

The King Fulfills Prophecy, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 2:16–23

Code: 2186

INTRODUCTION

The central theme of all Old Testament prophecy concerns the coming King, who will rule in God's promised Kingdom. If there is one major emphasis of all Old Testament prophecy, it is that God is going to set up His rule. He is going to have a Kingdom like no other kingdom has ever been. The King of that Kingdom will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Over and over again, the Old Testament promises that there is One who is to come, who has the wisdom and the power needed to bruise the usurper's head (Gen. 3:15). The One who is capable of taking back man's lost dominion and setting up the Kingdom of God on earth and throughout eternity is identified by the Old Testament prophets as the Anointed One, or the Messiah.

As I noted last time, there are probably 332 specific prophecies to be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, so that every facet of His life is covered in the Old Testament prophecies. And though the prophets wrote these things, they really didn't understand their full import. They knew they were writing of the One who would come, but they weren't sure just exactly how all the details would work out: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what [person], or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1:10-11). The prophets searched out the prophecies they had been given in an attempt to understand who would fulfill these tremendous prophecies and when he would do so. So, the Old Testament presents to us a King, and not just a human king, but a divine King--Jehovah, God incarnate. And the wonder of the New Testament and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in particular, is that they call together the answer to many of these prophecies, focusing them right on the person of Jesus Christ like some divine spotlight. Whereas all the impostors are unmasked by their inability to fit the picture, Jesus Christ is identified as the One who was prophesied, because in every part He fits what the prophets said. The New Testament from the beginning of Matthew to the end of Revelation is intended to present to us the One who fulfilled the predictions of the King. For example, the term for kingdom in the New Testament is the Greek word *basileia*, which is used 144 in the New Testament to speak of the reign of Jesus Christ. The term for King, *basileus*, is used 115 times in the New Testament, and at least thirty-five of those times in direct reference to Jesus Christ. And the verb form, *basileuo*, meaning "to reign," is used in reference to Christ ten times. Therefore, 189 times in the New Testament Jesus Christ is associated with the Kingdom that God promised through the prophets that He would bring. The extensive use of these Greek terms helps us to see that the New Testament is indeed emphasizing the fact that Christ is a King.

Review

The whole reason for Matthew 1 and 2 is to vindicate those very words of Jesus "...I am a king. To this end was I born..." (Jn. 18:37b). The Jewish people should well have known by the events of His birth that in fact He was a King. Even from the beginning, in His genealogy and the virgin birth in chapter 1, and in the adoration of the Persian king-makers and the antagonism of Herod in chapter 2, it is evident that Jesus was born a King.

Now, the final way in which Matthew presents Christ's kingliness in his first two chapters is by drawing out of the prophetic word of the Old Testament age four prophecies that point to the King, and showing how Christ fulfilled each one.

I. THE BIRTH AT BETHLEHEM (vv. 4-6)

II. THE EXODUS TO EGYPT (vv. 13-15)

Now that brings us to the third prophecy, which I shall call...

III. THE RAVAGING OF RAMAH (vv. 16-18)

Now remember, Jesus had been born in a stable in Bethlehem that probably was dug out of the side of a hill. By the time the Wise Men arrived, He had grown to be several months old, and was forced to flee into Egypt where He and His family remained for some months until Herod was dead. Before they returned, a tragic event was taking place back in the land of Israel:

A. The Persecution By Herod (v. 16)

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked [Gk. *empaizo* = 'to mock or to trick' (cf. Jer. 15:10)] of the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."

Now you'll remember that earlier in the narrative in verse 7, Herod had inquired diligently of the Wise Men to discover at what time the Christ had been born, not because he wanted the information to validate the King, but because he wanted to determine the age of the King so that he could kill Him. Then, when he had found that information out, he set about to kill all the children from two years old and under because that was within the time range that the Wise Men had told him.

1. THE EFFECT OF HIS RAGE

We have seen what a horribly cruel man this Herod was, who murdered people all through his reign. And now, when this Edomite king of Israel was tricked by the Wise Men, he became "exceedingly angry" (Gk. *thumoo* = "to be in a violent rage"). Because this verb is used in its passive form here, it implies that Herod was out of control. His anger was so intense that it actually blinded his sense, for if he had any sense at all, he would have figured that if the Wise Men were smart enough not to come back, they were probably also smart enough to have warned the family to flee. But being blinded with rage, he didn't even think about that possibility, and consequently ordered the massacre of every baby boy in the area of Bethlehem.

2. THE EXPRESSION OF HIS RAGE

I can imagine the terror that those bands of soldiers caused as they went from house to house, chasing fleeing mothers who clutched to their breasts their little ones. Torn out of their mother's arms, the babies were pierced with swords until they were all dead. That's what went on in Bethlehem because of the rage of this man. It's most interesting to me that Herod never bothered to determine whether this One the Magi came to worship was the true King or not. He may have thought this was the true King, because the prophets had said He would be born in Bethlehem. I believe that he did realize this and for this reason sought to execute the real King of Israel by executing all children in that town two years old and under. What is interesting is that the baby Jesus would not have been much older than six months of age at this time. Why then, did Herod extend the execution age to two years? Some commentators believe that any baby who had passed its first birthday would be considered to be a two-year-old, because it was entering into its second year. Others say that it actually means two years old, and Herod was just trying to make sure that he would kill the Child in case the Magi had miscalculated or had tried to trick him. He probably figured that if he slaughtered all the baby boys under two years of age, he would get the one that he wanted. We don't need to talk about how wicked he was to commit such an atrocity, because that's obvious. It's inconceivable that a man would do this...and even more inconceivable when you realize that he probably felt this was the Christ, the true King. What an evil, vile, incredibly heinous crime! It

was the beginning of sorrows for Israel as they rejected their King. And this is precisely what I feel Matthew wants us to see: that as the very beginning of the Messiah's life took place, there was rejection, unbelief, wickedness, calamity, and tragedy that resulted in death. Now, if you think that slaughter at Bethlehem was something, you are mistaken, because it was nothing compared to the disaster that came in A.D. 70 when one million one hundred thousand Jews were slaughtered by the armies of Titus. Furthermore, those two persecutions of Jews are nothing compared to what will happen in the Great Tribulation when the false messiah, a vastly more powerful ruler than Herod ever dreamed of being, will come and shed far more of Israel's blood than has ever been shed before. This massacre in Bethlehem by Herod was just the beginning. You may ask, "Why was this event included here?" Because it fulfilled prophecy, namely...

B. The Prophecy By Jeremiah (vv. 17-18)

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah, the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not [any longer alive]."

Matthew, who alone refers to this event, says that it occurred to fulfill prophecy. It fits his theme of fulfilled prophecy at the birth of Christ to establish that He was the King. Let's examine the circumstances under which this prophecy was uttered:

1. THE SETTING

We've already learned in the first two prophecies that sometimes New Testament writers really surprise us by the way they use the Old Testament. Sometimes we just don't understand that kind of usage and we have to broaden our thinking a little, so I want you to see what happens here. The prophecy about Ramah is recorded in Jeremiah 31:15, and what's interesting about it is that it doesn't appear here to be a prophecy. But it is a prophecy because Matthew said it was, not because it's inherent in this text.

a. Weeping for Rejection Jeremiah 31:15 says, "Thus saith the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." The prophesying of Jeremiah was perhaps the most tragic prophesying of all in Israel's history, because he uttered the doom of a dying nation. His prophesying was a swan song, as it were, that was uttered with tears, because he knew that nobody would listen or repent and that the captivity was really inevitable. Later on, there came One greater than Jeremiah who again uttered the same doom for that nation with tears. One day He sat over Jerusalem and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Mt. 23:37). And the Bible tells us that Jesus wept over the city (Lk. 19:41). Likewise, Jeremiah sat in view of a people that were doomed, and wept.

b. Hoping for Redemption But even in Jeremiah's prophecy there is great hope, believe it or not. In the heart of this book, there are four chapters (Jer. 30-33) that are filled with hope, joy, and comfort. Though Jeremiah was prophesying the doom of the Babylonian captivity, which came not long after and took them all away, he also spoke of great comfort and great hope in chapters 30 to 33. And notice that the statement about the weeping and lamentation concerning the children is located right in the middle of the section filled with hope, comfort, and joy. Why? Because even though there was weeping and lamentation, these chapters looked ahead to the coming Messiah, who would set things right. In fact, the very next verses in Jeremiah 31 hint at Israel's divine restoration: "Thus saith the LORD, Restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border" (vv. 16-17). In other words, God said to Jeremiah, "It's a sad day and there's doom ahead, so you have a right to weep. But refrain from weeping any longer because I will redeem them back." And He did so, didn't He, seventy years later. The same parallel is seen in the use of the prophecy by Matthew. There was Rachel weeping for her children because of the tragedy and

destruction that had come on the nation, which had rejected its Messiah. But at the same time, there was hope because even then there was a remnant, and one day, according to Romans 11, God would regather that whole nation, and they would finally recognize their Messiah. Zechariah said, "...and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son..." (12:10b). There's going to be salvation again in the nation of Israel, as Paul clearly said: "And so all Israel shall be saved..." (Rom. 11:26a). You can see then, that there's a general parallel: Jeremiah spoke about doom, and the people of Israel wept about that doom, but Jeremiah said, "Don't keep weeping because things will turn around and there will be salvation." The same thing was true of Christ: When He came there was weeping because His rejection brought doom. But there was comfort in that He would be the Savior of Israel. That's the parallel. There was weeping when the captivity came and the people were scattered, and there was weeping when the deaths in Bethlehem occurred. Those deaths were a sign of the hateful, vengeful rejection of Herod, as well as the indifferent rejection of the chief priests and the scribes and the people...a sign which showed that there was going to be a price to pay. But on the other hand, they were a sign that just as there should have been hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jeremiah's time, there should have been hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jesus' time, because there was going to be a turnabout. There was still hope in a salvation yet to be fulfilled.

2. THE SPECIFICS

a. Ramah Ramah was a village five miles north of Jerusalem, and was located right on the borderline between the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms in Israel, as indicated in 1 Kings 15:17. It served as the place where foreign conquerors ordered the defeated Israelites to be assembled for deportation to faraway places. Consequently, because of its location, Ramah became symbolic of the North and the South, as the only place where Israel came together. And it was always associated with weeping, because it was there that the deportations into captivity took place.

b. Rachel By referring to Rachel, Jeremiah was drawing a picture. Rather than Rachel literally going to Ramah and weeping, she was merely used as a symbol of the mothers of Israel in much the same way that Ramah was a symbol of the deportation of the sons and daughters of Israel. The mothers of Israel were crying because they saw their children taken away. That's the idea. Furthermore, it is most interesting that Rachel was Jacob's most cherished wife, who had given birth to Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. Those two tribes came to represent the Northern Kingdom, which, incidentally, was often called Ephraim. But later on, Rachel also bore Benjamin, who became identified with the Southern Kingdom. In this light, Jeremiah figuratively saw Rachel as alive, standing at Ramah, and weeping as the Northern Kingdom was deported by Assyria and the Southern Kingdom was deported by Babylon into captivity. Because both of those tribes came from the loins of Rachel, Rachel is depicted as weeping as she sees both sides of her family taken into captivity. She mourned so bitterly, being first deprived of Ephraim (Israel) and then of Benjamin (Judah), because it was she who cried in desperation, "...Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. 30:1b). And now, in Jeremiah's prophecy, she stands as if she were in the middle of those two nations and sees them both taken into different captivities. Israel was weeping because of the captivity of its children. When the population of the land was carried away it seemed as if God had deserted His people. But no sooner had Jeremiah presented the picture of Rachel weeping, than he added, "Stop your weeping, because there is coming a restoration. They will come back." And then over in chapter 33 he spoke about the righteous Branch, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be the agent to bring them back. In the end the sorrow will be turned to joy in the salvation of the remnant.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE

Matthew shows us that the Holy Spirit also intended this imagery to reveal the time of the birth of Christ. As Matthew records the slaughter of Bethlehem's babies, it's as if he sees Rachel beginning to weep all over again for her children as the mother of Israel. Some see this prophetically fulfilled in...

1. AN HISTORICAL SENSE

Rachel is identified with Bethlehem by some, because her tomb is near the town. And some Bible commentators also tell us that the word Ramah means "height," so that any place in Israel that was a height could be identified as Ramah. And because Bethlehem is a height, some believe that in those days, it was referred to as Ramah. But I believe that the figure of Rachel at Ramah best pictures what would happen again when the Messiah came.

2. A SPIRITUAL SENSE

Rachel wept again, but this time not because the foreign powers of Babylon or Assyria had destroyed her people, but because Herod had, the king of Israel himself. a. Consolation Regarding Christ However, consolation followed immediately, because even though the true King had been exiled and the slaughter was going on, the King would be coming back from Egypt. And ultimately, His Gospel would be preached and a remnant saved. Therefore, Rachel need not weep anymore. The sorrow of the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem over their babies murdered by Herod was a sign of the coming doom and the captivity of Israel in spiritual blindness that's still going on today, but in the end, that sorrow was destined by God to result in blessing and salvation for the remnant who would believe. b. Consolation Regarding the Children They didn't know it but those precious little babies in Bethlehem at that time were the first casualties in the warfare waged between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Christ, and ultimately the victory will be won. And if I read my Bible right, the minute those babies died, they went instantly into the presence of God, who gathers the little ones in His arms and says, "Permit little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19:14). The mothers could stop weeping because this very One who was now exiled in Egypt, would come back to offer them a salvation that could unite them with their own babies. The prophet gave a picture that was not fully understood. As with many Old Testament prophecies that are difficult to understand by themselves, we have to wait until the New Testament cracks them open. After all, the coming of Christ with His salvation is often called a mystery by the Apostle Paul. It is the New Testament writer under the magnificent and equal inspiration of the Holy Spirit who cracks open the mysteries of the Old. Because what Jeremiah was prophesying not even he was able to fully understand, we had to wait until God sent along Matthew, and inspired him with the Holy Spirit to give meaning and interpretation to that verse in Jeremiah. Thus was it enriched in a magnificent way and applied to Christ. So the King has come to Bethlehem as Micah said, He has gone to Egypt as Hosea said, and He has caused weeping in Ramah by Rachel, symbolic of the mothers of Israel, as Jeremiah said. Finally, in Matthew's magnificent presentation of the coming King, he includes one more of the pictures from the prophets:

IV. THE NAME OF NAZARETH (vv. 19-23)

A. The Death Of Herod (v. 19a)

"But when Herod was dead..."

In his historical account, Antiquities, Josephus said that Herod died of ulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot-filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath, and neither physicians nor warm baths led to recovery. I would say it was a rather fitting end for that kind of a man.

B. The Dreams of Joseph (vv. 19b-23a)

1. TO RETURN TO ISRAEL (vv. 19b-21)

"...behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the young Child's life. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel." You will remember that the angel had told Joseph to take his family to Egypt and wait there until he was brought word that it was safe to return. Not very long after the family had gone there, Herod died, as well as the others who apparently were set in opposition to Christ. Then the angel appeared to Joseph again to instruct him to move to the next place, Nazareth, again fulfilling the prophetic word. You will notice, however, that there was no specific place mentioned--they just came

back to Israel. Coming from the direction of Egypt to the south, they came to Bethlehem and Jerusalem, perhaps thinking that the capitol would have been the place to stay since they knew that their Child was Immanuel, God with us. They knew He was to be the Savior, as indicated by the name He was given (Mt. 1:21). They were well aware that He was the Messiah of God, for the angels had told them. Consequently, they probably thought Jerusalem, or Bethlehem nearby, would be the appropriate place for the future King to reside. But that option changed very quickly, because the angel directed them...

2. TO RESIDE IN GALILEE (vv. 22-23a)

a. Avoiding Archelaus"But when he [Joseph] heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee"1) The Redecorating of the TempleI want you to know why they were afraid. When Herod died, his kingdom was split between three of his sons: Herod Antipas took over the area of Galilee up in the north, Philip, the area further north, and Archelaus took over the area of Judea. Herod's sons, however, were less powerful than their father had been, being more like governors or territorial princes than kings. But while still alive, Herod had decided that he wanted to take a huge gold eagle and erect it over the gate of the Jewish temple. Needless to say, that didn't go over very big with the Jews, who considered it to be an abomination that violated Exodus 20:4, which forbade the worship of other gods. The reason they believed the presence of the eagle to be an idol is that the Romans used the eagle to represent their god Jupiter.2) The Reaction of the Two TeachersAt the same time, two famous Jewish teachers by the names of Judas and Matthias gathered their students together and got them all stirred up over the issue of having allowed Herod to put the eagle up over the Temple. As a result, their students climbed onto the Temple roof and started to tear the eagle to pieces. They were quickly arrested and brought to Herod, who was eager to avoid a wholesale insurrection, and were then sent to Jericho for their trial, whereupon they received a mild punishment. However, the two teachers were executed.3) The Rebellion Against the TyrantAfter Herod's death and before Jesus had returned from Egypt, a rebellion broke out in Jerusalem because of the murder of these two teachers. And Archelaus, who was now in control, quelled the revolution by slaughtering three thousand Jews, many of whom were pilgrims attending the Passover. Because it was a time of unprecedented religious consciousness in Israel, the mass bloodshed that was inflicted made Archelaus become hated and feared, even more so than his father. In fact, even the Romans removed him and replaced him with a man named Pontius Pilate. This is why Joseph had second thoughts about going to Judea, and his thoughts were confirmed when he was warned of God in a dream to go to Galilee instead.b. Fulfilling the Foretold"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."Verse 23 provides the ultimate reason that Joseph returned to Galilee. The fourth prophecy surrounding Christ's birth that showed He was born a King was this one which foretold that the Messiah would go back to Nazareth, Joseph and Mary's original home (Lk. 1:26-27; 2:4). They had to return to live out the prediction of the prophets who said Nazareth would be...

C. The Dwelling Place of Christ (v. 23b)

The term Nazarene is interesting because nowhere in the Old Testament does the statement "He shall be called a Nazarene" appear. Furthermore, that statement was spoken by more than just one prophet. If you try to find the prophets who said that though, you won't find them in the Old Testament. In spite of the fact that we have no record of any prophet explicitly saying this, some people want to connect it up with Isaiah 11:1, where it talks about Christ being a Branch (Heb. netser). They try to connect netser and Nazareth, but it isn't good etymology. Besides, one still has to deal with the plurality of the prophets. I believe there is a better explanation:

1. DECLARED BY THE PROPHETS

The prophets actually said this, it just never got written in in the Old Testament until it was finally

recorded by Matthew. You say, "But he says the Old Testament prophets said it. Did they say some things that didn't get written down?" I hope this doesn't shake you up too much, but yes. There were plenty of things that were said, which were very significant, but that weren't written down in the Old Testament. For example, Jude 14 says, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." Enoch said that, but it wasn't recorded in the Old Testament. How do we know he said it? Because Jude said he did, and Jude was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Do you know who said that the Messiah would be a Nazarene? The prophets said it. It just didn't get written down until Matthew did so. And because Matthew didn't even give an explanation, but merely said that the prophets foretold that He would be called a Nazarene, this tells me that this prophecy must have been common knowledge.

2. DESPISED BY THE POPULACE

Now, Nazareth was so despised, that Nazarene became a synonym for somebody despised. When somebody was called a Nazarene, it was used in the sense of a derogatory expression. In fact, the early church was derided by many in this way. In Acts 24:5 we find an example of this: "For we have found this man [Paul] a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." It was a term used in derision. I think that's part of the reason the prophecy is here. The Old Testament said again and again that the Messiah would be despised and rejected (e.g., Ps. 22; 69; Isa. 49; 53; Dan. 9:26). The Talmud, the Jewish rabbinic writings, even calls Jesus "Yeshu ha Nanotzri," which means "Jesus the Nazarene." They never called Him the Bethlehemite, even though He was born there. They called Him the Nazarene because it had a derisive connotation. And Jerome, the church scholar, mentions the synagogue prayer in which Christians are cursed as Nazarenes: "May they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the just." If Jesus had been raised in Bethlehem or in Jerusalem, He would not have been despised in the same way. But God said He would be despised, and being from Nazareth just intensified that. It was Nazareth that would furnish Him with the name Jesus the Nazarene, which would stimulate the reproach God predicted would come. This Nazarene was despised, rejected, and finally killed.

Conclusion

We have seen that every single location was vital to the character of Jesus Christ. Matthew paints a masterpiece of a picture. Micah said the King would come to Bethlehem...and to Bethlehem He came. Hosea said the King would come through Egypt...and through Egypt He came. Jeremiah said there would be weeping like Rachel in Ramah of old...and the mothers wept over their babies near the tomb of Rachel in the ramah of Bethlehem. And the prophets of old said His name would be Nazarene, and He would be from Nazareth...and so it was. And at each point, He fulfilled a prophecy that solidified His right to reign. And so Matthew says, "This is the King by genealogy, by birth, by worship, by the hatred of jealousy, and by the fulfillment of prophecy. This Man was born a King, for which cause He came into the world."

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is one of the central themes of the Old Testament?
2. What does the word kingdom and its related forms emphasize about Jesus Christ?
3. What effect did Herod's rage have on him?
4. How did Herod express his rage?
5. About how old would Jesus have been at the time of the slaughter? Why would Herod have probably extended the age of those to be executed to two years old?
6. Though Jeremiah 31:15 is technically not a prophecy, why can it be considered one?
7. Why was Jeremiah's prophesying so tragic? Why did both he and Jesus weep for Israel?
8. What is the immediate context in which the weeping of Jeremiah 31:15 is set? What is the significance of doing so?

9. What is the parallel of hope between Jeremiah and Matthew?
10. Of what was Ramah symbolic? With what was its weeping associated?
11. Rachel gave birth to Joseph, the father of Ephraim, and then she gave birth to Benjamin. Explain who she symbolizes and why she does so. (see p. 6)
12. What was the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem a sign of?
13. What is the double consolation from a spiritual perspective to the mothers of Bethlehem?
14. What aids us in understanding Old Testament prophecy?
15. What indicates that Herod was not alone in his opposition to Christ? (Mt. 2:20)
16. Why would Joseph and Mary have thought that the area of Jerusalem would have been a good place to reside?
17. What are the two reasons that they chose to reside in Galilee?
18. What event involving Archelaus would have made Joseph afraid to reside in Judea? (Mt. 2:22)
19. What was the ultimate reason that Joseph was guided to live in Nazareth?
20. Who was the statement "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Mt. 2:23b) spoken by? Why does it not appear in the Old Testament? What is another example of this?
21. What is the significance of the meaning of Nazarene as applied to Christ?

Pondering the Principles

1. Herod had an anger without restraint that completely blinded his sense. It is possible to be filled with anger to the extent that it controls you. Do you have an uncontrollable anger? Do certain injustices or adverse circumstances stimulate you to anger? Do you lose your patience easily? To gain a better understanding of the consequences of anger and the benefits of controlling it, read the following passages from Proverbs: 14:17, 29; 15:1, 18; 19:19; 22:24-25; 25:28. Rather than being controlled by anger or some other destructive attitude, commit yourself to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Prayerfully meditate upon Galatians 5:16-25, memorizing verses 22-25. The next time a potentially volatile situation arises, pray an immediate prayer to yield yourself to the Spirit's leading, and then let His fruit be manifested through your life.
2. Think back through this series covering Matthew 1-2. What have you learned about God's character and how He operates in the world in bringing His plans to pass? What divine attributes were manifested in the events which took place? Based on this passage alone, what could you teach someone else about God? Select a truth that became especially meaningful to you and share it in a family devotion or at a family Christmas gathering.

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