



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: Fulfilling Prophecy

Talking to the Kids

Ever since the first writers began recoding stories about Jesus, they have tried to explain Jesus using the only scriptures they had -- the Hebrew Bible. And while the ancient authors were not writing about a future Messiah like the people who first knew Jesus wanted them to, they found in those writings stories that helped explain why Jesus was the Messiah.

So, Matthew will often say "just as scripture says" or "as the prophet says" when pointing to a story. It is Matthew's way of helping his reader understand Jesus. Look at this previous story about how God was present, and see now in Jesus, God is present this same way.

Consider when you are trying a new recipe at home. You recognize some ingredients and you know you have had some ingredients in other recipes you like, so trying them in this new recipe will be okay, because we liked the other recipe. That's a little like what Matthew is doing here.

- Recently there have been some social media videos making the rounds taking about the odds of someone fulfilling any one particular prophecy, let alone all the prophecies associated with Jesus. Some mathematician is said to have calculated the odds in some staggering way that makes a claim near impossible ... so the video points to Jesus as the one who breaks the staggering near impossible odds and is the one who fulfilled all these ancient prophecies.
- Now, the Gospel of Matthew is one of the sources for this kind of logic. Matthew has a strong emphasis on Jesus fulfilling prophecy, citing 12 examples, including his conception, his birth, his upbringing, his ministry, and his passion. But ... we do need a little bit of a closer examination here, as Matthew's citation of Micah is embellished for Jesus' birth narrative. And the prophecy in Matthew 2:23 cannot be found either in the Hebrew scriptures as we have them now, or in sources from outside the canon that would have been known in Matthew's day. So, what is happening here in Matthew, and how do we explain Jesus fulfilling prophecy?
- Matthew as a gospel writer is really emphasizing how Jesus is continuing the story of God among God's people, and he does this by drawing from Hebrew scriptures. Matthew uses the story of Moses as an outline for Jesus' birth and escape to Egypt and return narrative. Matthew demonstrates Jesus' commitment to the Law, as given by Moses. Matthew also finds stories in the Hebrew scriptures that Matthew wants to draw a direct link to --- see here is Jesus being God's presence today, just as God was present in this moment from our history.
- We do need to remember that the ancients who wrote the story of Moses, or who composed Isaiah or Micah or any of the other Hebrew Bible texts, they were all writing about their own day and time. They were not thinking about a future messiah named Jesus. They were writing hundreds of years before the Romans would even come to Judea. They were not prophesying about Jesus.
- They were telling their own stories about God being present in their own time. Any connections to Christ is an intentional action of interpretation from a later reader who sees how the ancient stories relate to the story of Jesus. This is not prophecy foretold. This is interpretation of past events and connecting them to our own day. Think of it when our nation approaches another war, and someone says "We don't want another Vietnam" ... they aren't saying the military generals of the 60's were predicting today. They see similarities in what war is like today with what war was like in generations past. And there is caution, and worry, and lessons to be learned that can apply to the new situation.
- Yes, as we read Matthew's gospel, we will see very intentional lines drawn connecting us to the Hebrew scriptures. Matthew wants us to see in Jesus the same God who was present in those very stories he is connecting us to. And perhaps today, we can draw some intentional lines, as well, and point to where God is with us today.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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