

He Shall be Called a Nazarene Matthew 2:19-23

Here we have the last of five prophetic fulfillments, serving to identify Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one of God. They not only mark Him out, they set forth the salient features of His mission.

1. **He is Immanuel**- who shall save His people from their sins.
2. **He is born in Bethlehem**; least of the tribes from which emerges a ruler who shepherds His flock
3. **He is the Son** called forth out of Israel, the Son who will both embody the redemptive purpose of God the Father for His people, and obediently serve as royal priest.
4. **He is the climax of true Israel's Messianic woes** that finally issues forth in the Nations blessing, joy and jubilation.

1. Here is the return of the New Moses to the place in which the work of deliverance will begin. Cf. Vv. 19-21. We are told that, *“When Herod died...”* an angel appeared in a dream.

It would've been soon after the slaughter of the babes. Matthew Henry said, “What was it that made way for His return- the death of Herod, which happened not long after the murder of the infants. Such quick work did divine vengeance make!” **Cf. Acts 12:20-23.**

- a) The scholarly consensus, based on [Josephus](#)' is that Herod died at the end of March or early April in 4 BC.
- b) This is confirmed by the fact that his three sons, between whom his kingdom was divided, dated their rule from **4 BC**.
- c) In addition, Josephus wrote that Herod died after a [lunar eclipse](#), and a partial eclipse took place in 4 BC. It has been suggested that **5 BC** might be a more likely date — there were two total eclipses in that year. However, the **4 B.C.** date is almost universally accepted.

After Herod died his kingdom was divided between three of his sons. Judea/Samaria came under the control of Archelaus, while Galilee and the trans-Jordan fell to Antipas. **Cf. 14:1-12).**

Like their father, they were controlled by Rome but, they were not officially given the title 'king.' Archelaus was “ethnarch” while Antipas and Phillip were “[tetrarchs](#).” Archelaus and Antipas lobbied hard and successfully to be granted local usage of the royal title.

2. The fear Joseph felt was well founded and entirely understandable. Cf. V. 22a. Archelaus inherited his father's unpopularity without his political adroitness. Josephus tells us something of his brief reign.

- a) Archelaus received the kingdom of Judea by the last will of his father, though a previous will had bequeathed it to his brother Antipas. He was proclaimed king by the army, but declined to assume the title until he had submitted his claims to [Caesar Augustus](#) in [Rome](#). Before setting out, he quelled with the utmost cruelty and sedition of the [Pharisees](#), slaying nearly three thousand of them. The massacre took place during Passover. In Rome he was opposed by Antipas and by many of the [Jews](#), who feared his cruelty; but in **4 BC** Augustus allotted to him Samaria, Judea, and Idumea.
- b) He was eventually deposed in **A.D. 6**. A delegation from Jerusalem marched to Rome to complain of his 'cruelty and tyranny.' This resulted in the second Census of Quirinius. **Cf. Lk. 2:1-3.** Judea /Samaria fell under direct Roman rule and was placed under a Roman Prefect. At the time of Christ' public ministry it was Pontius Pilate (**A.D. 26-36**).

3. They withdrew to the district of Galilee to Nazareth. Cf. Vv. 22b-23. On a number of levels Nazareth of Galilee simply made sense. **It made sense of three levels.**

- a) Another of Herod's sons, Herod Antipas ruled as ethnarch over Galilee and Perea. He was widely known to be a much more tolerant ruler. Galilee in his day became known for revolutionary sentiments that never would've been tolerated by his father, or even his brother.
- b) It was an obscure village nestled in the Galilean hills overshadowed by Sepphoris, only about four miles away, which Antipas had rebuilt as the capital of Galilee.

- c) Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary had settled there prior to being dislodged by the first census.

Nevertheless it was the product of divine logic.

4. Matthew is concerned with the way it relates to OT prophecy. Cf. 23. There seems to be two lines of prophetic fulfillment. One is obvious the other is more subtle and sustained.

- a) **Subtle and sustained:** There is probably some significance to the mention of Galilee here. After the completion of the temple Solomon gave Hiram king of Tyre 20 cities in the region of Galilee. Hiram called it "the land of Cabul" and returned them to Solomon. Solomon later rebuilt the region using labor largely taken from among the remnant of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. It came to be known as "**Galilee of the Gentiles.**" Isaiah prophesied, "**There will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time He has made more glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of darkness, on them has the light shined.**" Cf. Isa. 9:1-2. Throughout this gospel Jerusalem opposes while Galilee embraces the ministry of Jesus. After the resurrection Jesus never appears again to Jerusalem but tells the disciples, "**Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.**" There the great commission is given.
- b) **Obvious.** This is a mysterious utterance. Matthew's statement simply can not be found anywhere- neither in the OT nor in any other literature till the late 2nd century. **Two things help us.**
- Instead of a single **prophet** he speaks of "**the prophets.**"
 - He uses a different construction. He usually uses a participle (*legontos*) which we render "**what was**

spoken." It is missing; here he uses a simple conjunction "**that.**" Cf. 1:22; 2:15; 2:17:3:3.

These two things combine to suggest that what we have is not so much a direct quotation as a summarization perhaps of many, perhaps of the entire prophetic tradition.

The answer lies in the name "**Nazareth**" and what it signified. **Nazareth is a term of contempt.** It probably came from an old Hebrew word "Netzer" which means 'a branch' or 'a sprout.' You cut down a tree and just a stump or sprout comes up. So was Nazareth, all of the great movements of history had left it untouched. It was out of the way, backwards. "**Can any good thing come from Nazareth?**" It was simply to say that He would not be accepted. He would be rejected and despised.

"For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me." Ps. 69:9, 12.

Therefore Christ is cast out by Jerusalem and crucified outside the city gates as a common criminal. Those who would follow Him must, "**go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured**" knowing that, "**here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.**"

The Messianic Branch, the promised descendant of David, toward whom all pointed, was in the world. He comes as did His people out of Egypt, through the trauma of the exile, to Galilee, a light breaking forth upon those sitting in darkness, as the prophets foretold, to dwell in the unlikely town of Nazareth and so to be known as a Nazarene.

Thus according to Matthew, the plan of God unfolds. Nothing has happened by accident- all is in its proper place as it must be when the sovereign God brings salvation to the world.