

Dr. David Turner, Matthew

Lecture – 2B – Matthew 2-4: From Jesus' Infancy to the Beginning of His Ministry

Greetings, this is David Turner, and this is lecture 2B of our Matthew class. In this lecture, we're going to hit some high points of Matthew 2:3, and 4, as you can see on the outline there on page 10 of your supplemental materials. Also, notice on page 11, we have a couple of other helps to let you grasp some other issues in Matthew chapter 2. As we begin, we note that Matthew 2 is probably best viewed as a sort of drama in two acts, which comprise 2:1-12 and 2:13-23. The worship of the wise men in 2:1-12 contrasts with the treachery of Herod in 2:13-23. There's also the strange indifference of the chief priests and scribes in 2:4-6, who quickly display knowledge of the Old Testament but do not act in obedience to that knowledge.

Through all of this, God protects the newly born Jesus by angelic appearances and dreams to the wise men and especially to Joseph, who obeys at every juncture when the challenge is presented to him. These events hint at two motifs that are stressed as Matthew's story of Jesus develops further. First, the promise of the wise men implies that God's redemptive purposes extend beyond the nation of Israel.

Second, the treachery of Herod and the indifference of the religious leaders show that many within Israel will not believe in Jesus. Herod's unbelief is particularly blatant and also instructive. He uses his newly acquired knowledge of Jesus the Messiah to plot against Jesus.

But as soon as the chapter closes, Herod is dead and Jesus is still alive, still fulfilling the patterns and predictions of the Old Testament. Further occurrences of these motifs can be found in 8:10, 15:28, 21:31, and 22:8-10. The narrative of the wise men and the infancy of Jesus can be displayed chiastically. Notice on page 11 of the supplemental materials how we have it laid out.

This is helpful because it puts the focus of the passage on Micah 5:2, which occurs in verses 5 and 6 of Matthew 2, right at the center of this outline. As we think about Matthew 2:1-12, it's significant in view of later developments that Matthew refers to Herod as a king and specifies that the wise men arrived in Jerusalem. Herod's kingship is merely a political office, and he will go to great lengths to guard against any potential rival.

Jesus' kingship, like David's in chapter 1 verse 6, is genuine and legitimate. It's been given to him by God at his birth, chapter 2, verse 2. It's appropriate that the wise men arrive in Jerusalem, which was, after all, David's capital city, the city of the great king, chapter 5 verse 35, citing Psalm 48:2. It is also the city of Solomon's temple, but

Jesus is greater than Solomon and his temple, chapter 12 verse 6 and 42. Jesus must cleanse the temple when he enters the city as its rightful king in chapter 21, only to be crucified there a few days later in chapter 27.

It's ironic that the birth of Jesus produces only anxious fear in the leaders of Israel, while it is the occasion of overwhelming joy in the mysterious Gentile wise men. The devotion of the wise men is in stark contrast to Herod's treachery and the seeming apathy of the chief priests and teachers of the law. Why are these wise men the only ones who travel to Bethlehem? How the wise men originally understood that astral phenomena signaled prophetic fulfillment in the birth of the Messiah is shrouded in mystery.

Numbers chapter 24 verse 17 was evidently understood messianically by the Jews, but how the wise men might have come to associate a particular star with that prophecy is unclear. Dispersed Jews in the East may have influenced the wise men, but in the final analysis, their worship of the Messiah is nothing less than a miracle of God's grace. Matthew 11:25 to 27 explains the divine initiative involved when anyone comes to faith in Jesus the Messiah, and Matthew 11:28 and 29 supply Jesus' invitation for others to emulate the example of the wise men.

This incident well illustrates the truth, which has become something of a cliché. God works in mysterious ways, performing wonders. The Jewish leaders, replete with scriptural knowledge, react with apathy here and with antipathy later.

The wise men, whose knowledge is quite limited, nevertheless offer genuine worship to the born king of the Jews. Matthew 2 verses 13 through 23 conclude Matthew's infancy narrative, which explains the origins of Jesus the Messiah and his early movements. It contains three sections: the flight to Egypt in verses 13 to 15, the massacre of the babies in Bethlehem, verses 16 through 18, and the return to Israel in verses 19 through 23.

It's noteworthy that each of these sections ends with an Old Testament citation introduced with Matthew's characteristic fulfillment formula. While Herod believed that the wise men had tricked him, their lack of complicity in his plot was due to divine intervention. Herod's rage was not in reality directed against the wise men; it was against God, who directed them not to return to Herod.

Thus his fury is pathetic and futile, like that of the kings whom God warned about in Psalm 2, which is cited in Acts 4 verses 24 to 28. In retrospect, it's clear that the message of the infancy narrative in Matthew 1 to 2 has little to do with Jesus' infancy. Rather, it traces his ancestry, his miraculous conception, his early worship and opposition, and his residence in Nazareth.

All this is interwoven with the Old Testament historical pattern and prophetic prediction. Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. He is the culmination of Old Testament history and prophecy.

As the son of David, he is the genuine king of Israel, contrasted with the wicked usurper Herod. As the son of Abraham, he brings the blessings of God to the Gentile wise men. Davies and Allison, in their masterful commentary, put it this way.

Jesus culminates Israel's history in chapter 1. In chapter 2, he repeats it. More on that as we look at the Old Testament in Matthew 2 in just a moment. As Matthew's story of Jesus continues, both of these themes are developed.

The contrast between Jesus and the false leaders of Israel erupts into full-fledged hostility, leading to his death. But his outreach to the Gentiles culminates with his resurrection and the mandate to the disciples to take the gospel to all the nations. Jesus' kingship is due to his Davidic sonship, as made clear in the genealogy.

Yet Jesus is also the son of God, as implied in 1:18-25. And this is made more explicit as the narrative proceeds in chapter 2. As the born king of the Jews, Jesus could resist Satan's test by offering him all the world's kingdoms in 4:8. He could affirm his superiority to King Solomon in 12:42 and promise a glorious future return to the earth in 16:28 and other passages. Yet he could also enter Jerusalem humbly in 21:5. He could endure the unspeakable mockery leading to his crucifixion in chapter 27. The resurrection would then vindicate his claims and validate him as the born king of the Jews, to whom all power had been given.

28:18 Lack of time prevents us from doing anything but just a cursory look at the use of the Old Testament in Matthew 2. But we need to point out, just for your own study, that in chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, there is a reference to Micah chapter 5, verse 2, which seems to be a direct prediction of the birthplace of the Messiah. It's also significant that in Matthew 2, verse 6, the last line cited from Micah chapter 5, verse 2, is that it states that the ruler will shepherd the people of Israel. As you continue to study Matthew, you will notice the importance of Jesus as the true shepherd, who has compassion for Israel as the sheep without a shepherd.

And Israel's present leaders are not good shepherds for the nation. In chapter 2, verse 15, there is the citation of Hosea 11, verse 1, Out of Egypt I called my son, which seems to be a typological reference. There's a historical pattern involved in the nation of Israel's time in Egypt, which is brought to completion in the visit of Jesus the Messiah there, who recapitulates in his person the previous experience of the nation.

Then in chapter 2, verses 17 and 18, there is a citation of Jeremiah 31, verse 31, where Rachel is pictured as weeping for her children at the time of Israel's

Babylonian captivity. Rachel, of course, had been dead for a long time by that time, so Jeremiah 31 in its own right is a highly figurative passage, and Matthew picks up on that here because it typifies as well the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem. Finally, in 2:23 is a very mysterious passage where Matthew, for the only time in the gospel, refers to the prophets, plural, as being fulfilled by Jesus returning to Nazareth.

There are many different views about the understanding of this, and I recommend simply that you look at the literature on Matthew that's available to you to see further discussions. For myself, I think it simply refers to Nazareth as a place of derision and shame, and speaks of Jesus similarly, as perhaps in the gospel of John, could anything good come out of Nazareth? Nazareth was not the place you'd want to be from. On the other hand, it would be the place you would want to be from, not where you would want to be identified.

So perhaps that's the point there, but there also may be something in the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means branch, see Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1, and look into this further in your own studies. Moving on to Matthew chapter 3, Matthew 3 is the first section in Matthew to have synoptic parallels, in Mark chapter 1, verses 1-11, and in Luke chapter 3. This chapter naturally divides into three sections: John's ministry in the desert in 3:1-6, John's conflict with the Pharisees and the Sadducees in 3:7-12, and John's baptism of Jesus in 3:13-17. Nearly 30 years, according to Luke 3:23, have transpired between Matthew 2:23 and Matthew 3:1. Although the apocryphal gospels contain many fanciful stories about Jesus' childhood, the New Testament is largely silent. What little scriptural knowledge that is available for this period is found in the gospel of Luke.

According to Luke, Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth, amazed at the revelations given about Jesus in the temple, Luke 2:25-38. Jesus' childhood and early adolescence are described in 2:40 and 2:52, similar statements which frame the incident at the temple during the Passover when Jesus was 12 years old. But Matthew says nothing directly about the years between Jesus's coming to live in Nazareth as a small child and his coming to John for baptism as an adult. One can draw a few inferences from Matthew 13, verses 54-58, about Jesus' upbringing in Nazareth, but the fact is that Matthew's theological purposes are not furthered by biographical details of this period.

Matthew is interested in telling the story of Jesus' origins in chapters 1 and 2 and in his preparation for ministry in 3:1-4.16. The story of Jesus' preparation for ministry begins with the ministry of John the Baptist and ends with John's imprisonment. John's ministry is in the desert of Judea, predicted by Isaiah 40, verse 3, and it results in many Judeans coming to him for baptism. But when his ministry attracts Pharisees and Sadducees, he rebuffs them and warns them of judgment in 3:7-12. He hesitates to baptize Jesus, but performs the baptism at Jesus' insistence that it is necessary to

fulfill all righteousness in 3:13-15. At this point, the Spirit comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven expresses the Father's approval of his beloved Son, 3:16-17. Next, Jesus' divine Sonship is put to the test by Satan, but Jesus emerges victorious in 4:1-11. But Jesus then hears that John has been imprisoned.

He withdraws to Galilee and begins his ministry there in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2, that's 4:12-16. The story of Jesus in 3:1-4:16 centers on John's ministry. John prepares the way for Jesus, and his baptism is the occasion of the coming of the Spirit with the Father's approval of his beloved Son. This Sonship affirmed by the Father at John's baptism of Jesus is immediately tested by Satan.

After this testing, the imprisonment of John leads to the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. With the presentation of the ministry of John, Matthew for the first time parallels Mark, Luke, and also John 1:19-34. It seems best to see John's baptism against a broad background of similar activities in Second Temple Judaism rather than to attempt an explanation with withdrawals from only one of the possible backgrounds, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Old Testament itself frequently alludes to water cleansing as a picture of forgiveness, spiritual purity, and eschatological blessing.

Such passages as Psalm 51:6-9, Isaiah 4:4 and 44:3, Jeremiah 4:11-14, Ezekiel 36:24-27, and Zechariah 13:1. But there are three important contrasts between John's baptism and these possible Old Testament backgrounds. First, John insists on repentance and baptism for Jews, not Gentile proselytes. This would counter the current view that Israel's problems were due only to Gentile oppressors and that the Messiah's mission was merely to set Israel free from political oppression.

Descent from Abraham was no guarantee of God's favor, according to John in 3:9. Second, John's baptism was a single act of confession, not a repeated ritual as in the Old Testament and in the Qumran community. Third, John's ministry and baptism were directed toward the nation of Israel as a whole, not toward a sectarian monastic community as at Qumran. Therefore, Davies and Allison, in their commentary, seem to be correct in viewing John's baptism as a creative reapplication of biblical and cultural motifs.

In conclusion, our discussion of Matthew 3, first a brief word needs to be said on synoptic relationships. After his unique material on Jesus' genealogy and infancy in the first two chapters, Matthew's narrative of John's ministry and the baptism of Jesus in chapter 3 parallels the other Gospels to some extent. All three of the synoptics cite Isaiah 40:3 as speaking of John's ministry.

Mark's account is brief, although Mark 1:2 alludes to Malachi 3:1 along with Isaiah 40:3. Luke's account is the longest, detailing the rulers who were on the scene when John arrived in Luke 3:1 and 2. And Luke cites a lengthier section of Isaiah 40 than

Matthew does. And he gives a brief summary of the dialogue between John and his audience in 3:10 through 15. Luke and Matthew both speak of Jesus's baptism in the Spirit and in fire, whereas Mark mentions only the Spirit.

When compared to Mark and Luke, Matthew's account presents two very noticeable, unique features. He alone presents the dialogue between Jesus and John in which John hesitates and Jesus ties the necessity of his baptism to the filling of all righteousness. Matthew 3:14 and 15.

This unique section highlights distinctive Matthean themes of fulfillment and righteousness. Another unique feature of Matthew is his account of the Father's endorsement of the Son in 3:17. Here Matthew couches the Father's words in the third person. As frequently noted by interpreters, this has the effect of making the endorsement more public in Matthew, although Matthew may intend the endorsement to be only for John's benefit.

Although this form of the endorsement brings it into conformity with the Father's words at the Transfiguration in Matthew 17:5, perhaps the third-person language is also intended to confront Matthew's audience more directly with the truth of Jesus' Sonship. Next, a concluding word about the function of chapter 3 in Matthew's narrative. There are two main purposes served by the story of John and Jesus' baptism.

This account provides the basis for the transition between John and Jesus and it attests Jesus' unique identity as the servant son of God. John, as the forerunner, now passes from center stage so that the spotlight can shine on Jesus. While John will appear again in the story, there can be no doubt about his subservience to Jesus in redemptive history.

Jesus will proclaim the same message as John, compare 4:17 with 3:2, and eventually he'll suffer a similar fate to John's, look at 17:12. But John's great redemptive historical significance pales in comparison to that of Jesus. John's ministry serves to initiate Matthew's definition of the genuine people of God and Matthew's dualism of those who respond correctly and incorrectly to the message of God's rule. The genuine people of God are not merely Abraham's descendants but those who show their repentance by their changed lifestyles.

Those who show no repentance are in danger of imminent judgment. The concluding pericope on Matthew 3 and on Jesus' baptism has profound Christological implications. Several things should be mentioned.

In 3:17, Jesus is described in terms which clearly represent Isaiah's suffering servant whom God has chosen, look especially at Isaiah 42:1. Related to this is the sonship typology metaphorically applied to Israel as a nation in Old Testament passages such

as Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 3:19, 31:9, and Hosea 11:1. And also the sonship typology applied to David as the ideal king who serves God, 2 Samuel 7:5-16, Psalm 2:7, 89:3, etc., and Psalm 89. The fulfillment of Old Testament covenant promises to the nation and to the king is found in Jesus, who recapitulates Israel's history as he sojourns in Egypt and passes through the waters before being tested in the wilderness. Additionally, it's possible that the emphasis on Jesus as the Father's beloved son is intended to recall Isaac's relationship to Abraham in Genesis 22:2. More likely are the creation overtones found in the dove-like spirit who descends upon Jesus in a manner which calls Genesis 1:2 to mind.

Thus, in Jesus, God has begun nothing less than the renewal of the entire creation, look at Matthew 19:28. It remains for the rest of Matthew's narrative to develop the distinctive understanding of Jesus and the new people of God which has begun here. Now we move to Matthew chapter 4. Matthew 4 leads us from the final preparatory episode of Jesus' ministry, the temptation, to the beginning of the public ministry in Galilee in 4:12-25. The chapter amounts to a transition from preparatory events to public ministry. The testing narrative itself in 4:1-11 consists of three temptations wrapped in an introduction in which Satan arrives in 4:1-2 and a conclusion where Satan departs in 4:11. Here, Jesus authenticates the Father's baptismal endorsement in his victory over Satan's triple test.

The things offered to him by Satan, physical sustenance, spectacular protection, and authority to rule the world, were already his by virtue of his unique status as the Father's beloved son. But his testing recapitulates that of Israel in the wilderness, and it becomes a positive example for his people. Matthew's temptation narrative differs significantly from both Mark's and Luke's.

Mark has only a short summary of temptation and doesn't mention three specific episodes. Neither Mark nor Luke indicates that the Spirit's leading was for the express purpose of Jesus' temptation as Matthew does in 4:1. Luke does not mention any angels. Luke 4:1-13 agrees with Matthew in describing Jesus' fast in three distinct episodes of temptation, but Luke's order differs.

Matthew and Luke agree in placing the turning of stones into bread as the first, but differ in the order of the next two. In thinking about the temptation I think it would be helpful for us to look at Jesus and the Spirit and Jesus as a model for Christians as well as the typology here. Jesus and the Spirit.

It's not surprising to read in 4:1 that the Spirit leads Jesus since the reader already knows that the Spirit is the agency behind Jesus' virginal conception in 1:18-20 and his empowerment for ministry 3:16-17, also 12:18-28. John's prediction that Jesus will baptize in the Spirit 3:16 anticipates his exaltation following his death in Jerusalem. Look at 28:18-20. But it is striking at first glance that Jesus is led by the Spirit to the desert in order to be tempted by the devil. Matthew 4:1 clearly indicates

that while the Spirit is the agent who led Jesus, the devil is the agent who tempted Jesus.

It is quite a profound undertaking to understand how God's benevolent purpose converges with Satan's evil designs in this narrative. The verb used here, which is the Greek word *peradzo*, may express both the positive nuance of testing, which develops character and achieves approval, and the negative nuance of tempting, which solicits evil and achieves disapproval. The positive or negative nuance depends upon the motive in each context.

Perhaps both the nuances are here, the Father testing Jesus to achieve approval, yet Satan mysteriously attempting in the same process to achieve disapproval for Jesus. So the convergence of the benevolent plan of God and the malevolent schemes of Satan and sinners is difficult for us to explain fully, but it is found in many places in Scripture. Jesus, as he is led by the Spirit and as he refers to the Scriptures in this temptation, is a model for Christians.

Satan appears in a role which ought to be familiar to anyone who reads and loves the Scriptures. In challenging Jesus' unique sonship so recently announced by the approving Father, it's as if Satan was saying again, Did God really say? From Genesis 3, verse 1. It's clear from the narrative parallels and from the Scriptures Jesus cites that his temptation recapitulates that of Israel in the wilderness. But from the widest scriptural perspective, Jesus' temptation recapitulates that of Adam and Eve in the garden.

Through Jesus, God is calling into existence a new humanity, Matthew 16:18, which will be characterized by the obedience modeled by Jesus, not the rebellion of its first parents. What can be learned from the example of the beloved Son? Concerning the avenues of temptation, it's clear that Satan tempted Jesus, and he continues to tempt Jesus' people in the area of daily sustenance. But instead of succumbing to the temptation to acquire one's bread by sinful means, Christians must remind themselves of the biblical truth that true life comes from hearing and obeying the Word of God, Deuteronomy 8:3, and that the God of the Word knows all about their daily needs, 6:11. Another avenue of temptation could be a desire for spectacular manifestations of God's power or protection.

But Christians must never leap disobediently away from the path God has revealed and ask God to catch them while in mid-air. This amounts to a selfish testing of God, Deuteronomy 6:16, not a serene reliance upon His love and providence. Yet another avenue of temptation is the desire for glory and power.

Satan continues to promote idolatrous ways of achieving status, but the Christian must rely on God for advancement and seek only that glory which is consistent with the way of the cross, Deuteronomy 6:13. How did Jesus withstand temptation? His

spontaneous citation of appropriate scriptures when under temptation shows that He was conscious of the past failure of God's people and aware of the reasons for their failure. In short, He knew the Bible. But He was also conscious of the endowment and leading of the Spirit, 3:16.4:1-12, 18-21. Therefore, Christians today must likewise withstand temptation by knowledge which comes from Scripture and by strength which comes through the Spirit.

Obedience and victory in the face of temptation comes from knowing what God commands and having the capacity to perform it. Christians who regularly study the Bible and humbly depend upon the Spirit for the strength to obey it can successfully resist the devil today. Now we move on to 4:12-25, the beginning of the Galilean ministry.

In the second part of this chapter, 4:12-25, John's ministry ends, and Jesus withdraws from Judea to Galilee to begin His own ministry and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, 4:12-16. Compare Isaiah 9:1 and 2. The theme of His preaching is the Kingdom of Heaven, which is mentioned in a hinge John verse 4:17, linking Jesus' message to that of His predecessor John. Compare 3.2. He begins to call His core disciples, 4:18-22, and His message is authenticated by powerful works, 4:23-25. Geographically, Jesus moves from the wilderness of Judea in 4.1 to Galilee in 4:12 where He goes first to Nazareth, 4:13, and then dwells in Capernaum, where He calls His disciples, 4:13-22. Then His ministry expands into all Galilee, where He is followed by multitudes from all over the land, 4:23-25. This Galilean ministry, then, is the setting for the Sermon on the Mount, and it also features themes which are important throughout this gospel,, such as the Kingdom of Heaven, the fulfillment of Scripture,, and the salvation of the Gentiles. Now, the mission of Jesus.

Matthew 4:15-16 cites Isaiah 9:1 and two, which occurs in the context of a promise in the middle of judgment. The stress of Isaiah 9:6 and 7 on a son who will rule David's kingdom fits nicely with the Mithraic theme that Jesus is the son of David. But the mention of Isaiah 9:1 and 2 of the scorned area of Galilee and its association with despised Gentiles repeats the idea that God Himself resists the proud and receives the most unlikely sinners into fellowship with Himself.

Matthew repeatedly stresses the mission to Gentiles either by implicit details such as 1:3, 5, 6; 2:1, 5:47, 6:32, 15:28, 22:9, and by the explicit teaching of Jesus in passages like 8:10-12, and 21-43. Jesus' Galilean ministry prepares the reader for His Galilean commission that His disciples should disciple all the nations. It's also clear from 4:12-25 that Jesus' ministry was, to use a popular contemporary term, holistic.

He dealt with the people's physical needs as well as their spiritual needs, the former sometimes evidently preceding the latter. While He demanded repentance, He did not make repentance the prerequisite for healing. Jesus has compassion on the

needy crowds and acts to help them, evidently in many cases before they even hear Him preach.

In narrating the gracious ministry of Jesus, Matthew surely intends it as a model for the ministry of the disciples. They, too, are to preach the kingdom, 4:17 10:6, but they are also to do works of compassion which demonstrate the power of God and His grace, 4:24 10:1. It's also the mission of Jesus to defeat the devil. As soon as He emerges victorious from His testing, He is presented at the outset of His ministry as one who heals not only physical diseases but also demonic oppression.

Jesus' power over the forces of darkness is made even more clear after the Sermon on the Mount as Matthew narrates Jesus' Galilean ministry. Read about it in chapters 8, 9, 12, 15, and 17. One incident in particular, 8:29, shows that the demons intuitively recognize Jesus' messianic identity and His ultimate eschatological authority over them.

We conclude the tape with some discussion of the call to discipleship. Matthew 4:12-25 narrates for us the holistic kingdom mission of Jesus' gracious words and powerful deeds. It also narrates for us the obedient response of Jesus' first disciples, who immediately left family and livelihood to follow Him.

But Matthew's purpose goes beyond providing a narrative of past events. Matthew wishes us to understand Jesus' ministry as a model for our own ministries and to view the obedience of the first disciples as examples that challenge us to similar obedience. The immediate, unquestioning, sacrificial response of the first disciples to Jesus' absolute, authoritative call to discipleship is a model for today.

Discipleship is still incumbent upon Christians, whether or not they are called to what we call vocational ministry. The unquestioning obedience of Peter and Andrew, James and John condemns any delay or ambivalence in responding to Jesus. This obedience of Jesus' first disciples is contrasted later in the narrative to the excuses of would-be disciples in chapter 8. Even true disciples who have responded to the call need to have their faith strengthened.

Their task is daunting, but their reward is a great 19:27 through 30.