

**December 3, 2017**

**(The Star Series)**

**“The Prophecies”, Matthew 2:1-18**

In this Advent sermon series, we will study one part of the Christmas story from the book of Matthew: the story of Jesus and the Magi (or Wise Men) and the star. Matthew begins this story with the fulfillment of three prophecies concerning Jesus' birth and infancy.

**I. Micah's Old Testament prophecy (750 BC) teaches us that God knows....**about all the suffering, injustice, tragedies, obstacles, and pain of our broken world. (Micah 5)

Micah's straight forward, linear prophecy specifically predicted the birth of Jesus (the good shepherd ruler, in strength and majesty, of ancient origins) in Bethlehem, and Matthew tells us of its clear and amazing fulfillment. (Mtt. 2:5,6)

**II. Hosea's Old Testament prophecy (790 BC) teaches us that it is all about Jesus.**

This prophecy (Hosea 11:1) is shorter (“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son”), and more general without much specific detail. It is not about a person, but more about a description of a disobedient nation (Israel) falling into idolatry. Using Biblical Typology, Matthew uses an image or symbol to teach us multiple spiritual truths in Mtt. 2:15. Jesus is identified with Israel, except that as the “New Israel”, Jesus succeeds in becoming all that Israel was meant to be: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” Through Jesus, God leads His people beyond the Promised Land to all nations of the world (as shown by the Magi at His birth. ( (Mtt.2:1-13).

**III. Jeremiah's Old Testament prophecy (587 BC) teaches us that sometimes prophecy is a mystery.**

Matthew (Mtt. 2:18) points back to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 31:15) about the mourning and weeping in Ramah by Rachel (seen as mother of Israel), but it is difficult to understand what the fulfillment is after Jesus' birth when the loss of the Israelite children Herod killed (to prevent the escape of Jesus to Egypt) seems so evil, pointless, sad. However, Jeremiah 31:16,17 moves on to hope for the Israelites' future, declaring “your work will be rewarded” and “your children will return to their own land.” Yet the exact connection between the brokenness and pain of the children's death by Herod in Matthew and the hope of Jeremiah's prophecy would be a mystery for the parents. We do know, however, that God says there is hope, even in the darkest hour.

These three prophecies from Micah, Hosea, and Jeremiah point directly to Jesus. He is the center of what God is doing in this world. Christmas is all about Jesus, and worshipping him. If we focus on the gifts and the gatherings and even on the joy of the season without focusing on Jesus...we miss the whole point. We serve a God who cares, who knows all the details of the difficulties we face, and is working to fulfill His good purposes. We serve a God who sometimes clearly, sometimes mysteriously, pronounces hope over our confusion, hurt, and loss.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. If about a quarter of the Bible contains prophecies, why might they be important to us?
2. Was it new to you in Hosea to think of Jesus as the New Israel? What does it mean to you?
3. Can you handle mystery in your Christian life, or does everything have to be black & white?

4. Doesn't God promise to protect us from all harm? "A Mighty Fortress", "Under His Wings"?
5. Have you ever experienced hope in God in the midst of unexplainable or evil events?
6. What is the point of Christmas to you?? What are you celebrating??