

The Double Meaning Behind This Ancient Prophecy

Secrets Surrounding the Birth of Messiah, Part 6

There is a prophecy in Jeremiah where Rachel is weeping for her children. It is a strange word in the middle of a prophecy about Israel's restoration. Like so many prophecies (Isa. 7:14; Dan. 9:27, 11:31, 12:11), there was a *current* fulfillment and a *future* fulfillment: "'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more" (Jer. 31:15).

In Hebrew, Ramah simply means "height," and there are dozens of cities and regions that have Ramah(t) in their names. The most famous of these is the Golan Heights, or in Hebrew, *Ramat HaGolan*. However, most scholars believe that Jeremiah was referring to an area five miles north of Jerusalem that served as a deportation center as the Jews were being exiled to Babylon. Exile was judgment. God's heart was broken, as, too, was Israel's faithful. We see the pain of exile in this most famous verse from Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. ... Our captors made us sing and our tormentors made us entertain, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not have Jerusalem as my highest joy (Ps. 137:1-6).

Jeremiah depicts Rachel crying, even weeping, over her

children who are taken away into captivity. But Matthew, who knew that Rachel's grave was in Bethlehem, reveals a deeper meaning.

Herod, the murderous king, was searching for the Messiah. He was scared this newborn Israelite king would dethrone him. He did not know that His kingdom was from another realm (John 18:36). Seeing the prophecies that this boy-king would be born in Bethlehem, he "sent forth and killed all the male children who were in Bethlehem and the surrounding region, from two years old and under" (Matt. 2:16a).