

The Witness of the Word

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[0:00] Well, it's good to see you this morning, and if you have a Bible with you, I'd like for you to turn to Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, and find chapter 2.

We're going to spend a couple of weeks, these two Sundays prior to Christmas, looking at the Gospel of Matthew, and specifically the second chapter of that Gospel.

Chapter 2 is Matthew's, what we call, infancy narrative. That just simply means, as you probably would guess, that this is the narrative of the events surrounding and pertaining to the birth of Jesus. Which actually begins in verse 18 of chapter 1, but the bulk of it is here in chapter 2. And so Matthew chapter 2 will be our text for this morning, and as I said a moment ago, for next Sunday as well.

And so, follow along in your Bibles as I read the entire chapter, the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew, now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

[1:33] For we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

So they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search carefully for the young child, and when you have found him, bring back word to me that I may come and worship him also.

When they heard the king, they departed, and, behold, the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to him, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

[2:52] Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now, when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt I called my son.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

Now, when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young child's life are dead.

[4:19] Then he arose, took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.

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. And that is God's Word.

God's Word on the subject of the birth of Christ, according to the Gospel of Matthew, as Matthew was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these things down. Now, you know, we, I don't know if you've ever thought of this, but we are fortunate to have four Gospel accounts in the Bible to inform us about the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, of course. And we have four Gospels in our Bibles because each account helps us understand not only the same story, but the same story about the same person, and yet from different perspectives and for different purposes in mind.

So we have these four Gospels to accomplish this for us. For example, Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah. That is the basic theme throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

[5:46] Matthew presents him as the sovereign king of kings. And so he traces the genealogy of Jesus back to David, Israel's most beloved king.

And then Mark presents Jesus not as king, but rather as servant. Not as the sovereign king of kings, but Mark presents Jesus as the sacrificial servant of God.

And he doesn't give us any genealogy of Jesus because, you know, servants' lineage is irrelevant.

And then when we get to Luke, Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man.

And so his focus is the humanity of Christ. And he traces his genealogy back to Adam, the first man. And then when we get to John, the fourth and final Gospel, John presents Jesus as the Son of God.

And so his focus is on the deity of Jesus Christ. And so he opens his account by giving us Jesus' divine genealogy. Chapter 1, verse 1.

[6:48] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And so his divine genealogy. Genealogy. The four Gospels giving us Jesus from different perspectives and with different purposes in mind.

Now this morning we're going to be zeroing in on Matthew. And if you've done any study of the Gospel of Matthew, then you already know that nearly every paragraph of the Gospel of Matthew points us to the sovereign kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He is God's anointed one. And so Matthew seeks to prove that at every juncture of Jesus' life on this earth.

And so he begins with his birth, and then he tells us about his life in ministry, and then he tells us about his death and about his resurrection, and all of these things pertaining to the life of Jesus, he connects with Old Testament prophecy.

Now, our focus, of course, this morning is his birth. And so that brings us to Matthew chapter 2. And there are two ways that Matthew seeks to prove to us, to his readers, to us here today, that Jesus, this Jesus who is of Nazareth, is the Christ of God, the anointed one of God.

[8:14] Now, two ways he does that. Through, first of all, the witness of the word, the witness of the word of God, and then also through the worship of the wise, or the worship of the wise man.

These two ways Matthew proves to us that Jesus is the anointed one of God, the Messiah, the Christ of God. Now, even though Matthew mentions the wise men first in the chapter, we're not going to begin there.

I have chosen to focus this morning on the part of the chapter that reveals to us the prophecies, the prophecies that pertain to the birth of Christ, or, as I've called it, the witness of the word.

So we'll look at the witness of the word this morning, which really takes up the better half of the last part of the chapter. And then next Sunday morning, we'll look at the worship of the wise.

And I'm going to take it in that order because the scripture, the fulfillment of prophecy, is the dominant theme in this chapter, in fact, in the entire book of the Gospel of Matthew.

[9:25] And I'm also going to do it because I think that accords with our experience as believers. Because, really, the word of God always precedes the worship of God.

Or to put it another way, the worship of God is always a response to the revealed word, the word of God. That's why the preaching of the word is so important here at Highland Park.

And that's why scripture, as I'm sure you realize, scripture dominates even our worship singing. And so this morning, let's focus on the Christmas story, the birth of Jesus Christ, and understand more and learn more about the Christmas story from Matthew's perspective, his account.

And we're going to do that by understanding better who this baby Jesus really is, was, and is. And we'll do that, of course, through the witness of the word.

The witness of the word of God. That's Matthew's approach. That's his approach throughout the entire Gospel to present the events of Jesus as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

[10:35] And, by the way, Amos the prophet did say in Amos chapter 3, verse 7, he said, Surely the Lord God does nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servants, the prophets.

And so prophecy is very important. God is revealing his purposes, his plans, what he's about to do and do for his people. And he reveals it through the prophets, and then it's fulfilled in the New Testament.

Now, four times in Matthew chapter 2, we have the inclusion of Old Testament prophecy in connection with the birth of Christ.

In verse 6, we have the prophecy concerning the place where Jesus would be born, where the Messiah would be born. In verse 15, the prophecy explaining Messiah's flight into Egypt.

And then in verse 18, the prophecy concerning the massacre of the male babies in and around the city of Bethlehem. And then finally, in verse 23, the prophecies concerning Messiah's ultimate settlement in Nazareth of Galilee.

[11:40] And here is the point of all of it, what we're going to learn from all of this this morning. That every event in the story of Messiah's birth is moving according to God's eternal plan.

As one Bible theologian put it, God is not an omniscient spectator. He is the sovereign mover of all the events of redemption.

And basically, really, God interferes in history. And Ephesians 1.11 says, In him also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

So God is interfering in history. And he is certainly doing that, proving himself to interfere in history here in Matthew chapter 2. And it's very profoundly revealed to us here.

All right, so then, four prophecies fulfilled to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, God's anointed.

[12:52] And each prophecy reveals some aspect of God's sovereign plan for his beloved. That is, for you and for me. So let's look at them this morning. First of all, through the prophecy concerning the place of Messiah's birth, here's what we see.

We see the truth of Messiah's incarnation. That's number one. The truth of Messiah's incarnation. Incarnation, of course, being God becoming a man. God taking upon him human flesh, becoming the God-man, the incarnation. So we have here in this first prophecy the revelation of that, the truth of Messiah's incarnation.

Now, as the story goes, of course, the wise men, they've come to town, come to Jerusalem, and they're looking for the king of the Jews. They're looking for the Messiah. And so they're inquiring. And we can take from the text, it's implied by the text, that they're inquiring everywhere. And they're asking this question, where is he who has been or has been born king of the Jews? So they're asking everywhere they go, where is he?

[14:00] Where is he? Where is the king of the Jews? And, of course, Herod gets wind of it. And Herod, who, of course, fancied himself as the king of the Jews, the unique king of the Jews, he was more than a little bit agitated by this when he heard about it.

And so in verse 4, we have this. And then he, that's Herod, had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together. That would be the theologians of the day.

And he asked them this question. He inquired of them, where is the Christ to be born? Where is he supposed to be born? And so what do they do?

They quote Old Testament Scripture. They quote a prophecy. Verse 5, they say, in Bethlehem of Judea.

And thus it is written by the prophet. This is, you know, Matthew's kind of formula. You see this throughout the chapter and all throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

[15:00] He's either saying it is written or it's in fulfillment of. And so here are the scribes, the religious ones of the day, the leaders of the day, the theologians of the day, the ones who propose

to correctly interpret the Word of God.

And they're quoting this prophecy. And it's from Micah, chapter 5, verse 2. And they quote it this way. But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah. For out of you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. So they quote the prophecy for Herod. And they were correct, weren't they?

Well, they're correct because the Word of God is correct. And Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem. And we know the story about that. And Luke, chapter 2, details all of that for us.

And so he was born in Bethlehem. And so the wise men were directed toward the very small town of Bethlehem. And the star led them all the way to the exact place where Jesus was at that very moment.

[16:05] And according to verse 11, he was in a house. And that part of the story we'll look at next Sunday. But this prophecy, I want you to understand, this prophecy of Micah's tells us more, a lot more, than just simply where the Messiah would be born.

It reveals for us the truth of the incarnation. God becoming a man. Because, you see, the chief priests and the scribes did not quote the entire prophecy.

And we have to go to Micah, chapter 5, verse 2, to see the full prophecy. And let me read it for you. But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah.

And that was just simply a way of designating the exact Bethlehem where the Messiah would be born. Because there was more than one Bethlehem. And so they specifically point out, the prophet specifically points out, the very Bethlehem where the Messiah would be born.

Among the thousands of Judah. Yet out of you, now listen to this, out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel.

[17:19] Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Now that's the full prophecy given to us in Micah, chapter 5, verse 2.

Now, the words come forth. And the words goings forth. You have both of those there. And those two words, they're really one word.

Each one is one word in the Hebrew text. Those two words come from the same Hebrew root. And so, then there are two kinds, or two references to comings and goings of the Messiah.

There is, in the first case, the coming and going at a point in time. At a point in history. And that, of course, is what you and I are confined to.

We're finite beings. There's a coming and going at one time, one point in time for all of us. Because we're finite. And so, that is the purview of mortals, of mortal man, of humanity.

[18:26] A coming and going in a finite time and a finite place. And so, the prophecy then refers to the Messiah coming in that sense.

In a finite time, at a finite point in history. And the Messiah didn't do that. The Messiah was specifically, or specifically limited himself, in the sense of coming forth, going forth at a specific point in time.

He would be born in Bethlehem. He would be born at a specific point in time. He would be then born as a man. And so, this speaks to his humanity.

Out of Bethlehem he shall come forth. Specific place, specific point in time. But there is the other sense of coming forth.

Or, as the prophecy puts it, goings forth. Plural. And that is very important to note. In the first coming, it's singular.

[19:31] And he did come, singular. Specific point in time, specific place. And that speaks of his humanity. But when it says, goings forth.

He says, from of old, from everlasting. That is saying something quite different. Because you see, the same one who eventually came at a specific point in time and history.

And came forth in Bethlehem. That same one was there at the creation of all things. And it was the same one who said, let us make man in our own image.

He was also there in the Garden of Eden, walking in the cool of the day. When he said, Adam, where are you? He is also the one who was there at the Tower of Babel.

When God said, come, let us go down. And there confused their language. He was there when Noah and his family were getting ready to get into the ark.

[20:36] And God said, come into the ark. He was there when Abraham was inquiring about Sodom and Gomorrah.

And whether or not God would destroy them. And he had this dialogue with the angel of the Lord. And he was there when he promised Abraham, I will not destroy Sodom for the sake of ten. He was there when Joshua, just before the battle of Jericho, met the angel of the Lord. And the angel of the Lord said, with sword drawn. He said, as commander.

I'm here as commander of the army of the Lord. He was there with Gideon. He was there with Samson. He was there with David. He was there throughout the entire Old Testament. Making various appearances along the way. And he was there even before the Old Testament. At the beginning of all things, he was already there. He was with God.

[21 : 31] And he is God. So his goings forth are from old and everlasting. And so you see, the prophecy of Micah concerning the place of Messiah's birth.

Reveals the truth of the incarnation. The one born in Bethlehem is the one and only God-man. Fully God and fully man.

As much God as though he were not man. As much man as though he were not God. He was the God-man. Fully God and fully man. He was fully God whose goings forth are from old and from everlasting.

Infinite in time and space. And fully man though at the same time. Because out of Bethlehem he shall come forth. Finite in place and time.

And so the first truth that we learn from these prophecies. This first prophecy is the truth of Messiah's incarnation. Second, through the prophecy concerning Messiah's flight to Egypt.

[22 : 35] We see this. We see the type or a type of Messiah's redemption. That's number two. The type of Messiah's redemption.

Now when I say the word type. I use the word type. I'm not talking about a type of redemption. In the sense of that there might be multiple kinds. Or several types of redemption. I'm not using type in that sense.

I am talking about an Old Testament type. A prefiguring. A type for a New Testament revelation. A type in the Old Testament that is ultimately revealed and completed in the New Testament. A prefiguring of a truth or event in God's redemptive purposes.

Augustine wrote in the Old Testament. The New Testament lies concealed. And in the New Testament, the Old Testament lies revealed.

[23 : 35] And so, for example, we're talking about types here. For example, King David was an Old Testament type of Christ. The ark, Noah's ark, is an Old Testament type of salvation.

That is, it prefigures the saving work of Christ. And so, in that sense of the word type. The second prophecy in this chapter reveals an Old Testament type of the plan of redemption.

Of redemption in Christ. And so, we have Mary and Joseph with the infant Jesus. They're staying. They've stayed there in Bethlehem for some time after the birth of Christ. Because they're now living in a house.

That's where the wise men find them, according to verse 11. And so, in verse 13, after the wise men had gone, the Bible says, Now, why would Herod want to destroy Jesus, by the way?

Well, because, not just because Herod fancied himself as king. And so, he saw Jesus as a rival to his throne. But the larger picture is that Herod would want to destroy Jesus.

[24 : 56] Because Satan wanted to destroy Jesus. Has always wanted to destroy Jesus prior to the cross. Attempted to do that a number of times. And Herod is just simply his servant.

He's the servant of Satan. And so, instead of protecting his son in some miraculous way. God protected his son in a very ordinary way.

In, you would have to admit, a very non-miraculous way. And how did he do it? He sent his son into Egypt. Egypt wasn't very far.

It would have been a very long journey. Though it would have been difficult with a brand new baby. But it was close. And so, he sent his son, Mary and Joseph also, into Egypt.

Now, why would he do that? Why send him to Egypt? Well, that would protect him from Herod's desire to have him killed. And what Herod is ultimately going to do.

[25 : 54] Jesus would be spared because he would not be there. But primarily, he sent his son into Egypt. Because seven centuries before, God had spoken through the prophet Hosea.

And he said, now Matthew quotes him there in verse 15. But I want you to listen to it from Hosea 11 and verse 1. Here's how Hosea put it. When Israel was a child, I loved him.

And out of Egypt, I called my son. Now, I would ask you, how could that have anything to do with Jesus? Because it seems pretty clear that Hosea is talking about the exodus.

That seems to be a clear reference to the exodus of Israel out of Egypt. I have called my son, my beloved son, out of Egypt. And so, it seems clear we apply to that.

In the Old Testament, of course, Israel is called God's son. Called even God's firstborn. But according to Matthew, the prophecy of Hosea looks backward.

[27:01] But it also looks forward. As prophecies, of course, typically do. And so, backward. Hosea is looking backward almost exactly 700 years to the exodus.

And at the same time, he is looking forward. By the way, almost exactly 700 years to the future to Jesus' birth. 700 years back to Egypt and the exodus.

And 700 years forward to the birth of Jesus. Now, the point of it is this. God, or rather, the exodus. The exodus of Israel out of Egypt.

Israel being the son of God. His firstborn. Referred to as that in the Old Testament. The exodus of Israel out of Egypt. Was a type. Another Old Testament type of a New Testament truth.

Revelation. Or an eternal revelation, really. Eternal truth. It's a type. The exodus was a type. Or a prefiguring. Of redemption.

[28:07] In Christ. The redemption. God's plan of redemption. You see. It's a type. You put them side by side. God brought his son Israel out of Egypt to be his chosen people.

And then gave them the promised land. If he had not brought them out of Egypt. Then they could have never obtained the promised land. Now, that's the Old Testament type.

And it's a type of redemption. He redeemed them. So that they could have the promised land. And the fulfillment of that is in the New Testament.

God brought his eternal son out of Egypt to be his chosen Messiah. And through him, we might have the promised land of redemption.

Of salvation. The promised land, by the way, is another type. It's a type of salvation. So the exodus is redemption. And the promised land is salvation. And this is a type of a New Testament reality.

[29:09] Something that Jesus fulfilled. And so the prophecy then shows us that it's a type of Messiah's redemption. Let's move on.

Number three. Through the prophecy concerning the slaughter of innocent babies. We see, number three. The test of Messiah's determination.

The test of Messiah's determination. Now, shortly after Joseph and his family had secretly fled into Egypt, Herod, of course, committed one of the most bloody atrocities in his long and wicked career as king.

What did he do? Well, verse 16 gives us the details of it. Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry.

And he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

[30:20] Horrifying. Unspeakable. Unspeakable. Herod was a wicked man. And I'll talk more about him next Sunday. But basically, Herod just drew a circle around Bethlehem and the surrounding vicinity, and he murdered all of the babies, male babies, two years and under, living inside that circle.

Unspeakable. We don't have any idea how many there were. But can you imagine? Horrifying. Now, clearly, Herod had no desire whatsoever to fulfill prophecy.

And yet, that's exactly what he did. Herod wanted to stop God. Really, Satan, through Herod, wanted to stop God, stop the Messiah, not help him.

And yet, that's exactly what he did in fulfilling prophecy. Matthew says in verse 17, Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentations, weeping, great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

And so Matthew is saying this is the fulfillment of that prophecy. Matthew attaches that prophecy to Herod's unspeakable act against these innocent children, two years and younger.

[31:52] Now, this is a quote, again, from Jeremiah. That's what the Scripture tells us, and indeed it is. Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 15. Specifically, Jeremiah is referring to the Jewish exiles who were being taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

The Babylonians had invaded and conquered the southern kingdom of that time, called Judah, and led the survivors into captivity.

So Jeremiah is referring to that. And the gathering place, historically, was Ramah. That's mentioned in the prophecy. It was Ramah, a town not far from Bethlehem.

And Bethlehem was where Jacob's wife Rachel was buried. Rachel had died in childbirth, giving birth to Benjamin, eventually one of the tribes of Israel.

And so she came to be thought of as a mother of Israel. And so Jeremiah is imagining Rachel. She's in her grave. But imagining Rachel, mother of Israel, weeping for her children as they're being led away captive by the Babylonians.

[33:06] So that's specifically what Jeremiah is talking about. But it's a prophecy. And Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he sees this as a prophetic fulfillment in the slaughter of these male babies, these Israelite babies.

And so he also sees then Rachel weeping for them. She weeps for these innocent babies who are being slaughtered by King Herod, and they are no more.

So that's specifically the prophecy and the application of it by the, again, Holy Spirit-inspired Matthew. But the prophecy is much larger than that.

In fact, Jeremiah is going to go on and prophesy restoration of Israel. And he's even going to make a reference to the virgin birth. And so we see in this prophecy, in the larger sense, we see God's determinate will to bring his Messiah into the world.

And we see Satan then, in the person of Herod, through Herod, his servant, attempting to thwart that determinate will of God to bring about his plan of redemption.

[34:25] And so this is, in a sense, a test of God's determination, his divine will. It's a challenge to it. But, of course, God's redemptive purposes in Christ cannot be thwarted.

They cannot be stopped. Again, I would remind you of Ephesians 1, verse 11, In him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who does what?

Works all things according to the counsel of his will. And so God moves in all of human history, directing, moving all things, because he works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

He's bringing about his plan of redemption that was devised in the heart and mind of God in eternity past. And he cannot be stopped. It cannot be thwarted.

Praise the Lord. But then you might be wondering, well, what about these male babies, these innocent little children? You mean God would be a part of that? Well, what about those poor babies slaughtered by Herod?

[35:31] Alexander McClaren, a great, great preacher many, many years ago, he said this about these babies. I want you to listen to this very carefully. I think he hits it right on the head of the nail.

He says, In their brief lives, these infants have won immortal fame. They died for the Christ whom they never knew. These little lambs were slain for the sake of the lamb, who lived while they died, that by his death they might live forever.

These little flowers of martyrdom. Have you ever thought of it in that sense? Incredible. Listen to Augustine. Oh, happy little ones, but just born, not yet tempted, not yet struggling, already crowned.

So the truth of the incarnation, the type of redemption, the test of determination. And then there's one more this morning. Through the prophecy concerning Messiah's final settlement in Nazareth, we see, fourth and finally, the testimony to Messiah's humiliation.

The testimony to Messiah's humiliation. Verse 19, But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel.

[37:01] For those who sought the young child's life are dead. And he arose, took the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judah instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

So he's headed back to Jerusalem, back to Judah. And I think apparently he was going to settle there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled, and here's the prophecy that he's referring to, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.

So there's the fourth and final prophecy in this chapter. Now, the interesting thing is that there is no prophecy that says specifically what Matthew quoted.

You can't go back to a specific place in the Old Testament and say, well, here it is, in Jeremiah or Isaiah or wherever. There's no specific prophecy like this. And so what's this about?

[38:09] Well, I want you to notice that Matthew said that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets. Do you see that? It's plural. Unlike the other three times, this is plural, prophets.

And so it's believed that Matthew was giving, really basically giving a summation of what several prophets had already revealed about the Messiah at his first coming. The word Nazareth comes from the Hebrew word netzer.

We would spell it N-E-T-Z-E-R if you're taking notes. It's the Hebrew word netzer, and netzer means branch or root.

And it speaks of something common, something earthy, something natural, something humble. In fact, it's come to mean and refer to humble, kind of humble beginnings.

So I would refer to a couple of places. Isaiah 11, 1 speaks of the Messiah, and it says, there shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse and a branch.

[39:17] It's the word netzer. A branch shall grow out of his roots. And it's a clear reference to the Messiah, Jesus coming from the lineage of King David, son of Jesse.

A branch, a netzer. Also in Isaiah 53, verse 2, there's this famous passage, and we hear it quite often this time of the year. For he, speaking of the Messiah, shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root.

It's the word netzer. A root out of a dry ground. He has no form or comeliness. And when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. And we'll find other references similar to these in the Psalms, a number of places in the Psalms, even in the prophecies of Zechariah.

And so, it's the prophets. It's a summation of what the prophets have said about the Messiah. And so, he shall be called a Nazarene is Matthew's summation of that.

[40:31] And he's not so much talking about the city of Nazareth, but he's going to settle there so that what was said about Jesus would indeed be true. It would be prophetic of who Jesus was at his first coming.

And so, when he says, he shall be called a Nazarene, this was a very poignant way of saying that the Messiah was to come in humility. He's not going to come as a king.

He's not going to come in all pomp and circumstance. Now, that'll come at his second coming. But he's going to come in all humility as a root out of a dry ground struggling to survive, though it seems.

And so, it speaks of his weakness and his humility. And Jesus indeed did come the first time in all humility. And that's not only descriptive of his birth, but also of his life.

And more specific and more significant to us in his death. Paul said in Philippians 2.11, he, speaking of Jesus, humbled himself and became obedient.

[41:36] Obedient to what? To the point of death. And specifically, even the death of the cross. The witness of his word, you see. All pertaining to the birth of Jesus.

Now, let me close with this. This thought. Matthew chapter 2 affirms for all of us that in the history of redemption, God's plan of redemption, salvation, in the history of redemption, everything in history proceeds according to God's eternal plan.

And it can't be thwarted, though Satan attempted many, many times. It is proceeding according to God's plan. And if that's true, and it is true, and if everything proceeds according to God's eternal plan, then guess what?

you and I can be sure. We can be assured. We can find great confidence, great hope that our salvation and all that we have because of Christ, because we're in Christ, all of that rest upon an unshakable, immovable, unalterable foundation, foundation, the foundation of God.

And we know that for certain because of the witness of the word, the word of God. Thank you.