

“Jesus and the Story of Israel” – Matthew 2:13-23; 4:1-11

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.sobc.net.]

The story of the Gospel is the story of what God has done to deliver sinful creation and humanity from their sins and the consequences of those sins that we might have everlasting life with God forever. That salvation was accomplished through the work of Christ—His perfect life, His substitutionary death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. And what I want us to see in the text this morning is that this work of God in Christ was anticipated throughout Scripture, not just in the New Testament.

It’s really quite brilliant the way God has ordered these things. Jesus was never plan B. He was always the Plan A, the only plan, our only hope. And the beauty of it all is that God arranged history in a way that anticipated Christ and His activity. He ordered things in such a way that the people of the Old Testament pointed to Christ and the major movements and events in the story of Israel pointed to Christ, so that when Christ actually arrived on the scene of history His activity would not seem foreign. It would look familiar. Kind of like *déjà vu*. You have heard of *déjà vu*, right? It’s that feeling of “that looks familiar; it’s like I have heard it or seen it before.” Or it’s like *déjà vu*, that feeling of “that looks familiar; it’s like I have heard it or seen it before.” It’s like we were being prepared for it all along and we didn’t even realize it.

Prophecy is one way that this anticipation is created and these “aha!” moments are experienced. But when we think of prophecy, we sometimes only think of specific predictions that have specific fulfillments in history. There are certainly plenty of those in the Bible. But there is also, what we might call, “patterned fulfillments” in which historical events are played out in ways that are reminiscent to previous historical events. It’s as though God has weaved into human history certain patterns that anticipate some significant event or person. Those patterns point to a greater fulfillment. They anticipate something beyond themselves.

In literature, this is sometimes referred to as typology. The original person or event is referred to as a “type” and the fulfillment is referred to as the “antitype.” The “type” is something of a shadow that prefigures the “antitype.” So if we say, Adam was a “type” of Christ, what we means is that Adam and his life pointed to Christ in some way, so it is fitting that Christ be referred to by Paul as the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45).

Today we are going to see some typology like this in Matthew’s text. Some of it is explicit through the Scriptures that Matthew cites. Other aspects are more implicit, but still possible “patterned fulfillments” (if not typologies) that Matthew probably intended. It all will seem very subtle to us, but would have been more obvious to Matthew’s original audience, who were probably from Jewish descent. Therefore, Matthew doesn’t always spell out the allusions, but that doesn’t mean he didn’t intend us to pick up on them.

To see what I mean, let’s reread the text from last week. We covered the details of the story and the historical background of the characters and events last time. This time, focus your attention on Matthew’s commentary on the various fulfillments. Start with me in Matthew 2, verse 13.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and

said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene. (Matthew 2:13-23).

This is God's Word...

Now, as I said, we discussed most of this text last time (see that online). This time I want to draw our attention to the patterned fulfillments that Matthew mentions. The first one comes after verses 13 and 14. Joseph was warned in a dream about Herod's plot to kill Jesus. He is told to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to escape Herod and remain there until God says otherwise. He obeys and stays in Egypt until Herod dies. Then, in verse 15, we read, "*This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'*"

The "prophet" Matthew is referring to is Hosea. And the passage quoted here is Hosea 11:1. The event that the prophet Hosea was referring to is the Exodus event in the Old Testament. So Matthew is saying, the Exodus has something to do with Jesus.

When You Think of the Exodus...Think of Jesus

Jesus Initiates a New Exodus

When Christians think of salvation and deliverance and redemption and ransom and all those salvific pictures, the image that comes to our minds is the cross. Why? Because it was on the cross that Jesus substituted Himself for sinners so that all of these things I just mentioned are accomplished for those who through faith, turn from their sins and trust Christ and His work alone to save them. So when we think of salvation (or anything related to it), we think of the cross.

In the Old Testament, when they thought of salvation, they would have thought of the Exodus. It was the Exodus event where Israel experienced salvation, deliverance, redemption, and ransom from their oppression in Egypt, their physical bondage. It is sometimes said that the Exodus is to the Old Testament what the cross is to the New Testament. In fact, the Exodus was one of those pointers that pointed beyond itself. It was pointing to Christ's work on the cross. God delivered His people the way He did in Exodus so that we would have the framework to understand the work of Christ later. The people were delivered from slavery in Egypt because of God's grace. God's grace preceded His covenant with His people. Obedience flowed from the grace of God, not the other way around. The people didn't work to earn deliverance. God delivered them and then frames their future obedience to the Law as a reaction of worship to the grace and

deliverance He had already extended to them. Likewise, all of those things are true for the cross of Christ, though on a much grander scale. God saves us in Christ, not merely from physical bondage but from a worse and more deadly spiritual bondage. That work of Christ brings us into a new covenant relationship with God. And our living a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus is not to earn His favor; it's a response to the favor He has already extended to us. So the Exodus story was a shadow that God set up to prepare us for the work of Jesus Christ.

So Matthew is trying to get us to make that association. He's showing us how the story of Jesus calls to mind the Exodus as a way of saying something of Exodus-proportions is happening now that Jesus is here. Jesus is a like a new Moses, who has come to His people in their bondage to lead them to freedom. To bring them into a Promised Land. To carry them into God's rest.

Think of some of this Moses typology Matthew is hinting at. In the Exodus story, the murderous Pharaoh kills the Hebrew children, the child Moses is delivered from these attempts. In Matthew, the murderous king Herod kills these babies in Bethlehem, but the child Jesus is delivered from that plot. In the Exodus story, Moses is hidden from the Pharaoh and survives. In Matthew, Jesus is hidden from Herod and survives. Moses was adopted by the woman who protected him; Jesus was adopted by the man who protected him. Moses was a prince in Egypt; Jesus was the Prince of Peace. There is no information about the period between Moses' childhood and his adulthood; the same is true for Jesus. Moses became a shepherd; shepherding language is commonly used for Jesus. Moses expounded God's Law from Mount Sinai; Jesus will do the same during the Sermon on the Mount. Moses is the mediator of the Old Covenant; Jesus mediates the New Covenant. And on and on we could go. But you get the idea.

As the Jewish people in Matthew's day began to sense these kinds of parallels, you can imagine the anticipation it would have created. Something big must be in the works. Something big indeed. A new and better Exodus. A deliverance not from bondage in Egypt, but from a greater bondage, a bondage to sin and death. Jesus came to lead us out of that slavery. He is the new and greater Moses who initiates a new and greater Exodus. All of this is called to mind in this story.

But notice, again, that it is Hosea 11:1 that Matthew quotes. A closer look at the context of Hosea 11 demonstrates that the prophet was indeed talking about the Exodus. But the quotation doesn't so much highlight the link between Jesus and Moses, but rather the link between Jesus and Israel. Hosea says, "*Out of Egypt I called my son.*" That's the part Matthew quotes. But what does Hosea mean by "my son"? The first part of Hosea 11:1 answers that. It says, "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*" Matthew takes that verse, which was a reference to Israel, and suggests that, in some sense, it was fulfilled in Christ. Which means...

When You Think of Israel...Think of Jesus

Jesus Enacts Israel's Story and Succeeds Where They Failed

Jesus is the true Israel. Jesus is not just a new and better Moses and a new and better deliverer (cf. Hebrews 3:3). He is also "the embodiment of Israel itself, a new and better 'son.'"¹ The circumstances of Jesus' life display a design to them that calls to mind the story of Israel. He identified with His people. He walked where they walked. He experienced what they experienced. Yet when He experienced it, He did not sin. He succeeded where they failed.

Listen to the next verse in Hosea—"the more they [i.e. the Israelites] were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols" (Hosea 11:2). A few verses later, the Lord goes on to say, "My people are bent on turning away from me..." (11:7). The point is that Israel, like the rest of humanity, has not done the things God has required and has done the things God has prohibited.

This is our problem. This is what sin is. We've all sinned. That sin separates us from God. Sin brings consequences. If we are to be with God and have a relationship with God, something has to remove our sin. But if God just wipes it away, then he would not be just any more than a judge would be just if he just let every criminal off the hook. A price has to be paid for that sin. A price has to be paid for our sin. God has made a way for that price to be paid by another as a substitute. In other words, if someone else can take your place and take the consequences of your sin then God's love could be experienced by you and his justice would be satisfied.

The problem is, who is going to take your place? Who is going to take the consequences of your sin? Who is going to die the death that we deserve for our sin against a holy God? I can't die for you, because I have my own sin and someone needs to die for me. You can't substitute yourself for me, because you have your own sin and need a substitute for you. Since all have sinned, there is no hope for us. No hope, that is, unless someone comes and lives a life without sin, lives a life of perfect obedience. If someone lived that perfect life, then he could be our substitute. He could take our place. And that's why Jesus came. And that's why Jesus had to live a life without sin, because the moment He sins He would become just like us, needing His own Savior. Thanks be to God that Jesus never sinned. We have hope because He lived the life we should have lived and was therefore He is the only one who can lay down His life in our place for our sin. He is the only possible Savior you have.

Now, the Gospel writers of the New Testament, love highlighting the way Jesus was in the same kinds of situations as Israel, faced the same kinds of temptations, in a lot of the same ways, and yet He never sinned. He was obedient, where they were disobedient. One of the clearest example of this picture is a on the next page in Matthew. Look at chapter 4. In verse 1, we read,

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came...” (Matthew 4:1-3a)

What follows is a series of temptations that are issued by the devil to Jesus. But notice where Jesus was led. He's in the wilderness. And notice how long he is there—forty days and nights. What does that remind us of? It calls to mind the 40 years that Israel wandered in the wilderness and was tempted to wander away from the Lord. Now Jesus is in the wilderness, for a period of 40, being tempted by the evil one.

Here again, Jesus is living out the story of Israel. But, again, notice the contrast. Jesus doesn't sin in the wilderness like they did. He resisted the temptations. And notice how He did so—by quoting Scripture that just so happened to come from the book of Deuteronomy, which is the book that describes the Law that was given to that wandering generation in the wilderness. Jesus took serious God's Law and chose not to sin in every temptation. Israel ignored God's law, fell into sin, which is why they wandered around and a generation died in the wilderness. Matthew is teaching us that Jesus embodies the story of Israel. He is a new Israel who reminds us of what God's people should have looked like had they not chosen the path of sin instead.

Matthew is highlighting the same thing back in Matthew 2 with his quotation from Hosea 11:1, because that passage in Hosea stresses the sinfulness of Israel, God's son, who God delivered out of Egypt. Here, God's Son, God's beloved Son (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) by contrast was sinless when *“out of Egypt God called His Son.”* And, by the way, it was Jacob (who was also called “Israel” and from whom all Israelites descended and derived their name) who originally fled to Egypt for deliverance for him and his family. That is yet another allusion that connects Jesus to Israel. So when you think of Israel, think of Jesus, because Jesus enacted Israel's story and succeeded where they failed. That's why He alone can save us. Next...

When You Think of the Exile...Think of Jesus

Jesus Brings to Pass the Hopes of the Exiles

Now where does that idea come from in the text? It comes from the quotation in verses 17 and 18.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

Here Matthew is quoting Jeremiah 31:15. In that passage, the prophet Jeremiah is describing the anguish felt by Israel, when the Southern Kingdom of Judah was carried off to exile by the Babylonians. He describes this in a very vivid way. Rachel was the wife of Jacob/Israel and was known as the "mother of Israel." She died giving birth to Benjamin. On the basis of Genesis 35:16-19, it is believed that she was buried in Ramah. Ramah is just north of Jerusalem by five or six miles. The Babylonians who came and destroyed Jerusalem came from the North and carried the people of Jerusalem into exile back in Babylon. What that means is the people who were carried into exile were carried through Ramah, where Rachel was buried. So Jeremiah is depicting Rachel weeping loudly as her descendants were carried past her grave into exile. It was a time of great uncertainty. A time when families were separated and some would never see their family again.

So why does Matthew quote it here? In part, it's because the people of Bethlehem are experiencing great anguish now as they have been separated from their children who were killed by Herod's thugs. So it's fitting that this passage describing grief would be cited in this new time of great grief. But there is more to it than that actually.

Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet and most of his book is sorrowful. That verse Matthew quotes is no exception. However, the chapter of Jeremiah it comes from, chapter 31, is actually a chapter of hope. The verses that come next in Jeremiah say,

Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for the future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country." (Jeremiah 31:16-17)

Earlier, the prophet said, "*they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them*" (30:9). So the passage Matthew is quoting actually comes out of a context describing the end of that trail of tears, the end of the exile. It's describing a time when God will restore His people and they will dwell again under the authority of the Davidic king (who as we have seen in previous sermons, that King is Jesus Himself). Jeremiah is talking about a time when God would establish a new covenant. Later in Jeremiah 31, we read:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

These are some of the most famous New Covenant texts we find in the Old Testament. So here is the point, by quoting from Jeremiah 31, Matthew is calling to mind the exile and by extension all of the hopes that were given to the exiles. He is saying to His audience, “The wait is over. The King has come. And those hopes are about to climax in Christ.” Our time of weeping now has an end in sight. Christ is here! He’s bringing those hopes to fruition. And sure enough, Jesus will die and shed the blood that established this New Covenant. That same blood makes possible what Jeremiah described when he said the LORD promises to “*forgive their iniquity*” and “*remember their sin no more*” (Jeremiah 31:34). So when we think of the exile, we ought to think of Jesus, because it is Jesus who brings to pass all of the new covenant hopes given to the exiles in the Old Testament (cf. Hebrews 8:8ff). Jesus brings us hope in the midst of our despair. He comes and He will come again and wipe away our tears. All of them. Every tear from our eyes, He will wipe away.

Then finally...

When You Think of Nazareth...Think of Jesus

Jesus Was Despised Because God’s Ways Are Not Our Ways

At the end of Matthew 2, we find Joseph returning from Egypt and relocating in the hometown of he and his wife, the city of Nazareth. Then in verse 23, Matthew adds that this happens “*so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.*” Now if you search the Old Testament, you will never find a passage that says exactly that. So what is Matthew up to?

Some have suggested that perhaps Matthew has in mind Isaiah 11:1, in which case Matthew may be using a word play. In Isaiah, the prophet uses the word *natzair*, which is translated “branch.” Isaiah says,

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD....” (Isaiah 11:1-3a)

This is clearly a messianic text. It’s a text that describes the coming of the Jewish Messiah and Davidic King. This King would, like David, be a descendent of Jesse (David’s father). So perhaps Matthew is using this wordplay as a way of saying that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. In fact, others have even suggested that the place name “Nazareth” was derived from this passage and given the name by a group of exiles who returned and settled in this region giving the city this name to remind them of their Messianic hopes.ⁱⁱ These are common suggestion, though not without a fair share of detractors among scholars.

Another possibility is that Matthew doesn’t have one prophetic text in mind, but an idea that can be traced in many texts. Notice that Matthew shifts the language a bit here. Instead of something like, “this happened to fulfill what the prophet so-and-so said...”, here he mentions no specific prophet. Instead he says “prophets” (plural), which may support the idea that he’s trying to draw attention to some idea taught in various prophetic writings. What idea? Well, that’s the million-dollar question, isn’t it?

The best way to answer that is to consider what Matthew’s original audience would have thought when they heard a reference to Nazareth. Nazareth was a Podunk town. Have you heard the expression “hicks in the sticks”? That’s Nazareth. When Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, lists all the cities and towns of the region he doesn’t even mention Nazareth, either because he forgot about it or he was trying to forget about it.

Perhaps the best example of a raw and uncensored reaction to the fact that Jesus would be associated with Nazareth comes from Nathaniel in the New Testament. When he firsts learns of “Jesus of Nazareth,” he

blurts out a now famous question—“*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” To which Philip replies, “*Come and see*” (John 1:46). You see, “Jesus of Bethlehem” has a nice ring to it. It has a ring of messianic majesty. That’s David’s city. The King’s city. But “Jesus of Nazareth” is something entirely different. That just doesn’t sound right. That evokes “overtones of contempt.”ⁱⁱⁱ Nazareth became a term of derision. Nazarenes were stereotyped as people who were rough and rude. And yet, God arranged things in such a way that “Jesus of Nazareth” would be the word on the streets.

For this reason, and many others, “he was despised and rejected” as prophet Isaiah said he would be (Isaiah 53:3). I think that is point Matthew is making. As D. A. Carson states in his commentary,

“First-century 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; Dan 9:26). The theme is repeatedly picked up by Matthew (e.g., 8:20; 11:16-19; 15:7-8).”^{iv}

Why would God arrange things in this manner? Why would he send our Savior with these associations? Because His ways are not our ways. I think this is another example of what Paul was getting at when he told the Corinthians:

“God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)

Do you see his point? He’s saying, God’s ways are not our ways. He operates differently than us. And He does so in order that he might deflate the pretensions of all the rebellious world. Where the world chooses the powerful, God gets it done through the weak and powerless. God chooses nobodies and Podunk towns like Nazareth. And why? Paul makes that very clear in verse 29—“*so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*” God refuses to attach His salvation of us to anything the world says is important and worthy because God doesn’t want anyone to boast in their salvation before the Lord. No one gets to say, “look at me I was so good I earned it. Aren’t I awesome?” No one gets to say, “Good thing I was so rich that the Gospel came to me because of my success and riches.” No one gets to say, “I searched hard enough that I finally found the Lord through my perseverance and smarts.” We don’t get to say, “I earned this. I deserved this. I made it.”

No. We get to say, with the Psalmist, “Who am I that you are mindful of me, what is man that you care for him?” (Psalm 8:4). And as Paul continues in that passage in 1 Corinthians 1, it is “because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

So, let’s review,

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When You Think of Israel...Think of Jesus

Jesus Enacts Israel’s Story and Succeeds Where They Failed

When You Think of the Exile...Think of Jesus

Jesus Brings to Pass the Hopes of the Exiles

When You Think of Nazareth...Think of Jesus

Jesus Was Despised Because God's Ways Are Not Our Ways

Here are a couple of takeaways from this.

First of all, Matthew has just shown, very subtly, yet powerfully, that the major points of history in God's people's story—the Exodus, the nation of Israel, the Exile, the prophetic writings—pointed to Jesus. That's another way of saying that the whole Bible is about Jesus. The whole scope of history, which the Bible addresses the heart of, pertains to Jesus and His work in accomplishing the redemption of God's creation, including our salvation. It's about Him. Jesus is the center of history.

What these biblical citations and allusions, therefore, remind us of is, first, that nothing can thwart God's plan. God is sovereignly working in history to accomplish His purposes, which all relate to Christ Jesus. He's working all things together for our good and history gives witness to the fact that God's "got this." History is in good hands. What God has promised will come to pass, because He is both faithful and sovereign.

And, second, if all of history has Jesus at the center, then why should your life be any different? We cannot see what we have seen in this text this morning and walk away and relegate Jesus to a closet of our life. He's not an add-on to your life, a supplement to your schedule. He should be your life. He is not a chapter in your story, you're a chapter in His story. This life is about Him, not you. And if you are living for anything other than Him, you're crazy. You're just plain crazy. And you're wasting your life. God has put you where He has—in your family, at your job, at this church, in your neighborhood, among your friends, in that class—for a reason. And that reason is so that you can make much of Him by going public with the Gospel. God doesn't offer us good news of a glorious salvation accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection and obtained by grace through faith so that we could receive that gift and then live lives without reference to that salvation. No! As one author put it,

“The Gospel came to you because it was heading for someone else. God never intended for your salvation to be an end, but a beginning. God saved you to be a conduit through whom His glorious, life-changing gospel could flow to others. You are a link in the chain of 2 Timothy 2:2, which says, ‘What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.’”^v

If Jesus is the center of history and you are a follower of this Jesus, then the only appropriate response to this glorious Savior is to live a life that is about making Him known. Live your life for Him church. He is worthy of that. That's what you are called to live for. All of us. Not for acquiring more trinkets and TV channels and titles and digits in your 401k. Live a life that makes much of Him, wherever God has placed you. If you live for anything else you will waste your life.

I'll leave you with my favorite poem:

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;

Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgment seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its clays I must fulfill,
living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.^{vi}

Church, listen...

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

ⁱ Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 52-53.

ⁱⁱ See for example, O'Donnell, 56.

ⁱⁱⁱ Daniel Doriani, *Matthew, Volume 1* (Reformed Expository Commentary; P&R: 2008), 40.

^{iv} D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *Matthew & Mark* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 124-125.

^v Robby Gallaty with Randall Collins, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013), xix.

^{vi} "Only One Life" by C. T. Studd, which can be found in various places online. I am not aware of a book that has the poem in print.