

In Matthew chapter 2 we have a continuation of Matthew's theme from chapter 1 to establish the authority of Christ tied to the Old Testament, and His place as the Son of God. Matthew is not as deliberate as Luke in drawing the comparison, yet he still intends for us to see Christ as the Son who fulfills God's plans for mankind, as opposed to Adam, (also God's son), who did not. There are four sections in chapter 2 including:

The visit of the magi (1-12),

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born. 5 "In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:

6 And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah: Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him." 9 After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

In verse 1 we are introduced to the king of Judea, a Hebrew convert of Arabic descent who is in the favor of Rome (Herod). His request to know where the threat to his reign will come from is answered in verse 6 with an Old Testament reference to Micah 5:1, indicating that a king would be born in Bethlehem. In verse 11, gifts are brought and presented to the child with Mary. Some have suggested symbolism and these as, gold for a king, frankincense for Jesus' divinity, and myrrh for death.

The sojourn in Egypt (13- 15),

13 After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. 15 He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called my Son.

Verse 15 is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:15, and another of the means by which Matthew is connecting Christ to Israel's past. A reader having familiarity with Old Testament writing from that day would easily recall the similarities of this in-and-out-of-Egypt experience, compared to Abraham and Moses' lives.

The massacre of the children (16- 18),

16 Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men. 17 Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

*18 A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
and she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more.
The Return to Nazareth*

and The return to Nazareth (19- 23).

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead.” 21 So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. 23 Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

In verses 13, 19, and 22, we read of Matthew’s references to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th times the Lord speaks to Joseph through dreams. Each time, Joseph responds to these dreams and demonstrates a critical role in the life of Christ.

The final verse of chapter 2 has no Old Testament reference to which Matthew is tying the fulfillment, “that He will be called a Nazarene.” The most conservative Biblical commentaries suggest Matthew is associating the specific name of someone from Nazareth as a Nazirite, which is most similar in sound to the Hebrew words for nazirite (נָזִיר, naw-zeer', Strong's 5139) – consecrated one, one especially dedicated to God (Judges 13:5,7,16:17); and for the Branch (נֹצֵר, nay'-tser, Strong's 5342), to whom much Old Testament prophecy is attributed, naming Christ as the “Branch.”

In these two connections that Matthew simultaneously delivers stating that Christ fulfilled the prophets “that He will be called a Nazarene,” we may also find purpose for ourselves as we consider - fulfillment comes from dedication to God.