

“Fulfilled” – Part 5 (Application)

A quote from the movie “Paycheck:”

“If you only look where you can’t go, you might just miss the riches below.”

The application of that thought to our study is that you must consider the whole context of a passage, not just part of it. If you focus on just the actual quote in the New Testament, not considering the surrounding text, you might miss the point of the quote. Last week we saw that the quote under consideration involved three days and three nights. What was not said, concerned what defined the three days and three nights. On one side was the “death.” In one case that was Jonah being swallowed by a great fish. In the other case, that was the actual death and burial of Jesus Christ. If that was as far as the context went, then you miss why the “burial” lasted only three days and three nights. It was resurrection! The three days and three nights was defined by what happened before and after. Without those events there was no three days and three nights. What was not said was just as important if not more important than what was actually quoted.

Now, this morning, I am going to give you two perspectives on a passage. The one viewpoint, in my opinion, misses the importance of the quote because it does not consider what follows the quote in the original context.

Let us start by reviewing some points from the last time we dealt with “Fulfilled.”

There are four different ways that events in the New Testament can be considered “fulfilled.”

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application) Matthew 2:18

Direct Fulfillment: Literal prediction and literal direct fulfillment.

Typical Fulfillment: A literal, historical event applied typologically.

Applicational Fulfillment: An historical event is used to draw out an application with reference to a future event.

Summary Fulfillment: No actual event is prophesied, but the fulfillment represents a summation of Old Testament prophecies.

Quoted from Dean's Lessons 15 & 16 of God's Plan for the Ages - Dispensations (2014)

This week, I will attempt to tackle the concept of “application” fulfillment. When we first began this study on fulfillment, we dealt with the application of “change of dispensation” in Acts chapter 2/Joel chapter 2. As we saw, there was nothing the same about the two passages except the change in dispensation. That made it relatively easy to pinpoint the concept from the Old Testament that was being “applied” in the New Testament passage.

The passage this morning, Matthew 2:18, is a quote from Jeremiah 3:15. This is a bit more difficult. Michael Rydelnik quotes from R. T. Francis' commentary on Matthew, “This is one of Matthew's most elusive OT quotations, and few claim with any confidence to have fathomed just what he intended.”

The passage, Matthew 2:18 is the verse under consideration. But it is dangerous to start with this verse. It gives no context. So we start with verse 16, understanding that the larger context is the birth of Jesus and the visit by the Magi. The Magi were warned not to go back to Herod to tell him where the new born king was located. Instead they just left by another route. Then...

Matthew 2:16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.

This sets the context.

But you must also understand why Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem to begin with.

Luke 2:1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

Luke 2:2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Luke 2:3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

Luke 2:4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

Luke 2:5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

As a result, not just Joseph, but every living male descendant from David would have been in that town at some point to register for the census. Any male babies in the line of David, and the other sons of Jesse, at that time would have been killed, other than Jesus.

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

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

Jeremiah is only “named” three times in the New Testament. All of them are in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 2:17, 16:14; 27:9). Just some interesting trivia. Also, there was not “in order that” in the Greek. This factors into identifying this as application rather than prophecy.

Matthew 2:18 “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.”

In order to understand this quote in Matthew it is necessary to go to the source of the quote and understand it before we can understand its application in Matthew.

Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the Lord, “A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.”

Because they are no more. In Hebrew this is only three words. “Because existing none.” The verb is actually a “substantive” from a noun from the verb to be. It is like, “Because, status: none.”

From Merrill Unger: “Nebuchadnezzar established his headquarters on the plain of Hamath, at Riblah (Jer. 39:5), and from thence sent his generals, who took Jerusalem. It was here (at Ramah) that the Jewish captives were assembled in chains, among whom was Jeremiah himself (40:1; 39:8-12). Here were, probably, slaughtered such as, from weakness, age, or poverty, it was not thought worth while to transport to

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

Babylon, thus fulfilling part of the prophecy, “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachael weeping for her children,” etc. (Jer 31:15 comp. Matt 2:18).

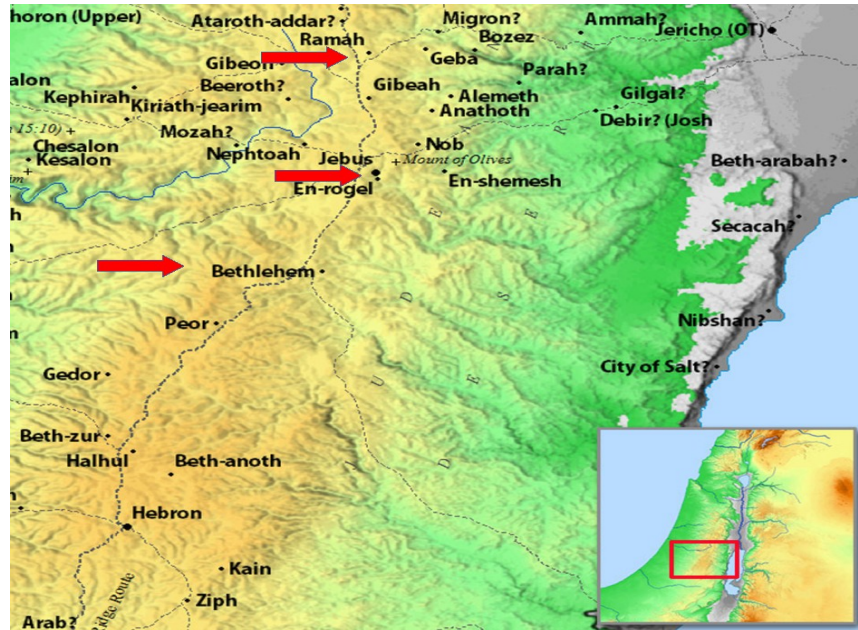
The Jeremiah 40:1 passage establishes the location as Ramah.

Jeremiah 40:1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan captain of the bodyguard had released him from Ramah, when he had taken him bound in chains among all the exiles of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

From Robby Dean:

“Ramah is a small village like Bethlehem located to the north of Jerusalem,” “... Now today there is a site in Bethlehem called the tomb of Rachel, but that is not the tomb of Rachel. Rachel is actually buried in Ramah, which is north of Jerusalem. Now the circumstance and the context of Jeremiah 31:15 is that when the Babylonians came in and defeated the Jews and destroyed the temple and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar took a host of captives, young men who were chained together and were taken out of Israel. They were taken from Jerusalem and the route that was taken went north through Ramah. So they marched down the road in front of the tomb of Rachel. Rachel is depicted or personified as the whole of the mothers of Israel. And so the writer, Jeremiah, is saying Rachel, that is all of Israel's mothers, are weeping for her children because she will not see them anymore. They are taken from her and "she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application) Matthew 2:18



From FreeBibleImages.org

Red arrows show Ramah, “Jebus/Jerusalem” and Bethlehem

“Now Matthew applies that to his situation. Now there are several differences in this passage. First of all Matthew is applying it to Herod's slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem. Bethlehem is south of Jerusalem. Ramah is north of Jerusalem. The mothers of Israel were weeping over the loss of their sons who weren't dead. They were being taken off into captivity. The mothers in Matthew 2 are weeping because they have lost their infant sons. So there are many differences between the two circumstances but there is one area of similarity; and that one area of similarity is the grief and the weeping of the mothers over the loss of their sons. And so this is taken and applied to the situation at the time of Christ; that when the infants were killed Rachel, the mothers in Israel, were weeping for her children. So it is just one point of commonality between the two circumstances. That is what we have in Joel 2. In Joel 2 remember what I said in the introduction? In Joel 2 and the quote in Joel 2 and Acts 2. Nothing that is predicted in Joel 2 happened in Acts 2. The one thing that did happen in Acts 2, speaking in tongues, is not predicted in Joel 2. The only point of commonality between the two is

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And that is what Peter is talking about. He is saying, see this, this is the same "kind of" thing that we can expect when the Holy Spirit is poured out when the New Covenant is inaugurated. He is only making a point of comparison there. He is not saying this is the fulfillment of that prophecy like the first category of Micah 5:2 quoted in Matthew 2. That is important to understand. That is what we mean by application. So even though the Text says "fulfill" don't read into it your preconceived notions that "fulfill" always means the same thing.”

Further explanation from Michael Rydelnik:

“Applicational fulfillment recognizes that ancient texts have continuing relevance. By quoting these texts the writers understood a principle in a biblical passage and then applied it to their contemporary situation. Thus, Matthew recognized that Jeremiah wrote of the suffering of Rachel, the personification of Jewish mothers, at the exile. He, in turn, applied the principle that the Jewish mothers of Bethlehem still wept because of the suffering of their children at the hands of wicked Herod.”

That sounds nice, but it doesn't completely satisfy. And, this explanation does not bring in the text that follows Jeremiah 31:15. Surprisingly, I find D. A. Carson to be closer to my view on this which includes using the verses immediately following Jeremiah 31:15.

“More believable is the observation (Gundy, Use of the Old Testament, 210; Tasker) that Jeremiah 31:15 occurs in a setting of hope. Despite the tear, God says, the exiles will return; and now Matthew, referring to Jeremiah 31:15, likewise says that, despite the tears of the Bethlehem mothers, there is hope because Messiah has escaped Herod and will ultimately reign.”

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

First, Jeremiah chapter 31 is the location of the “New Covenant.” That will be activated in the Millennium when Jesus Christ will reign as king. As Michael Rydelnik says, “The chapter revolves around an expectation of the end-time deliverance of Israel. Yet tucked into the middle of Jeremiah 31 is the reason that Judah needed to be reminded of her future deliverance—the death and exile of Jewish youth at the hands of the Babylonians.”

Let’s look at the verses following Jeremiah 31:15.

Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the Lord, “A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.”

Jeremiah 31:16 Thus says the Lord, “Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded,” declares the Lord, “And they will return from the land of the enemy.

Jeremiah 31:17 “There is hope for your future,” declares the Lord, “And your children will return to their own territory.

Note the difference between verses. Verse 15 is an observation by God of a human perspective. Rachel lost her sons. She is crying uncontrollably. Verse 16 is a command (imperative mood) from God. “Restrain your crying...because...

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

In verse 17, there is a word for “hope.” This Hebrew noun comes from a word that often means “to wait,” associated with trusting. In one version of the Septuagint, the word is translated into the Greek word for hope. We often say this means “confident expectation.”

In this case it says “they will return.” There are two possibilities depending upon what context the reader sees in this passage.

If, as Michael Rydelnik says, “Yet tucked into the middle of Jeremiah 31 is the reason that Judah needed to be reminded of her future deliverance—the death and exile of Jewish youth at the hands of the Babylonians.” In that case, some of the youth will return in old age back to Jerusalem.

If, on the other hand, the reader understands that Jeremiah 31 is about the future Tribulation followed by the Millennial kingdom, then there will be suffering similar to what happened in the Babylonian captivity. Jesus Himself said there would be suffering far worse than any previous time in history during the Tribulation. So, if young men are taken hostage during the Tribulation, it follows that some will be returned at the end of the Tribulation to participate in the Millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Here are some summary points:

1. Jeremiah 31, using Rydelnik’s point of view, is based upon a real world event but a fictional wailing by Rachel from her grave to represent the women of Israel. So the actual quote is not exactly a historical event. To make it historical, it would have had to say, women of Israel wept.
2. Jeremiah 31 refers to children, not men and women. It also does not refer to any “slaughter” of people. Only that they were no more. Ramah was the gathering point or marshaling point for Israelites being sent to Babylon.

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

3. Robby Dean pointed out that this cannot be a prophetic fulfillment or even a typological fulfillment because of the differences, “So there are many differences between the two circumstances but there is one area of similarity; and that one area of similarity is the grief and the weeping of the mothers over the loss of their sons.”
4. The accepted view is that Matthew is applying the principle of crying mothers from Jeremiah to the crying mothers of Bethlehem. Obviously, that is part of the application. But, if we bring in the extended quote from Jeremiah, then hope for a “return” may also play into the application.
5. The extended quote includes a command from God to desist from wailing out of control and look to the future with hope. The sons will return.

Now, look at the Matthew passage and what follows the Jeremiah quote. Does it add something we might miss if we stopped at verse 18?

Matthew 2:19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord *appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

Matthew 2:20 “Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.”

Matthew 2:21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Matthew 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,

Matthew 2:23 and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

In the Matthew passage, Jesus is taken out (?exiled?) of Israel to Egypt. But He returns. He returns to eventually go to the cross and provide the basis of salvation. There is hope.

And why is there hope? Because God is in control of history. He has a plan and He will implement it taking into consideration all the acts of the angels and humans. There is hope because of God’s character. As it says in 1 John 1:9, “...He is faithful and just...”

In Jeremiah, the children return. In Matthew, Jesus returns.

By including the full quote, we have crossed into yet another “fulfillment” type: Summary Fulfillment in Matthew 2:23. No one, as far as I know, has gone into passages in the Old Testament to determine the logic behind this statement to my satisfaction. Typical of what is said is from Michael Rydelnik and D. A. Carson.

Michael Rydelnik: “The best interpretation is to view this as a summary fulfillment meaning that the phrase “He shall be called a Nazarene summarizes a teaching from the prophets about the Messiah. This is supported from within the text because here alone Matthew states that this fulfills the words of the “prophets” (plural), referring to many prophecies not just an individual one. Moreover, the conjunction *hoti* which indicates an indirect statement shows that Matthew was not

“Fulfillment” – Part 5 (Application)
Matthew 2:18

referring to a specific quotation but a general idea—a paraphrase of Matt 2:23 would be that Jesus grew up in Nazareth “to fulfill the general teaching of the prophets that the Messiah would be a Nazarene.”

D. A. Carson: The point according to D. A. Carson is “Nazareth was a despised place (Jn 7:42, 52), even to other Galileans (cf. Jn 1:46). Here Jesus grew up, not as “Jesus the Bethlehemite,” with its Davidic overtones, but as “Jesus the Nazarene,” with all the opprobrium [i.e. contempt] of the sneer. When Christians were referred to in Acts as the “Nazarene sect” (24:5), the expression was meant to hurt. First-century Christian readers of Matthew, who had tasted their share of scorn, would have quickly caught Matthew’s point. He is not saying that a particular OT prophet foretold that the Messiah would live in Nazareth; he is saying that the OT prophets foretold that the Messiah would be despised (cf. Pss 22:6-8, 13; 69:8, 20-21; Isa 11:1; 49:7; 53:2-3, 8; Da 9:26). The theme is repeatedly picked up by Matthew (e.g., 8:20; 11:16-19; 15:7-8 see Turner). In other words Matthew gives us the substance of several OT passages, no a direct quotation (so also Ezr 9:10-12; cf. Str-B, 1:92-93).”

“It is possible that at the same time there is a discreet allusion to the neseher (“branch”) of Isaiah 11:1, which received messianic interpretation in the Targums, rabbinic literature, and Dead Sea Scrolls (cf. Gundry, Use of the Old Testament, 1040), for here too, it is affirmed that David’s son would emerge from humble obscurity and low state. Jesus is King, Messiah, Son of God, Son of David; but he was a branch from a royal line hacked down to a stump and reared in surroundings guaranteed to win him scorn. Jesus the Messiah, Matthew is telling us, did not introduce his kingdom with outward show or present himself with the pomp of an earthly monarch. In accord with prophecy, he came as the despised Servant of the Lord.”