

Matthew 2:17-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-2/matthew-217-18/>

Matthew points out that the tragedy of the murdered children in Bethlehem fulfills the prophecy from Jeremiah, again confirming Jesus as the anticipated Messiah.

There is no apparent parallel account of this event in the Gospels.

Matthew says that this tragic event, commonly referred to as “Herod’s Slaughter of the Innocents” and the lamentations that followed fulfill what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 31:15. (This is the fourth direct prophetic fulfillment Matthew cites for Jesus being the Messiah.) Matthew directly quotes the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she refused to be comforted,
Because they were no more.*

Ramah is a village situated just north of Jerusalem. Bethlehem is a village situated just south of Jerusalem. The portion of Jeremiah’s prophecy that Matthew quotes here was originally fulfilled at the time of the Babylonian Exile. Before the Exile, Ramah belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin. So, it would have been poetically fitting for her to weep over the destruction of Ramah. But Matthew says Jeremiah’s prophecy had a second fulfillment during Herod’s slaughter. It is common for prophecies to have immediate as well as future fulfillments.

Here, Rachel represents the mothers whose children were murdered. Rachel was also the mother of Joseph, who is a type of Christ in the Old Testament. Joseph also went to Egypt, and also saved Israel by providing for them during a worldwide famine. Joseph was thought by his family to be dead and gone for a long time, then unexpectedly appeared to them, and saved them from the famine. He likely even showed them his scars, his circumcision, to prove his identity, similar to what is predicted for Israel during the time when Jesus returns to earth again:

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zach 12:10).

Jesus prophetically will be presented by Matthew as a ‘second Moses,’ in fulfillment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15. He will not only lead His people out of slavery to sin, He will also deliver a living law from a mountain to inform a new covenant, written on our hearts. When Matthew described the horrific danger Jesus faced from a wicked king while young, there is a parallel with Moses, who was floated in a basket to avoid a similar royal death sentence.

Herod's search-and-destroy mission of baby boys in Bethlehem parallels Pharaoh's slaughter of baby Hebrew males when Moses was born in Exodus 1 and Exodus 2. Like the lawgiver Moses, Jesus is spared from a tyrant's wrath.

Biblical Text

2:17-18 Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

**“A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she refused to be comforted,
Because they were no more.”**