

Matthew 2:13-15

Introduction

Matthew has pretty much only one thing on his mind here, and that's fulfillment. Notice how simple and brief this account is. There is no description of the approximately 150 mile trip into Egypt. There is no mention of anything that happened while they were in Egypt. There is no mention of anything that a normal biography or historical account would have included! In fact, this account is so simple and so short that there could almost have seemed no good reason for including it in the first place!

But not only is this account simple and short, it also seems to be "out of order." Matthew's point is that God called His Son *out* of Egypt. But all we see in this passage is that God sent His Son *into* Egypt. We would have expected verse 15 to come after verse 21. Why doesn't it? Because in verses 19-23 Matthew is pursuing a different "fulfillment." To combine both fulfillments in the same part of the story would have muddled and blended them together and so it would not have been as clear cut or as compelling.

Once again, we see that Matthew has an agenda. He is not just recording history for the sake of history. He is not just writing biography for the sake of biography. And he isn't just reciting the most important ingredients of the story of Jesus in order that people might be saved. If that were the case, then why does Mark not include anything at all about Jesus' birth and early years? And why is Luke's story of Jesus' birth and early years so different from Matthew's? (Luke never mentions Jesus' stay in Egypt.)

Each Gospel writer has his own agenda/theme in telling the story of Jesus. And to this point, the theme of Matthew is clearly fulfillment. Matthew wrote his gospel for Jewish Christians in order to assure them that their new faith was in perfect harmony (continuity) with their Jewish heritage and the faith of their ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David). The Jewish Christians were being accused of being traitors to their Jewish heritage because of their faith in Jesus and their membership in the church. But "No!" Matthew says. "It is only through faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah and therefore as a member of the Messiah's church that you will ever truly experience the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Israel." In today's passage, Matthew will illustrate this point more clearly and beautifully than ever.

Why does Matthew include the story of the flight to Egypt? Because he sees in this story another proof that all of God's promises to Israel will only be experienced by those Jews who place their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This certainly applies to Matthew's Jewish Christian readers. But as we saw last week, it also applies to the Gentile Magi – and to each one of us.

The Sovereignty of God

A. Remember we said that Matthew's account here seems to be a little out of order? Matthew sees here the fulfillment of the Scripture that says: "Out of Egypt I called My Son." But the only thing he actually relates here is not Jesus coming *out* of Egypt, but Jesus going *into* Egypt. How can Matthew do this? What's the connection between what he actually *tells* us

about (going into Egypt) and the “fulfillment” (coming out of Egypt)? Well, Matthew is obviously assuming that the *whole reason* Jesus went down into Egypt was *so that* He might come out of Egypt in fulfillment of the Scriptures!

- B. Yes, Jesus went down to Egypt to escape Herod, but according to Matthew, Jesus *had* to go down to Egypt because it was the will of God. And so God uses Herod’s evil attempt on Jesus’ life in order to accomplish His will. The flight to Egypt was not *ultimately* caused by Herod, but by God – according to His sovereign good pleasure and will. This is an immeasurable comfort! Jesus *had* to go into Egypt in order that He might come out of Egypt in fulfillment of God’s Word.
- C. Now we can read verse 13 in the proper light. Yes, the angel’s message is urgent. But the angel of the Lord is not panicked, frustrated, or worried in the slightest. In fact, the angel is only commanding what was already God’s will since before the foundations of the world. How big is your God? Is He this big? Or have we remade Him in our own image so that He is somehow subject to the “chance” happenings of this world and to the “chance” decisions that we make? When we do this we not only rob ourselves of peace and joy, but we rob God of the glory that is due Him. Let us *believe* in God and grow *strong* in faith in order that we might truly bring glory to our sovereign God.

God’s Salvation Plan Fulfilled in Christ

- A. Hosea 11:1 – When Israel was a child, I loved him, and **out of Egypt I called my son.**

Hosea is not talking about Jesus, or the Messiah, or *anything/anyone in the future* for that matter. He’s talking about the nation of Israel and their *past* exodus from Egypt (the budding nation of Israel had gone down into Egypt where they were eventually enslaved by the Egyptians, and then God brought them out of Egypt by His great power and led them through the desert into the Promised Land). So if this passage is not a “prophecy” of the future and if it’s actually talking about “Israel” (not the Messiah), then how can Matthew say that it is *fulfilled* in Jesus when He came out of Egypt 700 years later? Is this just a case of really bad hermeneutics (really bad interpretation and application of the Old Testament)?

- B. The Jewish scribes and religious leaders were notorious for interpreting their OT Scriptures in a way that might look to us to be very similar to what Matthew is doing. It was called Midrash. And there were two very unfortunate things about Midrash. Right now I’m just going to mention the first one. Midrash didn’t always do good “exegesis.” In other words, sometimes in interpreting the OT, it was more fanciful and imaginative than truly faithful to the original context. It was amazing what Midrash could *make* the Old Testament Scriptures say and mean (whether good or bad)! So is Matthew just doing a Christianized version of Midrash? Is he just being fanciful and using his creative imagination as he reads Hosea? And are we to assume that this is alright because he’s using it for a good end, and because he’s inspired? No! Matthew is actually giving us a *model* of good exegesis. He’s showing us the ultimate and truest way to interpret and apply God’s word.

- C. First of all, Matthew knew that in the Old Testament, the Messiah was pictured as the “true Israel.”

Isaiah 49:1-5 – Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. And **he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”** But I said, “I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.” And now the LORD says, **he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him...**

The Messiah would be the true Israel, because He would do what Israel failed to do. He would be a light for the nations, and He would bring great glory to God. He would fulfill Israel’s calling in Israel’s place. Matthew certainly knew the context of Hosea 11:1!

Hosea 11:1-7 – When Israel was a child, I loved him, and **out of Egypt I called my son.** The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

Israel had failed. And exactly where the nation of Israel had failed, it was there that the Messiah as the *true* Israel would succeed! When Matthew takes an OT Scripture that originally referred to a past event in the nation of Israel and sees it fulfilled in a future event in the life of Jesus, he’s simply affirming what the OT already taught – that the Messiah would be the “true Israel.” *But* – can we really take every little tiny detail of Israel’s history and see it all fulfilled in Jesus? No. That would be fanciful. And Matthew is not being fanciful. He’s not doing Midrash. So what gives Matthew the right to see this detail of Israel’s history fulfilled in Jesus?

- D. Matthew not only knew that in the OT, the Messiah was pictured as the “true Israel”, he also knew that the salvation the Messiah would bring to Israel was pictured as a second exodus from Egypt. We have to remember that this “detail” of Israel’s history was the biggest and most important “detail” of all! Israel’s exodus from Egypt was the ultimate picture of God’s redemption and salvation and deliverance of His people! It was such a big deal that it became the model for a future and greater exodus through which God would accomplish once and for all the redemption and salvation of His people (Is. 11:11; Mic. 7:15; cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

Hosea 2:14-15 – Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a

door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 43:16-21 – Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Isaiah 51:9-11 – Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

And once again, Matthew certainly knew the context of Hosea 11:1.

Hosea 11:1, 8-11 – When Israel was a child, I loved him, and **out of Egypt I called my son [past]**...How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; **they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt [future]**, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD.

It was the Messiah, as the “true Israel” who would bring about this second exodus from Egypt and accomplish an even greater salvation and redemption of His people. In light of the clear teaching of the Old Testament, when the Messiah goes down to Egypt (much like when Israel moved to Egypt) and then comes out of Egypt, it is clearly a sign that He is the true Israel and that it is He who will bring about a second exodus when He redeems His people once again from slavery and bondage to sin. **God sent Jesus into Egypt and then brought Him out of Egypt not just to escape Herod, but so that through this “reenactment” of Israel’s history, we could see that He is the “true Israel” and the one who brings about a second exodus for His people – redemption from the slavery of sin. God sent Jesus into Egypt and then brought Him out of Egypt not just to escape Herod, but so that Israel’s history might be fulfilled in Christ (the Messiah) – according to what the prophets had already foretold.**

- E. This is *not* Midrash. This is not a fanciful interpretation. This is a careful reading and understanding of the Old Testament. It is a model of how to properly interpret and apply the Old Testament. I said earlier that there were two very unfortunate things about Jewish Midrash. First it was often guilty of fanciful interpretations. But the second major problem

with Midrash was that it tried to relate all the teachings of Judaism to the Old Testament Scriptures. And as we know, in Jesus' day, some of the teachings of Judaism were pretty far off the mark! Not only is Matthew *not* fanciful in his interpretation of the OT, but he also sees that the Old Testament Scriptures are to be interpreted and applied in the light of Jesus Christ – because they are **all fulfilled** in HIM (Mat. 5:17).

Conclusion

- A. Do you see how the powerful beauty of God's Word would have strengthened the faith of Matthew's Jewish Christian readers? Matthew is not so much writing to convince unbelieving Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. In fact, he *starts out* by *assuming* that Jesus is, of course, the Messiah. Matthew wants to strengthen the faith and increase the joy of the Jewish Christians as they see their OT Scriptures fulfilled in the Messiah. They *already* believe (much like we do), but as their belief becomes more and more grounded, as their understanding of the Scriptures is enriched and deepened, they are enabled to stand firm in the midst of opposition and to follow more faithfully after Jesus Christ. This is also true of us!
- B. Since Jesus is the "true Israel", and since these Jewish Christians are now "in Christ", they also are the "true Israel" – the true people of God. They have now experienced the second exodus from Egypt (the salvation and redemption that is in Christ Jesus) and they are now journeying to the Promised Land – in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And all of this beautiful truth is signified by the fact that God sent the Messiah to Egypt *in order* that He might *call Him out* of Egypt. "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" But what about *us*?
- C. Since Jesus is the "true Israel", and since we Gentile Christians are now "in Christ", by God's grace we also have been grafted in and become part of the true Israel – the true people of God (cf. Romans 2:25-29; Ephesians 2:11-22; Revelation 2:9; 3:9). The prophets foretold that when the second exodus from Egypt happened, the gathering into the promised land would include not only Jews, but Gentiles also!

Isaiah 49:5-6 – And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant [true Israel], to **bring Jacob back** to him; and that **Israel might be gathered** to him... He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring **back the preserved of Israel**; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

And so Paul quotes this passage when he turns to the Gentiles with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:47-48 – For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

Do you see the sure foundation of our faith? Are you rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord? Are you strengthened to persevere to the end in true faith and obedience to Jesus Christ? Jesus is the true Israel. He has succeeded where we failed, so that in Him and through Him, we *can* fulfill our calling to God's glory. **In Him and through Him God has called us out of Egypt.** He has ransomed us. He has redeemed us from slavery to sin and death.

Romans 6:20-23, 12-13 – When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord... Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Having been brought out of Egypt, we are now free to live for His glory as we anticipate the day when our journey is completed and we enter at last into the Promised Land.

Isaiah 51:11 – And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

“This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”

Teaching our Children

- Q. What country did Jesus' family move to when He was a baby?
A. Egypt
- Q. Why did the Messiah have to move to Egypt? (Hint: there are two answers)
A. Because King Herod was looking for Jesus in order to kill him.
Because God wanted to bring the Messiah *out of* Egypt.
(“This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea], ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”)
- Q. Hosea was actually talking about the time many years earlier when God called the nation of Israel out of Egyptian slavery (Moses / 10 plagues / crossing the Red Sea).
(Hosea 11:1 – When **Israel** was a child, I loved him, and **out of Egypt I called my son**.)
If Hosea was talking about the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt, how can Matthew use Hosea's words to talk about *Jesus* coming out of Egypt?
A. **The Prophets said that when the Messiah came, He would be the true Israel.** He would do what Israel had failed to do (be a light to the nations, do God's will, and bring God glory). (Reflect on the Scriptures under E. 1. & 2.)
- Q. Why would God want to bring the Messiah (the true Israel) *out of Egypt* – just like He brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt long before?
A. ~ When God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt He saved and redeemed His people from slavery in order that He might lead them into the Promised Land.
~ The prophets used this wonderful salvation as a picture of an even greater salvation that God would one day bring to His people.
~ Someday, God would again bring His people out of Egypt (slavery) and lead them to the Promised Land. (Thrill at the Scriptures under F.!)
~ When God brought the Messiah (the true Israel) out of Egypt, it was a sign that the Messiah would deliver God's people from slavery to sin and death. He would lead them to the *true* Promised Land.
- Q. What good does it do for us to see the amazing ways that all of God's promises and plans are fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
A. It makes our faith always stronger and gives us even more joy as we live for Jesus and obey His commands!
- Q. If we have become part of the “true Israel” by trusting in Jesus Christ, then God has also called *us* out of Egypt. What does this mean for us?
A. SEE SCRIPTURES UNDER CONCLUSION, D.