

Matthew 2:13-23 - Doug O'Donnell

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[0:00] Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. You hear me alright?

! And each of these lenses looks at the advent of Christ in important and unique ways and gives us the full picture of what God wants us to see about Jesus and his word.

So let's turn, open your Bibles again back to the text that Ted read to Matthew 2, 13 through 23 and I'll pray and then we'll see what God wants us to see. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, this morning our simple prayer is that you would open our eyes to see Jesus. Help us to know him better. Help us to love him more. Help us to worship him. We pray in his name. Amen.

In 1893, Chicago hosted the World's Fair. And Daniel Burnham, who was later responsible for the plan of Chicago, that beautiful architectural layout of the lakefront, what we have today with the museums and all of the parks and all of that.

[1:24] He was one of those architects. He was also commissioned to be an architect for this World's Fair. And at that time, he lived in Evanston. And the event was going to be in Jackson Park on the south side near Hyde Park, about 20 miles away.

In those days, with poorly paved roads, inefficient means of transportation, for him to commute from up in Sheridan Road down to South Stony Island Avenue was unfeasible.

And so he planned, as he planned for the fair, he actually worked and he lived on the south side. Well, this time away from family was very difficult for him, as attested by the many letters that he wrote to his wife, speaking of how he missed her and longed to be home.

They're just 20 miles away from each other. Now, think of this. If it took Burnham in the late 19th century America about half a day to travel from Evanston to Jackson Park, imagine how long it would have taken the Magi, the wise men, to travel from the east, what today is Jordan or Iraq or even as far as Iran.

From Baghdad to Bethlehem is 547 miles in extremely inhospitable terrain. But even if it wasn't that far, if it was only 200 miles or 20 miles, why would anyone desire to do this?

[2:54] Why would you leave friends and family, maybe a wife and children, likely for a year or two? What's at stake? What's the need? What's the driving impulse?

Well, today, that's what we're here to find out. Our discovery begins with us grasping what Matthew is doing in this first part of his gospel. Like a good architect, he's structured his narrative of the life of Jesus in a certain particular way.

He begins with the genealogy of Jesus, chapter 1, 1 through 17, to show us that Jesus comes from the right line at the right time and it's all the right design. That's the groundwork he sets in place.

And from there, he's going to construct these five pillars. Starting in chapter 1, 18 and ending in chapter 2, 23, Matthew gives us five fulfillments of what has been said through the prophets.

And if you're taking notes, those can be found in 1, 23, and then in chapter 2, verse 6, 15, 18, and 23. And if you're not taking notes, I'm praying for you now.

[4:00] So the first two are what I call precise fulfillments. Precise fulfillments. And then the latter three are what I'll call pattern fulfillments. Precise and pattern fulfillments.

By precise, I mean this is that. This is that. I borrow this phrase from Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2, 16.

That's the language. This, what is happening right now in the life of Jesus, is that. What the Old Testament said was going to happen. Thus in Acts 2, the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter says, is

this.

That's the language he uses. And the prophecy of Joel is that. That's precise fulfillments. Then pattern fulfillments, often under the label typology, works a bit different.

Here's my description of them. This is this. So something that happened in the past becomes a pattern for something that's going to happen in the life and ministry of Jesus.

[5:00] And I'll explain this is this when we get to that. I sound like Dr. Seuss, don't I? For now, we're going to look at the precise fulfillments that this is that.

We start with Isaiah. Isaiah 7, chapter 7 through 11, we read, there's going to be this king. A lot of this has been in our liturgy today. From the line of David, he'll be called Mighty God and Prince of Peace.

And this king is going to be born in an unusual way. He'll be born of a virgin. In Matthew 1, 18 through 25, the evangelist says, listen, this is that.

This Mary is that virgin. This Jesus is that God child, the prince of whom the whole world's governance will be upon his shoulders. That's the first precise fulfillment.

The second involves the place of this child's birth. The wise men know enough from Israel's prophets that they know the Messiah is going to be born. And he'll be born when they see this star.

[6:01] And so they follow the star and they follow the star all the way near Jerusalem because they think the holy city, the capital city, is surely where the Messiah will be. When they get there, they don't find the king of the Jews or people talking about the king of the Jews.

So they go to Herod, the guy in charge, and they say, where is he who is born the king of the Jews? And Herod, if you remember, doesn't know where the Messiah would be born.

So he calls in the experts, the religious leaders, the scribes, they tell him, in Bethlehem. When the Messiah comes, he will be born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a small town five miles south of Jerusalem, the same place that King David was born.

So that, again, is this, is that. Jesus was born in this particular town. Micah predicted that that would be the very town in which he would be born.

So those are the two precise fulfillments. Easy enough. And when I think about these precise fulfillments, and not just the ones about Jesus, what we have here this morning, but the ones by Jesus himself, that he is going to die and rise again, that his gospel would spread to all the nations, that his words, as well as his church, will be around forever.

[7:11] When I think of these predictions by Jesus and about Jesus, they, for me, are the closest things to touching the wounds of Christ. Remember when Thomas needed to touch Jesus' hands and feet inside, and then he would believe.

So, too, as I touch, so to speak, Jesus through these fulfillments, it's a tangible way in which God helps me to believe God's word and believe God's Son. Now then, if the precise fulfillments are like touching the hands of Christ, the patterned fulfillments, I think, are even greater.

I think they're more tangible. They're like holding on to the hands of Christ. They're not only this momentary touching of the hand, but this holding on, feeling his hand fit in yours and vice versa, that his hand fits just like these Old Testament patterns fit so well.

And I'll show you what I mean as we kind of walk through now verses 13 through 23. Years ago, as we were having classes over at College Church, which we prayed about this morning, those interested in joining my family, the Fulton family, and planting New Covenant Church in Naperville, a young man who was at that time studying Biblical Ex-Jesus, MA in Biblical Ex-Jesus at Wheaton, he came up to me and he said, are you ever going to preach on the Gospel of Matthew at this new church?

And I said, indeed, that's going to be actually the first book I preached through. And there was this sigh of relief. He said, good, because I can't wait to hear what you say about chapter 2. I don't know what Matthew's doing with Scripture.

[8:40] Now what is Matthew doing here with the Hebrew Bible? At first glance, it seems like he's randomly taking these Old Testament verses and trying to squeeze them into the life of Jesus.

Very much like a husband whose waistline has grown two inches since Thanksgiving, trying on the new jeans his wife gives him for Christmas, and saying, yeah, sure, honey, they fit great. At first reading, we can see how someone might think that's the case.

He's just squeezing things in there. You might think, others think, like the liberal Bible scholar William Barclay did when he wrote, Matthew is doing what he often did, and in his eagerness, he's finding a prophecy where there's no prophecy.

Or with equal skepticism, someone, some of you might think as Ulrich Lutz does, the distinguished Swiss scholar wrote, thus, at our text, one can speak no longer of a fulfillment of Old Testament predictions by God, but only the early Christian belief in the fulfillment.

In other words, God is not actually doing something in history, but Matthew, the early church, is sort of forcing that God is doing something through Jesus. He's making it up in order that you might believe about Jesus.

[9:47] Now, the problem with this kind of reading is that it views these Old Testament texts, back to my analogy, more like a pair of jeans that needs to perfectly fit a certain size body, rather than viewing it as a puzzle with these random pieces that are scattered all over the place.

But when you put them all together, the puzzle fits perfectly. In fact, what we have here is one of those double-sided puzzles, where there's puzzles, you can see an image on both sides.

And when they're fitted together, laying on the glass, you're to see two things. So, there's these two Old Testament themes that Matthew's going to bring together. And once you look under the glass, once you see what he's done on the surface, and look under the glass, you'll see the headshot of Jesus.

Or, as Paul put it, the light of the knowledge of the glory in the face of Christ. Now, if it helps, think of what Matthew is doing here as being similar to what the author of Hebrews does. In Hebrews, we have laid on the glass table these pieces that comprise the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifice.

And once those are all nicely fitted together, we look under the table, and we see Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of all three pieces of the whole sacrificial system. In a very similar way, Matthew is not thumbing through his Bible, looking for random proof texts to somehow say that Jesus fulfilled these.

[11:07] Rather, he's reading through the whole story of Israel, and noticing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, how this story, back then, is a lot like this story in Jesus.

So, here's the first similarity that Matthew sees. Look with me again at verses 13 through 16. Now, when they, the Magi, had departed, behold, take a look at this, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph.

And notice again, Joseph is going to be the main character, moving all the action along. And Joseph is obedient to whatever God says, and it's always through a dream and an angel. The angel said to him, Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child and destroy him, to destroy him.

And so he, Joseph, rose and took the child and his mother by night, and they departed to Egypt. Can you imagine this, what they're going through here? And they remained there as refugees until the death of Herod.

And this was, Matthew says, to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, out of Egypt I called my son. The prophet he's referring to here is Hosea.

[12:14] This is a direct quote from Hosea 11.1. In the original context, Hosea is recalling how God, through Moses, called Israel out of Egypt. So as Matthew looks, through Hosea 11.1, back to the Exodus, back to the beginning of Israel as a nation, he sees a similar pattern in Jesus' early years.

Matthew sees that this Exodus under Moses' leadership is repeated, and it is fulfilled in a new and a better way. And it's not just that Jesus is a better Moses, a new, better deliverer.

Rather, Jesus is an embodiment of Israel itself, and he is a new and better son. And if you read on, and this afternoon you can do that, the Bears game is over, right?

You can read on this afternoon, and the rest of Matthew, especially the next five chapters, you will see this pattern repeated over and over again. And John Stott summarizes the data this way, and

this I find really interesting and really helpful, and hopefully you do as well.

As Israel was oppressed under Egypt, under the despotic rule of Pharaoh, so infant Jesus became a refugee in Egypt under the despotic rule of Herod.

[13:24] As Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, so Jesus passes through the waters of John's baptism in the Jordan River. As Israel was tested in the wilderness of Zin for 40 years, so Jesus was tested in the wilderness of Judea for 40 days.

As Moses from Mount Sinai gave Israel the law, so Jesus from the Mount of Beatitudes gave his disciples the true interpretation and amplification of the law.

So you see here, the start of this providential pattern, Matthew is saying, I want you to picture the Exodus, and then I want you to picture Jesus. Picture Israel, whom Hosea says at the start of God's plan of salvation, he calls them my son, and then picture Jesus, who God calls in Matthew, my son at his baptism.

This is my beloved son at his transfiguration. This is my beloved son. And just as Israel went down to Egypt, and then came up out of Egypt into the promised land, so God's son is going to make that same journey.

This is this. This story relates to this bigger and better story. So that's the first pattern fulfillment.

[14:34] The Exodus and Jesus. The second is the exile and Jesus. The exile and Jesus. Or more specifically, the return from the Babylonian exile, and how that relates to the restoration that is going to come as Jesus came into the world.

Now let's say you see me in a grocery store. The grocery store, let's say Aldi. Let's make it Whole Foods, actually. And you said, Pastor O.

That's what I was called when I was his pastor back then. He called me Pastor O a couple weeks ago. And I love being called Pastor O, so you can call me that if you want. Say, Pastor O, I have a very important question for you.

Can you name the seven most important events in Israel's history? And I would reply, of course. For what other purpose do I exist? And I would stop inspecting the avocados and begin without further ado.

Number one, the call and covenant of Abraham. Number two, the conquest of Canaan. Number three, the Exodus. Number four, David and the Davidic covenant.

[15:34] Number five, Israel's exile to Syria. Number six, Judah's exile to Babylon. And number seven, the return and the restoration from exile.

Now, if you followed up by saying, nice job, Pastor O. You're both wise and learned. Can I ask you one more question? How about the top two? What would be your top two?

Well, I would scratch my head only momentarily. Place a jar of caviar in my basket. Two jars, probably. And say, the Exodus and the return from the exile.

The Exodus and the return from the exile. I honestly would have said that before reading Matthew 2. And now having studied Matthew 2 all week afresh, I am happy that I landed exactly where the inspired evangelists landed.

For Matthew says, I want you to look at the Exodus. Then I want you to look at Jesus. And then he says in the next verses, 16 through 18, look at the exile. And the return from the exile. And then look at Jesus.

[16:30] And you'll find another similarity of sorts. So listen again to this tale, this tragic tale that is depicted in our next verses.

And 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 all in that region who were two and under, according to the time he had ascertained from the wise men when he found out from them.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah weeping in loud lamentation. Rachel weeping for her children.

She refused to be comforted because they are no more. What Herod does here, usually called the slaughter of the innocents, is horrific. One of the most horrific acts in history.

And I don't want to downplay the evil event. But having said that, the focus of this sermon is going to be more on verses 17 and 18, the prophecy, then on verse 16, the tragedy. We're focusing on how the tragedy aligns with the prophecy and both align with Jesus.

[17:33] Now this prophecy comes from Jeremiah 31 15. When Jeremiah speaks of Rachel, he's referring to the matriarch, the wife of Jacob. Rachel died, you may remember, after giving birth to Benjamin.

And because of this, she took on a symbolic role for God's people. She was called, known as the Mater della Rosa, the sorrowful mother of the Old Testament, as well as the mother of Israel for all time, is what the rabbis would call her.

At one point, the prophet Jeremiah, like many Judean prisoners, was held prisoner in Ramah. This town is five miles north of Jerusalem. This was the town that Rachel was likely buried in, Genesis 35.

It's also the town through which God's people marched after they were captured by the Babylonians and brought into exile. Concerning this event, Jeremiah envisions in chapter 31, the mother of Israel, as if she's still alive in her tomb, weeping for her children as they walk before her very eyes into captivity.

We say, okay, what is Jeremiah 31 then? That whole story, what does that have to do with Jesus? Why quote from that chapter and relate it to the slaughter of these children? Well, here's the relationship between the two. In Jeremiah 31, Rachel's tears, the tears of the exile, have reached their climax in the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem.

[18:47] In other words, with Jesus, this trail of tears is going to finally come to an end eventually. That's the message of the whole chapter of Jeremiah 31, which you can also read this afternoon.

Unlike most of the book of Jeremiah, where everything is about sorrow and sad things, that chapter is a chapter full of hope. The verse right after Matthew quotes verse 16 is this, keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears.

Now, why would God's people stop crying, refrain from crying after such horrific events? Because God's people, finally, verse 16, same verse, shall come back from the land of the enemy.

They shall return. And what will they do? Chapter before it, chapter 30, verse 9, They will serve the Lord their God and David their king. David's dead at this point. So David, this ultimate Davidic king. In other words, the exile, Jeremiah says, is over. And the reign of a new king has come under a new covenant. Jeremiah 31, 33 through 34 is at hand in the coming of Jesus.

[19:54] Put simply, Matthew is saying that with the coming of Jesus, the time of the exile is at a close. Now, Matthew's hinted at this. The last verse of the genealogy, he's talked about the deportation of the Babylon.

He's hinted at this with illustrated with the coming of the Magi, possibly from Babylon. And now he alludes to it through the prophets. The shed tears by the mothers in Bethlehem, in a way, inaugurate the kingship, the reign, the ultimate reign, the rule of the one who will shed blood like, shed tears like drops of blood for the forgiveness of sins.

And for all, and he will, for all who are his, restore all things and wipe every tear away. So can you see, can you see, you sense your hand fitting nicely into Christ, saying to yourself, yes, these pattern prophecies, they help us to grasp who Jesus is better than we have before.

Now, as an aside, although it's quite connected to what I'm talking about, I'm working on a commentary on Luke, and I'm in chapter 7 this week, and I'm writing on the raising of the widow's son at Nain.

And get this, when Jesus sees the funeral procession, remember the story. Luke records these words, He had compassion on her, and he said to her, Do not weep.

[21:17] Do not weep. I thought, how unusual, how inappropriate, she just lost her son. Why would he say, do not weep? I never made the connection until Thursday, when I was working on both texts together, that what Jesus is getting at here is Jeremiah 31, verse 36, or 16, I think it is.

Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears. Why is he saying that? Because in him, the exile is over. In Jesus, the new covenant has come.

In Jesus, all the children of God can celebrate, because he has conquered the greatest enemy, death. There will be no more weeping. It has all come to an end.

So Jesus and the exodus. That's the first pattern we see. Jesus and the return from the exile. That's the second. And finally, we come to the third pattern, prophecy, which is the hardest puzzle piece to fit of them all.

Listen again to verses 19 through 23. But when Herod died, behold, take a look at this, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph. So once again, keep an eye on Joseph and him doing the will of God.

[22:25] In Egypt, saying, rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. For those who have sought the child's life are dead. So he rose and he took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the place of his father, Herod, so quite a dysfunctional family, he was afraid to go there. This was his hometown he wanted to go to, back to where he had grown up, where his family was from.

He was afraid to go there. Being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, farther in the north. And he went and lived, he, Jesus now, went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled.

He shall be called a Nazarene. What makes verse 23, that final verse, difficult, is there's no prophecy in the Old Testament that says exactly that.

In fact, Nazareth's not mentioned in the Old Testament. Nazareth's not mentioned in any ancient Jewish writing. So what is Matthew doing here? Is he just using his apostolic authority to pull a bunny out of a trick hat?

[23:29] No. Now the key to beginning to understand this complex allusion is Matthew's use of the word, the plural word, prophets. Instead of saying, as he's done thus far, this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, here he writes prophets.

Now what specifically does he have in mind? Prophets is a pretty big category. Well, I think he's blending together two messianic ideas, ideas about the Christ who would come.

From the time of David onward, the prophets, they talk a lot about this ultimate Davidic king, often called the son of David. Matthew 1.1, Jesus Christ, the son of David.

That's how he starts his gospel. They also talk about the seemingly contrary idea, at least to the Pharisees of Jesus' time, of the Gentiles, the non-Jews, becoming part of God's people under the rule of God's king.

So remember the visit of the Magi. Remember, in other words, the Abrahamic covenant.

Remember Matthew 1.1. This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. When Matthew says of Jesus, verse 23, he shall be called a Nazarene, and I think he's blending these two ideas together.

[24:41] In Hebrew, the word for branch is naser. Isaiah 11.1, important messianic phrase, uses the text, uses this word. Isaiah says, There shall come forth from a shoot, a stump of Jesse and the branch, naser, and from his roots shall bear fruit.

From David's royal line shall come this branch, this Messiah. We've been singing this throughout Advent. Advent, lo, how an air, how a rose air, or ever, is blooming.

From tender stem, branch, that is the idea, has sprung, of Jesse's, that's David's father's, lineage coming, as seers of old. Prophets.

As prophets. Not one seer of old. As prophets have sung. Now it is possible the town of Nazareth was named after Isaiah 11.1.1, although fewer and fewer scholars think that's the case.

We don't know exactly what naser can mean, or nazer means in the Nazareth thing. There's different opinions about what that is. What is certain, though, but it could have been. It could have been named after the city of the branch, something like that.

[25:46] What is certain, though, is that region was settled, first settled, by a group of exiles, returned from the Babylonian exile, and some of them were from the line of David, such as, verse 20 and verse chapter 1, Joseph, the son of David.

Now another interesting fact about Nazareth, and this is the second part of what the prophets are talking about, what they predicted, is its location in the region of Galilee, which had a mix of Jews and Gentiles.

And due to this, Matthew, following Isaiah, he's quoting from Isaiah, called it in chapter 4, verse 15, Galilee of the Gentiles. There are so many Gentiles that lived in that region, it gets that title.

And due to this ethnic diversity, Galilee, Nazareth was a part of that in particular, was looked down upon by others from the south, from Jerusalem and Judea, such as Nathanael.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Part of the problem with Nazareth was not just his backwoods, but it's got Gentiles living there. Nathanael assumed the Messiah, if he would come, he would be a pure breed, if he would be a Jewish Messiah, from Jerusalem, not from Nazareth.

[26:53] He wouldn't come from that region of the world. But, ah, Matthew says here in verse 23, think again. Think about the prophets. Think about what they had, their vision for this Davidic king who would come to rule all nations.

Think about Isaiah 11.1. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse. And think of Isaiah 11.10. Of him the nations shall inquire.

Think of the wise men traveling from the east, traveling perhaps farther than the queen of Sheba did to visit a king who is far greater, far greater than Solomon.

So here, in Matthew 1 and 2, I know that's a lot of work. You've done a good job. There'll be prizes for those who took notes at the end. Here in Matthew 2, we have two precise fulfillments and three pattern prophecies, and they all find their fulfillment in Jesus.

But that's the only part, I think, of what's going on here. It's one thing to see what's being taught here. Oh, I see. I get it. But it's quite another thing to see, to get it. Oh, I see.

[27:59] That is to find fulfillment, intellectual fulfillment, emotional fulfillment, spiritual fulfillment, in what is seen here, in Jesus who fulfills these five prophecies.

I'll put it this way. There are the fulfillments, and there is then our fulfillment in the one who fulfills. Now, I'm not just doing a cute play on words here. I actually believe that's part of Matthew's intention in chapter 2, especially with the wise men in the first 12 verses.

What we looked at last week is to show that this long journey from wherever, Baghdad to Bethlehem, was worth it. That Jesus filled the hollow of their hearts, brought them fulfillment.

We see this in verse 2. The wise men, they say, where is the star? Where is the king we've come to worship? Because we've come to worship him. Then when they finally see him, what do they do? They bow down before him, and they worship him.

Listen, they did not leave Bethlehem singing, we still haven't found what we're looking for. And they didn't have what the poet George Herbert called this repining restlessness.

[29:02] No, they were singing, my faith has finally found a resting place. They found, in other words, fulfillment in Jesus. You see, with the wise men, at the start of chapter 2, Matthew's telling us what all wise men then and now do.

Wise men and women and children, whether they're from the south or the north or the west or the east, they come to Jesus, and wise men find fulfillment. How? Through worshiping. Through worshiping the newborn and the forever reigning king of kings.

Now perhaps, as I know some of you, many of you are young, maybe you haven't done that in your life. Maybe you haven't come to Jesus as your king and your savior. Maybe you haven't bowed before him or worshipped him or found fulfillment in him.

And if you haven't done that, I invite you, what better time to do it, I invite you today to do that. In fact, you can follow my lead. Around this time of year, 34 years ago, I came to Christ.

I was 19. I had spent my life trying to find fulfillment through sports.

[30:11] I was a good basketball player, but basketball was my god. I loved it. I tried to find fulfillment through my girlfriend, and she became sort of god, goddess to me.

Through my academic prowess, I wanted perfect grades. That became a sort of god. The other two were bigger gods. But God, the real God, one semester of college, he took away those three gods from me.

And he brought me to the end of myself. I came home from work, tears falling down my cheeks.

And I prayed, Jesus, I know you're real. I've never doubted your existence. I've never doubted that you're the son of God. But I've never asked you to forgive me. Will you forgive me? And clean me up on the inside.

Because I'm full of lust, and I'm full of pride. And from this day forward, I will put you first in my life. And you know what happened? The Holy Spirit fell upon me.

[31:13] I was born again. I found Jesus, or Jesus found me. And I found, with the Magi found, for 34 years, I found fulfillment.

I found fulfillment. My brothers and sisters, let's find that fulfillment anew, for the first time, for some of you. Or a fresh.

I think I need a refresher. More fulfillment. This Advent, and this coming Christmas. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the power of your word.

We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to see, that is to understand, some of the difficult parts of your scripture that point us to Jesus. But also your spirit who opens our hearts to believe in Jesus, want to follow him, and do whatever for him, even like the Magi, to travel such a distance because they want to find fulfillment.

Lord, I pray for those that don't know you, that today would be the day of salvation, they would come to you in faith, and that this Christmas they would enjoy the joy that comes in knowing you and finding fulfillment in you.

[32:23] And Lord, I pray for the rest of us who know you, have been saved, been born again, I pray that you would fill us afresh with your spirit so we might walk in greater love and desire for you this coming year.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.