

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 1 January 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Jesus' Call out of Egypt

Matthew 2:13-23

In **Matthew 2**, we find a beautiful account from Jesus' childhood. It is the account of the visit of the wise men from the east, who came to Bethlehem to worship the King of the Jews. No doubt, Jesus' mother, Mary, had shared this treasured memory with Jesus' twelve disciples during the three years of Jesus' ministry; and a few years after Jesus' resurrection, when the Holy Spirit led Matthew to write his Gospel, Matthew was keen to record this story. Why? Because Matthew's purpose in writing his Gospel was to show his Jewish readers that Jesus is the **Messiah, the King of Israel**. His point in recording this incident is to show that even the *Gentiles* recognised the arrival of the King of Israel!

Now, the account of the wise men, beautiful though it is, is interlaced with disappointment. It is disappointing to see how the religious leaders of Israel, who knew the prophecies of the Messiah, weren't interested in seeking the King of the Jews, even though He was only 5 ½ miles from Jerusalem. The Gentile wise men went to find Him; but the Jewish religious leaders stayed behind in Jerusalem. Tragically, this was their dismissive attitude toward Jesus throughout His life. Many of the elderly religious leaders of Israel during Jesus' ministry would have been adults 30 years earlier; and they would have remembered that startling day when the wise men came seeking for the King of the Jews. They *knew* that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem. (They also knew the reports that had been circulating ever since His childhood, about how He had been born of a virgin.) These things were common knowledge. As Jesus said, "***Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am.***" Yet, they despised the Lord of glory.

However, the story of the wise men is interlaced not just with disappointment, but with great sorrow. No sooner had the wise men presented their gifts to Jesus, than God warned them, in a dream, that they must *not* return to King Herod, but must go back to their land by another way, since King Herod was plotting to kill Jesus. What happened next was one of the most brutal acts that Herod committed during His reign—the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem, in his attempt to kill Jesus. Yet, it was because of this awful event that the young Jesus was spirited away to the land of Egypt for safety. God arranged for His Son to go down to Egypt, so that He might one day be *called out* of Egypt. In this morning's message, we will learn *why* this was so important. The title of this message is ***Jesus' Call out of Egypt***.

Read Matthew 2:12-15.

I. The call of God's Son out of Egypt (vv. 12-15)

Have you ever stopped to consider how different history would have been if the wise men had *not* gone to Jerusalem to try to find Jesus? Remember, the wise men had been following the light of a unique, supernatural star, which God had prepared for them. That star had led their way for hundreds of miles. However, sometime before they arrived in Judaea, the star suddenly disappeared from sight, without explanation; and they didn't know where to go next.

So, they went to the next most logical place—Jerusalem. They figured that *surely* the citizens of the capital city of Israel must know where their Messiah was! However, no one seemed to know. The only help they got was from King Herod's scribes. However, the scribes simply

reminded them of what they would have already known—that the Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem. Since the Messiah wasn't in Jerusalem, they figured that He must still be in Bethlehem, where He had been born. And so, they went to Bethlehem. However, they still didn't know exactly where to go. It wasn't until *after* they left Jerusalem, and started to travel that last 5 ½ miles toward Bethlehem, that the star suddenly appeared again, and showed them exactly where Mary and Joseph's house was.

Now, again, I ask: "What if that star *hadn't* disappeared from sight when the wise men arrived in Judaea?" What if the star had continued to lead them straight to Mary and Joseph's house in Bethlehem? What would have happened? (Or, rather, what would *not* have happened?) Herod would not have heard the news that the Messiah was born; and he wouldn't have tried to kill Jesus; and he wouldn't have given the command to slay all the babies from two years old and under! Jesus' life would not have been in danger; and the angel of the Lord would not have had to command Joseph to take his family to Egypt for safety. Jesus would not have gone down into Egypt; and prophecy would not have been fulfilled! About 740 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Hosea had written, "***Out of Egypt have I called my son.***" If Jesus were to be called *out* of Egypt, He first had to *go down* to Egypt! Prophecy had to be fulfilled!

Read Hosea 11:1.

The meaning of **Hosea 11:1** is clear. The "***son***" whom God loved is the nation of Israel. The LORD is reminding Israel of when He had brought their forefathers out of Egypt, under the leadership of Moses. Throughout **Hosea 11**, the LORD continues to refer to the nation of Israel as His "***son.***" By the way, this isn't the first time that God called Israel His "***son.***" When God sent Moses to speak to Pharaoh, to command him to let His people go, He called the nation of Israel His "son."

Read Exodus 4:22-23.

As a nation, Israel is called the "***son***" of Jehovah. In **Hosea 11:1**, God reminded Israel of this precious truth. Yet, Matthew reveals that there is a *deeper* meaning to this verse. Matthew quotes **Hosea 11:1**, and applies that word "***son***" to the Lord Jesus. He says that Joseph took young Jesus into Egypt so that "***it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.***"

Now, why did Matthew take this Scripture that is talking about *Israel*, and apply it to *Jesus*? Surely Matthew realised what **Hosea 11:1** was talking about *Israel's* call out of Egypt, didn't he? *Any* Jew would have realised this. Why, then, does Matthew identify this "***son***" as Jesus?

Well, we must remember that this was not Matthew's idea. Matthew isn't trying to "pull one over" on us. He isn't trying to make Scripture say something that it doesn't really say. Matthew was given these words by divine inspiration. God had a *deeper* meaning in mind when he gave these words to Hosea; and now, through Matthew, God is revealing what that meaning is.

So, what *is* the deeper meaning of **Hosea 11:1**? The deeper meaning is that Jesus Christ is the *greater* Son of Jehovah! Israel, as a nation, is called the "***son***" of Jehovah (with a little "s");

but Jesus is the *Son of Jehovah* (with a “capital S”)! Jacob was named “Israel” by God, and his descendants are called “Israel”; but Jesus is the *true* Israel--the sinless Israel. “Israel” means “prince with God”; and that is who Jesus is. He is the Prince of Peace. He is the sinless Son of God, and *the eternal* Son of God. He is the Son of whom David prophesied in **Psalm 2** when he wrote, “*The LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*” He is the Son of whom Isaiah said, “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” He is also the Son of whom Isaiah wrote when he said, “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.*”

You cannot separate Christ from the nation of Israel. He *came forth* from Israel. God raised up the nation of Israel for the specific purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world. When God calls the nation of *Israel* by a special name, He often calls *Jesus* by that same name. For example, in some passages in **Isaiah**, God calls the nation of Israel His “*servant*”; but in other passages of **Isaiah**, He calls *the Messiah* His “*Servant*.” In **Isaiah 41**, the LORD says to Israel, “*But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen.*” But then, in **Isaiah 52**, He says, “*Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be extolled and exalted, and be very high.*” He then goes on to describe His “*Servant*” as a one who would be “*wounded for our transgressions,*” and who would go “*as a lamb to the slaughter,*” and who would “*make his soul an offering for sin,*” and who would “*justify many.*” Clearly, the “*Servant*” in **Isaiah 52 and 53** is *not* the nation of Israel; it is Israel’s Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins! The nation of Israel can’t take anyone’s sins away; but *Jesus can!*

Israel, as a nation, is called the “*servant of Jehovah*”; but Jesus Christ is the *greater* “*Servant of Jehovah.*” In the same way, Israel is the “*son*” of Jehovah; but Jesus is the “*Son*” of Jehovah. Israel, the nation, needs *to be* saved; but Jesus, the greater Israel, is the one who *saves!* Jesus *is* salvation. His very name *means* “*salvation*”! Jesus is the *true* Israel!

Read Isaiah 49:1-7.

In this passage, it seems, at first glance, that God is speaking to the nation of Israel. After all, God says, “*Thou art my servant, O Israel.*” However, as you keep reading, you begin to realise that God isn’t talking to the *nation* of Israel. Instead, He is talking to a *particular member* of the nation of Israel. For example, in **verses 5 and 6**, we are told that God raised up His “*servant*” to *bring Jacob back to Himself*, and to *gather the tribes of Israel*. If this “*servant*” were the *nation* of Israel, then how could the nation of Israel gather *itself* back to God? Obviously, God isn’t talking about the *nation* of Israel; He is talking about a *particular* Israelite. He is talking about a *Man* whom He has ordained to bring Israel back to Himself. Who is that Man? Who is this One “*whom man despiseth,*” and whom “*the nation abhoreth*”? Who is this One who was rejected by His own people, Israel? Who is this One who came as a “*servant of rulers,*” but who will one day be *worshipped* by kings and princes? It is the Messiah! *Christ* is this one whom God calls “*Israel*” in **Isaiah 49!**

Are you beginning to see why the Father called His Son down into Egypt as a young child? **Christ had to travel the same path that Israel travelled!** Why? Because Jesus identifies Himself with Israel! *Israel* is the son of Jehovah; and *Jesus* is the Son of Jehovah. Both these sons went down to Egypt for an express purpose. When the original Israel (Jacob) went down into Egypt with his children and grandchildren, he went there with God’s consent and

blessing. God appeared to Jacob and told him, ***“I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again.”*** Did you catch that? God promised Israel that He would bring him up to the land of Canaan ***“again”***! God brought Israel down *into* Egypt *specifically* so that He might bring him up *out of* Egypt! And why did He do that? To demonstrate His redeeming power!

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He showed His saving power in a way that the world has never forgotten. Who has not heard of how God parted the Red Sea, and of how Israel went through the Red Sea on dry land, and of how the entire Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea? God brought His “son,” Israel, down into Egypt so that He might bring him *out* of Egypt by a mighty hand, and thus show His saving power. In the same way, **God the Father brought His Son Jesus down into Egypt**, and brought Him out again, so that He might show His mighty, saving, redeeming power! Have *you* experienced Christ’s saving power? It’s one thing to *know* that Jesus saves; but it is another thing to *be* saved. If you have never asked Jesus to be your Lord and personal Saviour, I urge you to do so today!

II. The weeping in Bethlehem (vv. 16-18)

Read Matthew 2:16-18.

Thus far in the book of **Matthew**, Matthew has quoted three Scriptures in order to show his readers that Jesus is the King of the Jews. He quoted **Isaiah 7:14**, which prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He quoted **Micah 5:2**, which prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. He quoted **Hosea 11:1**, which foreshadowed the calling of God’s Son out of Egypt. Now, Matthew is presenting us with another prophecy. In this passage, we are told that Herod ordered all the children under two years old in and around Bethlehem to be killed; and we are told that this was the fulfilment of a prophecy of **Jeremiah**.

Read Jeremiah 31:15.

In this prophecy (which was written in 606 B.C.), Jeremiah is foretelling the bitter weeping that would take place about 20 years later, in the city of **Ramah**. Jeremiah foretold that the young people of Judah would be rounded up by King Nebuchadnezzar’s general, ripped away from their parents, and taken away to Babylon as captives. The parents mourned and wept as they watched their children being taken away, because they knew that they would never see them again. It was a *great* mourning. It was as though Rachel herself (whose grave was just a few miles away, between Bethlehem and Ramah) was rolling over in her grave, and weeping for her great-great-great-great-great grandchildren! It may be that God even gave Rachel a prophetic *vision* concerning this terrible event, and that she literally wept when she saw it. (Many Old Testament prophets wept when they were given prophetic visions of a future slaughter of their own people, or even of their enemies!)

However, there was *another* great mourning that would happen in this exact same area, nearly 600 years later. It was here that King Herod would give the command to slay all the children in Bethlehem, and ***“in all the coasts thereof.”*** God knew that this second great mourning was coming; and He foretold it long beforehand. It may be that Rachel saw a vision of the Babylonian slaughter, *and* of Herod’s slaughter. By the way, this was a big area!

Ramah was 7 miles north of Jerusalem; and Bethlehem was about 5 miles south of Jerusalem. Altogether, this is about a 12-mile radius. Who knows how many hundreds of children were slain!

This was a horrible tragedy. However, it would have been a far *worse* tragedy if the Scripture had not been fulfilled! If the Scripture had not been fulfilled, then God would not be a God of absolute truth; and His Word could not be trusted. But, thank God, such is not the case! *Every word* of God is true! This means that God's plan of salvation is absolutely true, as well. When God says, "***He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,***" you can bank on it! God preserved His Word (and His Child Jesus, when He was yet an infant), so that we might be saved by believing on Him! If *you* have never truly placed your faith in the Son of God, why do you hesitate? God has never gone back on His promises. He will save you *today*, if you will only come to Christ in repentance and faith!

Now, let's read **Matthew 2:16** again. (**Read Matthew 2:16.**) When Jesus was born in the manger in Bethlehem, all the fiends of hell were on their highest alert! It was "all hands on deck" for Satan and his demonic crew. For 4,000 years, Satan had done everything in his power to derail God's plan of salvation for mankind—but to no avail. Now the Anointed One, the Saviour—Satan's old enemy, whom he dreaded the most—was finally here.

Do you see why this slaughter of the infants in the coasts of Bethlehem took place? It was more than *human* wrath: it was *satanic* wrath. This was a *cosmic* battle—a battle of the ages! Your salvation, and mine, was hanging in the balance. The fate of all humanity depended upon this *seemingly* fragile and vulnerable Baby. Satan knew that if this Child grew up, He would conquer his kingdom, destroy his works, and "crush" his head, just as God had foretold back in the Garden of Eden. He was looking for every opportunity to destroy Baby Jesus, before that Babe could destroy him! In the vision that God gave to the John in **Revelation 12**, we find a vivid illustration of the battle that was going on around the time of Jesus' birth.

Read Revelation 12:1-5.

Let's examine this prophetic vision piece-by-piece. First, we see a **pregnant woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and with a crown of twelve stars on her head. This woman does *not* represent Mary, as an individual. This is *not* the "queen of heaven," as the Catholic Church tells us! This woman represents the *nation of Israel*. The **sun** represents the glory of the Messiah, which "clothes" Israel like a garment. (That is why Malachi called the Messiah "***the Sun of righteousness.***") The sun and moon *together* are often associated with God's covenant with Israel. The crown of twelve stars on the woman's head clearly represent the 12 tribes of Israel. And, of course, the Child that was born of her is Jesus Christ. The point of this "woman" imagery is that *as a nation*, Israel brought the Messiah into the world.

Now, what happened after the Baby Messiah was born? John saw that a "***great red dragon,***" with one-third of the stars of heaven in its tail, stood up, and tried to devour the child. This "***great red dragon***" is Satan; and the stars in his tail represent his fallen angels. Satan was the *real* power behind King Herod; and he is the real power that is at work in *every* government of this world to this day. He is the "***god of this world.***" In Scripture, Satan is compared to a dinosaur called Leviathan, which is described in detail in **Job chapter 41**.

Leviathan, like all the other dinosaurs, went extinct sometime in the millennia after the Flood; but in Job's day, this dinosaur was still alive and well. Leviathan was a semi-aquatic dinosaur (probably the *plesiosaur*); and it was so enormous, mighty, and terrible, that to him, iron was like straw, and brass was like rotten wood. To Leviathan, men's darts and spears were like stubble. People fled in terror from Leviathan. No one was able to stand before him. It is for this reason that God compares Leviathan to Satan. In the last verse of **Job 41**, God calls Leviathan the "**king over all the children of pride.**" That is who Satan is. He is the "**king over all the children of pride.**" *None of us* can stand before Leviathan, or escape his grasp.

However, there is someone who is infinitely greater than that old dragon: and that is *God!* There is no way that God would allow His Son to perish! God sent an angel by night to warn Joseph of what Herod was about to do; and only a few hours before Herod's soldiers began their slaughter, Joseph, Mary, and Baby Jesus slipped out of Bethlehem, and fled into Egypt.

If Jesus had died in the womb, or in infancy, we could not have been saved! If He had died as a toddler, at the hands of King Herod, He could *not* have atoned for our sins. Jesus had to die at the right time, at the right place, and in the right way. He had to die on Passover evening, at age 33, on a cross, on Mount Moriah, with His blood poured out, and with the sins of the world laid upon Him. Jesus *had* to leave Bethlehem in haste, and flee into Egypt. His life *had* to be preserved, so that He could one day pay the penalty for our sins on the cross.

The story of Christ's entrance into this world isn't all bright lights and warm, cosy, pastoral scenes. It was a time of intense spiritual battle! The next time you think about the wise men, think about the slaughter of the infants that followed their visit; and think about the way that God preserved His Son from premature death, so that He might save you from *eternal* death!

III. The young man of Nazareth (vv. 19-23)

Read Matthew 2:19-23.

Upon the death of King Herod, Joseph returned from Egypt with Mary and his adopted son Jesus, and took his family to the town of Nazareth, in the northern province of Galilee. He did this in order to protect his family from Herod's son, Archelaus, who now occupied the throne of Judaea. However, going to Nazareth was not Joseph's idea. *God Himself* instructed Joseph to take his family to Galilee. *God* sent His angel to instruct Joseph to return to Nazareth. *God* had a purpose in bringing Jesus to Nazareth; and His purpose was not merely that Jesus might grow up in a relatively safe place. Once again, there was a **prophecy** that had to be fulfilled. Matthew says that God instructed Joseph to go into Galilee, and to the city of Nazareth, so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "**He shall be called a Nazarene.**"

Now, this statement, "**He shall be called a Nazarene,**" is not found anywhere in the Old Testament. What prophecy is Matthew talking about, then? He wasn't talking about any *written* prophecy. You'll notice that Matthew did not say that this statement was "*written*" by the prophets: instead, he said that it was "**spoken**" by the prophets. This was an *oral* prophecy. Apparently, God had given this prophecy orally to at least a couple prophets; and it had been passed down by word of mouth for a good while.

As you read through the Old Testament, you will find that God *often* gave oral prophecies, which were never written down. Sometimes, though, oral prophecies *were* written down years later, by the same prophet who spoke it, or by another prophet. A good example is the prophecy of Enoch, which is recorded in **Jude 14-15**. This oral prophecy had been passed down orally for 3,000 years; but it wasn't until about A.D. 66 that God moved Jude to write down this prophecy about the future Battle of Armageddon. So it was with this prophecy that the Messiah would be "*called a Nazarene.*" For centuries, this prophecy had been *spoken*; but now, in the Gospel of Matthew, it was finally *written down*.

Now, even though this prophecy had been *spoken* for many years, there is a *written* prophecy that does give us a little "hint" that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene. That prophecy is **Isaiah 11:1**. **Isaiah 11:1** says, "*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*" In this verse, God is giving us a striking picture. Isaiah prophesied that a "*rod*" (a young, sapling tree) would one day spring forth from out of the "*stem*" of Jesse. The Hebrew word for "*stem*" refers to the "stump" of a tree that has been cut down. The picture that Isaiah is giving us is that of a great tree that has been cut down; and the stump of that tree is now rotting and decaying. Yet, right in the middle of this decaying stump, another little sapling tree has sprung up, and is taking root.

Who is this little sapling tree? He is Jesus, the Messiah! And what does the "stump" of the tree represent? It represents the royal house of David. Six hundred years before Christ's birth, the royal line of David had been "cut down," like a tree. Yet, from out of this decaying, royal house of David, the *true* Son of David, the Messiah, suddenly sprang up, in a little town called Bethlehem! The Messiah is the great Descendant of David. He "sprang up" from David's line, like a branch from a tree. That is why Isaiah calls Him the "*Branch.*"

This certainly is not the only prophecy where Christ is called "*The Branch.*" In the books of **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, and **Zechariah**, Christ is called "*The Branch*" six times. He is called "*The Branch of the LORD.*" He is called "*The Branch of David.*" He is also called "*The righteous BRANCH.*" This beautiful name, "The Branch," reminds us that Christ would have *human* origins and *divine* origin. He is the "Branch" (or "Son") of David; but He is also the "Branch" (or "Son") of God.

By the way, there are two words for "branch" in Hebrew. One of them is *tsemach*. In five of the six times when Messiah is called "the Branch," this word *tsemach* is used. However, in **Isaiah 11:1**, Isaiah uses *another* word for "Branch"; and that word is *netzer*. Does that word *netzer* ring a bell? It sounds a bit like the word "Nazareth," does it not? That's because "Nazareth" is based on the word *netzer*. Is that a coincidence? I think not! Every time we say "Jesus of Nazareth," we are reminded that Jesus is "the BRANCH"!

It has been two thousand years since Christ came into our world; but He is still called "The Nazarene"--the Branch! To this day, our Jewish friends still call Jesus "the Nazarene." In fact, they call *Christians* by this name, as well! In modern-day Israel, Jesus is still called *haNotzriy* (the Nazarene), and Christians are called *haNotzrim* (the Nazarenes). I don't know about you; but I don't mind being called a "Nazarene," if my Saviour be called by that name!

Jesus is the Branch of Jehovah, and the Branch of David; and by faith, I have entered into union with Him. I can truly say that “I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene”!

Conclusion: Do you know this One whose name is “the BRANCH”? Do you have a personal relationship with the Nazarene? If not, I can tell you that He is a kind and loving Saviour. If you will repent of your sin and believe on Him, He will give you a new, wonderful, abundant life! Jesus said, “*The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” Christian, how close are you to Him? You’ve entered into an eternal relationship with Him; but do you love Him with *all* your heart? If your love for Him has cooled down to any degree, re-stoke the fire of your love for Him, and draw near to Him today!