

APPENDIX 3

A QUICK LOOK AT MATTHEW 2:15

This particular passage has created some controversy among biblical interpreters, particularly as to the New Testament use of the Old Testament. The most important question that arises from Matthew's quotation of Hosea is the following: did he attribute new meaning to the quotation that is not present in the original context? Or, does it have to be interpreted in light of the original context?

NKJ Hos 11:1-2 – When Israel *was* a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. *As* they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images.

LXE Hos 11:1-2 – Early in the morning were they cast off, the king of Israel has been cast off: for Israel is a child, and I loved him, and out of Egypt have I called his children. As I called them, so they departed from my presence: they sacrificed to Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images.

Matt 2:14-16 – When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Some have suggested (including Ladd) that Matthew radically changed the meaning of the passage when he quoted it. He emptied, as it were, the words of their original meaning and gave them new meaning without any regard to the Old Testament pericope. However, his conclusion seems to be contrary to the analogy of faith and to the covenantal nature of God's revelation.

Milton Terry in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* offers an explanation that I consider more plausible than Ladd's. According to Terry, Matthew is appealing, or referring to, “the typical character of Israel as “God's firstborn,” which is a common theme of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Exod 4:22 – Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD: “Israel *is* My son, My firstborn.

Jer 31:9 – They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim *is* My firstborn.

So, Matthew recognizes this typical character of Israel as God's first-born son and sees that the exodus of Israel out of Egypt was a type of Jesus' return from Egypt. Thus, this is a typical prophecy, rather than verbal. In Hosea, the words found in 11:1 are not a prediction at all. Rather, they are a reference to an event that took place six hundred years before Hosea's time. Yet, such event was a type, pointing to the final Israel. "Out of Egypt came the typical son of God to found the theocracy; and thence also the true Son of God to complete the theocracy" (Lange). Thus, Matthew rightly applies this typical prophecy to the Son of God.