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Where is He Who Has Been Born King of the Jews? (Matthew 2)

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Matthew continues his apologetic for Jesus as the Messiah, exploring themes of kingship, Exodus, exile, and prophetic expectation.

Within this video, I advertise the following books:

Dale Allison, 'Studies in Matthew' (<https://amzn.to/2Q4yMtl>)

R.T. France, 'The Gospel of Matthew' (<https://amzn.to/36TrSh6>)

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Transcript

Welcome back. Today, I'm continuing my series on the Gospel of Matthew and looking at chapter two of the book. In chapter one, we saw Jesus being presented as the one who fulfills this history of Israel, the one who brings this genealogy to its intended destination, the one who comes as the new David, fulfilling this expectation of the son of David, the one who comes as the son of Abraham to sum up the history of Israel.

Now, within that story, as it's presented at the very outset, there is a genealogy presented for Christ, a genealogy that gives a sense of his ancestry and a qualification, his credentials for being the Messiah. It also presents that ancestry in a narrative form with references to the Babylonian exile, to going into Egypt, with references to the rise of the kingdom in David. And Jesus comes as the fulfillment of that history, as the fulfillment of a particular ancestry, but also the fulfillment of a history.

And Jesus, as he is born, is associated with prophecy, with dreams, with angelic announcement, and many other things that present this child as a special child, one marked out from the very outset for some mission or calling or identity that is unique. Now, there's the use of the Old Testament references, such as Isaiah 7, verse 14, "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, God with us." Now, the point of that is not necessarily to say that is what the verse meant in its original context. Matthew is a very subtle and brilliant, artistic user of scripture.

He's someone who takes Old Testament scripture and relates it to the mission of Christ, not in a one-to-one prophecy fulfillment model, but in a way that recognises within initial events that occurred within a time long past, anticipations and signals towards something that's going to come in the future that's ushered in by Christ. And we'll see that continuing in chapter 2. Jesus is being presented not just in a narrative form that these are the things that happened around Jesus' birth, but Jesus is being presented as the one marked out as the Messiah. So the purpose of these chapters is apologetic, not just historical.

Now, of course, the history is necessary for the apologetic. If these things did not in fact take place, then the apologetic purpose is undermined. But Matthew is not just giving us a blow-by-blow account of what happened, just reporting events.

He's presenting a carefully constructed case for his readers to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. Now, we see that in the way that Jesus' genealogy is presented, and certain of the questions raised by the genealogy that are resolved within the genealogy. For instance, the child of Jehoiakim, how is that going to be fulfilled when we have that judgment in Jeremiah chapter 22, verse 30? Now, implicit within the genealogy is an answer to that question.

Likewise, as we go further on, we see the way that there are anticipations of unusual, irregular features of the birth. So we have the women involved are people who do not naturally fit into the story in the way that Sarah or Rebecca or Rachel and Leah would. They are people who come from outside.

And in the same way, there's something about the birth of Christ through Mary that's not the expected way. There's something anomalous about this birth. It's anomalous in a way that points towards its divine origin, but also anomalous in a way that maybe challenges us to think about, well, is this in keeping with what God has been doing

previously? And indeed it is.

As we look further on in chapter 2 then, we'll see this apologetic continue. Matthew is presenting Jesus, not just in a series of events that occurred around his birth and his youth, but in a way that helps his readers to recognize Jesus as the one marked out as the king of the Jews, as the Messiah. Now, within this chapter, the focus is upon the site of his birth because there are different associations that Christ has.

Christ is associated with Bethlehem, but he's also associated with Nazareth. And so how do we fit those things together? How do we reline these different strains of messianic expectation? And one of the things that Matthew is doing in this chapter is doing just that. He's also continuing his theme of Gentiles.

Note that the four women included in the genealogy are Gentiles, or women associated with Gentiles. The wife of Uriah, who's a Hittite. Rahab, Tamar.

Tamar, a Canaanite, and Rahab, a Canaanite. And Ruth is a Moabite-ess. These are women from outside of Israel being brought in.

This is a person who will draw in Gentiles. And so within this chapter, we see that theme continuing and becoming more prominent. And it begins at the very outset, where Jesus is born in Bethlehem of Judea.

It's that theme of where is the Messiah to be born. He's associated with Bethlehem. And it's the city of David.

And wise men come from the east to Jerusalem. Now this is in the age of Herod the king. Now these themes of royalty are important.

Magi and wise men, they're associated with royalty. There'd be court advisors, there'd be astrologers, doing these other sorts of things that would be associated with the world of the court. And we have another king on the stage, Herod the king, in Jerusalem.

And so the wise men come from the east to Jerusalem. Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. Now the nature of this star is a matter of some dispute.

And some have suggested that it was a comet. Others, some planetary conjunction. Others, some nova or supernova.

And many people have tried to identify the specific astrological or astronomical phenomenon that are in view. It seems to have some astrological significance to the Magi. So they saw this and it symbolised something.

So within the rising of something within a particular constellation that symbolised the Jewish nation. And that set them on the path towards Jerusalem. Now note that what

they saw seemed to have a symbolic import that helped them to recognise that this was the king of the Jews that was being born.

And so they go towards Jerusalem because that's the logical place to go. You go to Jerusalem and you go to Herod who's the seeming king of the Jews. Now he's not a king in the fullest sense.

It's under Roman rule. But he has some authority as a royal type figure. Now as they come to Jerusalem presumably they're following the symbolism of the star.

Not just this star that's going in front of them. Now the identity of this, there's still more things to work out. Other things that have been suggested.

Some have seen it maybe as the Shekinah glory. Davies and Allison, or Allison particularly in his studies in Matthew, suggests that it is an angel. Now the angel is associated with the glory cloud in the book of Exodus.

The glory cloud or the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire is associated with the angel and it leads them through the wilderness towards the promised land. Now in the same way the wise men are led from the east through the wilderness and all these other places towards Christ. Now that's one suggestion.

I think there's a lot of merit to that. I like that suggestion in many respects. I think it captures something of what is taking place.

There is an Exodus theme taking place here but in an inverted way. The people who are being led through the wilderness by the star, by the pillar of cloud and fire perhaps, are Gentiles. And they're being led to the Jews.

Rather than Jews being led away from Gentiles there's an inversion. Note also that these are Magi. They're associated with the opponents of the Exodus.

The people who particularly in the first three plagues were trying to counteract Moses and Aaron. Or Aaron particularly in the first three plagues. And then in the sixth plague they had to retreat completely.

Now these figures are then presented as the ones who are coming to Christ. Whereas now you have a new pharaonic type figure who's Herod, the king over the Jews who's associated with people in his court who are scribes and Pharisees and chief priests. These other figures who are now presented in the place of Pharaoh's magicians.

These are the opponents now. And so there's an inversion. And we'll see more themes of inversion of Exodus within the rest of the chapter.

That's part of what's taking place. The themes of kingship are prominent. So the star, stars are associated with royalty, with kingship.

They're also associated with angels which is one reason why this idea of the angel leading them might have merit to it. In some ways you could see it perhaps as an association between some astronomical phenomenon and some divine manifestation leading them in a more terrestrial form with a light going before them. Now that's one possibility.

We need to remember that the sort of cosmology that they were working within was very different from ours. And so there's a symbolic association between stars and angels. And we see that in places like Revelation 12.

We see it in Job with the morning stars shouting for joy. And they're associated with the angels at that point. Now that association I think doesn't have to be a literal one.

Rather it can be seen in terms of symbolism that these things are symbolically associated. And they would be quite literally associated within the mind of many. But that association is one that enables that star to be associated with a light that goes before them and guides them at some later point in the story.

Now that being led by the star doesn't necessarily fit in with some of our Christmas hymns with the idea of this star leading them in the way that many have expected. A moving star. Well I'm not sure that's the case.

Rather it's the symbolism of the star that seems to lead them to Jerusalem. Not an actual literal star moving ahead. They do see the star later on though.

And it's at that point that I wonder whether we're dealing with some sort of manifestation of the Shekinah glory of the glory cloud. Whatever it is. Now that's speculation.

And that's all we have at this real point. I think many people have presented astronomical explanations for what's taking place here. But none of them are definite.

There are some ones that are better than others. Some ones that take into account the astrological features. The way that it would be associated with the symbolism of the zodiac and other things like that.

I think it's quite likely that there were some aspects of the symbolism of the zodiac playing out here. We see allusions to the zodiac. At various points within the New Testament.

In subtle ways. And I wonder whether there's something going on with the appearance of signs of the zodiac at key points. But leave that for another point perhaps.

Now led through the wilderness. This is an inverted exodus. And this occurs at the time of Herod.

Herod dies in 4 BC. So this gives us some sort of limit for our dating. Particularly when we consider that some time before the exodus.

And that time elapses when the Magi do not return to Herod. And then he kills the baby boys beneath a particular age. And the age of 2. And so that maybe suggests that Christ's birth occurs within around the period of 6 BC.

Many have suggested. It presents us with a cut off point. Particularly since Herod dies while they're in Egypt.

So that period of time has to elapse. The Magi. They come from the East.

Maybe we can see them as associated with Daniel. Who was set over the Magicians. And the others in the court of Babylon and Persia.

Maybe that's the association. The other thing to notice is the Queen of Sheba. The Queen of Sheba comes and brings gifts of gold and spices to Solomon.

In the same way. This is a greater than Solomon who's come. And there are people who have come.

Who have come to the Magi. With gifts. With tribute.

With a recognition of this new king has arrived on the scene. And we're going to bring tribute from the nations. That association.

With that great climax of the story of the United Kingdom. In the book of 1 Kings. Associates Christ with those glory days of the house of David.

Christ is the son of David. But he's the son of David like the son of David. Like Solomon was the son of David.

But he's a greater than Solomon. If the Queen of Sheba came with spices and gold to visit Solomon. Now the kings of the east are coming to visit Christ.

This also draws upon Old Testament prophecy. So within the Psalms. One example that comes to mind.

This is a Psalm of Solomon. Psalm 72. May he have dominion from sea to sea.

And from the river to the sea. And from the river to the ends of the earth. May desert tribes bow down before him.

And his enemies lick the dust. May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands. Render him tribute.

May the kings of Sheba and of Seba. Bring gifts. May all kings fall down before him.

All nations serve him. Now. It goes on to talk about the gold of Sheba.

And other things being brought to him. This is part of what Jesus is fulfilling. The gifts of the nations.

Coming into Israel. Another example could be in the book of Isaiah. Chapter 60.

Which is again a messianic passage. That we find elsewhere in the New Testament. Arise shine for your light has come.

And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold darkness shall cover the earth. And thick darkness the peoples.

But the Lord will arise upon you. And his glory will be seen among you. And nations shall come to your light.

And kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your heads. Lift up your eyes all around and see.

They all gather together. They come to you. Your son shall come from afar.

And your daughters shall be carried on the hip. Then you shall see and be radiant. Your heart shall thrill and exult.

Because the abundance of the sea. Shall be turned to you. The wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you. The young camels of Midian and Ephah. All those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense. And they shall bring good news. The praises of the Lord.

All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you. The rams of Nebeth shall minister to you. They shall come up with acceptance on my altar.

And I will beautify my beautiful house. Now these are all prophecies that are being fulfilled at least in some anticipatory form. In the story of the wise men coming to Christ.

These are people who are coming from foreign distant lands. Representing the riches of the Gentiles coming in. Coming into Israel to greet this new born king of the Jews.

This new Messiah. So we've had the Gentiles within the genealogy of Christ. Now we're having the Gentiles bringing in their riches.

And this presents Christ's birth as occurring within the context of the larger Gentile world. The world of the empire of Rome. The world of the surrounding nations.

The wealth of the nations. Of the riches of the sea. They're pouring in.

And now Israel's king is being greeted by the people who are being brought in. Later on we'll see Jesus spending a certain part of his childhood in Egypt. Again associations with wider Gentile nations.

This is all important for understanding who Christ is. Matthew is drawing us a portrait of Christ. He didn't have to include these elements.

Luke does not include these elements. But Matthew is including these elements to help us to recognise something of who Christ is. To continue his apologetic for Christ as the one who fulfils these prophecies from the Old Testament.

Christ as the one who fits the bill for the Messiah. So they go to Jerusalem. They enquire of Herod.

And Herod is troubled. And all Jerusalem with him. This is an unsettling event.

A challenger to his throne is coming on the scene. And so he gathers together the chief priests and the scribes of the people. And he enquires where the Christ is to be born.

And they answer him, in Bethlehem of Judea. For so it is written by the prophet. And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Now this is a conflation of two different verses. The verse that is primarily being quoted here is from the book of Micah, chapter 5, verse 2. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah.

From you shall come forth to me one who is to be ruler in Israel. Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has given birth.

Then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord. In the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall dwell secure. For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.

So it's referring to that but it's also referring to a significant verse in 2 Samuel, chapter 5, verse 2. Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, you shall be shepherd of my people Israel.

And you shall be prince over Israel. So this is at the moment when David is being established as king by Israel. It's presenting David as the one who's going to replace Saul and his line.

So occurring at this particular juncture, it's an ominous note to strike for Herod. This is the chief priests and the scribes presenting their report on where the Messiah would be born. And now there's this little verse thrown in that presents the Davidic king as the one who removes the line of the one that has gone before.

Replacing Saul, who's symbolising Herod at this point, and the Davidic king is coming to his rightful throne. So again we're seeing an important shift here that's presented against the background of Old Testament prophecy. There are other things about the verse that's quoted from Micah.

When Old Testament is cited or referred to within the New Testament, generally it's not just the verse, the single verse in view that the writer wants you to notice. It's the whole context that surrounds that. It's a wider context that gives you certain coordinates to understand what he's saying around that verse.

Now these things are, as it were, the sparks that fly between literary contexts. And in those sparks you'll find some greater understanding of what exactly is taking place. Now here we are supposed to go back to Micah chapter 4 and 5 and think about what's taking place there.

And then read the story of Matthew chapter 2 against that backdrop. And maybe we'll see things that we haven't seen previously. Now within Micah chapter 4 and 5 there's this woman struggling to give birth.

And then there's these references to particular places, the Tower of the Flock, Migdalida. And there are other references to struggling in a painful birth and to themes of exile and deliverance that remind us of the birth of Benjamin. It reminds us of the story, the tragic story, in chapter 35 of Genesis in which Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin on the way to Bethlehem.

She does not arrive at Bethlehem but on the road to Bethlehem she dies giving birth to Benjamin. And Benjamin in that context is associated with the first kings of Israel. In the immediate succeeding passage we have the story of the line of Edom, of the line of Esau and the kings associated with that.

And as we look in 1 Samuel and follow that story we'll see the ways that Edom, Esau and Saul are associated together. So here that continues. There are ways in which we're supposed to see Herod against the backdrop of Edom but also against the backdrop of Saul.

Now those connections help us to also see some of the deepest struggles in Israel's

history resurfacing again. The struggle with Amalek or the struggle between Esau and Jacob, the struggle between Saul and David. All of these things are being alluded to in subtle ways with this confrontation between the newborn king of the Jews and Herod, the Idumean king that's ruling in Jerusalem at the time.

Now other ways in which the Old Testament surfaces in subtle ways here is in the story of Balaam. Balaam is a prophet, a false prophet who's sent by a king and goes against the wishes of a king and blesses an opponent rather than actually bringing a curse upon them. And in Balaam's prophecy there are anticipations of what we read here.

In Numbers chapter 24. Now that looks forward to the reign of David but also looks beyond that to the reign of Christ. And that threat to Edom and Seir maybe makes us think of that conflict between Herod and Christ and what's taking place there.

Balaam, although a false prophet, has some ways in which he might remind us of the Magi. These people who are coming from afar and end up blessing this new king of the Jews. And here we see the way that they're coming.

They're following a star. They're following something that reminds you of the prophecy of Balaam. There's also Moses' typology here.

There are ways in which the story, what does it remind you of? It reminds you of the conflict with the Pharaoh and the way that the Pharaoh was deceived. And that conflict between Pharaoh and the wise men, the magicians and the king, who we'll see acting like a Pharaoh in what follows, helps us to see some inversions of the Exodus themes. The magicians now are the good guys.

The magicians are the ones who are led by a light through the wilderness to the promised land. And it's the people within the promised land who actually serve as the Pharaoh type figures. There's a deliverance into Egypt, not just a deliverance from Egypt.

And so there are interesting things to observe there. Other things to notice. In the Old Testament there is a story of Edom that reminds us of what happens to Christ here.

And that's found in 1 Kings chapter 11. When Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, he struck down every male in Edom. For Joab and all Israel remained there six months until he had cut off every male in Edom.

This is doing the same thing as Herod will go on to do. But Hedad fled to Egypt together with certain Edomites of his father's servants, Hedad still being a little child. What's happening to Hedad here is the same thing that happens to Christ.

Herod, like Joab and David, tries to kill the baby boys, the males. And this child flees to Egypt with his father and is saved there. Set out from Midian and came to Paran and took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt.

Who gave him a house and assigned him an allowance of food and gave him land. And then later on. Again this is what we see with Christ.

When Herod dies, Christ, or Joseph, brings Christ and his family back to the country. And so these are things that remind you of older conflicts, the sins of the house of David coming back upon their head. So all these Davidic themes, all these conflicts between kings, these kingly advisors, wise men and astrologers coming from the east.

All of these things are pointing towards the identity of Christ. This is the stage on which Christ is playing. The stage of kings, of rulers, of the nations and empires round about, of the Gentile peoples coming in and bringing treasures.

And so these are all ways that Matthew is characterizing Jesus as the king of the Jews. Notice that the Magi described Jesus as the king of the Jews. This was the way that the Gentiles would have referred to what the Jews would have referred to as their Messiah.

And so there's the expectation of this one who is born king of the Jews, who will represent the Jews and God's purpose for his people, bringing them to their proper destiny. Now again we see the importance of dreams in this chapter. We've had dreams in chapter 1, but dreams continue here.

There are dreams that the Magi have. There are dreams that Joseph has. And dreams are associated with kings in particular.

Prophets have visions and priests consult Urim and Thummim. But kings have dreams as we look through the Old Testament. That's a continuing association, kings and dreams.

And the wise men and dreams. The wise men are associated with the king and the court of the king. The king himself has dreams like Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar.

And the wise man also has dreams. These associations I think help us to again see some of the characterisation that Matthew is engaging in here. The Magi do not return to Herod.

They're warned and they return to their country in another way. They give treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Those things are associated with the gifts of the Queen of Sheba, with the gifts of the kings prophesied in places like Isaiah 60 and in Psalm 72.

And so they're presented as the fulfilment of prophecy here. Later on, not necessarily in Matthew's gospel, but in other gospels, particularly John, we see gifts brought by others to the tomb of Jesus. So maybe that's an association or at least some sort of symmetry within the story of Christ.

Great treasures associated with his birth. Great treasures associated with his death. Now when they depart, the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him to

take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.

Remain there until he is told. Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. And so he takes the child and departs to Egypt by night.

Now that might remind us of the story of the Passover. This departure by night into Egypt, just as the departure from Egypt by night in the Passover took place at that particular point. Now that I think helps us to see some of the typology that's taking place here.

And at this point, one of the unusual ways in which Matthew uses the Old Testament can be seen. He refers to Hosea chapter 11 verse 1. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Out of Egypt I call my son.

Now this was not a prophecy of Christ. This was referring back to God's deliverance of his people from Egypt. When Israel was a child, I loved him.

And out of Egypt I called my son. Now that's referring to the first Exodus. How can this be used to refer to Christ? Because the first Exodus pointed forward to, anticipated, signalled towards this later event of Christ's Exodus.

And now as Christ is brought out of Egypt, he is one who's represented as a new Israel. A new Israel brought out of Egypt. A new Israel that will consummate and fulfil Israel's identity.

It's also the first place that we really see Jesus referred to within the text as God's son. This is important. Out of Egypt I have called my son.

This is God naming or declaring Jesus to be his son. Now this is not just a miraculous child. This is one who's identified as God's firstborn son.

Israel was being brought out of Egypt. They were declared to be God's firstborn son in chapter 4 of Exodus. And now Jesus is declared likewise to consummate the identity of Israel within himself.

He is the true son. Herod, when he hears what's happened, he's been tricked by the wise men. And this is certainly in keeping with what we know of Herod, particularly in his later years.

He killed his favourite wife. He did a number of brutal acts against people who threatened him. He was paranoid in his rule.

And so this is not surprising. Although we don't have a record of it in history outside of Matthew, this is not the sort of thing that would surprise us from what we know of Herod within the historical record. He kills all the male children in Bethlehem and all that region that were two years old and under, according to the time that he'd ascertained from the

wise men.

So that period of time is not immediately after Christ's birth. The wise men are not necessarily coming on the scene at the moment that Jesus is born or just after. It seems that they might have come some months after or even a year after.

It's quite possible. The other thing to notice is they're in a house. That shouldn't be taken as opposed to Jesus being born in a stable because the idea that Jesus was born in a stable is largely based upon a misunderstanding of the Greek within Luke.

The guest room was free. It was occupied and it wasn't free. So they were in the other part of the house with the animals.

That doesn't necessarily mean that there was this stable that they were in and that they weren't in any house, that they were just left out on the street and ended up camping for the night in a stable. That's not actually what the text says. There's no room in the guest room but they're part of the house.

They're part of the house with the animals that would have been taken into the house at night. Now Herod tries to kill the baby boys at this point. Once again, this reminds us of the story of Moses and the attempt of Pharaoh to kill the baby boys in the first two chapters of Exodus.

That threat is one that would have - we're probably talking about 20 kids here. This is not a large number. So the fact that this is not recorded in the historical records is not entirely surprising.

This is not some vast massacre of thousands of children. This is probably 20 to 50 kids, a horrific thing to do but not on the sort of scale of even some of the other things that Herod did necessarily. And so it's important to understand that an event of this scale wouldn't necessarily make it to the history books.

This again is an event that marks Jesus out as the fulfilment of Israel's history. Not in the way that there was a prophecy exactly that this would take place but as the one who exists playing out the patterns and the models and the paradigms of Israel's history. He is the one who is a new Moses whose life is threatened at his birth.

He is the one who squares off against a Pharaoh from his birth. He is the one who's marked out for kingship. He's the one who plays out the history of David's sins against the Edomites.

And there's this inversion of that as now the Edomite is trying to kill the Davidic heir. And there we see Jesus taking on himself the legacy of Israel's history, both its negative and its positive content. Recognise again that Jesus is the one who will deal, savour his people from their sins.

And those sins are bound up within the story of David and his line, of Israel and Abraham and his children, all the things that were involved in that story. Now at this point, Matthew calls back to a passage in Jeremiah chapter 31. This was then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more. Now in that context, it's the nation scattered abroad going to Babylon in captivity.

Ramah was the place where they were rounded up and they were taken away from that. In chapter 40 verse 1 of Jeremiah, that's the place, the staging ground for the deportation to Babylon of the Judeans. And at that point we see the matriarch of Israel, Rachel, weeping over her people.

Now notice we've already encountered Rachel and Rachel and her struggles and weeping and struggling to give birth to the people already in this chapter. In the reference to Micah chapter 5 verse 2, within that context it's Rachel's plight. Rachel's struggling to reach Bethlehem and not reaching Bethlehem, giving birth to the first king or the one that will be the one from whom will come the first king of Israel, Benjamin.

On the way to Bethlehem. And this struggle is then continued as she weeps for her children that are taken into exile. These are sites of deep national memory.

Ramah and Bethlehem, Ephrath, the sites of these tragedies, of the death of Rachel on the way, of the birth of Benjamin and the tragic story of Benjamin. Of the near elimination of the tribe of Benjamin as a result of the sin at Gibeah. And then later on the story of Saul, the one removed from office.

And in all these ways there's this deep charged memory of Israel's history bubbling up beneath the surface. And at certain points we hear it pop on the surface and we recognise that something, some great energy is working beneath this text. And if we just pay attention we'll be able to recognise part of what's taking place here.

That Jesus is the fulfilment of the deep memory of Israel. These stories that go all the way back to Genesis, the stories that go back to the kingdom of the story of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel and the kings. All of these stories are playing beneath the surface here.

Charged with the anticipation and the witness of the prophets, Jesus comes onto the scene. The one who fulfils all of these patterns. And so Matthew is telling this story in a very artful and literary way.

Notice that in this context as Rachel weeps on high, she's weeping about children that have been taken into exile. Her children are no more. It's not necessarily that they've been slaughtered as the innocents are slaughtered within this chapter.

But children are deported. And God speaks to Rachel at that point with words of comfort and declares, Thus says the Lord, the immediate verse following. Now that's what we see.

Later on we'll see in that same passage God describing Israel as his son that he cares for. He's going to bring that son back, Ephraim. And here we find the same thing.

The immediately succeeding verse talks about this one coming back to the land. The son that was going to be called out of Egypt now comes forth from Egypt. So now there's a return from exile.

Notice all these themes draw upon the paradigms of Israel's history that we've seen previously. The history of going into Egypt. The history of the call of Abraham.

The history of David and the kingdom. The history of the Babylonian captivity and exile. In all of these stories we see Christ replaying these patterns.

And Christ is the one who's called out of Egypt too. Notice that this draws again another aspect of Mosaic symbolism. We've mentioned Exodus chapter 4 in reference to Jesus as God's son, Israel as God's son.

But there's another reference in Exodus chapter 4 that we should think of here. And it's when Moses is called from Egypt. He was called from Midian.

And Moses took the staff of God in his hand. Now this is the same pattern playing out. God appearing to this person, telling them to return because the people who sought their life were dead.

And they go back to the land with their family. Now this is what we see in the case of Joseph. Think about the different connections that are being drawn here.

What we're having is not a direct mapping on one-to-one of these figures. But there's a collage of different figures and associations that combine to form this text charged with scriptural memory. So in one respect Joseph is Joseph.

He's the son of Jacob who has dreams and leads his people into Egypt, saving them from the threat of losing their lives in the land. And so he's providing for his people. Again notice that the story of Matthew 2 continues to focus on Joseph.

Although the reference concerning the wise men is very much, it seems to be an independent source. And focuses upon Mary and the child without reference to Joseph. But the surrounding material continues the story of Joseph.

Joseph is the one who's the guardian of this son. Which is one reason why we need to think about Christ not just as the son of Mary but as the son of Joseph. God gave his son to a couple, not just a woman, the Virgin Mary.

And so these two people together are supposed to be involved in the life of Christ, to be protecting him. And so Joseph is another Joseph. But Joseph is also another Moses.

Joseph is the one who receives this dream, is told to go back to the land because the people who sought the child's life are dead. So Joseph is like Joseph. Joseph is like Moses.

But then Jesus is like Moses. Jesus is the one whose life is threatened by a murderous king. He's the one who has to flee so that his life won't be taken.

He's the one who returns to land when the person who sought his life has died. He's also like Israel. He's the one who's taken up from Egypt into the Promised Land.

And then there are the inversions there as well as he flees into Egypt from the Promised Land. So this is not a prediction as we find in Hosea chapter 11 verse 1. It's not a prediction of what Christ is going to do. It's a parallel.

It's a model. It's a fulfilment. It's a paradigm that Jesus fulfils, brings to its true conclusion.

All of Israel's history is charged with a prophetic anticipation. So Israel is brought out of Egypt in the Exodus as they celebrate the Passover. The Passover looks back to something that has happened previously but also anticipates a greater Exodus that God will accomplish in the future.

And so Jesus comes to fulfil the prophetic import of Israel's history. This is one of the things that you should notice when you work with typology. Typology creates a prophetic impulse to history because events that happen to one person anticipate things that will happen in the future.

So the scriptural shape of Christ's life is a manifestation of the prophetic import of Israel's history. We see the same thing in the story of Abraham as he undergoes an Exodus pattern to his life. Going down into Egypt to escape from famine and plagues upon Pharaoh and all these other things.

Pharaoh is a threat to the bride. And then finally being led out with many gifts, going into the Promised Land, walking throughout the Promised Land, winning great victories. And sweeping the Promised Land from the enemies.

Sweeping the enemies from the Promised Land. These are all ways in which Abraham's life is a prophetic anticipation of Israel's later history. In the same way Christ is the one who fulfils the history of Israel.

He takes all these events that happen to Israel and he brings them to their destiny. There are continued inversions here as I've noted. But Jesus has a background within the surrounding Gentile world.

So it's not just that he's fleeing from Egypt. He flees into Egypt. He's given succour there.

He's provided for. He's a refugee in the land of Egypt and provided for when he needs help. And so he is continuing the themes, Matthew is continuing the themes of the women within the genealogies.

We have kings. We have gifts associated with the land of Arabia. So we have gifts associated with Arabia.

Kings from Mesopotamia. We have sojourn in Egypt. We have people in his ancestry who are associated with Canaan, with places like the Hittites and the Moabites.

And so all these surrounding nations are part of this story too. And now they're being drawn to the light of this rising king. Jesus is one who's going to bring the Gentiles to his rising.

He's going to be the one who brings them to the promise that is for them too. So the king of the Jews from the very outset is presented not just as a narrow ethnic monarch. But as one who is good news for the entire world.

As one who's going to bring God's purpose not just for Israel but for the nations. This is anticipated by all of these stories from the Old Testament. So stories of Daniel and the wise men.

The stories of the struggles with the wise men in the court of Pharaoh. And now the wise men are being brought in. These things also occur against the backdrop of Roman rule.

And against the backdrop of a struggle with kings on the throne. Herod, whose kingship is maybe exaggerated a bit by the text. Certainly in the case of Herod Antipas and Archelaus and these other figures.

Their kingship is exaggerated a bit to emphasise this contrast. To emphasise the kingly claims of Christ. And so when they return, Herod Antipas is king in Galilee and Peraea, east of the Jordan.

And Archelaus is now king of Judea. And so you have Philip as well, the Tetrarchs. We're told at this point that in the fulfilment of what was spoken by the prophets.

He is called a Nazarene. That he comes from Nazareth. Now this is a very odd verse.

And it's one that sparked a lot of speculation about what exactly Matthew could mean. Now a few things to bear in mind when thinking about this problem. Is that Matthew is not averse to using Hebrew plays upon words.

We've already seen that in chapter 1. Where he plays on the gematria of David's name being 14. And so he's already done that. David in the 14th place.

David as the pattern for the 14 times 3. And Christ as the one who is the true son of David. So he's done that. He's also drawn our attention to the meaning of terms like Emmanuel.

Which depends upon a knowledge of Hebrew. So he's working within this world where he's expecting a number of his readers to be acquainted with Hebrew. And so plays upon Hebrew words should not be surprising.

Again, plays upon words should not be surprising more generally. Within Hebrew and within the Gospels we'll often see these sorts of plays upon words. This punning connection between characters.

This is throughout the Old Testament. We see it again and again in Genesis. Where there'll be particular place names.

There'll be particular characters and particular objects that are connected to each other with puns. And we'll see that for instance in the story of Jacob at several points. Luz appears as a place name and then it appears as one of the trees that Jacob uses to deceive Laban or to outwit Laban.

We see Jacob's name being changed at the Jakob which mixes the letters of his name up. We see the way that he is wrestling and the way that that's associated with his name. All of these things help us to recognize the sort of text that the New Testament and Old Testament writers were writing.

Not a text that was averse to playing with puns and playing with words. But one that is constantly using those things to help you to draw through the literature connections between things that go deeper than just literary connections. So this is not just a surface play upon words.

It's giving you a theological connection between things. Now he's saying that this is what's spoken by the prophets. Not just one prophet here.

He's not saying this is the prophet Isaiah or the prophet Jeremiah. The prophets. It's a vague reference.

There's no specific verse that this seems to refer to. At least on the surface of things. Nazareth was a fairly new town.

Nazareth probably had 500, at least under a thousand inhabitants. It wasn't a big place. And so why it should be marked out is unclear.

And it certainly does not seem to be marked out within the Old Testament. So some have suggested that it's a play upon the Hebrew word for branch that we see in Isaiah chapter 11. In Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1, there is a verse that some have seen as the

background here.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his root shall bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

So a play upon the word for branch. And that's something that is presented as a paradigm for understanding who Christ is. Christ is the one who fulfils the Old Testament prophecies of the branch or the root.

Now, these prophecies will often use a different word for branch. But this, I think, is a reasonable suggestion. Others have suggested that Jeremiah 31 verse 6, it's play upon the Hebrew for watchman.

Others have seen it in who are the great figures of the Old Testament who are set apart from their birth? They're Nazarites. And then there's a play upon the word for Nazarite, which is very close to this. So think about the characters of Samson or Samuel.

In both of these cases, they are prophesied from birth or they're told from birth that they will not drink wine and that they'll refrain from certain things. That they will be set apart as Nazarites from birth. Now, is Jesus a Nazarite? Not necessarily in the way that we might think of Samson.

Jesus is described as a glutton and a wine-bibber, which would be strange indeed if he was not drinking wine. So it seems likely that he's not a Nazarite in that stricter sense. But later on, he does play the role of a Nazarite.

He's one who dedicates himself to holy warfare, refraining from alcohol for the duration of that. I shall not drink of this fruit of the vine. Now, that statement is one that refers to the period of the cross.

Before he enters into his kingdom, he takes this sort of Nazarite vow. And so in that sense, he could be referred to as a Nazarite. He's also one who's an association between the expression the Holy One of God and the Nazarite.

And that's particularly seen in the Septuagint substitution for Nazarite, where it's described as the Holy One. Davies and Allison, Allison particularly, focuses upon this in connection with Isaiah 4, verse 3. So Jesus is the Holy One, and so he shall be called the Holy One of God. He's the one who's the Nazarite.

And so it's fulfillment in that sense. Now, Artie Franch has an interesting suggestion. He's one of the commentators I didn't mention in my previous video.

But this is his commentary, which again is very highly recommended. It's one of my

favourites on Matthew. And he points out that the very oddness of a connection with Nazareth may be part of the point.

That there are ways in which Jesus is foretold within the Old Testament which present the Messiah as a very nondescript figure. As a figure who comes on the scene almost incognito. Not from the place of power, but from surprising places.

As one that will suffer, as one that will be rejected, as one that won't be recognised by his people and honoured. And so Philip's response, when he hears that this one is from Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth? Later on we see in John chapter 7, there is dispute about the coming of the Christ, the Messiah. Some will say that on the one hand, we do not know where the Messiah will come from.

He will come as a sort of figure incognito. As a figure whose origins are not truly known. It says in chapter 25 of John, some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him.

Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? But we know where this man comes from. And when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from. And then later on we see in the same chapter, in verse 40 following, when they heard these words, some of the people said, this really is the prophet.

Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was? And so there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

So we have these disputes about the origin of the Messiah. Some will see the Messiah as coming from somewhere of little renown, of we do not know where he comes from. And others see the Messiah as coming from a place of significance, charged with the memory of David, of Bethlehem.

Now what Matthew does within this chapter is bring those two traditions together and show how both of them are true. Both of them represent something of who Christ is. He shall be called the Nazarene.

He is one who fulfills the meaning of the branch. He is one who fulfills the meaning of the holy warrior. And so these connotations, I think Matthew is playing with those.

But he is also coming from a place of little renown. He is coming as a root out of dry ground. This seems to be, this is the one who is continuing the Davidic line.

He comes from Bethlehem, but he grows up out of dry ground. The Davidic line has seemingly been cut off. And now it's growing again in a surprising terrain.

Jesus is coming from the outside. He's coming from the sticks. He's not coming from a place of great power and prestige.

He's not coming from Bethlehem, this place charged with ancestral memory, but from this newer village called Nazareth, which is not very large. It only has about 500 people there. And so those elements being brought together help us to place the Messiah, to recognize who he is.

On the one hand, he is the one who comes with all the memory and all the significance of the Davidic King. On the other hand, he's one who comes humbly. He comes in a place where few recognize him.

He comes from a place that has little renown, a place that can easily be dismissed even by those who will end up following him. Growing up in Nazareth, Jesus would have been connected with a wider world. Again, Nazareth is spoken, or that whole area is spoken of as Galilee of the Gentiles.

This is a region where there is a lot more interaction with Gentile peoples. This was not the heart of Judea and Jerusalem, where you'd have far more of a center of Jewish culture. This was a place where Jesus and his father would probably have been working alongside Greek-speaking people, and working in contexts where there were a lot of pagans.

And you can think Jesus probably would have been working with his father in rebuilding Sepphoris, about six kilometers down the road from Nazareth, which had been burnt a number of years previously and was being rebuilt. And so presumably they needed carpenters and people skilled in those sorts of trades. So this is a sort of world that Jesus was growing up in.

Not a world associated with this very monocultural setting, the setting of Jewish might and power, center of rule, but a place where you'd have the bleeding of different worlds into each other. And Jesus was in this realm where he was associating with people that wouldn't necessarily be seen as the center of Jewish society. This would be out from the center.

And so Matthew's presentation of Christ, even before Christ has done anything, Christ is presented in a very powerful way as the fulfillment of Old Testament expectation, as the one who represents the resurgent hopes of the Davidic king. It seemed as if the Davidic line was wiped out, as if there was no history left for them. The judgment upon Jehoiakim and Jehoiakim and yet how that is overcome.

The judgment of exile and the destruction of the kingdom. And now we have in an unexpected place a shoot growing up, a descendant of David. One who is coming as it were out of Jesse.

This is not going back to David, it's going back to even before David. Because David and his line as it were have been completely wiped out. And now you're having all this starting again from scratch.

This provides the basis for what we'll see in the rest of the gospel. And tomorrow we'll look at John the Baptist preparing the way. More setting of the scene for this one that's coming.

And all of this setting of the scene, when Jesus finally comes, he comes into a situation crackling with expectation. One that is prepared for his coming. We've understood who this one is.

And all these hopes and fears of all the years resting upon this one. And how is he going to act? And that's the story of the rest of the gospel. Thank you very much for listening.

If you have any questions, please leave them on my Curious Cat account. If you'd like to support this and other podcasts like it, please do so using my Patreon or my PayPal accounts. God bless and thank you for listening.