

## Filling UP

*1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him (Matthew 2:1-3, HCSB)*

## Context

*Who, What, Where, When, and Why?*

*Who:* The primary actor in this sketch is Herod the great. The Wisemen (Magi), the religious leaders, the murdered boys of Bethlehem and even Joseph Mary and Jesus are all supporting actors. Obviously, this is part of the greater story about Jesus the Messiah but the focus in this particular vignette is on Herod and what he represents.

*What:* This is a story about Herod's agitation, Herod hatching a plot and Herod's murder of the boys in Bethlehem. Again, everything else is designed to drive the story forward. While Herod is the primary character in this scene, the greater story is about a mighty leader bringing the people of God out of slavery and exile

*Where:* The narrative takes place in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem of Judea.

*When:* It is most likely this took place sometime in the winter of 2 BC.

*Why:* Matthew is setting the tone for the rest of his gospel. His use of Old Testament Scriptures and how they are filled up in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ reveals his intention for the rest of his gospel narrative.

## Content

*What was the original author concerned with and what did he want his original audience to understand? Furthermore, how would the original audience interpret it?*

Matthew once she is rude audience to think deeper then the surface narrative. The passages from the Old Testament that he chose to reference give his readers a clue about how they should understand Herod and the condition of God's people.

Matthew is not saying that the Old Testament passages he references are fulfilled in Jesus Christ – rather they are filled up. In reality, and a passage filled up is more profound than one fulfilled in the sense that it finds its completion, is fullness, it's realization in the subject Jesus the Messiah. A passage filled up has come to completion. There is no "duel application" in a passage that is full.

Thus, Matthew intended his original audience to understand that the people of God were in exile and slavery prior to the coming of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is the true Israel and is an invincible leader of God's people.

## Consideration

*What are the principles found here and how do they apply to the modern Christian?*

We have already seen that Jesus is the true son of Abraham and the true son of David. He is the true son of God and all of God's promises are yes in Jesus Christ. Most 21st-century Christians understand and accept these truths. For some reason, accepting Jesus the Messiah as the true Israel is a much greater hurdle to clear. Nevertheless, this is what Matthew wants us to understand.

When we realize who Jesus is, it affects our interpretation of Scripture. It has ramifications for our place before God. It awakens us to the fact – in a powerful way – that all of God's promises are yes in Jesus.

### **Study Questions**

- 1. What is the primary tool for understanding this section of Matthew's Gospel?*
- 2. Is there a single widely accepted interpretation of Matthew 2:23?*
- 3. What was the nature of the exile the first century people of God?*