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THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AND THE VALUE OF "FULL BLOOM ASPECT" FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

A Project

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AND THE VALUE OF "FULL BLOOM ASPECT" FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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For my greatest treasure on earth, Sally, and the princesses who were gifted to us: Meg, Mallory, and Macy. May my last academic pursuit deliver to you a glimpse of the majesties of the Book that is more to be desired than fine gold and the tools to mine it, leaving us delighting to recognize how every word points us to our King!

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PREFACE

Nearly every moment of my life in Christ has been a journey in the realization of my inadequacy and dependence. Writing this project is yet another mile marker. Every journey includes a past, present, and a hopeful future. There are innumerable contributors to this writing journey, but I would like to highlight a few that stand out.

From my earliest memories, my parents, Jerry and Kathy, modeled the importance of studying, understanding, and applying God's Word. They sacrificially provided resources such as Christian school education, books and tapes on theology, and the beginning of my Logos Bible Software library that often elicits pastoral jealousy from colleagues. Their personal investment in Bible study with groups such as Bible Study Fellowship served as a weekly reminder of the importance they placed on the Bible. This communicated to my brother, sister, and me that the Bible is the most important resource for our lives and should be studied regularly.

My grandparents, Mike and Peggy, invested time and money in training the next generation of pastors and Christian leaders at The Master's Seminary. Little did they know, though they always said they had a feeling, they were laying a foundation upon which their grandson would, one day, stand. Their hours packing boxes of tapes and books at the *Grace to You* publishing ministry has impacted countless people with tools and resources contributing to effective Bible study.

I am forever grateful for the man who, single-handedly, opened my eyes to the treasures of Scripture and continues to do so in what I believe to be the greatest example of his calling as an expository preacher, John MacArthur. Others have assisted in my passion for studying, understanding, and applying God's Word. My middle school Bible teacher, Greg Woolley, constantly challenged me with ideas I thought were crazy but did so with a sparkle in his eye and the repetitive, "then defend your disagreement with Scripture."

Travis Tamerius picked up the mantle in college, introducing me to Reformed Theology, an area of study I had held at arm's length due to perceived controversy and subtle warnings against it from others. The flame of passion for biblical interpretation blazed into a bonfire at The Master's Seminary. Professors such as Greg Harris, Andy Snider, and Michael Vlach not only instructed me but also blessed me with invaluable tools to grow as an interpreter, myself. Their impact on my life was not limited to academics but also extended to their examples of Christ in their character. Their tireless efforts to sharpen me—often not as appreciated then as it is now—serves as one of the most formative periods of my life.

The decision to continue my theological education offered several options, but the opportunity to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary had always been a longtime dream. The experience has both met and superseded expectations. The world class scholarship has been equaled by the Christ-reflecting charity demonstrated by the faculty. I am specifically grateful to professors James Hamilton, Brian Vickers, Peter Gentry, Mitchell Chase, and Samuel Emadi for their effective teaching, patience, and rigorous accountability immeasurably contributed to my love for biblical interpretation. I learned early in the program that I would be assigned a professor supervisor for my project. Soon after Jonathan Pennington was assigned as my supervisor, I quickly realized that his name was on the spine of many of the books I had begun to research for my project. Dr. Pennington's investment in this project engenders the kind of gratitude I would imagine Timothy had for Paul. His encouragement, patience, charity, and sharpening have proven to be one of the greatest gifts of this process. I am also indebted to Betsy Fredrick. I had always read authors share their gratitude for editors. I now understand why.

As I look to the future, I am encouraged. I am surrounded by a group of elders at Ascend Church who have graciously and generously supported my continuing education. They have provided iron that has sharpened me and, with great humility, allowed me to sharpen them. One of those men, Sal LoFaso, has indelibly left his mark on me. Sal is a veteran missionary and pastor who is also a theologian. While our years together have

sharpened me theologically and pastorally, it is his most recent life chapter that has influenced me most. Sal's journey with glioblastoma has been a constant reminder to me that theology is useless if not practiced. His greatest legacy for me will be the biblical integrity that has oozed out of his pores throughout this most difficult journey.

My girls—Meg, Mallory, and Macy—have endured what amounts to nearly 40% of their lives having their dad in school. They have cheered me on and served as knowing—and sometimes unknowing—focus groups for my discoveries and conclusions. Some of my greatest experiences throughout this project have been observing my girls applying the principles of biblical interpretation in the home and with their friends. If they are any indication of the next generation, my girls give me great hope!

Finally, if God wrote an illustrated theological dictionary, under the term "excellent wife" I am certain there would be a picture of my wife, Sally. An entire book does not afford the space to express my love and gratitude for her. No one models and encourages me to pursue Christ more. Our journey of marriage has included three graduate degrees, each including a promise—with a wry smile—that it would be the last degree pursued. Love, this is it . . . *for real*! One of the greatest benefits of this project has been the excitement and expertise Sally has gained for biblical theology and full bloom aspect. She constantly opens my eyes to discoveries I had not seen. Sally, "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all" (Prov 31:29).

This project and the journey of this program have left me forever changed. I pray that the results will be an ongoing discipleship that has been modeled by these influences in my life. To that end, I am hopeful and confident that, while the landscape of our culture continues to shift at warp speed, the timeless truths of God's Word will be understood and applied as Jesus and the authors of Scripture intended.

Jeff Terrell

Olathe, Kansas

December 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Do not over-spiritualize the text!" This and other well-meaning warnings are often leveled against methods of biblical interpretation which wade into the often mirky waters of typology, biblical themes, and other "less literal"[1] aspects. Such admonitions appear to be borne out of a desire to guard Scripture from individual autonomy in interpretation that ebbs and flows from one interpreter to the next. How does the biblical interpreter avoid over-spiritualizing or—said a better way—missing the interpretation the original author intended for the original audience as well as what the Holy Spirit intended for all generations? I propose the answer to this question is to interpret the Bible the way Jesus and the New Testament authors interpreted Scripture. They certainly considered the historical and grammatical aspects of the Scripture they interpretated but also included biblical theology and an aspect I call full bloom aspect. Full bloom aspect, as I am proposing it, recognizes the fully matured understanding of progressive revelation and reads it back into the Old Testament passages without betraying that passage's context.

The basis for the full bloom interpretive aspect flows out of quotes such as, "The Old Testament is the gospel in seedling form; while the New Testament is the gospel in full bloom." In other words, Isaiah's prophecies concerning the future of Israel, the future role of the Temple, the presence of sacrifices in that future, and the Servant who would be central to those events all provide details that are true. However, they are more fully developed as other authors provide additional detail and interpretation of these prophecies. Jesus and the New Testament authors provide the most fully bloomed

[1] This critique of not being literal is the voice of the critics rather than an interpretive method being proposed in this project.

understanding. Of all the accounts of Jesus and New Testament authors, the Gospel of Matthew provides the classroom to best introduce this full bloom aspect. Matthew's fulfillment quotations provide a crucial exercise in biblical interpretation that homes in on full bloom aspect and strengthens the guardrails of biblical interpretation. These guardrails ensure that Christians can interpret any passage of Scripture with a high degree of confidence that their conclusions align with the Author of Scripture and His plan for redemptive history. Before digging into the Gospel of Matthew, the soil of biblical interpretation must be tilled.

Hermeneutics: The Guardrails of Biblical Interpretation

Imagine a young husband stumbles upon a box of old love letters. Upon further investigation, he realizes that they were penned by his great-great-grandparents during World War I. They are filled with relatable expressions of young love as the two worked to effectively express their love for each other. The husband could effectively understand the essence of what was being communicated, but his conclusions would need guardrails. If he simply applied his experience of growing love with his own wife, that would not be enough to ensure an accurate understanding. He could ask his wife to give her interpretation; as a female she would likely contribute what his male mind may not be able to comprehend. However, unless they knew these authors, had background for the special names and veiled references, and familiarized themselves with the greater context of the communities, countries, the War, and many other aspects, they would not have a high degree of confidence that their interpretations were accurate.

In a similar way, guardrails must inform modern readers of ancient Scripture to ensure a high degree of confidence that they are interpreting what is "the comprehensive declaration of the divine will which sets all life in the light of divine truth."[2] Robert

[2] Gottlob Schrenk, "Διαλέγομαι, Διαλογίζομαι, Διαλογισμός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 94, Logos Bible Software.

Plummer well summarizes this importance of the modern reader's responsibility to determine the "author-intended meaning of a text."[3] Simply put, the interpreter must evaluate the historical context and grammar of the text which serve as guardrails for the interpretive process. Along with other considerations, the grammatical side of the equation must also consider literary genres and devices. However, despite a common starting point, systems, groups, and camps have developed. The result has been what seems to be a drift away from the foundational "author-intended meaning of a text" that includes the ultimate author: The Holy Spirit.

This observation should be clarified. Conservative biblical interpreters universally acknowledge that passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 reveal that the Holy Spirit authored every word of the original manuscripts of the canon of Scripture. With this starting point, biblical interpretation must expand beyond the immediate pericope of Scripture to see what other biblical authors may contribute to that passage since the Bible should be recognized as one "big story." This recognition must be considered during the process of biblical interpretation. James Hamilton, identifying the tool that guides this big story aspect as biblical theology, explains, "Biblical theology pushes us to understand the contribution individual books of the Bible make to the Bible's big story."[4] Unpacking this tool will prove foundational for the full bloom aspect.

The Importance and Purpose of Biblical Theology

The pop culture phenomenon *Star Wars* provides a practical illustration of the value and importance of biblical theology. In the opening scenes of *Episode IV: A New Hope*, the young protagonist, Luke Skywalker, visits the elderly Ben Kenobi. The weight of fascination with discovering the identity of the father he had never met plagued young

[3] Robert L. Plummer, Review of *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18, no. 1 (2014): 184, Logos Bible Software.

[4] James M. Hamilton, Jr., "Biblical Theology and Preaching," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 197, Logos Bible Software.

Skywalker. Ben explains that he had fought in the Clone Wars and was a Jedi Knight just like Luke's father. He then reveals, "A young Jedi named Darth Vader, who was a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father."[5] Audiences were left scratching their heads wondering what the Clone Wars were as well as how Ben, Darth Vader, and Luke's father linked. Debates ensued as fans worked to wrap their minds around these previously unknown topics. As more movies were released and the *Star Wars* canon closed, the questions were answered. It is not acceptable for *Star Wars* fans to simply "agree to disagree" about what the Clone Wars were or the identity of the Jedi order. The big picture of the whole story answers and defines those realities.

The discipline of biblical theology serves the modern Bible reader in a similar fashion, reminding that the interpretation of a particular passage must also consider the big picture of the whole story of Scripture. Like other disciplines of theology, a range of approaches exists. Edward Klink and Darian Lockett provide a helpful analysis of this range and assign "types" to the approaches.[6] The unpacking of biblical theology that follows is intended to be an attempt to unpack my own processing of the discipline as a guardrail. It may fit more into one or two types than the others, but it is my hope that it will provide a fair analysis that produces a guardrail guided more by engaging more with all four interpretive guardrails than attempting to analyze the various types and authors to fit into one of them.

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[5] George Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope*, digital, 20th Century Fox, 1977.

[6] The section begins on p. 21 and outlines several types of Biblical Theology categories. As with any attempt to reduce a broad study including many authors over many years, the categories are helpful but not perfect. They should be viewed as a guide and not infallible designations. Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

Hamilton's summary bridges the parallel to biblical theology: "To do biblical theology is to think about the whole story of the Bible."[7] Evaluating passages of Scripture in light of the whole story protects the reader from assigning their own definitions or forcing their own traditions upon the text, just as the other eight episodes of *Star Wars* ensure an understanding of that individual scene of *Episode IV* is not an idea that shifts from one interpreter to another. Interpreting the scenes of Scripture considering the whole story ensures accuracy through proper context. Biblical theology equips the Christian and the church with lenses through which they can evaluate every passage. Hamilton provides a more succinct definition that will serve as the working definition for this project: "Biblical theology is the attempt to understand the Bible in its own terms."[8] This definition requires the contemporary reader to invest in lenses which resist the modern propensity to study Scripture asking first, "what does this mean *to me*?"

A final observation should be made. Biblical theology proves helpful even for those who hold a high view of Scripture and apply a strong historical-grammatical hermeneutic to their exegesis. Evaluating pericopes primarily for literal terms and immediate context will yield rich discoveries. However, the emphasis of biblical theology to *also* investigate the allusions and patterns of Scripture ensures the riches of the "scene" are understood in the context of the whole, thereby ensuring greater accuracy.

Biblical Theology, Preaching, and Studying

The scope of this project is not limited to research and thesis. Within the context of the local church, biblical interpretation must overflow into faithful and effective preaching and teaching that transforms the thinking, speaking, and living of each individual Christian. John MacArthur relates one of the most important tasks for the preacher through

[7] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12, Logos Bible Software.

[8] Hamilton, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," 200.

a quote by his mentor in seminary: "You'd better get the text right."[9] Getting the text right requires a standard. Is that standard the opinion of the reader? Perhaps it is a pastor with a large church, several book titles under his belt, or a national radio or television ministry? Given what the Bible says about itself in texts such as John 10:35, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:20-21, Scripture itself should serve as the standard. According to Hamilton, biblical theology provides a most valuable tool for getting the text right: "If we are going to preach the whole counsel of God, and if we are going to preach all Scripture because we believe all of it is inspired and profitable, we need a healthy understanding of biblical theology to do it."[10]

The project is also not limited to preaching as its application. It is intended to provide a model to pastors and lay people for biblical interpretation. The goal is to provide tools for biblical interpretation enabling any Christian to open the pages of Scripture—including both the New Testament *and* the Old Testament—and arrive at understanding. These tools will enable the reader to accurately understand not only what the original author intended to his original audience but also the purpose for the Holy Spirit superintending its place in God's specific revelation of Himself to humanity. The biblical analysis will not attempt to exhaustively evaluate all angles of debate and scholarly analysis of the passages chosen. However, it will also not cut corners or provide only a surface analysis.

Hands On: Biblical Theology Aspect

Brian Vickers provides a glimpse into the importance of the biblical theology aspect. For many, Psalm 119 has provided deep reservoirs of insight to the unparalleled value of studying and applying God's Word. In fact, of the 176 verses, every one of them

[9] John F. MacArthur, Jr., "God's Demand for Discernment," sermon transcript, Grace To You, October 18, 2019, https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/TM19-11/gods-demand-for-discernment-john-macarthur.

[10] Hamilton, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," 199.

arguably contains a specific reference to God's Word.[11] Applying the historical-grammatical method will consider any historical background provided in the inscription and dig deeply into the words, syntax, and other grammatical aspects. Such investigation will surely yield a fruitful study. However, Vickers reminds of the importance of also considering the biblical theology aspect: "A clearer picture of what David longs for is seen when we read Psalm 119 the way all the psalms are meant to be read—in their larger context . . . Psalm 119 appears in the fifth book of the Psalter, which begins with Psalm 107 and a message of God's rescue of his people from exile."[12] This observation reminds the interpreter of the importance of evaluating how a pericope fits in the bigger story of not only the surrounding chapters or specific book, but also all of Scripture. This is extremely helpful to better understand historical narrative and other biblical genres, especially in the Old Testament.

The historical-grammatical method combined with the biblical theology aspect helpfully move the interpreter beyond the all-too-often-utilized "this is how *I* read that passage" method of interpretation.[13] Just as the hypothetical husband and wife at the beginning of this chapter would not, by themselves, provide the authoritative interpretation of the World War I love letters and would likely come up with slight or massive variations on the actual interpretation, so twenty-first century readers do not stand as authoritative interpreters of the ancient text. Biblical theology supplements the historical-grammatical method by calling to mind the mantra of the Reformers: "Scripture interprets Scripture." Bernard Ramm summarizes, "What [this mantra of the Reformers] means is that the

[11] The Psalm is replete with words such as "law," "commandments", and "testimonies," which are clearly referencing the Word of God. Terms such as "justice" and phrases such as "pledge of good" seem to point in principle to the Word of God.

[12] Brian Vickers, *Justification by Grace Through Faith: Finding Freedom from Legalism, Lawlessness, Pride, and Despair*, ed. Robert A. Peterson, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 104, Logos Bible Software. The paragraph continues to develop the contents of the fifth book of Psalms to provide additional rich insight for interpreting Psalm 119.

[13] While writing this project, two members of our church responded to the interpretation I provided for a passage of Scripture with, "well, that is not how *I* read that passage."

whole of Scripture interprets the *part* of Scripture and thus no part of Scripture can be so interpreted as to deform the teaching of the whole of Scripture."[14]

This leaves the discerning interpreter needing to answer the question, "how do we know we are interpreting the *whole* of Scripture that interprets the *part* of Scripture?" This is where the full bloom aspect assists. When we consider that the gospel is in seedling form in the Old Testament and in full bloom in the New Testament, we are ready to start the journey.

Expanding Biblical Interpretation with the Full Bloom Aspect

Biblical theology equips the lenses of preachers and Bible students to resist the urge for contemporary or personal influences to determine conclusions. The important questions for Bible interpretation must be, "is the Bible shaping the way we read the world, or has the world shaped the way we read the Bible?"[15] Biblical interpretation must consider the Bible in its own terms. The conclusions drawn from individual words, verses, or sections must pass the litmus of the whole story. When the whole story influences the lens of the interpreter, the broader context of the Old *and* New Testaments must be considered rather limiting study to the immediate context of the isolated passage. It is this principle that invites biblical interpretation to consider the full bloom aspect.

Evaluating a pericope with the historical-grammatical method combined with the big story analysis offers effective guardrails for biblical interpretation. However, some scholars who affirm these guardrails express concern that interpreters still slip into the gutter of over-spiritualizing biblical texts. To be sure, many authors and preachers have taken up residence in these gutters, and all would do well to heed these warnings. These

[14] Bernard L. Ramm, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology*, ed. Ralph G. Turnbull (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 105, Logos Bible Software.

[15] Hamilton, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," 200.

concerned scholars represent a camp of biblical interpreters committed to historical-grammatical interpretive methods who also take into account the biblical theology aspect.

However, this camp draws literal conclusions whereas a full bloom aspect seems to argue otherwise.[16] Are literal conclusions concerning topics such as God's future for ethnic Israel or the future fulfillment of literal geographical plot points on the world map for Abraham's physical descendants the ultimate intention of the Holy Spirit for such concepts introduced in the Old Testament? Chapter 2 will more specifically engage with positions from this camp on these and other important topics.

Defining Full Bloom Aspect

Simply put, full bloom aspect moves the reader to read *backward*, whereas biblical theology seems to emphasize reading *forward*. This aspect becomes helpful for specific pericopes and books of the Old Testament but also for informing the interpreter on the overarching big story of Scripture and seems to be what authors like Matthew model and intend to be followed. Interpreting the Old Testament the way Jesus and the New Testament authors interpreted has been a hotly debated topic. Robert Thomas attempted to end the debate by arguing, "Contemporary exegetes are not able to use the same hermeneutic as the NT authors did."[17] Thomas added, "The NT apostles had giftedness that we do not have."[18] However, are these statements accurate, and do they end the debate? Surely, one can grant that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit articulated in 2 Peter 1:21 supports the unique giftedness of apostolic interpretation. However, I propose

[16] Perhaps "literal" is not the best term to describe these conclusions. While it will be demonstrated later that scholars from this camp tend to emphasize the concept of "literal," it will also be demonstrated by the development of full bloom aspect that conclusions drawn by this aspect are, in fact, literal. However, these conclusions may not be what this camp would consider the "plain" meaning. As such, perhaps a better sentence would end with "this camp draws more 'plain sense' conclusions whereas a full bloom aspect seems to reveal a meaning more developed by considering later considerations in the rest of Scripture and reading them back into the current text."

[17] Robert L. Thomas, "The New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament" (class lecture, NT796: New Testament Introduction, The Master's Seminary, March 26, 2009).

[18] Thomas, "The New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament."

that Jesus and the New Testament authors intended not only to interpret the Old Testament for their readers but also to *educate* them as biblical interpreters.

Full bloom aspect stands downstream from the historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects. It then asks, "Is there other biblical revelation that advances, clarifies, educates, or fulfills the idea of the pericope at hand?" If there is, then full bloom aspect compels the reader to read this understanding back into the earlier texts. The journey that ensues then sheds light on Old Testament passages, the interpretation of which would otherwise be limited. Chapter 2 will further develop this concept; however, a brief explanation will assist.

The modern reader of books of prophecy such as Isaiah and Jeremiah will be guided by the historical, grammatical, and the biblical theology aspects. Full bloom aspect appreciates and prioritizes the initial analysis of the pericope that considers the passage, the immediate surrounding context, and the context of the book itself. It requires that the big story also contributes to the analysis. However, it *also* instructs the interpreter to read the pericope looking backward from the New Testament. Full bloom aspect moves the interpreter to read backwards along with forwards by using all four guardrails.

This seems to be the method Jesus used, the one who determined the whole story beginning to end,[19] and the New Testament authors followed. The Gospels are fruitful ground for the biblical theology and full bloom aspects. Jonathan Pennington well observes, "The evangelists are concerned to show that Jesus' teachings, actions, death, and vindication 'constituted the continuation and climax of the ancient biblical story' and that the Old Testament was the '*generative milieu* for the gospels, the original environment in which the first Christian traditions were conceived, formed and nurtured.'"[20] No other

[19] While Luke 24:27 will be evaluated later, it should be noted here that the method of interpretation Jesus modeled to the disciples on the road to Emmaus is foundational to this conclusion.

[20] Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 15, Logos Bible Software.

book of the New Testament more effectively contributes to this aspect than the Gospel of Matthew.

Why Focus on the Gospel of Matthew?

Matthew, like the other Gospel writers, provides more than simply an account of the life and teaching of Jesus. Some of the evangelists provide clear purpose statements, such as John 20:30-31: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."[21] Others, like Matthew, are more sophisticated in their purpose. R. T. France explains, "The one word that best characterizes Matthew's theological perspective is 'fulfillment' . . . [these uses of a fulfillment formula] illustrate the fertile ability of his mind to notice and draw attention to links between the Old Testament revelation and the story of Jesus."[22] Patrick Schreiner adds, "The overall point is that 'fulfillment' is the word Matthew employs to teach future disciples about the relationship between the new and the old."[23] Is this sophistication the result of a "special" hermeneutic reserved for the uniquely-gifted authors of the New Testament? As will be developed in chapter 2, the answer is, "no." The Gospel authors intended not only to teach their audience who Jesus was and what He taught, they also taught how Jesus interpreted Scripture and how He is the fulfillment of redemptive history.[24]

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[21] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version.

[22] R. T. France, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke," in *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 219, Logos Bible Software.

[23] Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 41, Logos Bible Software.

[24] This point of Jesus being the fulfillment of redemptive history will be a point the apostle Paul will corroborate in 2 Cor 1:20, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."

Of all the Gospels, Matthew achieves these intentions most vividly in a full bloom aspect fashion. Schreiner lays the foundation: "In the words of R. T. France, there is a surface meaning but also a 'bonus meaning' that conveys the increasingly rich understanding of the person and role of Jesus."[25] The "over-spiritualizing" alarms may be activated with the mention of a "bonus meaning." However, with a brief example setting up the point I intend to make with this project, the goal will be to show that France's description of a "bonus meaning" both remains faithful to historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects while also bringing the light of the very approach of Jesus and the New Testament authors to further ensure the Bible is understood in its own context. Jesus' response to the disciples of John the Baptist and His subsequent teaching of the disciples in Matthew 11:2-18 demonstrate the importance of interpreting Scripture with the historical, grammatical, biblical theology, *and* full bloom aspects.

John's Disciples and Jesus' "Cryptic" Answer

The disciples of John were sent by their teacher because of John's physical and ministry context. Physically, John was in prison because he called the king to account for his sinful behavior (Luke 3:19-20). John's ministry centered on preparing the way for Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament promises (John 1:23). This required him to be an expert on the texts pointing forward to Messiah. As John surveyed the contexts of his life, his ministry, and the accounts he had been hearing about Jesus, the data points left him with questions. Was Jesus the one he had baptized and declared to be the "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 34), the Son of God, or were they "to look for another" (Matt 11:3)? The importance of biblical interpretation is embedded in the question and Jesus' answer.

Jesus' response provides a glimpse into full bloom aspect. He very easily could have answered, "Yes, I am the one who is to come." That would have been true. It would

[25] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 56.

have also provided some great preaching if He would have used the phrase "I am." The preacher could include this statement along with the rest of the "I am" statements the apostle John highlights throughout His Gospel as a reference to the Hebrew name of God Almighty, Yahweh. However, this was not Jesus' response. In fact, some scholars have proposed that Jesus' response was "cryptic."[26] Yet, the goal of the cryptic aspect of His response was not to hide truth but instead to reveal truth. Moreover, Matthew appears to have a twofold purpose for including this account. On the one hand, Jesus' response serves the purpose of providing John's disciples with an answer that would provide a better understanding of who Jesus was as well as an education in biblical interpretation. On the other hand, combined with Matthew's developing purpose, the response equips the reader of the Gospel with yet another session in the classroom of biblical interpretation.

On the surface, Jesus appears to simply point to literal activities He performed in their presence. Interpreting the response this way would be faithful to the historical and grammatical aspects. However, the terms Matthew translated into biblical Greek expand interpretation to consider both biblical theology and full bloom aspects.

Moving from "Cryptic" to Full Bloom

Biblical theology expands the historical and grammatical aspects to see the pericope in light of the big story of Scripture. In doing so, the interpreter begins to recognize that the five human conditions Jesus references in verse 5 describe residuals of the fall of humanity in Genesis 3. Blindness, inability to walk, leprosy, deafness, and death were not present in the opening account of creation. Since Genesis 3 these conditions have been present because of the fall and continue to this day. Certainly, there have been modern strides to medically combat these effects and long-term conditions. However, what

[26] Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*, ed. D. A. Carson, New Studies in Biblical Theology 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity; Leicester, England: Apollos, 1999), 134, Logos Bible Software.

Jesus demonstrated and provided as an answer has never been duplicated. [27] People with these conditions, by a word or touch from Jesus, had them reversed and re-aligned with the original design of creation. Full bloom aspect ushers the reader of Matthew *backward* to Genesis and *forward* to the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:4 where the original design of creation will be the eternal reality. It is this exercise that Jesus intended for John the Baptist and his disciples. It also seems to be what Matthew intended for his readers to see—that Jesus is, more vividly, the Son of God[28] who fulfills the promises of the Old Testament and reverses broken creation to the original design.

The biblical theology aspect expands biblical interpretation beyond the pericope at hand and begins to alert the reader to the importance of considering the full bloom aspect of a topic or concept. Referencing this Matthew 11 passage, Schreiner pulls back the curtain of full bloom aspect ever so slightly: "The framework that Matthew has set up so far suggests that it is not until the arrival of Jesus, the divinely appointed heir of David's throne, that the Deuteronomic curses (Deut. 27–28) begin to be reversed."[29] This statement lays the foundation for the importance of full bloom aspect.

Full bloom aspect provides a more practical and specific tool, which I propose is included in Matthew's purpose. While the biblical theology aspect moves the reader outside of the immediate context to examine the whole story, full bloom aspect is an intentional next step that asks, "is there any further development of this concept that further 'matures' the interpretation?" We must first recognize that the words of Jesus in this passage occur during His earthly ministry. Full bloom aspect then stirs the reader to

[27] This was the exclamation of the crowd recorded in Mark 2:12: "We never saw anything like this!" To be sure, apostles and others given authority by God were able to perform similar miracles. However, the point Mark makes in the opening chapters of his Gospel is that the miracles and teaching of Jesus demonstrated an authority intrinsic to Jesus Himself and not dependent on the authority of another.

[28] This title is rich in biblical theology significance. A great source for further study is Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Son of God and the New Creation*, ed. Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

[29] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 109.

assess whether the rest of the New Testament speaks to the topic at hand as well as the theological development and purposes of the author. If it does, then that more matured interpretation should be read into this passage.

Applying historical, grammatical, and biblical theology analyses reveal that Matthew is quoting the Septuagint version of Isaiah 61:1. Certainly conservative scholars such as Robert Thomas and others in his camp would recognize this passage in Isaiah contains concepts pointing to the coming of Messiah. However, rigidly reading forward and not considering the full bloom aspect can leave the modern reader stuck in the "seedling" aspect of the Isaiah context. Their interest in protecting a "literal future" for ethnic Israel that includes the fulfillment of the land promises of the Abrahamic covenant saddles their biblical interpretation with limitations that do not allow them to see Matthew's point.[30]

The Jews of Jesus' day fell into expectations not informed by full bloom aspect. They had significant aspects of biblical theology at their disposal. Ernst Hoffmann well summarizes these expectations: "The whole of post-OT Judaism is characterized by a variety of eschatological expectations, directed in the first place towards the coming of the messiah and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel."[31] Unfortunately, these expectations exchanged the hope for their present-day relief for those of the full bloom aspect of God's redemptive plan for His people. It could have been the candid wrestling between these expectations by John the Baptist himself that led him to question the validity of his Messianic declaration that Jesus was, in fact, the "one who is to come" in John 1:29-34.

When the miracles Jesus displays in answer to John's disciples are viewed in a biblical theology aspect, Isaiah 61:1 can then be viewed in full bloom aspect. The ultimate

[30] This commitment to presuppositions and systems is addressed further in chap. 2.

[31] E. Hoffmann, "Hope, Expectation," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 241, Logos Bible Software.

destination for human history is the kingdom where "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). Despite the incredible miracles Jesus performed, the "no more" aspect of Revelation 21:4 had not been fulfilled. This means that Jesus pointed John's disciples—and Matthew pointed his readers—beyond a fulfillment limited to their day to instead recalibrate their expectations to recognize an already-but-not-yet aspect to the Isaiah 61:1 passage. The full bloom aspect informs the reader of Isaiah 61:1 that the fulfillment of that passage would be inaugurated in the days of Jesus' ministry on earth but will be consummated when Jesus returns to set up His eternal kingdom introduced in Revelation 21-22, the fully matured bloom of the gospel and redemptive history.

The full bloom aspect equips the reader to read backward from the vantage point of the consummation as well as forward from the context of the Old Testament passage and allows us to interpret the way Jesus and the authors of the New Testament modeled. This full bloom aspect would have moved the Jews of Jesus' day beyond their limited expectations of a political Messiah or even the culmination of all things in their day to see that a greater plan expanded beyond their seedling interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Setting Up the Rest of this Project

This exercise is intended to lay the groundwork for a journey through key full bloom passages in the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel. Scholars, such as those who see full bloom aspect as over-spiritualizing Old Testament passages, should not be viewed as the "enemy" or even members of an opposing team. Their contributions to biblical exegesis, theology, and preaching continue to be invaluable. Their passion to establish and protect faithful guardrails for biblical interpretation has promoted and upheld the historical, grammatical, and even biblical theology aspects. Their ineffective interaction with the full bloom aspect, however, leaves them stuck in conclusions that Jesus and the New Testament authors seem to develop further.

I intend to interact faithfully and charitably with Michael Vlach's[32] excellent book on biblical theology, *He Will Reign Forever*, to reveal opportunities for growth in biblical interpretation that result from not engaging with and subscribing to full bloom aspect. I will then show that Matthew's use of full bloom aspect is intended to provide modern readers with interpretive tools to avoid Jesus' criticism of His disciples and others who read Scripture but did not understand.[33] The remainder of the project will exegetically and expositionally work through the "fulfillment formula" passages of the first two chapters of the Gospel of Matthew for the purpose of demonstrating that Jesus and the New Testament authors intended to teach a hermeneutic of interpretation that leaned heavily on the full bloom aspect. There are more fulfillment passages outside of the first two chapters. However, as Christopher Wright helpfully summarizes, "What Matthew does in these opening chapters about the childhood of Jesus is programmatic for the rest of his Gospel."[34] The first two chapters lay the important foundation of direction and tools for the reader to recognize and apply the hermeneutic and full bloom aspect that Matthew intends the reader to follow. If used faithfully, the full bloom aspect, along with the other three aspects Matthew models, will assist Bible readers and preachers in avoiding over-

[32] I explain later the personal context for why this book was placed on my radar. However, I will explain here why a chapter will be devoted to focusing on this author and his book out of all the authors and books on biblical interpretation. Since the Reformation, the historical-grammatical method of interpretation has been recognized as the starting point for faithful interpretation. Therefore, authors and books which do not agree with these aspects of interpretation were not considered. At the time of writing this project, Michael Vlach is Professor of Theology at The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, CA. As a student, I have personally benefitted from Vlach as a scholar and from his integrity as a follower of Christ. Much of my theology has been shaped by his approach to biblical interpretation. This accounts for why so much of the analysis will be favorable. However, digging into full bloom aspect has uncovered, in my opinion, some weaknesses in Vlach's approach. I have also realized that a sizable category of brothers and sisters follow a similar approach as Vlach's. Since often they agree in their adherence to the first three guardrails, it is my prayer that this analysis and proposal of full bloom aspect will further strengthen Vlach's approach to more align with the interpretive approach of Jesus and the New Testament authors.

[33] A definitive statement to this end is Jesus to Nicodemus: "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?" (John 3:10). This criticism will also be extended to the disciples (Luke 9:44-45) and the crowds (Matt 13:13).

[34] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 71, Logos Bible Software.

spiritualizing the text and moving past "what does this mean *to me*" and instead understanding the Bible in its own terms. Now that the ground has been tilled, it is time to sharpen tools before digging into the Gospel of Matthew.

CHAPTER 2

THE SHARPENING BENEFIT OF FULL BLOOM ASPECT

Biblical interpretation does not exclusively carry value for the modern Bible reader arriving at a knowledge of facts. Throughout His ministry, Jesus emphasized the importance of understanding what was taught and how it connected with the Old Testament, correcting—often with harsh words—those who did not properly understand.[1] He indicted the religious leaders for reading Scripture with their own agenda and objective of personal gain but missing the very point of the Scriptures they read (John 5:39). He also modeled biblical interpretation to the pair of disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus struggling to understand their current events (Luke 24:25-28). Jesus emphasized the importance of not just reading but also their understanding. If first century experts on Scripture and those recognized as disciples during the earthly ministry of Jesus needed help, so do the many generations of Bible readers who have followed. Even for those who stand on solid ground of biblical interpretation, the potential pitfalls of living nearly 2,000 years after the original writings require rules of interpretation to guard the journey of interpretation. Full bloom aspect is a key guard that can often be neglected or explained away as will be evidenced by the analysis of Michael Vlach's *He Will Reign Forever*. Before the analysis, there must be a more in-depth investigation to sharpen the tools of biblical interpretation and further demonstrate the importance of guardrails.

[1] In Matt 13:14, Jesus referenced Isa 6:9 appearing to indicate that accurate understanding is associated with spiritual health and evidence of citizenship of the kingdom of heaven. The Isaiah passage indicts the nation of Isaiah's day for their deplorable spiritual condition and describes them as "hearing, but [not understanding]." Jesus' use of this passage references those outside His circle of disciples who heard the parables but did not understand them. In so doing, He is challenging His disciples to strive to accurately understand His teaching.

Guardrails to Bridge the Gaps

Each of the interpretive guardrails carry intrinsic importance assisting the modern reader not only with understanding but also as much confidence as possible that their conclusions are accurate. When the modern reader pauses to consider the gaps that exist between the modern context and that of the original author and audience, the need for guardrails naturally grows. Scholars often identify specific gaps between the modern context and the original context which, if not considered, potentially derail interpretation. Sidney Greidanus emphasizes the importance of modern readers working to bridge these gaps: "The Old Testament addressed its own time relevantly: God's word did not float high above Israel as an eternal word but entered Israel's culture in a relevant way."[2] He further energizes the engagement of preachers—and modern readers—with these gaps by explaining, "Instead of an obstacle, therefore, the historical-cultural gap can become a challenge for preachers to discern this past relevance and to preach the message of the Old Testament just as relevantly today as it addressed Israel in the past."[3] The importance of identifying and bridging these gaps in the exegetical analysis of Scripture is well summarized by Roy Zuck: "The aim of biblical exegesis is to determine what the text of Scripture itself says and means, and not to read something into it."[4] This requires that the modern reader begins with even laying aside presuppositions and systems and ensuring that what is extracted from the text is guided by the interpretive principles of the authors of Scripture.

The gaps and aspects of the guardrails of biblical interpretation can be divided into micro and macro categories. The micro categories emphasize the passage and immediate context being evaluated. The macro category emphasizes the broader context.

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[2] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 23, Logos Bible Software.

[3] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 23.

[4] Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*, ed. Craig Bubeck, Sr. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1991), 99, Logos Bible Software.

Considering a passage that will be unpacked later will assist the distinction. Matthew 2:13-15 is a three-verse pericope that describes the historical details of the angelic instruction to Joseph directing him to flee Bethlehem and to travel to Egypt with his wife and son, Jesus. Matthew then references Hosea 11:1 and explains that the historical details were "to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." The micro categories spur the reader to dig into the details of those three verses themselves. The macro categories push for a consideration of the contexts of the entire book of Matthew, the place in the canon, the progression of the Old Testament, and how the rest of Scripture develops the topics in this passage. Both the micro and macro categories are needed. The micro categories serve a purpose but can only go so far. The macro categories move the interpretation to a place, as Jesus often instructed His disciples to get: understanding. These categories require further explanation.

Micro Categories of Biblical Interpretation

The micro categories focus on several gaps between the original author and the modern reader. John MacArthur provides an excellent summary of these gaps. First, he explains the cultural gap:

> The cultural setting in which each part of the Bible was written is very different from our twentieth-century western culture. To interpret each part properly, one must understand the culture of its time. For example, understanding the Old Testament requires a knowledge of ancient Judaism and pagan culture, just as comprehending first-century Jewish culture is important in interpreting the Gospels.[5]

Such observations should be acknowledged as logical for anyone approaching the study of this ancient book. However, moving beyond acknowledgement to ownership that leads to investment is crucial. Laying aside modern cultural influences is not as easy as simply acknowledging the validity of this observation. It also requires investment of studying the cultures that influenced the original context. This can often be educated by the details of

[5] John F. MacArthur, Jr., "A Study Method for Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word, 1992), 216, Logos Bible Software.

the text itself but also benefits from expanding to study other biblical books written in or to cultures contemporary to the original text. Additionally helpful is an investigation into historical or archaeological resources outside of Scripture.

Similarly, MacArthur recognizes the geographical gap that exists for modern readers. An awareness with the ancient map alerts readers not just outside of the era of Scripture but also the geographical boundaries that details contained in the text often draw upon the locations of cities and even the highway systems of the Roman Empire. He cites the geographical context of the Roman highway system in the details Paul provides in 1 Thessalonians 1:8: "For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia." Such a statement is staggering considering an understanding the ancient geography, given the short amount of time between Paul's writing this letter and the time of his departure from Thessalonica. Knowledge of the Roman highway system equips the reader with an understanding of the physical context God used to accomplish this rapid expansion of the gospel.[6]

The third is identified as the historical gap. Like the cultural and geographical gaps, acknowledging, owning, and investing in overcoming the historical gap is crucial. Walter Kaiser explains, "The historical sense is that sense which is demanded by a careful consideration of the time and circumstances in which the author wrote. It is the specific meaning which an author's words require when the historical context and background are taken into account."[7] MacArthur summarizes the importance of bridging this gap: "A major effort of research to develop the historical background of a passage often is the major key to its interpretation."[8]

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[6] MacArthur, "A Study Method for Expository Preaching," 216-17.

[7] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 88, Logos Bible Software.

[8] MacArthur, "A Study Method for Expository Preaching," 217.

All three of these gaps are summarized by the historical aspect guardrail. The historical aspect guardrail drives the reader to engage with these considerations using other biblical references and historical tools to lay the foundation for bridging these gaps. Historical aspect waters the ground for the fourth related gap, the language gap.

A fourth gap could be included in the historical genre. However, for the purposes of biblical interpretation, it requires its own analysis. This is the language gap. At a basic level, the language gap recognizes the fact that the original manuscripts were written in languages that, while similar to modern Hebrew and Greek, are no longer active today. However, the language gap also includes the need to recognize literary genre. Kaiser acknowledges the importance of attending to the language gap by pressing beyond a basic study of the languages themselves: "We contend that the original languages serve best when we become aware of the syntax and grammar involved in phrases, clauses, and sentences."[9] The interpretive aspect that assists bridging this gap is the grammatical aspect. While tools, such as lexicons and dictionaries, greatly assist this guardrail, the interpreter trained in these languages and with a strong understanding of literary genre and syntax will ensure a more effective journey on the highway of biblical interpretation.

Macro Categories of Biblical Interpretation

The wealth of tools and resources to educate and equip the modern reader with these two aspects is unprecedented compared to previous generations. The utilization of these tools greatly contributes to bridging the gap between the original author and the modern reader. However, if the interpreter stops here, the threats of presuppositions and systems loom like drop-offs on a mountain road with only partially constructed guardrails. Two additional aspects introduced previously must be further developed.

The first is biblical theology. Hamilton, once again, assists. Biblical theology is "the interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented

[9] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 49.

their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses."[10] This definition beautifully illustrates that this macro aspect builds upon the foundation of the micro categories. The biblical theology aspect moves the modern reader to recognize that "the Bible teaches Christians how the Bible should be read."[11] The modern reader, drawing from the experience of watching movie series or reading novels in a multiple-book series, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, must recognize that a particular passage serves as a scene within a larger story. Biblical theology not only challenges the reader to expand the context to the book, canon, and progression of the historical-redemptive story but also instructs to look for patterns of typology. Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel Emadi provide a helpful definition of typology: "Types are historical, authorially-intended, textually rooted, tied to Scripture's covenant structure, and undergo escalation from old covenant shadow to new covenant reality."[12] The well of this aspect is deep and includes the investigation of themes intended by the Holy Spirit to pull through the entire span of redemptive history. Engaging with these considerations surely transports the reader to the original context and perspective of the human author and the ultimate Author of the passage, the Holy Spirit.

The second macro aspect rounds out the four guardrails. It is what I have described as full bloom aspect. Geerhardus Vos greatly contributes to identifying and summarizing this aspect describing the concept of the progressive nature of biblical

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[10] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16, Logos Bible Software.

[11] Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 19-20.

[12] Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel C. Emadi, "Biblical-Theological Exegesis and the Nature of Typology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21, no. 1 (2017): 12, Logos Bible Software.

revelation: "Every increase is progressive . . . from seed-form to the attainment of full growth."[13] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson further illustrate this concept:

> A favorite illustration of some in explaining this phenomenon is the picture of a seed. An apple seed contains everything that will organically grow from it. No examination by the naked eye can distinguish what will grow from the seed, but once the seed has grown into the full apple tree, the eye can then see how the seed has been "fulfilled." It is something like that with the way OT passages are developed in the NT. There are "organic links" to one degree or another, but those links may not have been clearly discernible to the eye of the OT author or reader. Accordingly, there is sometimes a creative development or extension of the meaning of the OT text that is still in some way anchored to that text.[14]

These concepts and comments have led me to summarize this as the full bloom aspect. It requires the interpreter to not just consider the place and role of the passage in the unfolding story of redemptive history but also to intentionally search for later developments that provide the "fulfilled" view of the "seed" of a particular passage. The Matthew 2:15 passage referenced is a helpful example of the importance of this guardrail, not only to the interpretation of the Matthew verse but also the Hosea 11:1 verse it references.

The Beale and Carson quote introduces an inherent challenge with this guardrail. Vos sheds light on this challenge: "It is sometimes contended that the assumption of progress in revelation excludes its absolute perfection at all stages."[15] Continuing the seed and tree illustration, Vos adds, "We do not say that in the qualitative sense the seed is less perfect than the tree."[16] This principle, more complicated and further developed, often raises the sharpest contention between modern conservative interpreters who align with these interpretive aspects up to this point. This is where an analysis of scholars such as Vlach proves helpful. It is helpful not only to track with Vlach—as well as those who

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[13] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 7, Logos Bible Software.

[14] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, introduction to *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), xxvii, Logos Bible Software.

[15] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 7.

[16] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 7.

would be in his camp—but also to further evaluate the validity of these stated guardrails and the ramifications for holding to them or denying them.

As the passages in Matthew will reveal, neither Jesus nor the authors of the New Testament read back into the Old Testament meaning in a way that disengaged with the context of the Old Testament passages. As such, I agree with Jonathan Pennington's encouragement to neither exclusively read forward or backward but instead to read both ways.[17] This would be the essence of full bloom aspect. The development in the New Testament provides the primary hermeneutic but does not discount or disengage with the context of the Old Testament passages to which the New Testament refers.

One final clarification will guide understanding of full bloom aspect. Up to this point, biblical theology and full bloom aspects could seem to be very similar if not the same. Biblical theology connects the "dots" of the big story of Scripture while full bloom aspect provides the priority. Full bloom aspect is the priority perspective that guides the connecting of the biblical theology dots throughout the big story of redemptive history. There is a sense in which some approaches to biblical theology require a sequential trajectory of progressive revelation.[18] Full bloom aspect does not argue against the progressive nature of revelation but also does not require a linear trajectory. It provides the second narrative that will be the priority perspective and guide the connecting of the dots of biblical theology. These concepts as well as more specificity for how Matthew's fulfillment quotations guide the full bloom aspect will be unpacked further in the next chapter.

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[17] The "both ways" approach to reading Scripture will be further developed later in this chap.

[18] Edward Klink and Darian Lockett summarize the type they refer to as *BT2*: "The Bible reveals a History of Redemption progressing in a chronological manner. The history of redemption is visible through tracing the major themes and overarching structural ideas (e.g., covenant, kingdom, and promise and fulfillment) as they develop along a sequential and historical timeline. The biblical 'theology' is only accessible through the lens of God's (historical) progressive revelation." Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 23.

The guardrails outlined serve as an opportunity to be reminded of the beauty of biblical interpretation intended by the Holy Spirit. When we read Scripture, we are immediately confronted with seemingly insurmountable gaps and limitations that race to quench the fire of expectation that we can understand the ancient text. These guardrails are an attempt to follow the methods of interpretation modeled by the biblical authors themselves. The process is illustrated by figure 1.

The modern reader begins reading the ancient text. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the contributions of previous study or teaching, and the intellectual skills provided by the Creator, there is understanding accessible in that reading. In figure 1, reading informed by these influences is illustrated as "gray" in contrast to the brilliant color offered on the other side. The guardrails serve as an opportunity to bring the reading through the prism of biblical interpretation modeled by the biblical authors that is intended to produce the wonder and beauty of an understanding that holds up against an analysis of all of Scripture and works to see the text as the Holy Spirit intended. This beauty does not always fit neatly into presuppositions or systems. However, the exercise offers not only brilliant vistas but also opportunity to stretch ourselves beyond modern presuppositions to bridge the gaps that confront us. Before exercising these guardrails, I want to provide an exercise to demonstrate why full bloom aspect is so crucial to the process.

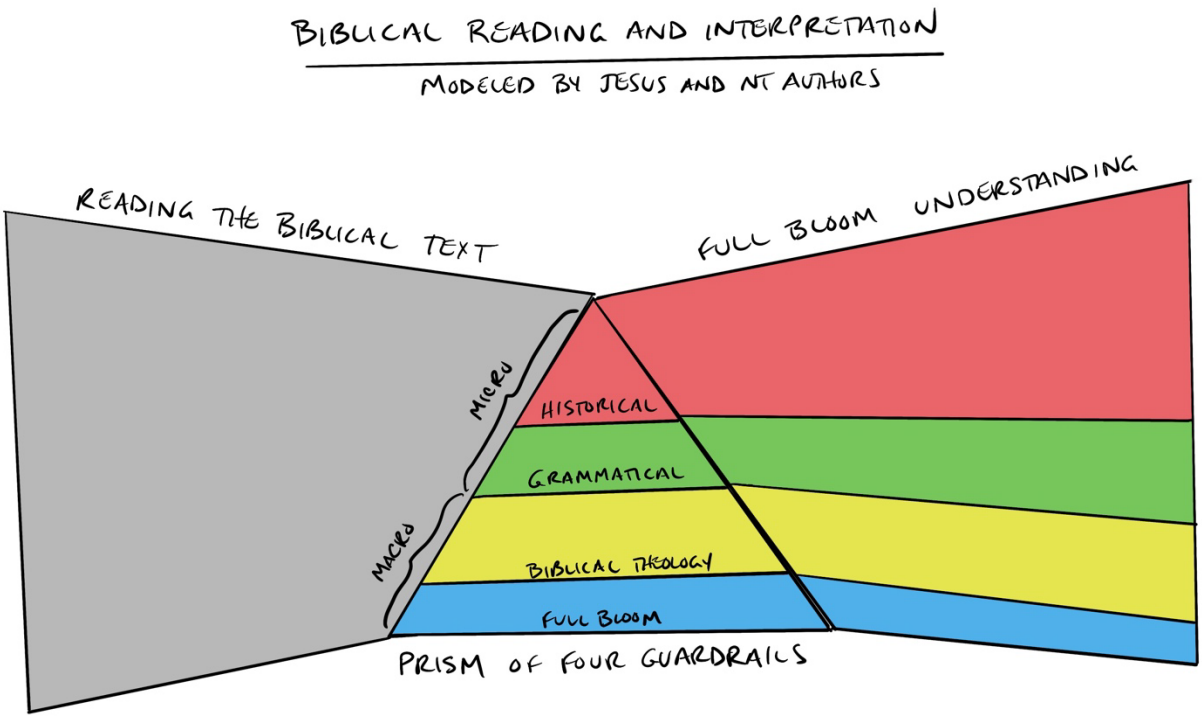

Figure 1. Biblical reading and interpretation

The Importance of All Four Guardrails

I shared my excitement for new discoveries of God's unfolding plan for redemption that flowed out of my own studies in biblical theology with some fellow pastors with whom I share a high view of Scripture and commitment to expository preaching. They listened intently and shared my enthusiasm until I began sharing the ways full bloom aspect had begun reshaping my views of the timing of the end times and the future role of ethnic Israel. These brothers align with the guardrails of historical and grammatical aspects so closely that we often discuss biblical interpretation with even more enthusiasm than local sports teams or other common topics of great interest. We also often discussed the fact that the Bible presents themes and an unfolding revelation that challenges interpreters to recognize that context extends beyond history and grammar to consider the progression of revelation since each passage is a scene in a larger story. I left that conversation with several resounding exhortations to read Vlach's book, *He Will Reign*

Forever. They were confident that, if I did, I would return to their convictions on these reshaping points.

Value in Studying a Work Like Vlach's

The consistent commitment to the historical and grammatical aspects of biblical interpretation rekindled during the Reformation has served the church well in the subsequent generations. Each generation, however, has produced leanings and points of emphasis that fit neatly into systems or rally denominations. These leanings often make it difficult to cut through the fog of these presuppositions to center interpretation on the method modeled by Jesus and the authors of the New Testament. Utilizing the historical and grammatical aspects of biblical interpretation are crucial starting points that draw the modern reader to turn on their fog lights. Often, excellence in historical and grammatical aspects naturally leads to an understanding that each passage and book is a scene that fits in the larger story of the Bible and often provides recognition of themes that pull the story along from beginning to end. Authors such as Vlach shine in these first three guardrails. Evaluating these strengths reinforces the value of these guardrails. This evaluation will also water the ground for a charitable and beneficial exposing of the value of the fourth guardrail and the ramifications of not leaning into full bloom aspect.

Value in the Three Guardrails Modeled by Vlach

The subtitle for Vlach's book is *A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God*. For the most part, it is an excellent journey in biblical theology. Vlach states that biblical theology recognizes the "perspective of unfolding revelation."[19] It is important to establish that the "biblical theology" that Vlach demonstrates in this book aligns with a narrower lane than most authors referenced in this project. Vlach seems to focus more on the "big picture" rather than the biblical theology approach that I propose and is modeled by the

[19] Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion House, 2020), 134.

majority of the biblical theology authors in this project. His strengths shine in the aspects of historical context and grammatical analysis. Strong historical and grammatical aspects are a crucial component of a robust biblical theology. These strengths further demonstrate the intrinsic value of each guardrail of biblical interpretation along with the importance they serve in bolstering each other. Benefits from the conclusions he draws are many, but there is even more value in learning from his process.

Vlach's analysis of Genesis 49:11-12 highlights the activity of the prophecy concerning Judah found in the blessing given by his father. "He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine." A temptation for modern readers is to fast forward once they recognize, by verse 5, that this is a list of blessings that will work through all twelve sons of Jacob. Perhaps the mention of Judah would grab the reader's attention since Jesus is referred to as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah."[20] While allusions to a future king are readily visible in Jacob's blessing of Judah,[21] an additional context of timing is embedded in the historical and grammatical aspects of verse 11.

Vlach transports the reader back to the ancient context. He educates the modern reader on the ancient practices of tying donkeys to vines. Searching commentaries reveals the historical conclusions Vlach uncovers are not unique: "When the special ruler reigns, vines will be so common they could be used as hitching posts for donkeys. No concern exists that donkeys will eat or trample the vines because even if they did it would not matter since vines are so abundant."[22] Several commentaries recognize this prosperity as

[20] This title given Jesus in Rev 5:5 is the subject of many modern worship songs such as *The Roar* and *Is He Worthy?* (Chris Tomlin) along with *Lion and the Lamb* (Bethel Music). Incidentally, these songs encourage biblical theology as the tittle, along with "the Root of Jesse" found in Rev 5:5 draw the reader back to the Old Testament in a fashion that Jesus modeled through His exposition of "Moses and all the Prophets" showing the disciples on the road to Emmaus all the ways the Old Testament pointed forward to Christ (Luke 24:27).

[21] The mention of the "scepter," the "ruler's staff," and the "tribute [that] comes to Him" in v. 10 provide obvious references to royalty.

[22] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 90.

the point being made in the blessing by Jacob.[23] Vlach moves these historical and grammatical aspects into an excellent position of strong biblical theology. He recognizes the conditions described by Jacob are "similar to Edenic conditions before the fall."[24] In doing so, he moves the reader beyond a more weighted historical and grammatical analysis to recognize the outworking of these micro categories. In some respects, the Jews of Jesus' day would have benefited from broadening their interpretation to recognize the biblical theology aspect of the Messianic fulfillments of Jesus' day. If they would have, they would have recognized that the Edenic context surely did not exist during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

Vlach's excellence with the first three guardrails is once again displayed in his analysis of a New Testament passage, Luke 19:11-27. The story Jesus gave is of a nobleman who "went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return." The modern reader will likely recognize the parabolic nature of what will follow. However, Vlach seizes the opportunity to invest in the historical and grammatical aspects of this story: "It was regular procedure for native princes to journey to Rome to receive their right to rule."[25]

He then develops the historical context of Jesus' original audience by explaining the recent, for them, political journey of Herod Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great. Despite the commander of the army declaring Archelaus the rightful heir to the throne, he "did not have the right to rule until he first received official permission from Caesar

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[23] K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 890, Logos Bible Software; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 337, Logos Bible Software; John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 277, Logos Bible Software; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 478-79, Logos Bible Software; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, *A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 231, Logos Bible Software.

[24] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 90.

[25] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 358.

Augustus in Rome."[26] A journey to Rome, an audience with Caesar, and the political defeat of his enemies later, Archelaus returned to Judea and began his reign as legally recognized king.

Such historical background provides important context to Jesus' story. The expectation and longing for an immediate establishment of the kingdom of God with His Messiah on the throne had reached a fever pitch by the time Jesus began His ministry, despite the many Old Testament details which clearly stood unfulfilled, such as the Edenic prosperity of the Genesis 49:11 passage. The historical context of this story of the nobleman moves the reader to recognize the nobleman is Jesus who must journey to a "distant country" to receive His kingdom. What appeared to be a delay for Jesus' contemporary audience was required by a context with which they should have been familiar. Vlach astutely concludes, "The reason the kingdom is not going to appear immediately is because Jesus must receive kingdom authority first."[27]

Once again, Vlach's excellent work with the historical and grammatical aspects set up a natural biblical theology context. He even tips his hat toward full bloom aspect by stretching outside of the Luke passage to see the more full bloom context to which Jesus' story pointed His audience: "Acts 3:21 affirms this by noting, 'heaven must receive' Jesus 'until the period of restoration of all things.'"[28] This affirmation of an eschatological process that recognizes the unfolding of and anticipation of a future culmination is precisely the outworking of a robust biblical theology. It also proves pastorally valuable. The ball has been set on the proverbial tee as Vlach recognizes the personal application for the followers of Christ as Jesus' story homes in on the minas entrusted to the nobleman's servants. The historical context sets up the original audience and the informed modern reader to understand that the "delay" of the King to set up His kingdom is not an

[26] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 358.

[27] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 359.

[28] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 359.

unintentional delay but rather a necessary one. The task of His servants is now to be faithful. Vlach well observes, "The application for Jesus' followers is that they should be faithful, using their gifts and talents during this period between His two comings. When Jesus returns, He will reward the faithful and grant them ruling authority."[29]

There are many reasons to affirm and learn from the excellent work by Vlach in the first three guardrails of biblical interpretation. He even recognizes and provides examples of potential value in considering the full bloom aspect. However, the fog of the modern presuppositions and systems seems to keep him, and others like him, from being able to see and follow the full bloom aspect of the authors of the New Testament.

Hindrances Exposed by Full Bloom Aspect

While mentioned above, one of the key applications of full bloom aspect is reading that aspect back into earlier passages. One of Vlach's chief concerns with this approach is that doing so changes the meaning of the original author.[30] He is driven by a conviction that I wholeheartedly support: "No passage contradicts another passage."[31] This is the *analogia scripturae* (analogy of Scripture) of Martin Luther and the Reformers.[32] His affirmation of these points drives him to argue against "hidden meanings"[33] and the New Testament "transcending, reinterpreting, or spiritualizing" the

[29] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 360.

[30] The validity of such a conclusion would be a concern for those who hold a conservative approach to biblical hermeneutics. The responsibility for those who do hold to a full bloom aspect guardrail of interpretation is to demonstrate that reading this aspect back into earlier passages is what Jesus and the New Testament authors not only taught but also intended to model.

[31] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 33.

[32] More specifically the phrase refers to letting Scripture interpret Scripture which "stemmed from a belief in theological unity between the two Testaments." Edward J. Herrelko III, "Biblical Theology, History of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), Logos Bible Software.

[33] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 33.

Old Testament.[34] This is the crux. Are conclusions drawn from full bloom aspect read back into the Old Testament passages changing the meaning of those passages or inserting hidden meaning? Are full bloom aspect conclusions that recognize patterns and typology with Israel, nations, land, and the temple causing these topics to "lose their significance once Jesus arrives?"[35] I agree with Vlach that biblical interpreters must "grapple with the relationship between the two testaments, which could be the single greatest factor determining a kingdom view."[36] It is to this end that further analysis of Vlach's argument is necessary.

Seeing "Fulfillment" Through Lenses

The meaning and purpose of Matthew's use of the term "fulfilled" (πληρόω) is important not only to the first Gospel but also to the topic of biblical interpretation.[37] Vlach concurs, "The word for 'fulfill' is *pleroō* and was used strategically by Matthew in chaps. 1 and 2 to identify Jesus with Israel by connecting events and prophecies in Israel's experience with Jesus."[38] He also recognizes, "It should alert the reader that *pleroō* sometimes has a wider range of meaning than just literal fulfillment of an OT prophecy. Context will determine the meaning of each use of the term."[39] Such statements carried

[34] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 32.

[35] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 32.

[36] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 32. It should be noted that the primary emphasis of the book is to examine biblical theology with an application of understanding specifically the redemptive plan of God as it pertains to the theme of the kingdom of God. However, as has been evidenced in this chap., the ramifications of the arguments extend beyond the kingdom topic to biblical interpretation in general.

[37] Matthew's use of the term *pleroō* will be analyzed to further understand and equip biblical interpretation by the modern reader to follow the examples of Matthew, the New Testament authors, and Jesus Himself.

[38] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 278.

[39] Michael Vlach, *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2021), 170. Kindle. This book was published toward the end of the research and writing for this project. It is an excellent book, much in the vein of *He Will Reign*. However, it continues to demonstrate Vlach's desire to maintain a future for ethnic Israel at the expense of engaging with the full bloom aspect that the biblical writers seem to demonstrate in

out to an analysis of the use of the term in the entire Gospel should set Vlach up well to embrace full bloom aspect. Unfortunately, he does not. He even sees the testing of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11) as a pattern of Satan's "attempt to thwart God's kingdom" that he beautifully illustrates by a "chiastic" layout of biblical passages that span from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 21:1, an illustration that provides a visual of the beauty of biblical theology.[40]

Vlach homes in on the term and concept in his analysis of Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but *to fulfill* them." He evaluates the historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects and concludes, "[Jesus] came to complete it in all its details. In other words, Jesus did not come to discard anything in the OT. He came to fulfill everything."[41] Vlach allows for the fact that this topic has generated "considerable debate" but oversimplifies the sides by not engaging with full bloom aspect.[42] The decision not to see full bloom aspect in the understanding and application of Jesus' statement seems to be greatly influenced by Vlach's dedication to certain systems and presuppositions, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

The issue seems to be summarized by the analogy of lenses. Two lenses are available for the interpreter. One lens emphasizes the *forward* reading of the passage. In other words, the interpreter reads Isaiah with the resources and development of progressive

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their own interpretation of Scripture. In doing so, he is strong in his historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects but falls short in being able to see and appreciate the figurative and beautiful aspects of biblical interpretation that would surely challenge his strong convictions concerning ethnic Israel.

[40] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 289.

[41] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 310.

[42] He provides a summary of one side as "an 'absorption' or 'embodiment' view . . . where the details of OT prophecies are absorbed into Jesus or embodied by Him. . . . Supposedly, the physical, national, and/or land promises of the OT find fulfillment, not by actually being fulfilled literally in history, but by being fulfilled in the person of Jesus who represents the highest ideal of these matters." Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 311. I agree with this statement. However, what follows is clearly a disagreement by Vlach which exposes why the summary is overly simplistic and does not engage with the full bloom aspect that leads one to draw the conclusions with which he disagrees.

revelation *up to that point*. The prophecies along with the details, concepts, and vocabulary are read forward, straining to understand their fulfillment as Isaiah would have understood them. Such a position for those wearing these lenses is often espoused as the lens that most honors the meaning of the original author for the original audience. The second lens is that of understanding the end of the story and reading that *backward* into the passage. Jonathan Pennington well observes the significance of the implications of these lenses from the teaching of Jesus: "The relationship of Jesus's message and actions to God's preceding revelation was the primary source of conflict during Jesus's own ambulatory adulthood, and this continued and even intensified in the early church after his resurrection and ascension."[43] The complexities of this concept and the impact on the "fulfillment" formulas of Matthew will be addressed later.

Pennington reminds the modern reader that the biblical interpretation modeled by Jesus and the New Testament authors was not an either-or approach between the two lenses but a both-and: "This Christ fulfillment of torah means that we must learn to read the whole Christian Bible in a bidirectional way."[44] This charitable and exegetically robust perspective would move Vlach's excellent three guardrail interpretive approach into a realm of interpretation that better reflects that of the authors of the New Testament. However, the investment in presuppositions and systems appears to hinder him and others like him. This "bidirectional" lens could potentially offer those whose commitment to Old Testament concepts challenges them to shy away from full bloom aspect in a way that they perceive to be honoring to the original author but also follow the example of Jesus and the authors of the New Testament.

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[43] Jonathan Pennington, "The Per Se Voice of the Old Testament and The Gospel According to Matthew: Abiding Witness and Recontextualization of Torah in the New Covenant," in *The Identity of Israel's God in Christian Scripture*, ed. Don Collett et al. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 255, Kindle.

[44] Pennington, "The Per Se Voice," 266.

Transcending or Changing the Meaning?

Vlach's overarching concern for reading backwards with the full bloom aspect seems to be his concern that such conclusions change the meaning of the original author's intention. Pennington acknowledges a similar concern present in Jesus' day: "Both theologically and pragmatically it was difficult for the first Christians to articulate how God's revealed word that abides forever (Isa 40:8) could now be modified or even ignored by the teachings of Jesus and the apostles."[45] Neil MacDonald appears to summarize well Vlach's solution to ensure the meaning or intention of the original author is not compromised: "One may read the Old Testament for its plain sense as it were, as one's first hermeneutic."[46]

The plain sense is a concept very important to Vlach's approach to biblical interpretation. To be sure, approaches to interpretation that have invested in viewing full bloom aspect conclusions as primary to prior revelation have abused this, resulting in an over-spiritualized or allegorical approach to biblical interpretation.[47] Throughout his book, Vlach warns against "cryptic or spiritualized meanings."[48] A recurring concern he voices is that full bloom aspect requires seeing the church as the fulfillment of Israel.[49]

The previous quote by MacDonald continues, "But then, in the light of one's reading of the New Testament, one rereads the former for its christological sense, the

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[45] Pennington, "The Per Se Voice," 255.

[46] Neil B. MacDonald, *Metaphysics and the God of Israel: Systematic Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 186, Logos Bible Software.

[47] MacDonald sees this as an abuse by individuals such as Marcion and an approach that "informed the patristic period, dominated medieval theology." MacDonald, *Metaphysics and the God of Israel*, 187.

[48] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 35. This vocabulary continues throughout his work along with concepts such as reinterpreting, transcending, and over-spiritualizing the meaning of the Old Testament. These are critiques validly leveled against the allegorical interpretations of Marcion and others declared heretics by early church councils.

[49] He summarizes this view as "the nation of Israel is an inferior type that is transcended by the church." Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 85. I believe—and will work to show in the analysis of Matthew's Gospel—that Israel was a type not of the church but of Christ Himself, the true Israel.

second and primary hermeneutic."[50] The point that the Christological sense, despite being second in the progress of revelation, is the "primary" hermeneutic seems to be the point Jesus Himself modeled in passages such as Luke 24:26-27 and John 5:39. Vlach recognizes the Christological development of concepts, even wading into the full bloom aspect end of the pool in his analysis of Genesis 49. He recognizes Jacob's "'lion' language indicates royalty. Later, Jesus is referred to as 'the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah' (Rev 5:5)."[51] In these factual observations, he recognizes the biblical theology aspect but does not consider the full bloom aspect considerations that Jesus models in John 5:39 and Luke 24:26-27. Unfortunately, Vlach does not spend much time in the Luke passage and not any time in the John passage.[52]

Perhaps Vlach would agree with Rudolf Bultmann's conclusion that "the writers in the New Testament do not gain new knowledge from the Old Testament texts but read from or into them what they already know."[53] Neither biblical theology nor full bloom aspect *change* the meaning of the original author or passage any more than adding light to a dimly lit room changes the contents of the room. The prophets prophesied using the vocabulary and concepts with which they and the original audience were familiar. The

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[50] MacDonald, *Metaphysics and the God of Israel*, 186.

[51] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 89.

[52] He briefly mentions Luke 24:27 on p. 404, doing so to bolster the point he appears to consider a dagger to the full bloom aspect as he walks through the dialogue between the resurrected Jesus and His disciples in Acts 1:6ff. Sadly, the Scripture index of his book reveals that John 5:39 is not even mentioned in the 582-page volume.

[53] Rudolf Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, English translation ed. James Luther Mays (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966), 54. Bultmann's concern seems to be that of Vlach's that if the insight of the New Testament authors is understood to take precedence over the Old Testament understanding without full bloom aspect then the insight of the New Testament authors must then be "changing" or "transcending" the Old Testament meaning. This observation is not intended to equate Bultmann's overall approach to biblical interpretation with Vlach's. Nor is it an attempt to put Bultmann and Vlach in the same camp. In fact, analysis of the writings of both men would demonstrate otherwise. Bultmann's concern conveyed in the included quote seems to capture well one of Vlach's concerns regarding "new knowledge" or "changing" the meaning of the original author.

light of Jesus and New Testament revelation simply provide vision to see with greater understanding the content of the prophetic rooms.

Influenced by Systems and Presuppositions

Vlach's strong conviction in literal fulfillments of Old Testament promises to ethnic Israel unfortunately seem to ground him from soaring to the vantage point of Jesus and the New Testament authors and their development of God's redemptive plan. Vlach recognizes well that "the NT does not reinterpret or transcend the OT expectations."[54] To this I agree. However, his commitment to systems and presuppositions moves him to dogmatically suggest, "Instead, the NT continues the OT storyline and *affirms literal fulfillment of the OT promises and covenants in all their dimensions through two comings of Jesus*."[55] Conclusions such as Jesus providing the fulfillment of the promises and covenants that appeared in the Old Testament to be specific to ethnic Israel does not allow for theological concepts such as typology, which Matthew seems to clearly be understanding and modeling in his fulfillment passages.

Statements revealing presuppositions can often be subtle but also have broad influence on the lenses through which a biblical hermeneutic is conducted. Vlach states, "The purpose of the Servant is to restore Israel, not make the nation Israel insignificant."[56] The statement reveals the strength Vlach brings to the discussion of biblical interpretation. He recognizes the "Servant" motif is an important thread that weaves through Scripture with its intended fulfillment in Jesus. However, is the actual "purpose" of this Servant to restore ethnic Israel? To journey the path of biblically defending an answer to this question extends beyond the scope of this project. However, what follows in Vlach's paragraph brings the study of Matthew into full view. "When the NT writers later identify Jesus with

[54] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 38.

[55] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 38, emphasis added.

[56] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 156.

Israel (see Matt 2:15) they identify Jesus with Israel and show He is qualified to restore the people."[57] As the following study will demonstrate, Matthew includes key Old Testament passages to develop much more than Vlach's conclusion and further reveals that the role of Israel served as a shadow pointing to the substance that is embodied and fulfilled in Christ.

An additional example of systems and presuppositions influencing Vlach's otherwise strong biblical interpretation is his conclusion concerning the Greek term γῆ as it relates to Matthew 5:5. The text states that the meek "shall inherit the earth (γῆ)." Vlach concludes that this statement was to point ethnic Jews to the hope of future promises such as "regaining the land [promised to Abraham] itself. Land, therefore, is part of the kingdom proclamation to Israel."[58] He bolsters such a claim by strongly stating, "The term *gē* always refers to physical earth in some way, whether land, soil, or ground."[59] However, the grammatical analysis void of full bloom consideration misses what appears to be the broader Genesis through Revelation purpose of the attention to "land" throughout Scripture. Stephen Wellum and Brent Parker seem to capture the broader scope of how land fits into the development of God's redemptive plan: "There is an implication that God's kingdom will no longer be limited to the promised land but will, like the original vision for the garden of Eden, expand to include the whole world (Gen 1:28; Matt 5:5; Rom 4:13), God's blessed glory filling the earth as the waters cover the sea (Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Hab 2:14)."[60] Such conclusions honor the broader context of Scripture as well as what the New Testament authors develop as the move away from plot points on a map

[57] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 156.

[58] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 306.

[59] Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 307.

[60] Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 14, Logos Bible Software.

to the dwelling of God with His people that would be unlimited by people groups or land boundaries (Rev 5:9-10; 7:9; and chaps. 21-22).

Unknowingly, Vlach has revealed the influence of presuppositions that could be overcome by recognizing full bloom aspect in his recently published book, *The Old in the New*. Matthew's fulfillment passage of Matthew 2:15 will be analyzed later in this project. In Vlach's analysis, he once again reveals the excellence and care with which he handles the Word of God within the first three guardrails, concluding that there is "divine correspondence between Israel and Jesus."[61] However, his conclusions concerning what Matthew intends to convey Matthew's fulfillment quotations seem to be more influenced by convictions about the future for ethnic Israel than in keeping with how Matthew intends to use them. This is on display when Vlach references Simeon's quote in Luke 2:32: "Jesus is 'A light of revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.'"[62] Vlach sees this quote as evidence that Jesus "can restore Israel and bring blessings to the Gentiles."[63] This statement continues the flow of his argument that there a distinct future for ethnic Israel. Certainly, this can be and has been debated. However, the Pauline influence on Luke along with the full bloom aspect of the rest of the New Testament moves the weight of Simeon's statement away from emphasizing ethnic Israel and instead letting the Bible speak in its own terms. Luke, writing to the Gentile Theophilus (1:3), seems to be conveying the reality Paul expressed in Galatians 3:28—"There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus"—which would have been unexpected for not only Theophilus but also Jew and Gentile alike. That this baby, in such an unexpected location of the world, born to such unexpected parents would bring salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike was completely unexpected and should cause Luke's contemporary audience and every subsequent generation of reader reason to pause and look more closely at the claims

[61] Vlach, *The Old in the New*, 171.

[62] Vlach, *The Old in the New*, 171.

[63] Vlach, *The Old in the New*, 171.

of the gospel message. Such a conclusion seems to honor the original context more than reading Simeon's statement in support of a view of a distinct future for ethnic Israel.

Full Bloom Aspect Challenges Over-Emphasizing Systems and Presuppositions

Approaches to biblical interpretation such as Vlach's have provided modern Christians with valuable historical, grammatical, and biblical theology tools that bridge many of the interpretive gaps and have served those passionate about faithful exegesis well. From my own experience, the strength of their systems and presuppositions is often in their excellent evaluation of specific verses or passages. One such topic is the "people of God" and the explanation they provide from Romans 9-11.

Admittedly, conclusions drawn from their historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects that God's people include Jews and Gentiles with God specifically having unique future plans for faithful ethnic Israel seem to hold up. However, full bloom aspect compelling the reader to read backward and forward begins to poke holes in an otherwise strong position.

While the scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth development of this topic, a summary will need to suffice. Beginning with the end, one sees that God's people will be identified as those with whom God dwells (Rev 21:3). He is said to dwell within His people identified by their faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:16). In a similar fashion, the nation of Israel is identified by God's dwelling with them (Lev 26:11-12; cf. Exod 33:16). Finally, such intimacy was first seen in the Garden of Eden as God walked with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8).[64] This concept of dwelling combines with that of the kingdom of priests to tie the people of God together across generations,

[64] The Hebrew term הלך (to walk) ties together the principles of intimate fellowship in Lev 26:11-12 with Gen 3:8.

people groups, and any other intrinsic characteristics.[65] That Paul reminds the Galatians that the people of God are not recognized by their social, economic, or ethnic status but instead by their faith in Christ (Gal 3:28) combines with Paul's efforts to show that ethnic status for a Jew is eclipsed by his or her spiritual status as a follower of Christ (Rom 9:6) and moves the concept of the people of God to extend beyond ethnicities. It would stand to reason that this has been God's plan throughout history and will culminate in the undifferentiated people of God with whom He will dwell for all eternity.[66]

Modern readers will naturally approach the ancient texts of Scripture with presuppositions. Historical, grammatical, and biblical theology guardrails assist bridging the interpretive gaps with aspects that work to supersede presuppositions. However, as has been demonstrated through the analysis of Vlach's book, the important aspect of full bloom provides even more opportunity to lay aside presuppositions and "understand the Bible in its own terms."[67] There may be an opportunity to remind modern minds that the emphasis of interpretation today may often be the "provability" of the Bible. B. B. Warfield well observed that a doctrine, such as the Trinity, does not fit neatly within the linear, provable bent of today, concluding, "Nor is [the Trinity] provable by human reason."[68] Such an observation does not throw out the importance of rightly dividing God's Word and utilizing the "analogy of faith."[69] Conclusions drawn by modern readers must be

[65] This concept is applied to Israel (Exod 19:6), the church (1 Pet 2:9), and the people of God in heaven (Rev 5:10).

[66] A book most impactful for me on this subject is Benjamin Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019).

[67] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 45, Logos Bible Software. This will be the succinct "technical" definition for biblical theology used throughout this project.

[68] Fred Zaspel, "B. B. Warfield on the Trinity," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (2006): 55, Logos Bible Software.

[69] The "analogy of faith" is a phrase that summarizes the hermeneutical axiom that "Scripture interprets Scripture." Bruce A. Demarest, "Analogy of Faith," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 58, Logos Bible Software. Demarest also observes, "As an exegetical principle the analogy of faith has been abused by the imposition of meanings that were

accountable and should hold up under the analysis of the rest of Scripture. My observation is that modern readers should helpfully be reminded that there is beauty in the details as well as analogies and patterns in Scripture that do not always fit neatly into formulas or linear timelines. Full bloom aspect and the other three guardrails provide a reminder and allowance for this "beauty" while not opening access to the steep cliff of personal autonomy. Additional analysis is needed before diving into the ancient text.

Recognizing the New Testament Contribution to Full Bloom Aspect

The modern reader must consider that the Bible is a story that progresses from beginning to end. Once acknowledged, the reader is ready to consider that the end of the story informs the beginning. David Steinmetz provides an excellent explanation for this "effect." In his chapter "Miss Marple Reads the Bible," Steinmetz works to demonstrate how the approach mystery and history authors take can inform the modern reader how to understand the unfolding of progressive revelation. He summarizes his case by differentiating between historical criticism and traditional exegesis. This is important because the differentiating feature between the two seems to be the lenses through which one reads a given text. He defines historical criticism as a discipline that "attempts to set texts in their own place and time. It can do this properly only if it avoids anachronism: that is, reading back into earlier texts the views and assumptions of texts from a much later period."[70] Contrasting historical criticism, Steinmetz explains that traditional exegesis

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not intended by the biblical writer. Some thus argue that even if a particular interpretation cannot be drawn from a given text, it may be imposed upon the passage, provided the interpretation is found elsewhere in Scripture and provided it does not do violence to the literal meaning of the text." Demarest, "Analogy of Faith," 58. Heeding and protecting against this valid warning is one of the values of full bloom aspect and the four guardrails proposed in this project.

[70] David C. Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15, Kindle.

"assumes that no one can properly understand earlier developments in the biblical story without reading them in the light of later ones."[71]

The New Testament authors, while different human authors than those of the Old Testament books, provide what a mystery novel author provides: the rest of the story. While they themselves, just as their Old Testament counterparts, did not necessarily fully comprehend the full development of what they were writing, their writing contributes to what Steinmetz calls the "second narrative." Steinmetz helpfully explains,

> It is important to understand that this second narrative is not a subplot, even though it is short. It is the disclosure of the architectonic structure of the whole story. Therefore the second narrative quickly overpowers the first in the mind of the reader, who can no longer read the story as though ignorant of its plot and form. The second narrative is identical in substance to the first and therefore replaces it, not as an extraneous addition superimposed on the story or read back into it, but as a compelling and persuasive disclosure of what the story was about all along.[72]

This second narrative is what Jesus and the New Testament authors provide for the progress of the story of the Old Testament. Just as the final chapter of a mystery novel clarifies and brings to conclusion the earlier chapters of the story, so the New Testament to the Old Testament.

Further Developing "Fulfillment"

A tool that the Gospel writers, especially Matthew,[73] use is the aforementioned fulfillment formula. Vlach and others emphasizing the forward lens miss the important second narrative to which Matthew seems to be referring with his "fulfillment" formulas. These fulfillment formulas provide what Steinmetz refers to as the second narrative. Once the second narrative is in place, "it is impossible to understand earlier events apart from them. . . . In the order of being, the second narrative comes last. In the order of knowing,

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[71] Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View*, 15.

[72] Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View*, 16.

[73] Patrick Schreiner observes, "Matthew employs a fulfillment quotation twelve times, compared to Mark's one use and Luke's double use." Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 38n4, Logos Bible Software.

it comes first. That is why both mystery stories and the biblical documents are best understood by reading the last chapter first."[74] This seems to be the point Matthew is modeling along with the bi-directional lens proposed by Pennington.

Pennington digs into the controversial passage of Matthew 5:17-20 to show that Jesus is modeling a bi-directional lens of understanding the Old and New Testaments.[75] A potential temptation for someone who overemphasizes full bloom aspect could be the exclusion of digging into the interpretation of the context of the Old Testament reference. This is neither the motive nor the goal of the concept of full bloom aspect proposed here. Pennington well summarizes the application of full bloom aspect and the other three guardrails: "By being read together, the two parts of the Christian Bible inform each other in a bidirectional way."[76] The fulfillment formulas will frame the passages analyzed in Matthew. However, the "why is this important" must be considered first. The answer is best found in a brief analysis of the importance Jesus placed on His followers not only reading Scripture but also understanding.

Why Do You Not Understand?

It has already been mentioned that understanding a concept that is read or taught was important to Jesus. Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus in John 3:1-15 highlights this well. The tables turned as the Pharisee conversed with the seemingly uneducated[77] man from Nazareth. The expert was called out for his lack of understanding. Jesus' question stung at two levels.

First, He identified Nicodemus as *the* teacher of Israel. D. A. Carson observes, "The article with this expression (lit. 'the teacher of Israel') suggests he was a recognized

[74] Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View*, 25.

[75] Pennington, "The Per Se Voice," 267.

[76] Pennington, "The Per Se Voice," 267.

[77] The amazement of the Jews at Jesus' teaching was due to their conclusion that He had not been formally educated, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" (John 7:15).

master, an established religious authority."[78] Second, He stunningly asks this theological expert, "[do you not] understand these things?" Carson aptly recognizes Jesus' emphasis in this dialogue to be drawing from Old Testament Scriptures and concepts to explain what it meant to be born again and the role Jesus and His Holy Spirit played in the process. It is this process to which the Old Testament pointed, and Jesus exposes that the interpretive process this expert had been using left him with a lack of understanding. Carson notes the intentional questioning by Jesus: "Nothing could make clearer the fact that Jesus' teaching on the new birth was *built on the teaching of the Old Testament*."[79]

Understanding accurately not only the facts but also what they meant was important to Jesus. It would drive His questioning of the disciples after He taught parables (Mark 4:13). Understanding what was taught "certified" His disciples to be "scribes" for the kingdom of God (Matt 13:51-52).[80] It is the goal of His disciples understanding that led His interpretive modeling of interpreting from Moses to the Prophets "all things concerning Himself" on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:26-27).[81] This emphasis by Jesus moves the topic at hand from research for the purpose of knowledge to knowledge for the purpose of application.

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[78] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 198, Logos Bible Software.

[79] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 198.

[80] The importance of the concept communicated by the position of scribe will be unpacked in the next chapter.

[81] Verse 31 says their "eyes were opened, and they recognized (ἐπιγινώσκω) Him." This term can have a slight variation of emphasis than the verb, γινώσκω, in John 3:10. However, "It is possible that ἐπιγινώσκω differs somewhat in meaning from γινώσκω in focusing attention on what is understood or indicating that the process of understanding is somewhat more emphatic." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1:318n6. Thus, the term in this context appears to emphasize the process that leads to accurate knowledge.

Conclusion

Why is this analysis important? It is important because the admirable starting point of wanting to honor the authorial intent in biblical interpretation can also include strong tools for accomplishing this while missing an important component. That component is the guardrail of full bloom aspect modeled by Jesus and the authors of the New Testament. Unfortunately, a commitment to presuppositions and systems requires an explanation for why Jesus and the New Testament authors drew conclusions that do not support those presuppositions and systems. The conclusion Vlach and others like him have come up with is that the interpretive method of Jesus and the New Testament authors used is not available today. Matthew demonstrated otherwise, which is what the remainder of this project will develop.

It is important to establish at this point that the guardrails presented in this chapter along with the analysis of Michael Vlach's book are not being made from a position of perfection or superiority. Scholars of Vlach's caliber—both academic and character—are to be respected and studied. Their contributions to the topics of biblical interpretation and theology are invaluable to modern readers. The purpose of revisiting guardrails of biblical interpretation is an effort to build on their excellent foundation. Further, while their approach to interpretation succeeds in most aspects, the point I intend to make is that the aspect of full bloom, bi-directional reading moves the modern reader more into the realm of the intended and modeled interpretation of Jesus and the New Testament authors than the existing model provided by Vlach and others.

CHAPTER 3

FULL BLOOM AND "THE VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE"

Matthew provides his first fulfillment quotation embedded in the rather short summary, at least as compared to the Gospel of Luke, of Jesus' birth.[1] The formula introduces a rich initial sandbox to discover and develop interpretive skills which Matthew will expect his readers not only to enjoy but also to use. It is a passage with which most modern Christians are familiar. In Scene 3, section 1 of his masterpiece, *Messiah*, George Frideric Handel etched the passage, along with its corresponding passage in Isaiah, in Christmas lore.[2] While the passage certainly centers on the events Christians celebrate at Christmas, the meaning and reach are much more expansive. At the onset of the analysis of the fulfillment passages a broader analysis of Matthew as a scribe must be conducted and will serve the rest of the study.

How Matthew Contributes to Full Bloom Aspect

From the opening lines of the Gospel of Matthew, the reader can see the author drawing attention to the development of the Old Testament. Beginning with the genealogy and then developing through Matthew's fulfillment quotations of the first two chapters, there appears to be intentionality by the author. Christopher Wright well summarizes the apparent broader purpose: "Matthew clearly wants his readers to see that Jesus was not only the *completion* of the Old Testament . . . but also that he was in a deeper sense its

[1] This chapter is a combination of additional foundation that the rest of the project will build upon. As such, it is a longer chapter than the passage analysis chapters that follow.

[2] Calvin R. Stapert, *Handel's Messiah: Comfort for God's People*, The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 97, Logos Bible Software.

fulfillment."[3] He further explains this purpose with a relatable and practical illustration: "A destination is not just the end of a journey; it is also the point of a journey."[4] This purpose is further developed and explained by looking closer at Matthew as disciple and scribe.

Patrick Schreiner identifies Matthew not only as disciple but also scribe. He helpfully provides the analogy of a signet seal that, in the ancient context, served the purpose of authenticating the message or the messenger.[5] He proposes that Jesus served as the seal of the Father and that Matthew then serves as the seal of Jesus' ministry and message through "seals, stamps, and images."[6] The latter is an important designation that provides the foundation for why Matthew's interpretive process should be recognized more than just a tool he uses for education purposes. As scribe, he intends to follow the example of his teacher and intends the process to be a model for his readers to follow. In doing so, he models and emphasizes the importance of full bloom aspect. Schreiner sets this up well: "The Gospel of Matthew is best understood with one eye looking back and the other eye attuned to the tectonic shifts from the old story."[7]

Matthew As Scribe

A predominant view among commentators is that Matthew refers to himself and his fellow disciples as "scribes who [have] been trained" in Matthew 13:52.[8] R. C. H.

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[3] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 64, Logos Bible Software.

[4] Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 64.

[5] Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 65, Logos Bible Software.

[6] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 65.

[7] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 8. This backward and forward concept embodies the concept of full bloom aspect.

[8] It is Schreiner's observation that set my investigation in motion. Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 11. The investigation confirmed his observation. David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 354, Logos Bible Software; W. D. Davies

Lenski waters the ground to ensure fertility for investigating the scribal aspect of Matthew's self-disclosure: "The title 'scribe,' used to designate rabbis who were educated in the law in the peculiar Jewish fashion, is here used in a broad sense to designate anyone who is versed in the Word."[9] The scribal designation was not one exclusively reserved for understanding and education but also included the expectation of teaching others who would then teach others. D. A. Carson confirms this additional aspect and sees it as an important role of the scribes of Judaism in Jesus' day: "The point of comparison becomes clearer when we remember that a *grammateus* ('scribe') in Jesus' day was not simply a theological interpreter of the Scriptures capable of rendering Halakic decisions (rules for conduct) *but a teacher* (hence NIV's 'teacher of the law')."[10]

David Orton backs the understanding up from the application of teaching to recall the foundational role of scribe as interpreter: "It is clear that the scribal role is of teaching and interpretation of Torah."[11] These two aspects applied by Matthew to the disciples of Jesus combine to recognize that Matthew served as both theological interpreter

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and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 446, Logos Bible Software; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 550, Logos Bible Software; Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 225, Logos Bible Software; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 545, Logos Bible Software; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 571, Logos Bible Software; William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953–2001), 580-81, Logos Bible Software; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 332, Logos Bible Software; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 362-63, Logos Bible Software; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 401-2, Logos Bible Software.

[9] Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 550, emphasis added.

[10] Carson, *Matthew*, 332, emphasis added.

[11] David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 54, Logos Bible Software.

of Jesus' teaching[12] as well as rabbi, instructing his readers in their biblical interpretation, understanding, and teaching to follow the interpretive example he set. In many respects, each generation of disciples of Christ serve as scribes. Yet, the authority does not reside in the disciple himself but instead in the Scripture rightly interpreted. The proposed interpretive guardrails intend to serve the scribe to guide toward conclusions that are consistent with Jesus, the New Testament authors, and the many generations of "new scribes" who follow these examples. A helpful reminder for all Christian scribes is that the role of a scribe is not limited to intellect and practical application. It includes character. Leon Morris observes that a Christian scribe is "one whose studies proceed from a genuine humility and lead him into a true understanding of the things of God."[13]

The Scribe Making Disciples of His Rabbi

The importance of Matthew displaying the progress of understanding is creatively demonstrated by the progress of this interpretive process in his Gospel. In chapter 6 of Orton's book, he provides a helpful analysis of the term "understand" (συνιέναι[14]) in the Gospel of Matthew. It is helpful to recognize that capacity, process, and arrival at insight all seem to be included in this concept. Orton recognizes that Matthew utilizes the term nine times beginning in chapter 13. The emphasis is even more on

[12] Just as Jesus demonstrated in the parable of Matt 13:51-52 that the disciples served as "new" scribes superior to their contemporary scribes of Judaism, so many passages, such as Matt 5:17, reveal that the teaching of Jesus and the New Covenant superseded the teaching of Torah. Thus, the scribal aspect of Jesus' disciples moves into the realm of full bloom aspect. It does not discredit Torah or the teaching of the Old Testament but instead puts them in the proper light and instructs future generations of readers how to interpret the Old Testament appreciating the context of the passages themselves but utilizing the light of the full bloom of the New Testament.

[13] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 362.

[14] Louw and Nida provide the following definition, "to employ one's capacity for understanding and thus to arrive at insight." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 379, Logos Bible Software.

display when one considers it occurs six times in the chapter.[15] He sets the context for the question and parable of understanding for His disciples by observing that the crowds did not have understanding (Matt 13:13-15).

It was the expectation of the scribes that they understood the hidden meanings of parables. In his analysis of Matthew 13:52, Orton rightly sees the understanding of Jesus' teaching as the dividing line of discipleship: "It is indeed the moment when the two camps are separated definitively and Jesus' complete rejection begins."[16] It stands to reason that this moment was seared in Matthew's memory as a dividing line between true disciples and those who rejected Christ. Not only was the dividing line understanding, but by the teaching that followed in verse 52, the scribal aspect expected of His disciples by Jesus compelled Matthew to instruct through his writing with the same expectations of his readers. In so doing, Matthew's instruction intends to turn the disciples of his Rabbi into scribes.

The Scribe and Typology

One of the important tools of the scribes of Jesus' day was the use of patterns and allusions to teach in addition to straightforward teaching. Robert Alter helpfully explains, "In biblical narrative more or less the same story often seems to be told two or three or more times about different characters, or sometimes even about the same character in different sets of circumstances."[17] These repetitions of characters, scenes, and other details are intended by the authors of Scripture to alert the reader to patterns that intend to point to God's character, expectations for the development of the story at hand, and sometimes the concept of a shadow. This shadow concept intends to draw the reader to a

[15] Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 143.

[16] Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 144.

[17] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books), 58, Kindle.

later presentation of the substance to which it refers.[18] Alter's analysis of Old Testament narrative helpfully reminds the modern western reader that the use of types for Ancient Near East authors was a normal device applied creatively and extensively to assist interpretation and raise expectations.

What constitutes a type is a deeply divisive topic. However, Schreiner helpfully clarifies, "There is probably more commonality than [the debaters] realize."[19] A type can simply be understood as a shadow that points to a substance. This seems to be a principal Paul draws from when, in the context of the religious activities his audience was observing, he wrote, "These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col 2:17). Yet, from a literary standpoint, we should dig deeper. After all, shadows can be deceiving. Hamilton assists, "The two key features of biblical typology are historical correspondence and escalation."[20] Schreiner uses the phrase "shadow stories," which provides the recognition that stories often reveal patterns intended to point the reader beyond the details of the passage. He writes,

> Shadow stories are unique to the Gospels' narration. They connect large swaths of narrative rather than just points or dots in the story. The point here is to push people past simply looking for similar terms and to look for a combination of these factors and the development of a narrative through quotes, allusions, and echoes. The main importance of this is that as we study Matthew, we should be looking for more than "word" connections; we should watch for "narrative" echoes as well. Associations are made to Jesus's life that demonstrate how all the types in the Hebrew Scriptures are fulfilled in the antitype. This makes sense, for a story consists not only of persons but also of events, institutions, things, offices, and actions.[21]

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[18] Alter describes these repetitions in the biblical narrative as a "type-scene" and offers fascinating insight that assists the Western reader to better understand the art of narrative from the perspective of the Ancient Near East. While his book focuses on understanding narrative, it provides a helpful foundation for introducing, defining, and equipping the modern reader of all genres of Scripture to look for typology and to have rules by which to conduct the search.

[19] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 54. Schreiner submits that the scope of his work does not allow for a deep dive into the debate or an effort to resolve the differences. I echo this sentiment and will not attempt to dive into the debate or provide a path to a solution.

[20] James M. Hamilton, Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 77, Logos Bible Software.

[21] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 55.

This paragraph not only assists with the understanding of a biblical type but also provides practical signaling value, not only to the interpretive assistance it provides modern reader but also the opportunity to better understand the intention of the original author.

Schreiner describes the details of Jesus' life in Matthew's narrative that "reflect and complete" concepts of the Old Testament as an important example and application of these "shadow stories."[22] I appreciate the imagery conveyed by "shadow stories." It drives the modern reader to engage with the four guardrails. This phrase and the concept of typology remind of the value of the stories themselves but also emphasize the importance of the frontwards and backwards reading of Scripture. Matthew's use of shadow stories will tutor the modern reader in the biblical interpretation modeled by his Rabbi.

"They Shall Call His Name Immanuel"

The first fulfillment formula occurs embedded in the rather brief summary of Jesus' birth and provides the first exercise in evaluating Matthew's modeling of full bloom aspect, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel'" (Matt 1:22-23). Matthew points the reader back to the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Much of modern Christianity traditionally views this as Matthew teaching that Jesus' birth is the ultimate birth Isaiah had in mind.[23] The evaluation of these passages in light of full bloom aspect will reveal a biblical interpretation that will challenge traditional views as well as begin the interpretive classroom of study Matthew intends for his fulfillment quotations.

Predictive vs. Typological Fulfillment

The study of this passage will provide foundational principles that will guide evaluation of the additional fulfillment passages. James Hamilton provides an important

[22] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 55.

[23] There appear to be two main traditional positions on Jesus' birth and the Isaiah prophecy: (1) the virgin birth Isaiah prophesied was that of Jesus; (2) the virgin birth Isaiah prophesied was fulfilled by a birth in Isaiah's day and ultimately fulfilled by Jesus' birth.

primary clarification. Hamilton often emphasizes the escalation of fulfillment.[24] While this emphasis may seem to indicate that biblical theology requires a linear trajectory to guide interpretation, Hamilton instead seems to model the forward and backward reading in his analysis of this passage in Matthew. This is revealed in his distinction between predictive and typological fulfillment of prophecy. Hamilton states, "When Matthew speaks of the OT being 'fulfilled' he refers to typological rather than predictive fulfillment."[25] Predictive fulfillment, according to Hamilton, would require that "the prophet was speaking specifically of the coming of the Messiah in the distant future."[26] This would be the perspective described in Edward Young's summary of Isaiah 7:14: "In verse 14 the birth of the Messiah is present to the prophet's vision. This is prediction, and in the birth of Jesus Christ it found its fulfillment."[27] In this strong statement, seeing the prophecy as anything but predictive seems to be viewed as not being faithful to the historical context. Or, as explained by John Watts, "A hermeneutical method in general

[24] This is not a criticism. It is an aspect of typology as well as biblical theology with which I agree. In his foreword to Leonhard Goppelt's book, *Typos*, Earle Ellis explains, "Unlike a Judaizing hermeneutic, typology views the relationship of OT events to those in the new dispensation not as a 'one-to-one' equation or correspondence, in which the old is repeated or continued, but rather in terms of two principles, historical correspondence and escalation." E. Earle Ellis, foreword to Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), x, Logos Bible Software. Two comments must be made. First, the reminder that not every detail requires a one-to-one equation or correspondence is very important to biblical interpretation and, specifically, biblical theology and full bloom aspects. Limiting expectations for types that require a one-to-one correspondence seems to restrict interpretation in a way neither the original authors nor the original audience would have intended. Second, the point I intend to make about Hamilton is further corroborated by the Ellis quote. Hamilton does not appear to rigidly model an approach to biblical theology that requires *only* a linear trajectory for understanding and interpreting the Bible. Instead, he seems to recognize and model what Matthew models; namely, a reading backwards and forwards in order to understand the biblical text.

[25] James M. Hamilton, Jr., "'The Virgin Will Conceive': Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 232, Logos Bible Software.

[26] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 232.

[27] Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 294, Logos Bible Software.

use allowed verses to be separated from their contexts."[28] However, an interpretation can value the context of the Old Testament passage and also see something in the New Testament as a fulfillment other than predictive.

Hamilton offers the concept of the typological fulfillment, which he describes as referring "to the fullest expression of a significant pattern of events."[29] The emphasis in this concept is not in the details of the Old Testament prophecy having in mind or even finding literal one-to-one fulfillment in the New Testament event, but rather the patterns of those events finding their "full measure" in the life and ministry of Jesus.[30] Hamilton is not the only scholar who recognizes the existence of typological fulfillment in the New Testament. Darrell Bock recognizes Luke's use of Isaiah 61 as typological fulfillment.[31] With this context, Matthew's use of the Old Testament should be evaluated as whether he interprets the Old Testament prophecy as being fulfilled predictively or typologically in Christ.[32]

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[28] John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 24, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 141, Logos Bible Software.

[29] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 233.

[30] Gerhard Delling, "Πλήρης, Πληρόω, Πλήρωμα, Ἀναπληρόω, Ἀνταναπληρόω, Ἐκπληρόω, Ἐκπλήρωσις, Συμπληρόω, Πληροφορέω, Πληροφορία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–), 296, Logos Bible Software.

[31] Bock recognizes patterns Luke provides in Luke 4:24-27 as "the sphere of the miracle-working prophet like Elijah and Elisha . . . and the sphere of the Servant." Thus, he acknowledges the value of patterns and repetition. He draws out the typological nature of fulfilment in Luke by stating, "Jesus typologically supersedes the Isaianic prophetic anointing and pattern of Isaiah 61 which itself points to or parallels the Servant figure by effecting the salvation about which he preaches." Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 110. He also provides a helpful chart of Old Testament references in Luke and Acts and identifies several as "typological-prophetic." Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern*, 276.

[32] A clear example of Matthew's predictive fulfillment perspective is Matt 2:5-6: "They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."'" The reaction of Herod as well as the very specific account of the wise men traveling to the city of Bethlehem indicates both the narrative characters as well as that Matthew clearly viewed the fulfillment of the Micah passage as predictive.

Applying the Guardrails to Isaiah 7:14

Based on the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23 leaves no question that Matthew has this passage in mind as the reference to his first fulfillment quotation. Matthew provides a model for Bible interpreters to follow rather than demonstrates a method of handling the Old Testament that is careless or unique because of his apostleship or inspiration. Rikk Watts recognizes the growing scholarship that presents the case otherwise: "A number of recent studies affirm C. H. Dodd's contention that the NT authors were more aware of the contexts of their OT citations than is generally accepted."[33] Critics consider it a lack of "critical" scholarship to conclude that Matthew *does* take context into consideration. Despite this, Hamilton reminds of the importance of Matthew's modeling of the guardrails of biblical interpretation: "It seems that this does not have to be an issue of being a 'critical scholar' . . . though it is an issue of interpreting Isaiah 7:14 in its own historical and literary context."[34]

Isaiah 7:14: The Micro Lenses

The micro lenses of the guardrails provide a starting point. Isaiah 7 takes place during the reign of Ahaz, King of Judah.[35] The historical account of Ahaz's reign is found in 1 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28. These historical accounts are helpful and provide additional insight to the events of chapter 7. However, the historical context of chapters 1 through 6 should be considered first. The spiritual condition of Judah was deplorable. The Lord summarizes their lack of spiritual health: "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it" (Isa 1:6). The nation is exhorted to repent: "Wash yourselves;

[33] Rikk E. Watts, "Immanuel: Virgin Birth Proof Text or Programmatic Warning of Things to Come (Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23)?," in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 92, Logos Bible Software.

[34] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 229.

[35] The scope of this project is intended to provide a model to pastors and lay people for biblical interpretation rather than to dive deeply into the scholarly debates surrounding the passages. This is not an attempt to provide only a surface analysis; however, this explanation is intended to provide context for the decisions made in this project for exegetical details provided.

make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (Isa 1:16-17).

The deplorable spiritual condition of the nation is especially surprising when one considers the summaries of the grandfather and father of king Ahaz. Both Uzziah and Jotham received the rare summary that they "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chron 26:4; 27:2). J. Alec Motyer bridges the historical context between the royal generations of David: "The dying kingship of Uzziah (6:1) provides the foil for the hope to come: David's house is sinking fast but the promised King will come (9:1-7; 11:1-16)."[36]

As chapter 7 begins, clearly an ominous political climate exists. Isaiah's reference to David, in verse 2, alerts the reader to the bigger historical picture. While Ahaz is the king and the citizens of Judah are the participants in the scene, the greater importance is the topic of the line of David. When news arrives in Jerusalem of the league of Syria and Ephraim,[37] two historical considerations are available. First, Isaiah provides the strategy for the league: "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it" (7:6). Second, the progress of the league had already been devastating, as 2 Chronicles 28 details. In one day, 120,000 soldiers of Judah had been killed, 200,000 were taken captive, and the king's son, commander of the palace, and second in command were all killed (28:5-8). Add to this the raids by the Edomites and Philistines (28:17-18), and the gathering storm promised to be more than the capital city and its inhabitants could endure.

These devastating events appeared to be just a precursor to utter defeat, and it understandably caused "the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people [to shake] as the trees

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[36] J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 80, Logos Bible Software. The end of that observation bleeds into the biblical theology aspect, but I include it to whet anticipation.

[37] Ephraim and Israel are interchangeable titles for the northern tribes of Israel who separated from the two tribes of Judah when the kingdom divided with Judah's king, Rehoboam, and Israel's king, Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12).

of the forest shake before the wind" (Isa 7:2). While the Isaiah passage does not insert this detail into the progression of the narrative, we are told, "At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help" (2 Chron 28:16).[38]

The literary genre of the verses leading up to verse 14 is also important to analyze. It is important to recognize that the chapter is narrative. This guides the grammatical analysis of the passage. This reminds the reader that it is important to understand the characters and their setting before rushing to modern understanding and application. In this way, the narrative genre serves as a bridge between the historical and grammatical guardrails.

This is important as the first noticeable grammatical term to analyze occurs in verse 2: the "house of David" (לְבֵית דָּוִד).[39] While alluded to previously, additional investigation will prove helpful. King David was the man known as "the man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). Many of the "righteous" kings of Judah were compared to the righteousness of David (2 Kgs 22:2), and several "unrighteous" kings who were especially wicked were compared to the righteousness of David in a negative light, including Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:2). David was also the mightiest warrior-king of Israel. That David was known as a warrior is one of the primary reasons the Lord told David he was not qualified to build the Temple (1 Chron 28:3). Moreover, when Solomon took the throne, the "peace on all sides around him" (1 Kgs 4:24) clearly resulted from the military campaigns of his father. Isaiah's use of this phrase, with this historical context, explains

[38] From a Bible study or preaching perspective, there are many opportunities even in this initial historical analysis to make pastoral observations or look for personal application. However, the process of initial interpretation is the crucial first step before pastoral and personal applications. One must work to ensure the interpretation is correct in order to stand application on solid foundation that aligns with the original author's intent to the original audience and passes muster with faithful interpretation.

[39] The phrase בֵּית דָּוִד in reference to the royal line of David occurs in the context of Jonathan's covenant with David (1 Sam 20:16). It was then used as a title for the army of David when Saul campaigned to destroy David and preserve the royal lineage for his family (2 Sam 3:1, 6). The only other use outside of the prophecies of Isaiah (Isa 7:13; 22:22) and Jeremiah (Jer 21:12) was in reference to Jeroboam differentiating the northern kingdom of Israel from the southern kingdom of Judah (1 Kgs 12:20; 2 Kgs 17:21).

further why "the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind" (Isa 7:2). John Oswalt bridges the understanding well: "It is *David's* house which is terrified. How are the mighty fallen!"[40]

What would have been even more perplexing for the king and the people of Judah was the spiritual and theological aspect of the phrase given their contemporary developments. While there is clearly political context for the designation in the historical references of the dividing of the kingdom of Israel, a key passage to advance the context to a theological elevation is the covenant between God and David in 2 Samuel 7. David proposed to build a physical house for the Lord (הַאַתָּה תִּבְנֶה־לִּי בָיִת). The Lord forbids David to conduct this activity but, instead, gifts the king with a covenant. In the covenant, the Lord promises that He will make a house for David (כִּי־בַיִת יַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ יְהוָה). The "house" for the people of Judah, especially the royal line of David, would be viewed as evidence of the faithfulness of the Lord.[41] Not only would the potential military defeat of the house of David cause terror but also the ramifications that Israel's God may be proven unfaithful to His covenant.

Isaiah approaches King Ahaz along with his son Shear-jashub in verse 3, whose name means, "a remnant will return."[42] His message from the Lord provides vivid imagery that the Lord *will*, in fact, once again prove Himself faithful to His covenant with David by reducing the invading league to "two smoldering stumps of firebrands" (7:4). The Lord even reveals His character further by exposing the "secret motives" of the invading kings, information which king Ahaz's intelligence informers did not have access (7:6). The oracle

[40] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 198, Logos Bible Software.

[41] The term חֶסֶד is often used to describe the character of the Lord that is communicated through His faithfulness to the terms of His covenants (see Exodus 34:6-7).

[42] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, 199.

Isaiah provides includes great specificity of sixty-five years for when "Ephraim will be shattered from being a people" (7:8).[43]

Given the fear of the king and the people portrayed in verse 2, combined with the possible dismay of Ahaz that he would not live to see the fulfillment of verse 8, the words of Isaiah must have sounded absurd. So, the Lord offers to prove Himself by commanding[44] the king to request of the Lord a sign as "deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (7:10). The king refuses, providing weak attempt at offering a spiritual excuse (7:12). To which the Lord responds that He Himself "will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."[45] This brings us to the Matthew passage. Or does it? The macro lenses of the guardrails of biblical interpretation assist before heading to Matthew.

Isaiah 7:14: The Macro Lenses

For those familiar with the New Testament and the story of Jesus' birth, the temptation is to jump from Isaiah 7:14 to Matthew 1:23. In so doing, this is a partial step in full bloom aspect, recognizing the rest of the story informs the present scene. However, the macro lenses of biblical theology and then full bloom aspects of the Isaiah passage contribute to avoiding jumping too quickly to conclusions based on modern context and understanding.

Biblical theology reminds us to understand the Bible in its own terms and, in so doing, instructs the modern reader to acknowledge the passage at hand is a scene in a

[43] Commentators are divided as to whether or not the reference to sixty-five years is literal. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 82; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah,* 201-2; Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 275-76. The scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth analysis. However, I agree with Oswalt—and v. 9 seems to corroborate: "The statement that an event sixty-five years in the future would be of no consequence to Ahaz misses the point. Like all of us, Ahaz was required to exercise faith in the veracity of God's word at that moment, whether or not he lived to see the complete fulfillment of it." Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 202.

[44] The verb שְׁאַל is a Qal, imperative.

[45] Grammatical analysis of the terms *virgin* and *Immanuel* will be reserved for the Matthew passage analysis.

larger story. That larger story ripples like the concentric circles of a pebble tossed into a pond. The immediate concentric circle of Isaiah 7:14 contributes to interpreting this passage. Hamilton cautions the leap to Messiah directly from verse 14 but also acknowledges, "Affirming that when read in the broad context of Isaiah's messianic expectation the text does contribute to Isaianic Messianism."[46]

The topic of a virgin conceiving then seems to take on the primary focus of verse 14. Certainly, this topic would be important to the birth of Christ and will be further addressed in the analysis of the Matthew passage. However, considering the expectations for the house of David mentioned along with the present context, the name Immanuel would have interested the original audience. Young well summarizes the significance: "The name Immanuel asserts that God will be present with the Jews, that they will experience success, deliverance, freedom from danger and anxiety."[47]

The details of the verses that follow appear to point to a fulfillment that will be verifiable to Isaiah and Ahaz soon. The fulfillment of the Lord's promise to thwart the invading league will take place before the child prophesied in verse 14 knows how to "refuse the evil and choose the good" (7:15-16).[48] The opening verses of chapter 8 nearly repeat the details of verses 15 and 16: "Before the boy knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria" (8:4).[49] The debate concerning the identity of Immanuel—especially

[46] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 230.

[47] Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, 290.

[48] Again, space and scope limit the level of investigation into the details of this passage. There are different opinions by scholars as to whether the context of this prophecy is judgment or blessing. A hybrid of judgment and blessing is proposed by Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 86-87. Watts argues almost convincingly for it being judgment Watts, *Immanuel*, 93ff. However, Hamilton's position of the prophecy demonstrating the Lord's deliverance of Judah convinces in light of context and biblical theology Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 234ff. Surely, there is a note of judgment in vv 17-25, but this seems to be more the result of Ahaz's refusal to respond in faith (7:9) by going to Assyria for salvation (7:17).

[49] Scholars are divided as to whether the similar vocabulary implies that Immanuel from 7:14 is also Maher-shalal-hash-baz of 8:1. Derek Kidner proposes, "The sign of Immanuel (7:14–17), although it concerned ultimate events, did imply a pledge for the immediate future, in that however soon Immanuel were

with similar phrases included with the prophecy of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the repetition of Immanuel as possessor of the land (8:8), and the final phrase of the prophecy (8:10)—is impossible to definitively conclude. However, the biblical theology aspect assists. The repetition of key phrases, individuals, and concepts appears to tip the scales toward Maher-shalal-hash-baz being the child who will affirm to the people that their God with them (Immanuel). Referencing Isaiah 8:4-10, Hamilton observes, "This statement appears to elaborate upon 7:16, and if that is the case, it is tempting to identify Maher-shalal-hash-baz (8:1, 3) with Immanuel (7:14; 8:8, 10)."[50]

Concluding the biblical theology analysis with the occurrence of Immanuel in 8:10 misses an important "postscript." The section that follows corroborates with the trajectory of Ahaz to reject a path of faith and instead pursue horizontal solutions (7:12-13). He pursues the solution of alliance with Assyria, which proves to be a snare and stone of offense on which they would stumble (8:14-15). The birth of Immanuel would reveal to the present company that God's Word, like His character, would prove faithful. Tragically, this would be too late for Ahaz. Isaiah then calls his disciples to himself and instructs them instead to learn from the failure of Ahaz and choose to patiently wait as they seek the Lord through His Word (8:16-22).

The history of ethnic Israel offers patterns that are consistent with this Isaiah passage. Jeremiah describes Israel in the early days of the first exodus as a bride, emphasizing her obedience and devotion: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your

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born, the present threat would have passed before he could be even aware of it. But the time of his birth was undisclosed; hence the new sign is given, to deal only with the contemporary scene and with its darker aspect." F. Derek Kidner, "Isaiah," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 639, Logos Bible Software. Hamilton acknowledges the identity is "disputed" Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 236. Four primary positions appear to be the most popular: (1) Immanuel is one of three sons of Isaiah, each having a name that reveals an aspect of the future plans of the Lord for His people; (2) Immanuel is intentionally mysterious to set His birth in the long distance future, which would mean Immanuel in the Isa 7 context is intended to specifically predict the birth of Jesus; (3) Immanuel is the child of king Ahaz; and (4) Maher-shalal-hash-baz and Immanuel are the same child.

[50] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 236.

love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (2:2). This "bride" symbolism would vividly illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord in the book of Hosea. Yet, Hosea repeats the patterns provided in Isaiah 7. Despite the unfaithfulness of the bride, neither the redemptive plan nor the faithfulness of the Lord is deterred. The predictive fulfillments of the promised child of 7:14 in 8:3 and the strategies of the league of Syria and Ephraim being thwarted (2 Kgs 16:5, 9) provided yet another example of the patterns of the Lord's faithfulness despite the unfaithfulness of His people. These scenes of the faithfulness of the Lord and the spiritual failure of His people remind the reader not to put faith in the nation or the leaders of the nation to reverse the pattern and demonstrate they can live up to the Lord's standards on their own. They also encourage the reader to long for another who will fulfill where Israel failed.

I have proposed that the child predicted in Isaiah 7:14 is not Jesus. Instead, it is the child of Isaiah, also called Maher-shalal-hash-baz. H. M. G. Williamson observes, "In the immediate context the prediction of his birth is securely tied to the prevailing historical circumstances of the reign of Ahaz, so that a long-range messianic prediction is ruled out, at least *at the primary level*."[51] While debated, it appears that such a conclusion holds up under the historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects along with the concept presented above of full bloom aspect being the end of the mystery novel or the second narrative. The conclusions drawn here appear to remain faithful to the context of the Isaiah passage. However, does this miss the full bloom aspect that Matthew intends to provide? Does Matthew disagree with this conclusion? This sets up the full bloom aspect that Matthew's first fulfillment passage will provide. However, before examining the full bloom aspect, the Matthew passage must be viewed through the micro and macro lenses of the interpretive guardrails.

[51] H. G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day (New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), 254, emphasis added. The article by Hamilton introduced this quote and surrounding context. Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 239.

Applying the Guardrails to Matthew 1:18-25

The first fulfillment quotation in Matthew tempts the reader to immediately home in on the word "virgin." Because the virgin birth is an important aspect to the birth of Christ, this is understandable. However, the traditional understanding of this passage should be laid aside to first understand the passage in its own terms and context. The emphasis in the previous section is on the way the details of the prophecy of Isaiah demonstrate patterns consistent with the rest of the Old Testament. This concept guides the topic of predictive or typological fulfillment when preparing to interpret Matthew 1:23 and will surface throughout the following analysis.

Matthew 1:18-25: The Micro Lenses

The historical aspect begins by recognizing that the Gospel of Matthew was written several centuries after Isaiah 7:14. This is important because the seed of the gospel will have matured significantly through the life and teaching of Jesus. A term that summarizes the importance of this historical aspect is progressive revelation. Mitchell Chase well summarizes, "Progressive revelation acknowledges that what God disclosed at one point in history may undergo development and further disclosure."[52] Vlach and others hasten to remind Bible readers to remember that progressive revelation does not discard the context or authorial intent of the Old Testament passage. To this I would heartily agree. However, this is where the full bloom aspect both affirms the context and authorial intent but also allows for the actual reality of progressive revelation. Chase adds, "Later biblical authors may use and reappropriate the texts of earlier biblical authors. Recognition of such usage is hermeneutically helpful because we can see an inspired, authoritative interpretation and expansion of earlier verses and themes."[53] The canonical

[52] Mitchell L. Chase, "'From Dust You Shall Arise:' Resurrection Hope in the Old Testament," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18, no. 4 (2014): 10, Logos Bible Software.

[53] Chase, "From Dust You Shall Arise," 10.

fact that Matthew occurs later in the development of redemptive history than Isaiah is a crucial starting point for biblical interpretation.

The first quotation follows on the heels of the genealogy of Jesus. Recognizing this context is an important step in utilizing the historical and grammatical aspects. The opening phrase of the genealogy was intended to point Matthew's reader to the Old Testament. The phrase "The book of the genealogy" (Βίβλος γενέσεως) occurs in the Septuagint translation of Genesis 5:1, the passage that introduces the "book of the generations of Adam." Schreiner sees this introduction as instructing the reader to recognize both "the historical and theological retelling" and proposes that Matthew "is requesting his readers to engage his narrative through the lens of the new and the old."[54]

From the opening phrase of his Gospel, Matthew is interested in the theological ramifications of Jesus' life and ministry but not at the expense of the historical context. This reminder of the characters, events, and patterns of the names he provides sets up the lenses through which to examine both the Isaiah and the Matthew passages. In doing so, Hamilton is correct: "Matthew *both* respects the OT contexts of the texts he cites *and* sees them being fulfilled in Jesus."[55]

Next, the audience to which Matthew was writing is important to identify. The decision for the names highlighted at the beginning of the genealogy alerts us to the background of the original audience of Matthew's Gospel. Hamilton observes, "By opening with the statement that Jesus the Messiah is the son of David, son of Abraham, the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises to David and Abraham (1:1)."[56] Combined with the *gematria* of the groups of fourteen names, this

[54] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 8.

[55] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 229.

[56] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 239.

adds to the Jewish flavor of that audience.[57] Whether the audience was exclusively Jewish, the intentional wording of the opening genealogy leaves little doubt the audience was well-versed in Jewish culture, thinking, and the Hebrew Scriptures.

Shifting to the grammatical aspect, one recognizes that the passage, beginning in verse 18, is narrative. It is interesting that the term translated "birth" is γένεσις and draws the reader back to the opening line of the Gospel in verse 1. Donald Hagner observes, "'Birth,' picks up the γενέσεως, origin,' of 1:1 and suggests that the βίβλος γενέσεως, 'record of origin,' now reaches its goal."[58]

Craig Blomberg summarizes the words and phrases Matthew chooses to describe the events surrounding Jesus' conception and birth: "Matthew is clearly describing a supernatural conception here, but he uses remarkable restraint in that description."[59] The apostle waters the ground of his fulfillment reference by reminding readers that Mary was "found to be with child" (εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα).[60] He bookends this clear phrase of Mary's pregnant condition with two phrases that further explain the unique context.[61] First, her condition was "before they came together" (πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν

[57] While the scope of this project does not allow for a fully developed analysis of *gematria*, Allison and Davies remind how the Jewish readers would have processed Matthew's observation that the genealogy is in groups of 14 (Matt 1:17): "Because seven but not fourteen is a prominent number in the Bible, Matthew's three fourteens can be regarded as the equivalent of six sevens (3 × 14 = 6 × 7), in which case Jesus would stand at the head of the seventh seven, the seventh day of history, the dawn of the eternal sabbath." Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 162.

[58] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 17.

[59] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 58.

[60] Embedded in the phrase is the term γαστρὶ, found in five other passages outside of the context of Jesus' birth, and each provides a clear context for referring to a pregnant woman (Matt 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 21:23; 1 Thess 5:3; Rev 12:2).

[61] It is interesting that the term translated "found" (εὑρίσκω) is the root from which we get the English transliteration, "eureka!" This is supposed to be the declaration of the miners in the gold rushes of the 1800s when they found the very treasure they were seeking! "This simple Greek word—meaning 'I have found it!'—became a life slogan for thousands of California gold prospectors in the mid-1800s. It summed up every treasure hunter's dream and expressed the thrill of striking pay dirt." John MacArthur, *1, 2, 3 John*, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 151, Logos Bible Software.

αὐτοὺς). The term συνέρχομαι is used euphemistically as sexual union between a man and a woman.[62] Second, Matthew provides the phrase translated "from the Holy Spirit" (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου). Donald Wagner rightly proposes that this phrase "is of great theological importance to the narrative."[63] Louw and Nida assist with recognizing the sense of the preposition ἐκ as "a marker of the source of an activity or state, with the implication of something proceeding from or out of the source."[64] The phrase repeats the explanation of the angel to Joseph recorded in verse 20.

The angel instructs Joseph to "call His name Jesus" (καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν). This instruction will prove interesting in light of the fulfillment quotation that Matthew provides. Carson explains that the name Jesus "is a Greek transliteration for the Hebrew name Joshua."[65] He further explains that Joshua means "'Yahweh is salvation,' Exod 24:13."[66] This Old Testament background would set up the original audience well to recognize the theologically significant statement that ends verse 21: "He will save his people from their sins" (γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν). Central to this statement is the identification of the "people." Analysis of this identity will be reserved for the biblical theology aspect.

We now arrive at the first fulfillment quotation: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." Before evaluating the words, an important decision must be made as to whether verse 22 continues the statement of the angel or if

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[62] The term is widely used in the New Testament in its general sense: "to come together with others as a group, assemble, gather." William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 969, Logos Bible Software. However, Louw and Nida helpfully bring forward the figurative aspect of this term: "A figurative extension of meaning of συνέρχομαι[a] 'to come together,' 15.123)—'to have sexual intercourse with.' . . . In almost all languages there are euphemistic ways of speaking about sexual intercourse, and the use of γινώσκω[f] and συνέρχομαι[c] is illustrative of this in the Greek NT." Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 257.

[63] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 17.

[64] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 798.

[65] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 823.

[66] Carson, *Matthew*, 76.

these are the words of Matthew. Scholars are divided, but it is my conviction that the words are Matthew's.[67] There may be temptation to jump to the term "fulfill." However, "all this took place" (τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν) must first be addressed. The immediate understanding is that it summarizes the details of verses 18–21. Hagner concludes that it is "all that had thus far transpired [in the narrative]."[68] Hagner also affirms the position stated previously that Matthew is signaling that he is not simply recording facts of history but is doing so intentionally: "This . . . reveals the evangelist in his role as teacher. He will not only tell the story but also convey its significance."[69] Further affirming this teaching aspect of Matthew is the use of the adverbial purpose conjunction translated "to" (ἵνα). What follows is the purpose not only of the events happening but also Matthew's including them the way he has.

At this point, the term "fulfill" (πληρωθῇ) can be evaluated.[70] First, the historical aspect sheds light on the term. Davies and Allison observe, "The early church found in the Scriptures the declared will of divine providence and believed that the life of Jesus in its every detail completely fulfilled that will. Thus arose the NT's distinctive sense of fulfilment and its distinctive πληρόω-formulas."[71] This observation provides insight for the original audience and how they would have understood the word and what it conveyed. However, a more granular analysis of the word itself is needed. Louw and Nida offer a

[67] Carson makes a strong case based on another passage in Matthew (25:55-56) where he argues convincingly that the fulfillment quotation is the continuation of Jesus' statement. Carson, *Matthew*, 76. However, David Turner's response to Carson and additional insights from the passage, the grammar, and the rest of Matthew are more convincing. Turner, *Matthew*, 68. I conclude that the words are Matthew's.

[68] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 20. Hagner also bolsters his position by stating, "This is the force of the perfect [verb]."

[69] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 20.

[70] The term "fulfill" will be evaluated throughout the remainder of this project. The evaluation in this chap. will serve as foundational and is intended to be analyzed primarily considering this passage.

[71] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:211.

succinct definition: "To cause to happen, with the implication of fulfilling some purpose."[72] Reinier Schippers offers a more literal understanding of the classical use of this term: "To fill a vessel, so that the result can be described by *plērēs* or *plērōma*."[73] This more literal sense begins to reveal the sense that would influence the theology of a fulfillment formula. The voice of the verb is also important, and Schippers recognizes what the passive[74] sense conveys: "In the pass[ive] of expiring, coming to an end, e.g. a full (*plērēs*) year, a full number (*plērōma*) of years."[75]

It is this sense that moves into a perspective that can better understand the literal meaning, classical use, and the understanding of the early church concerning the term πληρόω. R. T. France considers the list in the UBS *Greek New Testament* that there are 54 direct citations and 262 "allusions and verbal parallels" to be conservative.[76] While he acknowledges that not all of these are directly related to "fulfillment," he recognizes that such emphasis on the Old Testament reveals "Matthew's presentation of the story of Jesus . . . is designed to bring to mind OT people, events or institutions which may serve as models for understanding the continuity of God's purpose as now supremely focused in the coming of Jesus."[77] He refers to this as a "'typological' understanding of Old Testament Scripture."[78] Setting up the macro lens analysis of this passage, France observes, "It is thus for Matthew not only the explicitly predictive portions of the OT that can be seen to be

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[72] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 160.

[73] Reinier Schippers, "Πληρόω," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 733, Logos Bible Software.

[74] Apart from Matt 3:15 and 5:17, all the formulas evaluated in this project are passive voice verbs.

[75] Schippers, "Πληρόω," 734.

[76] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 10.

[77] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 11.

[78] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 11.

'fulfilled' in Jesus, but also its historical characters, its narratives and its cultic patterns, even the law itself."[79] Before investigating the macro lenses, two additional terms must be evaluated.

The first has received the primary analysis in the passage cited in verse 23, "virgin" (παρθένος). Debates have proven not only numerous but also ongoing. While the Hebrew term found in Isaiah 7:14 does not definitively convey the idea of a virgin, Watts effectively cuts through the mountains of debate: "It is now widely agreed that [Isaiah] did not [envisage this as a miraculous virgin birth] and, had it not been for Matthew's use of this text, it is extremely doubtful if anyone would ever have read it so."[80] What is clear is that Matthew's use of the Greek term παρθένος[81] conveys undeniably the understanding of an unmarried woman.[82] Louw and Nida, once again, provide a succinct definition of the term: "A female person beyond puberty but not yet married and a virgin."[83] Despite Matthew's clear decision to convey the miraculous nature of Jesus' birth to be that of a conception apart from physical intimacy between a man and a woman,[84] it is not clear

[79] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 11.

[80] Watts, "Immanuel," 100.

[81] This is the term the translators of the LXX used to translate the Hebrew term עַלְמָה in Isa 7:14. Blomberg well observes, "The LXX translation of *ʿalmah* as *parthenos* (both words do not always mean 'virgin,' though the Greek term is less equivocal) shows that some Jews already two hundred years before Christ favored an interpretation in which this immediate fulfillment was not seen as exhausting Isaiah's prophecy." Blomberg, *Matthew*, 60.

[82] First, the concept of "unmarried" conveys a woman who has never sexually been with a man. Second, the use of the term in the rest of the New Testament, let alone definitions from Greek lexicons and dictionaries, conveys this same sense (Matt 25:1, 7, 11; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 7:25, 28, 35-38). The Corinthians passage makes the effort to contrast this term with the other translated "unmarried" (ἄγαμος). There are two other instances (outside of Jesus' birth narrative). Paul uses the term metaphorically to describe the purity with which he longs to "present [the church] as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11:2), conveying no other relation of spiritual intimacy. The other use is Rev 14:4 where the 144,000 [men] are referred to as those "who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins."

[83] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 108.

[84] This has already been established by the phrases and terms used in v. 18 and will be further enforced with the phrase, "but knew her not until she had given birth to a son" in v. 25.

that Matthew's intent is to show this miracle was what Isaiah had in mind when he prophesied. In fact, the second term will further confirm this.

The second term is "Immanuel" (Ἐμμανουήλ). Morris summarizes, "*Emmanuel* is found here only and is the transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning *God with us*."[85] Since the baby is given the name "Jesus" in verse 25, the question remains why Matthew would cite the Isaiah text and include the phrase, "they shall call his name Immanuel" (καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ). Morris then adds, "Matthew surely intends his readers to understand that 'Emmanuel' was his name in the sense that all that was involved in that name found its fulfilment in him."[86] These micro lenses naturally flow toward patterns and typology without even picking up the macro lenses. However, the macro lens analysis seems to bring a more accurate understanding of Matthew's purpose for citing the Isaiah prophecy.

Matthew 1:18-25: The Macro Lenses

Transitioning to the macro lenses is crucial to understand not only Matthew's intent but also that of the ultimate author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit. Admittedly, this understanding is not always easy and must allow for charity in many cases given the gaps outlined previously. However, neither gaps nor the complexities of a text leave the reader excused from engaging in the hard work of biblical interpretation. The guardrails serve as tools to assist the interpreter with the digging.

One prevailing conclusion concerning the use of the Old Testament by Matthew is that he "twists" the Scriptures, taking editorial liberties. The opinions of those taking this line of thinking range from liberal scholars to conservatives. The former use their conclusions to weaken the authority of Scripture. S. V. McCasland, commenting on Matthew's use of the Old Testament, states, "It is clear that Matthew has relocated sayings

[85] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 31.

[86] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 31.

in new contexts, where they may have lost their original meanings."[87] This seems to be simply an attack on Matthew's intentionality for not engaging with the original context. However, McCasland more alarmingly adds, "Matthew has freely picked up sayings of Jesus from various places and put them together in convenient collections, showing no concern for preserving the integrity of any original sources from which he drew them."[88] On the other side of the range are conservative scholars like Vlach and Thomas who affirm the conclusions he draws but also contend that the hermeneutic applied by Matthew is not intended to be followed by subsequent generations of interpreters. Is the modern reader simply left to close his eyes and throw a random dart at the range to conclude for themselves the authorial intent? The micro lenses assist in resoundingly answering, "No!" The macro lenses, however, must also be employed.

The biblical theology aspect reminds the reader that each passage is a scene in the bigger story of Scripture. This lens reminds that neither the prophecy of Isaiah nor the account of Jesus' birth in Matthew occur in isolation. Hamilton sets up the biblical theology aspect of this passage well by summarizing something the bookends of Scripture seem to confirm: "All of history was to culminate in the coming of the Kingdom of God."[89] We read of "kingdom" terminology in Genesis 1:28 as the Lord instructed Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and *subdue it*, and *have dominion over* the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."[90] This kingdom concept continues through the Old Testament as prophecies point to an individual: "To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion,

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[87] S. V. McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 151, Logos Bible Software.

[88] McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," 151.

[89] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 239.

[90] Emphasis added.

which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:14). The end of the Bible brings this theme to a conclusion as Christ will reign over the new heaven and new earth from His throne, with no more impact of the corruption of sin to ever influence this kingdom (Rev 21:3-4).

While this aspect encourages the reader to ascend to a cruising altitude to see both the big picture and where the passage under analysis fits, it is full bloom aspect that will draw the reader back and forth throughout Scripture. The biblical theology aspect which I am proposing, and which seems to be corroborated by scholars such as Hamilton, tends to emphasize escalation. This does not mean that full bloom aspect is at odds with biblical theology or that a hard distinction must be made between the two. It is more a nuance of emphasis. Such a reminder is important at this stage of the analysis of the Matthew passage to make two points. First, I propose the distinction between biblical theology and full bloom aspects because the variations of emphasis serve the reader to better align with the understanding of the original author and audience as well as the scope and purpose of progressive revelation. This will come into play with the analysis that follows and is, I believe, one of the great contributions of Matthew's Gospel to biblical interpretation. Second, I agree with Hamilton's conclusion concerning Matthew's use of the Isaiah prophecy but want to ensure that such a conclusion is not the end of the biblical interpretation process. In other words, the escalation in Matthew's passage of the patterns established by Isaiah's prophecy is important to Matthew's point. Such an understanding fits well within the system of biblical theology. However, such a linear progression is not the only aspect of biblical interpretation that Matthew is modeling. This will be where full bloom aspect comes into play.

As for escalation, Hamilton recognizes the presence of typology in the opening verses of Matthew and summarizes, "There is also an aspect of *escalation*, whereby the meaning of these events is intensified by the coming of the Messiah and the period in

salvation history that begins with his arrival."[91] The expectation of escalation was not new to the authors and audience of the New Testament. Francis Foulkes well summarizes, "We find in the Old Testament the hope and the conviction, not only that the past acts of God will be repeated, but that in the future they will be repeated on a scale greater and more wonderful than that of the past."[92] When considering the interplay of Matthew between his intended purpose of teaching through his Gospel and the prophecy of Isaiah, it is important to consider the historical context of Isaiah as well as the escalation Matthew displays in Jesus. Hamilton sets this up well:

> The sense in which Matthew's narrative *fulfills* Isaiah 7:14 has everything to do with *historical correspondence* and *escalation*, whereas it has to do with *predictive fulfillment* only when Isaiah 7:14 is read as a contribution to Isaianic Messianism rather than as a contribution to Isaiah 7. Thus, Matthew can be seen to be respecting the context of Isaiah 7–8 and claiming that Isaiah 7:14 is indeed *fulfilled* (typologically) in the birth of Jesus.[93]

The escalation of typology is seen primarily in two ways in the first chapter of Matthew. First, it is seen in the royal escalation of the genealogy. While Abraham is never referred to as a formal king, his kingly military exploits of Genesis 14 as well as the diplomatic efforts of the Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen 21:22-24) more than establish a royal status to the patriarch. Then, there is the actual description of the king *par excellence*—at least up to the arrival of Jesus—of David in Matthew 1:6. The inclusion of the sons of David from Solomon to Jeconiah continue the royal theme of the genealogy and culminate in Matthew's statement, "Jesus was born, who is called Christ" (Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός).[94] Matthew's audience, very familiar with the Old Testament and

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[91] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 241.

[92] Francis Foulkes, "The Acts of God: A Study for the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament," in Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 343.

[93] Hamilton, "The Virgin Will Conceive," 241-42, emphasis original

[94] "Christ" is more a title than a name, "literally 'one who has been anointed.'" Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 542. The concept of anointing was associated greatly with the formal designation of the next and rightful king in the Old Testament. Consider the task Elisha gave one of the sons of the prophets in formally designating Jehu as the new king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1-13).

Jewish culture, would have recognized the royal emphasis and understood the escalation present in the birth of this baby.

Second, the escalation is seen in several Isaiah details that escalate in the Matthew passage. I agree with McCasland that the prophecy of Isaiah was predictive for "an event of [Isaiah's] own life time."[95] And, he is correct in recognizing the Hebrew term used by Isaiah does not definitively point to a virgin. However, he misses the mark in concluding, "This makes it evident that Matthew transfers the event to his own."[96] The escalation of typology and biblical theology assists. The fact that the child prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 was the result of the prophet who "went to the prophetess" (וָאֶקְרַב אֶל־הַנְּבִיאָה וַתַּהַר) clearly conveys sexual intimacy. The phrases and terms incorporated in Matthew's birth narrative show the details of Jesus' birth supersede the details of the Isaiah prophecy in their miraculous nature. The deliverance promised to God's people of Isaiah's day is also escalated in the details of Jesus' birth. Whereas the nation of Judah would be delivered from the impending assault on the capital by the league of Syria and Israel, they would continue to be susceptible to and succumb to future invasions. This is superseded by the baby in Matthew's narrative who will "save His people from their sins" (*αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν*), never again to be defeated by them. Finally, Matthew includes an editorial on the prophecy of Isaiah's statement that the child would be called Immanuel, "which means, God with us" (*ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός*). The presence of God was to be seen in the deliverance events of Judah from their invaders and symbolically illustrated by the birth of the child in Isaiah's day. However, as Matthew has clearly shown by the fact that this child would forgive sins,[97] this child is, Himself, God.

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[95] McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," 147.

[96] McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," 147.

[97] The Jewish theologians of Matthew's day understood rightly, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7).

Just as Judah was delivered from the slavery of impending invasion, so Christians are delivered from their spiritual slavery by the super-child, born from the super-conception, whose very nature is embodied in the super-name! This sets up the full bloom aspect modeled by Matthew. Where biblical theology splashes over into full bloom aspect is primed by Foulkes: "The prophets and the writers of the Old Testament had, as the very basis of their understanding of the work of God in history, the conviction that his acts could be and were repeated, that as he had done, so he could and would do again."[98] As previously stated, the attention Matthew appears to provide emphasizes more the patterns than the prediction and draws the reader to scan back and forth throughout Scripture looking for these patterns. France writes, "'Fulfillment' for Matthew seems to operate at many levels, embracing much more of the pattern of OT history and language than merely its prophetic predictions."[99] Full bloom aspect compels the reader to recognize that, in Jesus, the patterns of the character of God, His faithfulness to His promises, and the care for His people find their ultimate demonstration.

The biblical theology I propose includes aspects of this statement. My effort to separate biblical theology and full bloom aspects is intended to assist the Bible reader with what can sometimes be a confusing aspect of biblical theology. Some proponents seem to overemphasize the linear progression and escalation as the rigid standard of biblical theology. Others seem to bounce back and forth with their interpretive lenses, sometimes emphasizing one over the other in a manner that can also be confusing. I intend to separate these aspects to provide clarity.

The emphasis of the proposed biblical theology aspect is on the linear progression, the escalation, and the substance being Christ.[100] Full bloom aspect moves

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[98] Foulkes, "The Acts of God," 343.

[99] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 12.

[100] Despite extending the scope beyond that of this project, I cannot help pausing to propose that Paul agrees with this last emphasis of biblical theology. In Col 2:16, he refers to the attempts to see the end, or the substance, in religious ceremonies as a deficient exercise. Instead, he reminds readers that "these

the reader to scan backward and forward with the illumination of understanding provided by the full bloom of the New Testament. Full bloom aspect reminds the reader of Matthew's Gospel that there is more revelation in the New Testament to inform conclusions of even this passage. This will be further equipped by the epistles concerning who Jesus is, what sin is, what salvation from those sins means, the identity of God's people, their future destination, the reality and application of God being with His people, and much more. We do not simply immerse ourselves in the history, the grammar, or even the linear progression and escalation of biblical theology to draw conclusions from this passage. Full bloom aspect compels the reader to read backward and forward to understand the passage at hand.

This aspect assists our reading backward to Isaiah. The mature understanding of the birth of Jesus, His lineage, His purpose, and the escalation of the patterns of the Old Testament assists keeping the reading of Isaiah from ruts that potentially bog down biblical interpretation in topics such as ethnic Israel being the people of God or their future being a primary purpose of redemptive history. It guides the student of Scripture to understand the role and progression of God's Word found in Torah. Such a backward reading was not limited to Matthew. The decisions of the authors of the Septuagint likely modeled this full bloom reading backward. Seeing the broader theological development of Isaiah 7-11, Vanhoozer observes, "The developing theme of a wonder-child, Immanuel ('God with us'), who transcends all normal expectations and who will be hailed as 'Mighty God' (9:6). It was probably to reflect this wider dimension that the LXX translated the rare word for 'young woman' as 'virgin.'"[101] Such a reading provides an opportunity to not just "fly" over the many books between Matthew and Isaiah 7:14 at 30,000 feet,

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are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." Biblical theology and full bloom aspect are not competitors but complementary teammates fulfilling different roles in the unified purpose of achieving accurate biblical interpretation.

[101] Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., eds., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 668, Logos Bible Software.

glancing to see only peaks of mountains or faint squares and rectangles of farmland. Instead, it compels us to fly just about the surface, gathering patterns, terms, references, and developments like a child gathers treasures during a frolic through the forest.

These full bloom informed treasures ensure that when we arrive at Isaiah 7:14 we are informed by the recognition of ethnic Israel returning from their deportation to the land of promise but with Roman occupation, the patterns of the historical context of king Ahaz and Isaiah served a purpose much greater than their immediate context. We realize that, while God's character revealed in creation and Scripture should be enough evidence to fully trust in future promises no matter how unbelievable they are, He often provides additional evidence to help our unbelief, such as a child being born and the timeframe of his ability to discern right from wrong—just as He would throughout the careers of the prophets such as Jeremiah and Hosea.

Full bloom aspect also assists our reading forward from Isaiah. Isaiah clearly wrote with a Messianic gaze to the future. Brevard Childs captures this forward reading brilliantly: "Not only does the interpretation of Immanuel's role in Isaiah 8 point to a continuing eschatological role of Immanuel; the linking of Micah 5:1–3 and 2 Sam. 7:12–16 also points to the expectation of a future David. Thus, the "prince of peace" forms a messianic texture joining Isa. 9:5-6 and the shoot of Isaiah 11."[102] We are encouraged to read Isaiah with eyes to the future. This assists even our expectations for deliverance for ethnic Israel and descriptions later in his prophecy of future worship of the nations in Jerusalem at the temple offering sacrifices, despite the eschatological context. But that will need to wait for a later study.

The forward reading of Matthew also encourages the further investigation of key concepts such as salvation from sins. Full bloom aspect compels the reader to engage with the theology of salvation in Romans and its practical outworking in Galatians and

[102] Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 11, Logos Bible Software.

Ephesians. The idea of God being with us sets up well the New Covenant understanding of the indwelling Holy Spirit and provides a sounding for the bedrock of Revelation 21:3 where God and His people will dwell together for eternity. The super-conception of the virgin that eclipses the predictive fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 reminds Christians of every era that God will prove Himself faithful no matter how dire or impossible their circumstances.

Conclusion

Matthew's fulfillment quotations of the Old Testament are intentional devices used by Matthew to instruct his readers on three levels. First, he intends to convey facts and details surrounding the life of Jesus. Second, he provides a theological understanding for those facts. Third, he models a process of biblical interpretation he learned from his own rabbi, Jesus. I agree with Childs: "There is a 'surface meaning' that the uninstructed reader can grasp from the received biblical text. However, there is also a deeper meaning that reverberates from the constellation of prophetic texts linked by the history of tradition."[103] It is this summary that full bloom aspect serves to spur the reader to joyfully engage in the hard work of digging for accurate biblical interpretation despite the gaps between the era of the reader and that of the original author and audience of the Scripture.

Matthew is not revealing that Isaiah predictively prophesied the birth of Christ in Isaiah 7:14. He uses the prophecy of Isaiah in a typological fashion, with typological fulfillment. He shows that the details of the birth of Jesus provide the ultimate affirmation that God is faithful to His character and faithful to His promises. Just as God provided for His people in their time of great distress in Isaiah 7, He provides for His people in their greatest distress—the bondage of their own sin nature—through the ultimate provision of Jesus Christ who is able to save His people from their sins. This epicenter of Matthew's birth narrative establishes his point. In this salvation provision, just like the fulfillment of the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz in Isaiah 8, Jesus is provided as the ultimate provision

[103] Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 10.

that culminates history and proves, once again, that God is faithful! And just as the birth of Isaiah's son proved to the prophet, the king, and the nation of Judah that God was Immanuel, so the escalation and full bloom understanding of the birth of Jesus provides the ultimate illustration of Immanuel, because in the child, Jesus, God Himself was with us.

The full bloom aspect lens that flows out of the historical, grammatical, and biblical theology aspects also presses into each of these guardrails. The interplay back and forth of these aspects is crucial. The result is a faithfulness to the historical context of the Old Testament text as well as a theologically educated foundation of the "rest of the story." The exercise seems to align with the purpose of Matthew and the example modeled by Jesus Himself. It also serves the modern reader well as a guide to assist avoiding ruts of commitments to systems and presuppositions. This modern baggage is kept at as much at an arm's length as possible to continue to let the ancient context, language, and purpose drive the process of biblical interpretation as much as possible. However, one passage is not enough. Matthew offers more. And, in so doing, he further equips us with invaluable tools for biblical interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

FULL BLOOM AND "OUT OF EGYPT"

Full bloom aspect modeled in the first fulfillment quotation has taken us on an incredible journey. It is not only a journey of discovery about the facts Matthew presents. It also reveals how those facts ping the reader *back* to recognize the progress of the redemptive plan in the Old Testament and pong *forward* to mature our understanding of how the details of Jesus' life brilliantly reflect God's redemptive purposes. Despite overwhelming gaps for the modern reader, the guardrails of historical, grammatical, biblical theology, and full bloom aspects have served to immerse us in Matthew's context, language, and thinking as a scribe of Rabbi Jesus. The exercise begins to assist us with laying aside as much as possible our presuppositions and systems to recognize Matthew's purpose for including what he did in the way he did. Not only did Matthew definitively establish the unparalleled uniqueness of the details of Jesus' birth, but also the fact that the child was God in human flesh. These facts flow well out of the historical and grammatical aspects, but it is the biblical theology and full bloom aspects that draw the reader in and out of Old Testament passages recognizing the patterns of God's character and demonstrating their ultimate substance being in Jesus Himself. This is just the beginning!

The next stop is the much-debated fulfillment formula of Matthew 2:15: "Out of Egypt I called my son." The brief sentence drips with Old Testament terms and references. The temptation could be to simply look to the cross reference to guide us to the Old Testament reference and begin drawing conclusions. As biblical interpreters, the exercise of wrestling with the text will yield much greater understanding and ownership than simply adopting the conclusions of others. Wrestling with the text also produces

questions. Did Matthew twist the Scripture for his own literary purposes? Does Matthew simply desire to show his readers, familiar with the Jewish Scriptures and culture, his own familiarity with the Old Testament? Is this just a verse we can skip over because none of the other Gospel writers quote this passage?

Applying the four guardrails will not only provide a high level of confidence that the reader can understand why Matthew included this reference, but it will also continue the exercise of growing our understanding of the big story of Scripture. Before digging into the passage, itself, a brief summary of the progress of the Gospel between fulfillment formulas will prove necessary and valuable.

Bridging Between the Fulfillment Formulas

Chapter 2 moves attention away from the new parents with their baby to a land east of Israel. Magi (μάγος), often translated "wise men," are certainly more than experienced counselors. Louw and Nida move the understanding from the modern concept of three kings traveling on camels to visit Jesus to the informed ancient context. The Magi were "noted for unusual capacity of understanding based upon astrology (such persons were regarded as combining both secular and religious aspects of knowledge and understanding)."[1] The combination of secular and religious aspects provides significant background for Matthew's decision to include this aspect of Jesus' early years when no other Gospel writer does. The Magi were "members of a Persian priestly caste" tasked with overseeing religious ceremonies, teaching science and religion, as well as serving as counselors to Persian kings.[2] The fact that they are "from the east" (ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν) draws the reader back to the Old Testament and the use of this phrase to recognize the significance of the event in the narrative to the development of redemptive history. The

[1] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 384, Logos Bible Software.

[2] Gerhard Delling, "Μάγος, Μαγεία, Μαγεύω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–), 356-57, Logos Bible Software.

"east" played a significant role in the Genesis narrative. It often contrasted the position of being in obedient relationship and favor of God with that of being outside of that right relationship.[3]

The Gentile contingent arrives in Jerusalem to search for the royal baby whose birth they believed to be signaled by the star (ἀστήρ)[4] they saw all those miles away. Matthew provides a preemptive signal to the reader that Jesus "was born in Bethlehem" (γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ). This will prove important in preparation for understanding the Old Testament reference Matthew provides in verse 6. Matthew identifies additional characters present in this scene: Herod, the king of Judea, along with the chief priests and scribes of the people.[5] These parties serve an important role in the progress of Matthew's Gospel. First, the scribes, as previously noted, were not only expected to be experts on the facts and location of passages of Scripture but also the interpretation of these texts. Second, king Herod was the opportunist and paranoid vice regent of Israel. An Idumean,[6] Herod shrewdly rose to power, receiving the designation "king of the Jews" by Rome.[7]

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[3] The phrase occurs first in Gen 11:2 (LXX) to describe the background for the rebellious refusal of the people at Babel to obey the command God gave them to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (9:2). The term "east" is also prevalent in contrasting the direction Lot chose when he and Abram separated (Gen 13:11). The phrase "people of the east" is used to summarize the people outside of the covenant of Abraham to whom Jacob visited to find a wife (Gen 29:1).

[4] The scope of this project does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the identification of the star. Werner Foerster provides an excellent analysis of the term that draws out not only helpful details surrounding the potential identification of the object but also the ancient understanding of stars and their historical and religious significance. Werner Foerster, "Ἀστήρ, Ἄστρον," in Kittel, Bromiley, and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 503-5.

[5] This last phrase, "of the people" (τοῦ λαοῦ), is an idiom often employed by New Testament authors to ensure the original audience understood the person or people to be Jewish in ethnicity (Matt 13:15; 21:23; 26:3; 26:47; 27:1; Luke 3:15; Acts 4:8; Rom 15:10).

[6] Idumea was Greek name for the land of Edom, whose founder was Esau. This meant that Herod was a descendant of Abraham but not of the line of promise. B. MacDonald, "Edom," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 18, Logos Bible Software; A. Terian, "Idumea," in Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 800.

[7] The inscription found on a broken piece of pottery in Masada, dated around 19 BC, reads, "Herod the Great King of the Jews." The latter could also be translated, "Judea." Zeljko Gregor, "Archaeology and the Bible," *Perspective Digest* 3, no. 1 (1998): 39, Logos Bible Software.

One of the greatest threats to his rise to power was the invasion of the Parthians,[8] which would have included "the east" from which the Magi travelled. Third, the Magi—the political and religious professionals from the land that led Herod to take his troops and his close family to Masada, Petra, and eventually traveling himself to Rome[9]—round out the motley crew.

However, the makeup of this group is not coincidence, and neither is Matthew's inclusion of them. First, this is a glimpse into the expanded understanding of God's redemptive plan to include representatives of every tribe, tongue, and nation not segregated by ethnicity, social class, or gender (cf. Gal 3:28; Rev 5:9). Second, there is a sense in which Matthew is exposing that the Jewish Scripture experts may recognize the facts but are deficient when it comes to interpretation.

Matthew provides an Old Testament quote in verse 6. It is not introduced by the fulfillment formula found in 1:23. The Magi had asked Herod where the "king of the Jews" was so that they could worship Him. Like the reaction of Ahaz and Judah in Isaiah 7, the question sent shockwaves through the palace and the capital city.[10] Herod immediately thought of the prophesied Messiah and asked the scribes to provide the location of His birth. Their response was to read from Micah 5:2: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." There is clearly a predictive fulfillment that the narrative characters as well as Matthew conclude. Herod sent the Magi to the place Micah prophesied (v. 8), and they traveled to Bethlehem (vv. 9-11). Herod's reaction to the Magi not returning to him would also reveal an expectation of predictive fulfillment when Herod

[8] Background for the Parthians and their association with the Persian empire can be found in E. E. Carpenter, "Parthians," in Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 671.

[9] H. W. Hoehner, "Herod," in Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 689-90.

[10] The study as to what motivated the shockwaves is fascinating. However, it is outside the scope of this project.

ordered the execution of all the male children two years old and younger, beginning in the town of Bethlehem (v. 16).

Embedded in this tragic fallout from the predictive prophecy of Micah 5:2, Matthew reveals that Joseph was, like the Magi, divinely instructed to change locations and told to "flee to Egypt" (v. 13). Obediently—and immediately—Joseph traveled with his wife and child to Egypt. It is this location that would serve as the context for the second fulfillment formula. Matthew clearly cites Hosea 11:1. The guardrails will be applied to that passage before returning to Matthew.

Applying the Guardrails to Hosea 11:1

The book of Hosea contains the prophecy God entrusted to Hosea, son of Beeri, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah as well as Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel (Hos 1:1). This is important background on many levels, but it specifically alerts the reader to Hosea being a contemporary of Isaiah. Therefore, the spiritual and political climate of the nation would be the same as the context in Isaiah 7. Hosea is an interesting book that recounts the instruction the Lord gave to the prophet to "take a wife of whoredom."[11] The rest of the book clearly reveals that she would demonstrate a pattern of marital unfaithfulness. Despite her literal unfaithfulness to her husband, Hosea, the Lord instructs the prophet over and over to restore her. The marital unfaithfulness of Hosea's wife is contrasted with the marital covenant faithfulness of the prophet. Hosea's marriage is intended to illustrate the covenant relationship and subsequent behavior of Israel, the bride, and the Lord, the groom. This high-level background sets up the micro lens analysis of the passage cited by Matthew.

[11] Douglas Stuart provides a helpful grammatical analysis to show that the prophet reveals not that his wife was a prostitute or unfaithful prior to marriage but rather that she had a "prostituting spirit" from the beginning. Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 26-27, Logos Bible Software.

Hosea 11:1: The Micro Lenses

While the entire book provides historical background for chapter 11, chapter 10 provides vivid historical context. The chapter emphasizes Israel's deplorable spiritual condition. Demonstrating their unfaithfulness, they constructed altars (10:1), an outward demonstration of apparent covenant devotion, but the Lord sees through these activities and recognizes "their heart is false" (10:2). These altars were "evidence for Israel's religious folly and defection from an acceptable Yahwistic standard."[12] Israel's unfaithfulness to their covenant is further revealed in their brazen claim that they "don't fear the Lord" (10:3). While grace and mercy are prevalent throughout this book, so is appropriate judgment. The judgment prophesied for Israel is both specific, "the thing itself shall be carried to Assyria" (10:6), as well as vividly broad-brush stroked, "they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and to the hills, 'Fall on us'" (10:8). While the emphasis is initially on the nation of Israel, Judah is brought into the prophecy of judgment: "Judah must plow; Jacob must harrow for himself" (10:11).[13]

The imagery is dire and conveys both a spiritual and political "slavery" of sorts that would elicit within the Jewish audience memories of another dire chapter of their history: the slavery in Egypt. This sets up the context of the opening verse of chapter 11: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Craig Blomberg recognizes exodus aspect behind verse 1: "Hosea 11:1 is a reference to the exodus, pure and simple."[14] However, the prophet is not simply rehashing the exodus. Nor is he indicating that Israel will be returning to Egypt to experience slavery all over again. Benjamin Gladd summarizes the progress of Hosea's prophecy as well as the context for

[12] J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, The New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 260, Logos Bible Software.

[13] Judah is included in the indictment of God's people elsewhere in Hosea (6:4).

[14] Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 7, Logos Bible Software.

Hosea's statement: "Hosea 11:1–4 recounts God's devotion to Israel by redeeming her out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1), but Israel did not remain faithful to him."[15]

Embedded in Hosea's decision to refer to Israel as "son" and in the singular will be an important piece of the grammatical analysis. However, it also sets up further investigation by reminding the reader of a broader aspect of Israel, as God's people. Planting a seed for later analysis, Gladd adds, "The book of Hosea, not unlike other prophetic books, oscillates between the one and the many, or 'corporate solidarity' . . . astute readers are keenly aware of the corporate solidarity that the prophet Hosea has already established."[16] There is a sense in which the historical understanding of Israel as the people of God rounds the historical foundation for the continuing analysis.

Transitioning to the grammatical aspect, but not leaving the historical completely, the opening conjunction "when" (כִּי) draws the reader into the past. Thomas McComiskey observes that the conjunction "introduces a temporal clause that brings us back in time to Israel's early history."[17] This grammar seems to further confirm Hosea's intention to draw the reader back to the exodus. The historical reference to the exodus is further set up by the wayyiqtol, "I loved" (וָאֹהֲבֵהוּ). Michael Heiser observes, "This construction commonly conveys past tense / time."[18] Further drawing the reader to the specific period of the exodus is the perfect tense of the verb "called" (קָרָאתִי). McComiskey further assists, "The concept of completed action connoted by this tense focuses the divine love specifically on the period of time delineated by the protasis of the temporal clause,

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[15] Benjamin L. Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God*, Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 78, Logos Bible Software.

[16] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 79.

[17] Thomas Edward McComiskey, "Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 184, Logos Bible Software.

[18] Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), s.v. "wayyiqtol (waw-consecutive + imperfect)," Logos Bible Software.

that is, the period of Israel's national infancy when she was delivered from Egyptian bondage."[19] Douglas Stuart observes, "The context suggests that 'summon' or 'gather' is also intended, and the statement must be seen in the light of divine guidance and protection."[20] This latter aspect would have moved the original audience into the realm of God's covenant love for Israel and centered the focus on the phrase, "my son." The prepositional phrase "out of Egypt" (וּמִמִּצְרָיִם) further solidifies this historical chapter of Israel's history as the context.

At this point, someone may conclude that the ability to process such a grammatical analysis is reserved for scholars or grammarians. While familiarity with biblical Hebrew and technical grammatical concepts are helpful, much of this can be initially gathered by investigating the English text and then further assisted by solid commentaries and dictionaries. The guardrails of biblical interpretation are not exclusively reserved for the highly trained or a small group of scholars.

The grammatical aspect of the micro lenses places the macro lens "ball" on the proverbial tee with the next phrase. It is the grammatical phrase, "my son" (לִבְנִי), that provides crucial groundwork for understanding this verse in the Hosea context. Initially, the context seems to be driven by the imagery provided in the first line, "when Israel was *a child*" (נָעַר). However, there is a broader theological aspect, just as there was in Isaiah 7:2 for the phrase, "house of David." The fact that the phrase follows "out of Egypt" (וּמִמִּצְרָיִם), moves the interpretation beyond the simple metaphor of child-to-parent.

While the child-to-parent terms surely intend to draw the reader to the early days of the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel, more of a theological aspect is conveyed. The fuller analysis of this theological aspect will be reserved for the macro lens

[19] McComiskey, "Hosea," 184.

[20] Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 178. Stuart immediately jumps to a Messianic view for this prophecy in the sentence that follows: "It is in this latter sense that v 1a functions as a Messianic prophecy. A second special exodus from Egypt, that of the child Jesus after the death of Herod (Matt 2:15), comports precisely with the wording Hosea was inspired to use, and which therefore does double-duty." Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 178. The engagement with this Messianic aspect will be reserved for later in this study.

analysis. However, the idea that Israel's was formally recognized as God's son is rooted in the opening chapters of Exodus. Duane Garrett assists by reminding the reader that the phrase is not simply drawing back to the period of the exodus but also to the specific statement the Lord makes in Exodus 4:22: "[Hosea 11:1] self-evidently refers to the exodus event, and in particular to Exod 4:22, where Yahweh declares to Pharaoh, 'Israel is my firstborn son.'"[21] Theological ramifications must be drawn out. Garrett provides explanation: "The presentation of Israel as a male child here distinguishes it from Ezek 16:1-6, which describes the young nation as a female child. In a number of passages God calls the people of Israel his 'children,' but it is not extremely common for God to speak of the nation as a whole as his son."[22] The words and phrases of God's Word delight the reader with shades of color, nuance, and emphasis that remind us of the longing of the psalmist, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (119:18). When the Lord does open his eyes he exclaims, "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (119:97). With the refraction of biblical revelation dancing on the walls of our reading, it is time to move to the macro lens analysis of this passage.

Hosea 11:1: The Macro Lenses

The biblical theology aspect invites the reader to remember that this verse is a scene in a big story and compels investigation to explore previous scenes to shed light on this passage. The "sonship" of Israel will serve as the starting point for this investigation. Mentioned above, the only other reference to Israel being God's son is Exodus 4:22. There, the context is the Lord's instruction to Moses for when he returns to Egypt.

Israel had resided in Egypt since the era of Joseph when Jacob and his family found protection and provision from the widespread famine throughout that region of the world (Gen 47). For over 400 years, Israel's population exploded, drawing the attention

[21] Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 19A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 219, Logos Bible Software.

[22] Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 219-20.

of a pharaoh who "did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8). Paranoid that Israel posed a potential threat, Pharaoh made the Jews his slaves under great oppression. Desperate for relief, "The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help" (Exod 2:23).

These historical facts educate us. However, the passage in Exodus 2 moves these facts into the realm of theology as the covenant with Abraham becomes the focal point for the Lord's response to the groaning of Israel: "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exod 2:24). This response of the Lord serves as the context for His statement that Moses is to tell Pharaoh: "Let my son go that he may serve me" (Exod 4:23).

The concept of the "son of God" is not new to the Exodus passage. Written by Moses, Genesis provides the introduction of this title. The first title holder was none other than the first man. Adam is said to have been made in God's "image" (צֶלֶם) and "likeness" (דְּמוּת). These two terms occur again in the first three verses of Genesis 5. That chapter introduces the "book of the generations of Adam" (5:1). It reflects on the fact that Adam was made in the likeness (דְּמוּת) of God and then explains that Adam "fathered a son in his own likeness (דְּמוּת), after his image (צֶלֶם)" (5:3). The wording seems to be intentional. Gregory Beale agrees: "This is 'sonship' language. The explicit sonship notion of this language in Gen. 5:3 should inform our understanding of the same wording in Gen. 5:1–2, which refers back to Gen. 1:26. If so, then this language in Gen. 1:26 indicates that Adam is a son of God."[23] This reference to son and the vocabulary of image and likeness appears to point to the theological title, "son of God."

The intimacy of this relationship is expressed by a covenant relationship between God and His "son." These covenants provide both benefits as well as expectations. The covenant between God and Adam is not as obvious as other covenants and is intensely debated. In a rather extensive analysis, Peter Gentry argues well the merits for the position

[23] G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 402, Logos Bible Software.

that a formal covenant existed between the Lord and Adam. He draws from both Genesis 2:8-17 as well as the vocabulary of the covenant between God and Noah to convincingly establish the validity of a formal covenant between God and Adam. His convincing summary sets up the benefit and expectation aspect of biblical covenants: "Only when the father-son relationship is nurtured through worship, fellowship, and obedient love will humankind appropriately and properly reflect and represent to the world the kind of kingship and rule intrinsic to God himself."[24] A fully developed analysis of the benefits and expectations of the covenants is beyond the scope of this project. The expectation of worship and obedience by Adam was met with his tragic failure being documented in Genesis 3:1-19, which left God's redemptive plan with the need for a son of God who would not fail.

The next candidate would not be an individual but a group of people. This is the backdrop for Israel being called God's son. The covenant between God and His son, Israel, would be specifically made through the Law of Moses. The initial covenant between God and Israel is found in the covenant with Abraham. The significance of this covenant leads Gentry and Wellum to suggest "*all* biblical covenants must be viewed in relation to it."[25] While there is strong evidence that there were expectations for Abraham and his descendants with that covenant,[26] it is the Mosaic covenant that the Old Testament most often refers to as evidence of their obedience or disobedience as the corporate son of God. Most notably Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 reveal the blessings and judgment for Israel's fulfillment or failure of the expectations. As the history of Israel progresses,

[24] Peter J. Gentry, "Kingdom Through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 39, Logos Bible Software.

[25] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 69, Logos Bible Software.

[26] The Abrahamic covenant has often been referred to as a "unilateral" covenant. This is often explained to be a covenant with terms having expectations only on one party. Gentry and Wellum provide extensive evidence to demonstrate the bilateral nature of the Abrahamic covenant in *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 69, 88, 207-9.

prophets like Hosea reveal that the corporate son of God failed, just as Adam, in fulfilling God's expectations for His son.

This failure is affirmed by Hosea's prophetic forward lens in Hosea 11. His summary illustrates this well: "The more they were called, the more they went away" (11:2). In this case, the prophecy targets the "slavery" into which God will send the northern tribes of Israel—a slavery which Hosea says will not be a "return to the land of Egypt" but instead their exile to Assyria (11:5). In this, the reader recognizes both the patterns of Israel's failure as well as the anticipation that the Lord's patterns of steadfast love for His people will occur once again. This looking beyond the present context of the Hosea passage transitions from biblical theology to full bloom aspect.

Full bloom aspect has already been set up in previous passages of the Old Testament. Hosea is, himself, demonstrating full bloom aspect—the forward and backward reading of Scripture. G. K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd observe, "Hosea himself in Hosea 11 and elsewhere in the book already had a view of Israel's first exodus as a typological foreshadowing of an end-time exodus, with the Messiah leading it."[27] Hosea was looking forward as well as looking back as he interpreted the present and future of Israel. The backward and forward reading of the exodus is more vivid in this book of prophecy. However, the background of the development of the son of God title was surely present in Hosea's thinking. Admittedly, the lighting on the topic in Hosea's day was very dim.

Still looking back, the "son of God" concept was embedded in the unveiling of the Lord's covenant with David. The covenant included God promising David that He would establish the kingdom of his offspring and that this offspring would be a "son" to the Lord (2 Sam 7:14). The expectations of the son in this covenant are displayed in unique fashion. The son of God in the covenant with David is anticipated to be one who will "commit iniquity" and subsequently be "disciplined with the rod of men" (7:14). The most

[27] G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2014), 350, Logos Bible Software.

qualified candidate for the fulfillment of this son of God was David's son, Solomon, who would "build a house for the Lord's name" (7:13). The progression of the historical books of the Old Testament tragically reveals Solomon's failure: "when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kgs 11:4). The initial unpacking of the covenant with David anticipates a future bloom of the young "plant" of the son of God topic. This forward-looking anticipation sets up a future looking back on this concept.

By the time Hosea was written, Adam and Solomon had failed the expectations of obedience for the covenant relationship of the son of God. Israel had demonstrated plenty of patterns of disobedience, but the Lord continued to extend grace and mercy. As the prophecy of Hosea 11:2-5 would reveal, judgment was coming. The failures of these three son of God candidates made it clear that another son of God candidate would be needed. Daniel 7 mentions the fourth formal reference to God's "son." While it is not expressly set within the context of a covenant, the passage refers to a "son of man" who would be given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that will be everlasting and never pass away (7:14). Just a brief analysis of the Gospels in the New Testament recognizes that Jesus refers to Himself as "Son of Man" more than any other title.[28] While a more extensive analysis would yield even greater treasures, it is clear that Jesus is the Son of Man who is the fourth "son of God" candidate. The New Covenant serves as the covenant relationship associated with this fourth Son of God.[29] The expectations of this son of God would not be unlike that of Adam, Israel, or Solomon. The full bloom of the New Testament will provide the rest of the story for these expectations.

Hosea demonstrates full bloom by reading backwards and forwards in his analogy of the exodus, God's deliverance of His people, and the son of God candidates of

[28] The title occurs 21 times in the Gospel of Matthew, 10 in Mark, 14 in Luke, and 5 in John.

[29] Jesus states that He ushers in the New Covenant prophesied in Jer 31:31-34 as He institutes the Lord's supper in Luke 22:20: "And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

the Old Testament. The "new exodus" to which Hosea alludes is anticipated by the prophecy of Israel's future "slavery" in Assyria and further reminds the reader that there is more to the "son of God" story than revealed in this prophecy. The predictive fulfillment of the patterns of deliverance Hosea provides in 11:1 will be fulfilled in the nation's return to their land of promise. Yet, that is already complete when the events of Matthew 2 occur and when Matthew authored his Gospel. This micro and macro analysis provides the background Matthew and his original audience would have had. However, understanding Matthew's use of this passage will require the application of the guardrails.

Applying the Guardrails to Matthew 2:15

In the first fulfillment quotation, Matthew seems to be drawing from the extensive history of the Lord's care for His people, especially when they were in impossible situations. He intends for the reader to join him in rehearsing the details concerning that Isaiah 7 context. Facing the invasion of superior forces that had already wreaked havoc on border towns of Judah, the potential contract with Assyria offered a bondage of another kind. During this impossible situation, the Lord had graciously promised to thwart the invasion within a very short amount of time; shorter than it would take for a child to be born and learn how to choose good and refuse evil. This child would be the evidence that the Lord's promise would come to pass and that He was with them. As Matthew considered that incredible event in Israel's history, he wanted to show that the birth of Jesus, once again, demonstrates God's unquenchable devotion to His people, despite their sins and impossible circumstances. Yet, the birth of Jesus is superior to all other examples of God's dealings with His people. The fact that He was conceived in a woman who had never known a man is miracle enough. However, the fact that the baby did not just point to God's faithfulness, that He was in fact God Himself, was intended to boggle the mind of the reader. The shadow patterns of the past find their substance in the birth of Jesus. Is this what Matthew is reiterating through his use of Hosea 11:1?

Matthew 2:15: The Micro Lenses

Matthew seems to be establishing a relationship between Jesus and Israel with the intentional beginning of his Gospel. The opening phrase of the Gospel, the specific characters highlighted, and the grouping of the genealogy combine with the typological fulfillment of the Isaiah 7 passage and move the reader to look for a substance to which these shadows point. Hamilton reveals what I believe to be Matthew's point: "After the genealogy, the opening chapters of Matthew show the recapitulation of the history of Israel in the life of Jesus."[30] It seems that this relationship between Jesus and corporate Israel is what drives Matthew's decision to describe Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveling to Egypt only to return as fulfilling the Hosea passage.

Recalibrating to the importance of interpreting the Matthew passage within the guardrails, Robert Plummer observes, "We must know what a text *meant* to its original author before we can know what a text *means* for us today. The conscious intent of the divinely-inspired human author is the channel of meaning in which all other implications and applications must flow."[31] Applying the micro and macro lenses of biblical interpretation takes work. The importance of putting in the work is set up by Walter Kaiser: "The whole revelation of God as revelation hangs in jeopardy if we, an apostle, or an angel from heaven try to add to, delete, rearrange, or reassign the sense or meaning that a prophet himself received. In doing so, the friends of Scripture imperil the Scriptures as much as do her enemies."[32] The quote moves *from* solidly alerting the modern reader of Scripture to the crucial importance of strong hermeneutics *to* a rather harsh warning that

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[30] James M. Hamilton, Jr., "'The Virgin Will Conceive': Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 249, Logos Bible Software.

[31] Robert L. Plummer, "Righteousness and Peace Kiss: The Reconciliation of Authorial Intent and Biblical Typology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2 (2010): 54-55, Logos Bible Software.

[32] Walter Kaiser, Jr., "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 135.

is a bit too influenced by modern hermeneutics.[33] The neatly laid out hermeneutic of emphasizing the author's original intent—especially in Old Testament passages—holds up well, in most cases. Where the fissures of overly dogmatic statements surface are passages such as the Hosea 11:1, when New Testament authors, such as Matthew, use it in their writings. Douglas Moo observes, "Kaiser does allow that a New Testament author may draw out some of the implications or applications of an Old Testament text, but this involves *significance*, not meaning."[34] It is this drawing out of implications that serves as the objective for our investigation of the Matthew passage, and the micro lenses will ensure we are doing what we can to lay aside presuppositions.

The historical context that leads up to the fulfillment formula is well laid out in the narrative. Joseph is warned in a dream by "an angel of the Lord" (ἄγγελος κυρίου), instructing him to "flee to Egypt" (φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον) with Mary and their son (2:13). The journey of Jews to Egypt for safety or provision was not unique to this young couple. Abram, Jacob's sons, and Jacob himself each traveled to Egypt for this purpose.[35] Blomberg provides additional evidence of Jews seeking refuge in Egypt: "A large Jewish community had lived there for several centuries, and even from Old Testament times Egypt had often provided a refuge when danger threatened Israel (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:40; 2 Kgs 25:26; Zech 10:10)."[36] Egypt certainly did not have a predominately positive place in Israel's history with the slavery in Egypt providing some of the most vivid imagery of suffering.

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[33] By "modern hermeneutics" I mean more of a "modernistic" reading of Scripture. While the initial interest of scholars in Kaiser's camp is to move the modern reader back to the mindset and interpretive rules of the ancient authors and audiences, they often reveal—as he has with this quote—that they are more greatly influenced by their systems and presuppositions than they realize. The argument often levied at those who find typological fulfillment where Kaiser and those in his camp see only predictive fulfillment is that the typological fulfillment is an "over-spiritualizing" hermeneutic. As I intend to demonstrate, the typological fulfillment is less an "over-spiritualization" and more of a faithful demonstration of the hermeneutic Jesus and the New Testament authors modeled and intended to be followed.

[34] Douglas Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 198, Logos Bible Software.

[35] Abram (Gen 12:10-20); Jacob's sons (Gen 42-44); Jacob (Gen 46-47).

[36] Blomberg, "Matthew," 66.

However, the historical context of Egypt in the time of Jesus' birth moves the modern reader into the actual historical context. Citing historical evidence such as Josephus, France explains, "Egypt . . . a Roman province with a large Jewish population especially in Alexandria, was a natural place for Jews to seek asylum when in political danger at home; a substitute for the Jerusalem temple had even been set up by Jewish exiles in Egypt."[37]

Matthew draws attention to the time of day for Joseph's response to the angel and draws the reader to recognize the historical significance. This moves our analysis into the micro lens of the grammatical aspect. Joseph departs "by night" (νυκτὸς). On the surface, this could appear to simply be a narrative marker of time. However, the fact that the noun is genitive provides emphasis that seems to help us understand what Matthew is communicating—and modeling. The genitive in this case is an adverbial genitive, which Daniel Wallace observes "is not very common."[38] He explains that the use of a genitive in this way reveals an effort by the author to emphasize the *kind* of time, as opposed to the *point* of time or *extent* of time as communicated by the dative and accusative cases, respectively.[39] Davies and Allison capture what is interesting about this emphasis: "The *Passover Haggadah* puts the exodus at night. Yet if this were pertinent, the note of time should come in 2:21, when the family *leaves* Egypt, not here, when they enter it."[40] This point is both valid and important to the analysis of how Matthew will use the fulfillment formula. It seems Matthew is setting up the reader to anticipate a fulfillment that is not predictive or a one-to-one relation to the exodus of Israel from Egypt but rather reflects

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[37] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 79, Logos Bible Software.

[38] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 122-23, Logos Bible Software.

[39] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 123.

[40] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 261, Logos Bible Software.

aspects of that historical event. Before a more involved analysis of these connections, additional grammatical insights must be made.

The opening phrase of verse 13 is familiar to the narrative and seems to echo the wording of 1:20. France observes, "The very similar wording to that in 1:20 indicates the next phase in God's careful direction of events by supernatural revelations to Joseph."[41] While it is clear that God had plans of intentional providence that directed the story, Matthew also has plans to direct the reader through the words he chooses for his narrative.

There is also intentional connection, according to France, to the exodus from Egypt in the wording of verse 14: "There is a further possible verbal allusion here and in v. 14 to the Moses story, since in LXX Exod 2:15 Pharaoh ἐξήτει ἀνελεῖν Μωυσῆν, ἀνεχώρησεν δὲ Μωυσῆς."[42] I agree with France that the details of the narrative up to this point have been an effort by Matthew to creatively draw parallels between Herod and Pharoah to train the reader to see the typological significance in the unfolding of the narrative.[43]

The grammar throughout these verses continues to echo aspects of the preceding narrative as well as to beckon the reader to expand their view beyond the details at hand to search for parallel patterns and events throughout Scripture. The verb translated "he rose" (ἐγερθεὶς) in verse 14 is the same construction as the verb in 1:24 and is likely an effort by Matthew to draw the reader back to that event, recalling the intervention by God in the details of the lives of this young family. The angel's imperative for Joseph to "flee" (φεῦγε) also conveys the need for hasty action. The sense of the action is captured well by Louw and Nida: "To move quickly from a point or area in order to avoid presumed danger or difficulty."[44] The cause for the hasty action is captured by the angel's

[41] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 78.

[42] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 79n11.

[43] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 79.

[44] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 189.

explanation: "For Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρῴδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό). This urgency is affirmed by Joseph's response to depart to Egypt immediately. The similarities between Pharaoh's decree to execute all the Hebrew children (Exod 1:16) and his search for Moses to kill him (Exod 2:15) seem to be used intentionally by Matthew to set up his second fulfillment quotation.

The formula is introduced by the same phrase he used in 1:22: "This was to fulfill" (ἵνα πληρωθῇ). Is Matthew simply demonstrating that the patterns of God's dealings with His people are once again—and perhaps, ultimately—on display in the details of Jesus' life? Or, is Matthew interpreting the Old Testament in a different way than he did in the 1:22-23 passage? Before answering that, we must analyze the grammar of verse 15.

France explains that Matthew's citation of Hosea 11:1 "is in a form which fairly translates the Hebrew text but differs from the LXX."[45] One variation provides significant insight into Matthew's purpose. The LXX translates the Hebrew of Hosea 11:1 as "out of Egypt I called my children" (τὰ τέκνα). Matthew translates the citation with τὸν υἱόν for "son." The significance of this variation will be further evaluated under the macro lenses. The Greek nuance conveyed by this variation is that the LXX interprets the "son" to be the "children of Israel," whereas Matthew's translation is undeniably referring to Jesus. France observes, "This LXX rendering identifies the intended reference of the Hebrew text, but abandons its wording, and it is that wording which gives Matthew his specific point of entry to this instance of scriptural 'fulfillment.'"[46] It is this point of entry through which we now progress, ready with our macro lenses.

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[45] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80.

[46] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80.

Matthew 2:15: The Macro Lenses

The micro lenses revealed that the parallels between Jesus' family escaping Herod's threat and that of Israel's exodus from Egypt are not exactly one-to-one. This has set the table for the reader to recognize Matthew's citation from Hosea 11:1 must not be limited to a predictive fulfillment. The reminder that Matthew 2:15 is a scene in the middle of a bigger story compels the reader to raise to a cruising altitude and survey the development of redemptive history up to this point.

The macro lens analysis of Hosea 11:1 bridged the gaps to recalibrate to the importance of the title "son of God" and the expectations of those to whom the title was given. The analysis planted the seed of the significance of Adam and Israel to the progression of the son of God candidates. Gladd waters the ground for the significance of Adam and Israel on the Gospel writers: "One cannot fully understand the person of Jesus without appreciating the centrality of Adam's and Israel's story in the Gospels."[47] As Matthew cites Hosea, the flow of the narrative, the grammar he uses, and the details he provides draw focus not to the land of Egypt or even the historical exodus of Israel from Egypt. That may be the reason he intentionally adjusts the plural term "children" (τέκνα) in the LXX translation of Hosea 11:1 to the singular "son" (υἱόν) here in verse 15. Doing so draws the focus to the Old Testament title of "son of God."

With the foundation for the Old Testament use of the title laid out, the title holder of corporate Israel seems to be Matthew's focus in verse 15. While Christian readers will read "my son" and immediately recognize the divinity of Christ in this statement, this would not have been the default for Matthew's original audience. France reminds, "Without this agreed terminology the relevance of the quotation to Jesus would be quite obscure. Thus the divine sonship of Jesus, which Pesch (art. cit., esp. 411–14) presents as

[47] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 78.

the main point of the quotation, is rather its presupposition."[48] Matthew seems to be providing something more developed than a simple proof-text for Christians to simply recall that Jesus is God. France adds, "A fuller knowledge of the Old Testament, however, would immediately demand a more sophisticated interpretation. This must have involved, for Matthew himself and for the better instructed of his readers, an Israel-Jesus typology."[49]

This focus is clear, first, by the vocabulary and analogies identified through the micro lens analysis. Second, of the three title holders, it is corporate Israel that receives the most attention in the Old Testament. Finally, Israel-Jesus typology is advanced by the use of the singular "son" (υἱόν). The translators of the LXX chose to translate the term in the plural form, drawing attention to the corporate nation of Israel. France sees this retranslation of the LXX as "clear relevance" from which Matthew's development of the significance of Jesus to redemptive history builds.[50]

This is an important aspect that is not only valuable in the realm of scholarly debate but also the greater population of Christianity. Joseph Fitzmyer affirms the importance of understanding the theological ramifications of the Son of God title applied to Jesus: "The designation of Jesus in the NT as the 'Son of God' is widespread, and no other title of his can claim as much significance for later theological development than it."[51] Jesus is constantly referred to, and rightfully so, as the Son of God. Often, those who use the title do so to demonstrate and affirm His deity. Clearly, this is an appropriate conclusion. This is especially on display in Gospel accounts of Satan (Matt 4:3, 6) as well

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[48] R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 125n24, Logos Bible Software.

[49] France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2," 126.

[50] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 80n16.

[51] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament: A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Cambridge, UK: Dove Booksellers, 1997), 102, Logos Bible Software.

as demons (Matt 8:29) addressing Jesus as Son of God.[52] This is also affirmed in the angelic communications to Mary (Luke 1:32, 35). Fitzmyer further explains that the title, and derivations of it, expresses "the distinct relationship that NT writers understood was enjoyed by Jesus of Nazareth to Yahweh, the God of the OT, who is Father."[53] This moves attention away from the modern understanding that potentially oversimplifies the title to invest in understanding what the New Testament authors intended to convey in their use of the term.[54]

The opening statement of Mark's Gospel, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (υἱοῦ θεοῦ),"[55] seems to convey Jesus' rightful claim to the Son of God title more than simply declaring His deity. Mark's rapid accounts of Jesus' early ministry seem to parallel Matthew's and demonstrate a similar effort to display more than the simple fact of Jesus' deity. Fitzmyer recognizes that the use of the title extends beyond the Gospels but is invested in determining if the messianic association of the title was a concept understood in the pre-Christian Jewish mindset.[56] While a more developed

[52] There is also a variation of this title in the address of Jesus by the "Legion" demons, "Son of the Most High God" (Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28) which, again, seems to center on the deity of Jesus.

[53] Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament*, 103.

[54] This exercise is at the heart of biblical theology. Recall James Hamilton's summary: "Biblical theology is the attempt to understand the Bible in its own terms." James M. Hamilton, Jr., "Biblical Theology and Preaching," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned Mathews (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 200, Logos Bible Software.

[55] It must be acknowledged that the phrase "son of God" is missing from some important early manuscripts. While brief, the summary provided by Robert Bratcher and Eugene Nida is helpful. Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 2, Logos Bible Software. I find William Lane's explanation that allows for redaction but explains such an edit to be consistent with the emphasis found in the Gospel of Mark to be charitable as well as affirming of the validity of the phrase being a major point of emphasis for Mark. I also agree with Lane's conclusion that it is actually original to Mark: "It is better, accordingly, to suppose that 'Son of God' was omitted unintentionally in manuscript transmission." William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 41n7, Logos Bible Software.

[56] Fitzmyer's entire addendum, "Implications of the 4Q 'Son of God' Text," is an insightful and valuable resource that serves to challenge rapidly running to Christian conclusions concerning the use of the title. It investigates not only a broad range of biblical texts but also considers other Jewish writings, including Qumran texts. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Semitic Background of the New Testament: A Wandering*

investigation of the pre-Christian understanding of the title would prove valuable, the use by Matthew will be sufficient to draw confident conclusions. This is especially true given the scribal intention of Matthew explained previously.

Gladd draws us back to the purpose verse 15 seems to be introducing: "The Messiah is not only founder and leader of the Israel-to-be, the new people of God; he is its 'inclusive representative.' In a real sense, he *is* the true Israel, carrying through in his own experience the process through which it comes into being."[57] This broader application of the title seems to let Matthew speak for himself. This is not an over-spiritualizing or changing of the meaning of the Old Testament text or concepts but, instead, Matthew turning the lights up on this topic. Here, Matthew is introducing the idea that Jesus is the one who completes the expectations and succeeds where Israel and the other son of God candidates failed. Gladd explains,

> When we read the Gospels, we must appreciate Christ's earthly ministry in its simplicity and in its complexity as heading toward this goal. The life of Christ is the culmination of the Old Testament. Every chapter, ever paragraph, and every verse in the four Gospels reaches back, in some sense, to the Old Testament while simultaneously never losing sight of the person of Christ.[58]

The "culmination" sits well in the center of the escalation of biblical theology, and the "reaches back" aspect sets the analysis of the full bloom aspect on the tee.

Matthew draws attention to the title, son of God, through the progression of the passage as well as the intentional change from the LXX back to the singular "son" (τὸν υἱόν). Robert Gundry sets up the backward and forward reading of this title and the full bloom aspect: "The multiplicity of parallels drawn between the history of Israel and the life of Jesus suggests that Matthew saw that history as both recapitulated and anticipated

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Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Cambridge, UK: Dove Booksellers, 1997), 102, Logos Bible Software.

[57] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 81. Here, Gladd cites C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 106.

[58] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 81.

in the 'king of the Jews.'"[59] The idea of anticipation flows out of the "escalation" emphasis of the progression of the big story in the biblical theology aspect. The idea of recapitulation could also fit within this framework in that Matthew could simply be stating that Jesus is repeating the patterns of the Old Testament accounts of Israel. However, full bloom aspect compels us to see that Matthew is working to convey a more developed understanding of how Jesus "recapitulates" Israel as the son of God. Beale and Gladd provide a helpful analysis of the entire book of Hosea that reveals Hosea's "seedling" form of full bloom aspect. Their conclusion is that Hosea "understood that the first exodus was a pattern foreshadowing a second, end-time exodus."[60] This is on display in the previous analysis of Hosea.

Matthew, just as Hosea did, appears to point the reader to a typological interpretation in the citation he provides. In so doing, we can see more clearly Matthew's broader purpose for his fulfillment quotations. Rather than signaling the reader that the events in the Gospel are predictive fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies, he intends to educate the reader of the typological nature of those Old Testament prophecies. This reveals Matthew's weaving together puzzle pieces, which intend to reveal an important picture that will serve to reveal a major point. Beale and Gladd assist by providing a conclusion that, though it requires further confirmation, bears up under the trajectory established by the first and second fulfillment quotations: "Matthew is just following

[59] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 34, Logos Bible Software. It should be noted that Gundry's commentary on Matthew was the lightning rod that led to his resignation from the Evangelical Theology Society, which he and four others founded. This was largely due to his positions regarding the lack of historical trustworthiness of the Gospel of Matthew. The summary of the controversy and Gundry's resignation can be found in Leslie R. Keylock, "Evangelical Scholars Remove Gundry for His Views on Matthew," *Christianity Today* 28, no. 2 (1984): 36-38, Logos Bible Software. As with any non-inspired resource, discernment must be exercised with Gundry's commentary. However, I have found valuable insights that would encourage the application of the axiom, "don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

[60] Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 350.

Hosea's own wider peripheral typological hermeneutic, which he sees beginning to be fulfilled in Jesus."[61]

This bigger picture to which the puzzle pieces contribute does not appear to be a fulfillment unique to Matthew, an over-spiritualizing of Old Testament texts, or a change in the Old Testament meaning. Instead, Matthew, the scribe, seems to clearly be teaching the reader to interpret Scripture the way he was taught by his rabbi, Jesus Himself. However, before moving to the next fulfillment formula, one remaining full bloom aspect must be addressed.

It appears that Hosea clearly referred to the entire nation of Israel in Hosea 11:1, which is affirmed by the translation of the LXX. How does Matthew then move the concept from corporate Israel to the individual, Jesus? The beginning of this answer is found reading backward to Hosea 1:11. A brief analysis will set up answering the corporate-to-individual transition.

The second half of Hosea 1:11 states, "and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel." The phrase "and they shall appoint (וְשָׂמוּ) for themselves" reveals Hosea's backward consideration as he prophesies future redemption for Israel. The same verb found in 1 Samuel 8:5, "Now appoint for us" (שִׂימָה־לָּנוּ), clearly has a king as its object, but it appears the same conclusion should be drawn from the Hosea passage. Hans Walter Wolff well observes, "The object of 'appoint for themselves' (ושמו להם) is a sovereign who is to be appointed. The emphasis on 'one head' means that those who up to this time had been separated would place 'him' as their head in order to seal their union."[62] Wolff recognizes that Hosea does not seem to drive a Messianic expectation, like Isaiah seems to pick up in a more specific sense in the whole of his prophecy. Instead, Hosea's use of "head" (רֹאשׁ)

[61] Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 350.

[62] Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 27, Logos Bible Software.

is moving back before the era of the monarchs to see an eschatological rather than monarchial emphasis: "The eschatological election of one head lends stability to the eschatological unification; more than this is not said here, which in true prophetic manner hints at more than it describes in detail."[63] It is this recognition of "prophetic manner" that reminds the modern reader that there is often more to what is being stated in a passage than what is easily discernable on the surface. This is not an over-spiritualizing but rather an interpretation that flows out of the biblical text.

This passage does alert the reader to the fact that Hosea exercised full bloom aspect even at the onset of his prophecy, looking down the stairs of history and seeing with vivid clarity events of the past from which he would draw but also up the stairs with a very dimly lit awareness of the details that would unfold in the future.[64] Beale and Gladd conclude that Hosea "sees that the Messiah will lead this future exodus."[65] Wolff's excellent analysis of Hosea's use of the four guardrails leads me to agree that Hosea did not specifically have Messiah in mind. However, I do agree with Beale and Gladd that "kings represented Israel in the Old Testament, so that what could be said about the king was true of the nation, and vice-versa."[66] This concept brings the Matthean use of the passage to what appears to be his point. It would appear that Matthew, taught by his rabbi, wants the reader to understand that the "head" of Hosea 1:11 would be the representative of Israel and, thus, the reason he highlights that God's Son would be brought out of Egypt with the full weight of the Hosea context. Beale and Gladd summarize, "Matthew sees

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[63] Wolff, *Hosea*, 27.

[64] This downstairs and upstairs analogy is drawn from my research. One of the resources explained that the authors of Scripture often read back and forth like someone looking down the stairs where that portion of the ascent was fully illuminated but then also up the stairs where the light fades as the stairs go up. This is a beautiful illustration of what I am working to convey with the idea of full bloom aspect. It is the exercise of looking down and up the stairs of redemptive history. The New Testament, with the teaching of Jesus and the writing of the New Testament authors, provides the illumination for the rest of the ascent and, thus, informs interpretation through reading down and up.

[65] Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 351.

[66] Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 351.

Jesus as that king, so the king can appropriately be said to be Israel."[67] Richard Hays agrees, "Matthew now sees the fate of God's 'son' Israel recapitulated in the story of God's Son, Jesus: in both cases, the son is brought out of exile in Egypt back to the land."[68]

Conclusion

Matthew's second fulfillment quotation does not avoid or change the context of the Hosea passage. In actuality, Matthew expects the reader to know the context of the Hosea passage as he brilliantly weaves the details of the narrative of Jesus and His family fleeing to Egypt to be safe from the threat of Herod's execution of the male children two years and under into the details of the exile prophesied and also historically reflected in the Hosea passage. Yet, the details of the exodus from the first exile differ significantly, most notably that Israel *left* Egypt, but Jesus and His family were told to go *to* Egypt. This combined with the results of the micro and macro lenses of the Hosea and Matthew passages alert the reader to Matthew's identification of typology in the portrait he is working to masterfully paint for the life of Jesus. Hays summarizes this well: "The fulfillment of the prophet's words can be discerned only through an act of imagination that perceives the figural correspondence between the two stories of the exodus and the gospel."[69]

In utilizing this Hosea passage, Matthew is demonstrating a twofold purpose. First, he is advancing the foundation he laid in the first fulfillment formula. There, he

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[67] Beale and Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed*, 352.

[68] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 113, Kindle.

[69] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 113. The term *figurative* works here, but I would prefer *typological*. *Figurative* carries the idea that an author is "departing from a literal use of words." Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "figurative." Utilizing *figurative* to describe what Matthew is doing could easily leave the door open for critics of the typological fulfillment to argue that such a fulfillment discredits the faithful hermeneutic of utilizing or appreciating the literal sense of the text. As has been demonstrated in this chapter, Matthew most assuredly appreciates the literal aspects of interpretation. The "figurative correspondence" is actually a faithful and, in a sense, literal correspondence that is the product of recognizing typology in the Old Testament being fulfilled in Jesus.

established that Jesus is not simply the evidence that God is with His people but is, in fact, God Himself. Here, Matthew references the Old Testament title son of God that was applied to Adam, corporate Israel, and Solomon to show that Jesus is the title holder *par excellence*. Second, Matthew introduces what Hays refers to as a "fundamental identification with Israel."[70] Whereas his first formula emphasized patterns of God's dealing with His people, here he emphasizes Jesus' actual identification with Israel. His utilization of full bloom aspect has revealed a similar but different approach to interpreting an Old Testament passage. In so doing, he builds the portrait of his puzzle of Jesus' identification as well as provides additional tools for biblical interpretation.

[70] Richard B. Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020), 25, Logos Bible Software.

CHAPTER 5

FULL BLOOM AND "RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN"

The first two fulfillment formulas have revealed that Matthew is not only providing an account of the life of Jesus but also equipping his readers with tools for reading and interpreting Scripture the way his rabbi modeled. He has shown that the patterns of the Lord's provision for His people repeat throughout Scripture and culminate in the ultimate provision: "Immanuel, God with us." However, the child is not simply a symbol of God being with His people but actually God, Himself, in human flesh! Matthew then provides details of Jesus' childhood that creatively parallel Israel's journey in Egypt, culminating in Matthew tying in Hosea's statement that the Lord brought His son out of Egypt. The disciple-scribe draws the reader's attention to the fact that Jesus is the rightful title holder of "Son of God" where Adam, Israel, and Solomon failed, revealing that Jesus is the true Israel. It appears clear that Matthew is using the term "fulfill" (πληρόω) as a tool of biblical interpretation.

The next occurrence is only two verses later: "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah." By now, the reader should be primed to turn to Jeremiah to find the citation, being prepared to see something more than predictive fulfillment. However, the citation Matthew provides causes the reader to pause and recognize the human-interest present. Before applying the guardrails to the Jeremiah passage and the present fulfillment quotation, we would do well to refresh the historical context of the flow of Matthew's narrative.

Refreshing the Narrative Flow

This exercise is helpful for those with whom the biblical theology and full bloom aspects may be unfamiliar. Conservative interpreters of Scripture recognize the value of bridging the gaps of historical context and grammar. Recognizing that New Testament authors and Jesus, Himself, used these macro lenses to interpret Scripture may tempt the interpreter to gravitate toward the newly discovered tools at the expense of leaving the historical and grammatical aspects behind. This reminder to revisit the flow of Matthew's narrative reminds us of the important micro lenses and that this method of interpretation is both-and and not either-or.

The flight of Joseph and his family from Bethlehem to Egypt was necessary due to the escalation of fear and anger by Herod the Great. The sweeping application of Herod's reactions to a sense of threat is greatly attested. During his conquest of Jerusalem, he had forty-five leaders of an opposing party executed and forcibly purged the wealthy to pay his debts to Rome.[1] This is but the tip of the iceberg. The fact that "all Jerusalem" was troubled along with Herod when the Magi arrived in the capital city to inquire where the king of the Jews had been born, the title Herod jealously guarded and for which his sons thirsted,[2] it is understandable that the citizens braced for the brash reaction of the king that was sure to follow. This historical background bridges the gap for the modern reader to understand why the angel instructs Joseph to leave with haste, and Matthew does not provide any details leading up to this to explain why. The verses that follow the flight to Egypt tragically provide those details. Without applying the guardrails in detail, a brief analysis will set up the study.

Herod learns, either by intelligence or the fact that the Magi did not return or both, that he has been made to look like a fool. Here, his solution is to kill not only all the

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[1] L. I. Levine, "Herod the Great (Person)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 161, Logos Bible Software.

[2] For more background on Herod's sons and their thirst for this title, see H. W. Hoehner, "Herod," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W Bromiley, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 688, Logos Bible Software.

male children in Bethlehem, two years and under, but to extend to the entire region. Matthew is the only Gospel author to include this account of infanticide. This seems significant given the apparent broad reach of this tragedy and the modern perception that it likely impacted a multitude of families. We would expect that it would have been a significant event in Israel's history.

The question of "why did Matthew include this event" seems to be answered by the occurrence of the familiar formula, "Then was fulfilled" (τότε ἐπληρώθη) (2:17). The formula is clearer in English, and the deviation from the previous two formulas will be further evaluated in the micro lens analysis below. Matthew further assists by stating that his Old Testament citation is from the prophet Jeremiah. The specific verse is Jeremiah 31:15: "Thus says the Lord: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Even a basic awareness of the context of that verse alerts the reader that Matthew is expanding his tutorial on biblical interpretation beyond even the two previous fulfillment formula lessons. Kyle Snodgrass sets up the importance of leaning into the surprising nature of Matthew's use of this citation: "Why does Matthew 2:18 view Jeremiah 31:15 as a prophecy of Herod's slaying of innocent babies, while Jeremiah's words obviously relate to the Babylonian invasion of Judea? Do the New Testament writers twist the Old Testament Scriptures, as some have charged?"[3] The guardrails must be applied to the Jeremiah passage to lay the foundation for understanding Matthew's purpose.

Applying the Guardrails to Jeremiah 31:15

As Christopher Wright practically observes, "You don't need a biblical chapter and verse to prove that parents whose children are killed will mourn and grieve."[4]

[3] Kyle Snodgrass, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 30. Logos Bible Software.

[4] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 69, Logos Bible Software.

However, by now, if the reader is learning from Matthew's training, there is an expectation both that the Jeremiah context is important and that there is more to his use of it that will bear a bountiful harvest through investigation. Richard Hays observes, "Matthew's use of the quotation depends upon the reader's recognition of its original sense . . . Matthew's formula quotations may have more narrative resonance and allusive subtlety than is often credited to them."[5] This encouragement waters the ground of great expectation that there will be extensive profit for the hard work of investigating the context of the Jeremiah passage.

By now, Matthew has taught that a figurative use of an Old Testament text does not betray, misuse, or overlook the original context of that passage. Instead, it honors the context and then uses it to provide a rich theological education as well as tools for biblical interpretation. The goal is to get to those incredible provisions by doing the work of biblical interpretation in an effort to follow Jeremiah's, Matthew's, and the Holy Spirit's methods of teaching and interpretation.

Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet."[6] The book is characterized by warning after warning to sinful Judah and her leadership, warnings which tragically go unheeded. Like so many of the prophecies against God's wayward people, His covenant love and mercy weaves throughout the warnings like an essential thread. Beginning with the Lord's response to Jeremiah's concern about his own qualifications to fulfill God's calling,[7] His covenant mercies are on display: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord" (Jer 1:8). However, the combination of narrative

[5] Richard B. Hays, "Matthew: Reconfigured Torah," *HTS Theological Studies* 61, nos. 1/2 (October 2005): 174.

[6] J. Gordon McConville, "Jeremiah: Theology," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 755, Logos Bible Software.

[7] Such a response to calling is also characterized by the great servant-prophet, Moses (cf. Exod 4:10).

and prophetic chapters that lead up to chapter 31 include evidence of the humanity of the prophet as well as the hard-heartedness of Judah's leaders and people.

Through Jeremiah, the Lord reveals in chapter 29 that the nation will be taken into exile in Babylon for seventy years (v. 10). God's mercy is undeserved as the deplorable spiritual condition of Judah is summarized in verse 23: "They have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them." Beginning in chapter 30, the Lord unpacks, with great detail, His plans to restore not only Judah but also the northern kingdom of Israel. The future timeline is marked by the prophecy that "they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them" (30:9), leaving the original audience and subsequent generations of readers looking for the fulfillment of this promise to be a descendant of David. It is this context that sets up chapter 31.

Jeremiah 31:15: The Micro Lenses

The historical context of the book of Jeremiah and the details of chapter 31 provide the important starting point. The emphasis in this chapter is the same throughout the promises of the Old Testament. The steadfast character of God is placed on center stage: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (31:3). The eschatological[8] expectation for this fulfillment is stoked by the opening statement of chapter 31: "At that time, declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people." This vocabulary draws the reader to the intimacy of God dwelling with His people that has been developing throughout the

[8] By "eschatological" I am emphasizing the aspect of "completion of God's ultimate plan" to this definition more than the "end times" aspect that often receives the focus. I was first introduced to this emphasis by Brian Vickers, who provides this definition of eschatology: "The fulfillment of God's ultimate plan for the world." Brian Vickers, "The Old Testament Use of the Old Testament" (class lecture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, July 9, 2020).

Old Testament (cf. Lev 26:11-12) and will be further developed in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; Rev 21:3).

Despite the encouragement and hope found in the opening verses of chapter 31, there is a vivid reminder that these positive expectations will be necessary due to the harsh judgment that is ahead of them. The implication is that the Lord's people have been scattered across the earth: "I will . . . gather them from the farthest parts of the earth" (31:8) and that they will return to Him "with weeping . . . and with pleas of mercy" (31:9). Interestingly, the Lord reminds the original audience of the familial relationship they have with the Lord: "I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" (31:9). Despite the implications of the judgment before them, Craig Blomberg well summarizes the bulk of this chapter: "Almost all of Jer. 31 describes the future days of God's new covenant with his people, when he will restore them to their land, forgive their sins, and bless them with peace and prosperity."[9] The section that follows the Matthew citation unpacks what is identified as the "new covenant" (31:31). Jesus, Himself, teaches that He is inaugurating this new covenant through His death (Luke 22:20).

Verse 15, then, seems to stick out like a sore thumb in this chapter of hope and promise.[10] The verse vividly depicts the historical context facing the original audience. Mothers in Israel and Judah are depicted collectively by the reference to Rachel and the location of Ramah. Blomberg observes, "Jewish mothers have watched their sons go off to battle, some to die and others to be carried away captive to distant lands. Still more were forcibly evicted from Israel to ensure that the nation would not pose a military threat in the future."[11] The nation of Israel had been defeated and exiled to Assyria (2 Kgs 17:6-

[9] Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 8-9, Logos Bible Software.

[10] Davies and Allison describe the verse as "the only gloomy verse in all of Jeremiah 31." W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 269, Logos Bible Software.

[11] Blomberg, "Matthew," 9.

41), and the powerful Babylonians were descending upon the nation of Judah (2 Kgs 24). This context anchors the promises in the reality the original audience was facing. Further understanding is provided through the micro lens of the grammatical aspect.

Jeremiah begins his quotation of the Lord with the term "voice" (קוֹל). Jack Lundbom recognizes this as a "signature expression of Jeremiah" that signals the beginning of a poem.[12] This is important because it alerts the reader that the interpretation of what follows should be guided by principles for understanding the use of poetry. The literary device of poetry does not preclude the use of literal details, but it alerts the reader to the fact that details are often intended to reference or communicate more than meets the eye. Before investigating this aspect of poetry, it is valuable to investigate the next phrase first at face value.

The phrase that will bridge the historical and grammatical aspects is "in Ramah" (בְּרָמָה),[13] "a Benjaminite city at the border of Judah and Israel near Gibeah, Geba, and Bethel."[14] Gerald Keown identifies the location as "named in Jer 40:1 as a stopping-off point for the captives from Judah and Jerusalem on their way to exile in Babylon."[15] He additionally recognizes the historical context that would have contributed to the great sorrow of the parents of Israel and Judah: "It is an appropriate site at which to picture Rachel mourning for her offspring because they have been killed or carried off."[16] There

[12] Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 21B (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 435, Logos Bible Software.

[13] There is scholarly debate as to whether the term refers to the town or the more common noun that simply means "height." The debate extends beyond the scope of this project. A starting point for investigating the sides of the debate can be found in William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 186, Logos Bible Software. I am convinced that Jeremiah intended to reference the actual location and not the common noun.

[14] A. A. Saarisalo, "Ramah," in Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 38. (Josh 18:25; Judg 4:5; 19:13; Isa 10:29)

[15] Gerald L. Keown, *Jeremiah 26–52*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 27 (Dallas: Word, 1995), 119, Logos Bible Software.

[16] Keown, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 119.

is more historical background to the location known as Ramah. Wright reminds that Ramah "was not far from the traditional site of Rachel's burial (just on the other side of Jerusalem)."[17]

The fact that Rachel (רָחֵל) is included in this Jeremiah passage also draws the reader's attention back to Genesis. Rachel was the favored wife of Israel, formerly named Jacob, and died giving birth to her second son, Benjamin (Gen 35:16-20). The great sorrow she experienced as she was giving birth is captured in the name she gave her son, Ben-oni, which means "son of my sorrow . . . son of my last effort."[18] The sorrow in those chapters of Genesis is also captured in Genesis 37:35 in the refusal of Jacob to be comforted (וַיְמָאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם), which will be echoed at the end of Jeremiah 31:15. The great sorrow of the context of Jeremiah 31:15 is captured in two additional phrases: "lamentation" (נְהִי) and "bitter weeping" (בְּכִי תַמְרוּרִים). The phrases are similar but combine to draw out the intense emotional pain Jeremiah conveys. The intensity of the combination is effectively conveyed in the decision Lundbom makes to translate the latter phrase "bitterest" weeping.[19]

Is Jeremiah using the name of this town to draw the reader back to the account of Rachel's death or something else? This question begins the transition from the micro lenses to macro. The macro lenses build on this all-important foundation of historical and grammatical aspects and are also naturally invited by the literary device of poetry that Jeremiah uses here. Extending beyond these micro lenses will prove crucial for preparing the investigation of Matthew's use of this Old Testament passage.

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[17] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End*, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity, 2014), 319, Logos Bible Software.

[18] John M'Clintock and James Strong, "Ben-O′ni," in *Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880), 756. Logos Bible Software.

[19] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 436.

Jeremiah 31:15: The Macro Lenses

Expanding beyond the Jeremiah chapter and even the prophetic book identified with his name sets the context for the macro analysis. Referencing the previous fulfillment quotation as well as this one, Schreiner reminds, "Both places (Ramah and Egypt) and both prophets (Hosea and Jeremiah) declare that God will both send his people into exile and reach out in mercy and bring them back."[20] This is a great reminder that the evaluation of the Jeremiah passage should expand beyond the chapter and surrounding context to examine how it fits within the big story of redemptive history. The first term that requires analysis is Jeremiah's reference to Ramah.

Jeremiah's inclusion of the location of Ramah seems to indicate a broader purpose than simply the location, the historical events of Genesis that took place near there, or even the contemporary significance for the audience of Jeremiah's day. The position that Ramah is the location of Rachel's tomb is disputed. William Holladay asserts, "There is no passage in the OT (beyond the disputed present one) in which Rachel's tomb is said to be 'in Ramah.'"[21] In addition to his convincing analysis against the claim that the tomb was at Ramah, he also observes that, apart from this present passage and its occurrence in a list of places (Neh 11:33), the term Ramah as a place name always includes the definite article.[22]

The work by Holladay, and others, moves the interpretation beyond the location of Rachel's grave to further investigate her life to better understand Jeremiah's use. Keown brilliantly summarizes Rachel's life and death as compared to the other matriarchs of Genesis to set the stage:

> Rachel's life story sets her apart from the other Israelite ancestors. She alone had only a grave and never a home in the promised land (Jer 30:3). She died "on the way" (Gen 35:19), and her last words express her sorrow (Gen 35:18). Not every

[20] Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 217, Logos Bible Software.

[21] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 187.

[22] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 186.

> mother will give up her own life for her child's (e.g., Jer 19:9; Lam 2:20; 4:10; 2 Kgs 6:28–29). Rachel's death in childbirth makes her deeply credible as an example of the profound extent of a mother's love. Rachel is a mother who does not forget her children (cf. Isa 49:15).[23]

The identity, then, of Rachel's children moves into focus. Rachel was the mother of Joseph, which makes her the grandmother of Ephraim, the namesake of Northern Israel, which had been defeated and taken into captivity years before Jeremiah prophesied the content of chapter 31.

Jeremiah's reference to Rachel seems to be drawing the reader's attention to the deportation of Northern Israel. Keown observes, "Jeremiah imagined the spirit of Rachel . . . weeping for her children who had been deported by the Assyrians a hundred years earlier."[24] This explains why this negative context occurs in the middle of a chapter summarizing the hope of future restoration and the New Covenant. The verses that follow advance the understanding that Jeremiah is contrasting the dire circumstances of exile with the hope of restoration. In fact, verse 17 provides stark contrast to verse 15: "There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country." It is this pattern of the oppression of God's people that Jeremiah seems to be emphasizing. Hays observes that the imagery is Rachel mourning "proleptically from the past over the exile—and, by implication, over the repeating pattern of violence against God's chosen."[25]

This reminder of patterns recalls the biblical theology aspect of God's provision for His people, despite often seemingly impossible circumstances, that appears to escalate toward the promise of Messiah. The broader repetition of patterns—both of oppression and provision—is included in Jeremiah's prophecy as he has already revealed that Judah will also experience their own deportation, which the Lord will overcome (29:10) just as He promises He will do for Ephraim in verse 17. Hays summarizes Jeremiah's point for

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[23] Keown, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 119.

[24] J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 573. Logos Bible Software.

[25] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 115, Kindle.

including this staggering negative amid a chapter of hope: "That is the reason why there is hope for the future: *violence and exile do not have the final word*, for God's love for Israel will prevail and bring about restoration."[26]

This forward-looking biblical theology aspect sets up the full bloom aspect, a tool that even Jeremiah seems to be using in this passage. Jeremiah demonstrates *both* a forward *and* backward reading of the patterns of God's people and His provision for them. This backward and forward understanding has been on display by Jeremiah's tying the grandmother of Ephraim as well as her weeping being heard in Ramah. F. B. Huey summarizes, "Her connection with both northern and southern tribes suggests that although her weeping may have been primarily for the Assyrian exiles (Isa 10:29), we should associate it with the Babylonian exile as well."[27] Jeremiah centers his audience on the contrast between justifiable tears and the hope in their gracious covenant-keeping God. However, Jeremiah's hope is not unique to the prophets of the Old Testament. The insight God gave them revealed a glimpse of a future day when the repetitions of rebellion, judgment, and restoration would one day come to an end. Yet, for Jeremiah and his colleagues, the details of that future day remained but shadows and outlines of a dimly lit perspective.

In some respects, Jeremiah seems to be using a similar interpretive approach to Matthew's fulfillment quotations. Jeremiah reaches back to both the context of Rachel's death as well as the present context of the audience he is addressing to highlight a greater plan of redemptive history, the clarity of which he does not have at the time he prophesied. However, he is demonstrating the importance of recognizing that God's Word and plan are not bound by a linear or even historical correspondence with escalation progression. It

[26] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 115, emphasis original.

[27] F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 274, Logos Bible Software.

is this approach that agrees with Matthew, or vice versa, and sets up our analysis of Matthew's Jeremiah citation.

Applying the Guardrails to Matthew 2:18

As the focus returns to Matthew, the previous fulfillment quotations combine with Jeremiah's interpretive perspective to draw attention to the correlation between Jesus and Israel. This correlation leans the reader toward expecting Matthew not to be using the details of Jesus' life as predictive fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. However, modern tendencies tempt the reader to rush to apply presuppositions and systems to interpreting the text rather than letting the Scripture and its author speak first. In a work published during the writing of this project, Michael Vlach demonstrates this tendency once again. Recognizing the clear connections Matthew is making between Jesus and Israel, Vlach sees these connections as Matthew intending to reveal Jesus as the "corporate head of Israel who represents Israel and brings to pass all God intends for Israel."[28] The commitment to seeing ethnic Israel as essential to God's plan for redemptive history seems to color the lenses of Vlach's biblical interpretation. The exercise of applying the guardrails through the micro and macro lenses for the Matthew passage will take time but will also serve to ensure we are letting the Bible speak in its own terms.

Matthew 2:18: The Micro Lenses

The historical context is informed by verse 16. The Magi are warned not to obey Herod's instructions to return to him with the location of the child and instead return to their own country (2:12). As has been documented, Herod spent his entire reign constantly in fear of threats to his throne, viciously carrying out executions of even his close family,

[28] Michael Vlach, *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2021), 167, Kindle. "Corporate head" and "represents" may seem to be nuanced variations to what Matthew is developing. However, the conclusion that a main purpose of Jesus' incarnation as well as the point Matthew intends to make is that of bringing "to pass all God intends for Israel" seems to be a theological position that drives Vlach's interpretation rather than the other way around.

including a brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and his favorite wife.[29] The fact that the Magi announced they were looking for "he who has been born king of the Jews" triggered the self-preservation instinct of the king, as verse 3 reveals. In verse 16, Matthew chooses words that reveal Herod's pride had been triggered.

The grammatical aspect will serve to further inform the historical context. Matthew states that Herod saw "that he had been tricked by the wise men" (ὅτι ἐνεπαίχθη ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων). The word is translated "tricked" (ἐμπαίζω) carries the meaning of, "to make a fool of such a person."[30] This triggered fury and rage. The English translation captures this somewhat: "became furious" (ἐθυμώθη λίαν). However, the inclusion of the emphatic adverb λίαν seems to convey more than just rage. Gundry observes that the term "accentuates Herod's rage and warns of similar calamities to come."[31] The pattern of Herod giving up control of his actions to his intense rage blasts through the warning signaled by Matthew's wording.[32] It is this warning that ties the grammar to the historical context and sets up the horrific details that follow.

Herod sends soldiers to kill "all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under" (πάντας τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς ἐν Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ὁρίοις αὐτῆς). France summarizes the traditional understanding of what this conveys: "Christian tradition has, of course, inflated the number of babies involved in the

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[29] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 85, Logos Bible Software.

[30] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 758-59, Logos Bible Software.

[31] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 35, Logos Bible Software.

[32] Leon Morris draws out the progressive nature of the influence of anger on Herod by observing that the ingressive aorist combines with the emphatic adverb. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 45n47, Logos Bible Software. This demonstrates an important principle of the life that is not controlled by the gospel. Paul provides the necessary steps for dealing with anger in the second half of 2 Cor 10:5: "Take every thought captive to obey Christ." The beginning of intense anger left uncontrolled by the gospel has the potential of great tragedy not only for the individual but also for others in the person's path. This will tragically be on display, once again, in the life of the king.

'massacre' into several thousands."[33] This makes the association of great weeping by the mothers of that region in verse 18 a logical fulfillment of the Jeremiah passage. Or does it? The historical aspect assists.

France informs of the historical context of this passage: "Estimates of the total population of Bethlehem in the first century are generally under 1,000, which would mean that the number of male children up to two years old at any one time could hardly be more than 20, even allowing for 'all its district.'"[34] This does not diminish the tragedy those families or even the communities experienced. However, it does provide helpful historical context that would account for the "lack of any other record of the Bethlehem 'slaughter'" and that such an event "is unsurprising in light of other atrocities during Herod's rule."[35]

The end of verse 16 provides additional historical context. Matthew says that Herod carried out his tragic scheme against male children "who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men." These details are intriguing and have produced volumes of analysis that often focus on the age of Jesus when the Magi visited Him. While the study is fascinating and certainly provides value, France provides a helpful summary for our purposes: "Herod's specification of age need be no more than a rough rule of thumb to make sure his soldiers did not miss any potential rival."[36] The phrase is not only valuable in the efforts to better understand the timeline of Jesus' birth. It also serves to transition the interpretive process to the examination of the grammar. The historical context also stretches the reader to expand beyond the details of the passage, setting up further analysis of the grammatical aspect.

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[33] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 85.

[34] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 85.

[35] E. Frank Tupper, "The Bethlehem Massacre—Christology Against Providence?" *Review and Expositor* 88, no. 4 (1991): 410, Logos Bible Software.

[36] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 85.

The reader will notice that Matthew reaches back to earlier in the narrative of chapter 2 by his use of the verb "ascertained" (ἀκριβόω). Morris sees this as intentional: "Matthew repeats the verb he used in verse 7 for accurate inquiry. Clearly he wants his readers to be in no doubt that Herod had accurate knowledge of the time the star appeared."[37] Given Matthew's efforts up to this point, his purpose for using the verb is more than just educating the reader of Herod's accurate knowledge of timing. Matthew appears to be setting up the expectation for what follows, and he wants his readers to draw from what—and how—he has been developing as he presents this third fulfillment quotation.

The formula is introduced differently than the previous passages. The previous quotations have been introduced with the phrase "to fulfill" (ἵνα πληρωθῇ). Here there is slight variation: "then was fulfilled" (τότε ἐπληρώθη). The exchange of τότε for ἵνα may be Matthew's effort "to lessen the implication that God's purpose was fulfilled by the atrocity."[38] The preposition ἵνα seems to emphasize result or purpose[39] in a way that could have distracted the reader with wrestling with the topic of theodicy more than the actual intention Matthew has for his recognition of fulfillment. Gundry also helpfully observes that the only two passages where Matthew utilizes τότε in the fulfillment formulas were "because of the rejection of Jesus—hence the temporal τότε, which allows a limitation of the fulfillment to God's permissive will."[40] The second departure from previous formulas is the removal of the phrase "what the Lord" (ὑπὸ κυρίου). Following Turner's vein of thought, Gundry explains, "The dropping of 'by the Lord' and insertion of 'Jeremiah' also

[37] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 45.

[38] David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 93, Logos Bible Software.

[39] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 782.

[40] Gundry, *Matthew*, 35.

distance God from the event."[41] This, of course, does not mean that God's providence is absent from the story or that His divine will did not superintend this event, but it does serve the progression of Matthew's development of the narrative by tweaking the emphasis.

Like his citation of verse 15, Matthew's citation of Jeremiah varies from the Hebrew and LXX versions of the passage. While the variation in verse 15 demonstrated significant interpretive purpose, Turner observes, "There are several differences in the text form of Jer. 31:15 as found in MT, LXX, and Matt. 2:18, but none seem significant for exegesis."[42]

The fact that Matthew maintains the translation of the location Jeremiah identifies as Ramah (בְּרָמָה) with the Greek name of the location (Ῥαμὰ) seems to be significant considering the flow of the passage and Matthew's use of the Old Testament. Just as the Greek language provided words with more specificity, such as "virgin" (παρθένος[43]) in 1:23, instead of a more generic term for young woman, Matthew resists the opportunity to translate the term with a word that would convey "in the height," as is often attempted to be the translation of Jeremiah's passage, rather than the Benjamite city of Ramah.[44] Why is this important? In verse 6, Matthew's citation of Micah 5:2 removed the additional identification of Ephrathah. The inclusion of Ephrathah in the passages concerning Rachel's death and burial (Gen 35:16, 19; 48:7) and Matthew's adjustment with the Micah citation combine with the direct translation of Ramah here in a way that "militates against his associating Rachel's sepulchre in Ramah with Bethlehem-Ephrath."[45] This seems to indicate that "the meaning Matthew sees in the slaughter does not have its

[41] Gundry, *Matthew*, 35.

[42] Turner, *Matthew*, 94.

[43] This term is recognized as being "usually unambiguous" as describing "a sexually inexperienced young woman." Turner, *Matthew*, 69.

[44] Saarisalo, "Ramah," 38.

[45] Gundry, *Matthew*, 35-36.

center of gravity in the geographical locale, as though he was trying to explain the Messiah's seemingly inappropriate departure from Davidic Bethlehem on a journey that would eventually take him to that oddity for a messianic hometown—Nazareth in Galilee."[46]

This observation of the path of the Messiah revealed in this chapter and the response to Jesus of the character in the story seems to be more what Matthew is driving. Gundry observes, "The stress here lies on the dreadful consequences of rejecting Jesus."[47] This appears to be an important, albeit partial, aspect to what Matthew is developing. To better fill in the entire aspect, the micro lenses must give way to the macro. Before this transition, some additional grammar must be evaluated.

The phrase, "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation," maintains the parallelism of Jeremiah in the Hebrew and LXX. However, Matthew's adjustments achieve the emphasis on "the motif of sorrow."[48] It is also interesting that Matthew chooses to replace "sons" (υἱοῖς) in the LXX for "children" (τέκνα). This is the opposite of his decision to swap "son" (υἱόν) for children (τέκνα) in his citation of the LXX of Hosea 11:1. As the study of those passages revealed, the words Matthew chooses often reveal scribal intention, and that is the case here. France is correct, "[Sons] would have fit more exactly his account of the killing of male children."[49] By now, the reader should recognize that such a decision conveys Matthew's intention to creatively teach something beyond the literal details of the account.

One final observation should be made about Ramah, a location that does not relate anywhere else to the life of Christ. The fact that Jeremiah identifies the location with the gathering place of Jews before they were formally sent into exile (Jer 40:1) is a trigger

[46] Gundry, *Matthew*, 36.

[47] Gundry, *Matthew*, 36.

[48] Gundry, *Matthew*, 36.

[49] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 86.

Davies and Allison recognize as a reason to combine this citation by Matthew and the use of the location by Jeremiah to "draw a typological correlation between Israel and the Messiah."[50] This understanding of seeing beyond the literal details of the grammar appears to be the objective of Matthew, setting up the macro lens analysis.

Matthew 2:18: The Macro Lenses

The progression of the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel have revealed that he is interested in more than simply documenting historic details of the life and ministry of Jesus. The use of fulfillment formulas has proven to not only advance the theological objectives of Matthew's agenda but also to train the reader how to interpret Scripture. In doing so, we have found that Matthew desires to honor the original context of the passages he cites rather than over-spiritualize or change them. The historical and grammatical aspects have revealed both honor for the original context but also intention to teach something bigger. With the historical context of the tragic deaths of male children in and around Bethlehem being tied to Jeremiah 31, the modern reader must now ask, "why did Matthew choose to cite this particular passage in the way he did?" Answering this question will help us understand but also continue to teach us how to interpret Scripture.

When the "gloomy" verse of Jeremiah 31:15 was evaluated as a scene in a broader story, the passage revealed Jeremiah's purpose of including it as a reminder that there was hope for Israel despite a terribly painful present and near future context. The hope was that Israel's covenant-keeping God would bring them back to their land and establish a new covenant (31:31-40). The progress of God's plan and escalation was in full view in the biblical theology aspect of the Jeremiah passage.

It seems Matthew uses the citation in a similar fashion. Jeremiah's exodus motif fits well in Matthew's development of his first two chapters. His drawing from the patterns

[50] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 269.

of God's provision for His people despite desperate and impossible circumstances has been on display in Matthew 1:23. Then, in chapter 2, the parallels between Israel and Jesus have escalated, with special emphasis on Israel's exodus from Egypt. Here, Matthew draws both patterns and exodus-like restoration from the Old Testament citation. Christopher Wright summarizes well what appears to be Matthew's goal with these citations: "The original exodus itself was used as a pattern for God's future action. There would be a 'new exodus.' In the same way, Matthew uses both exodus and return from exile as patterns for what he sees in the life of Jesus."[51]

This brings forward the intention of Matthew's use of another passage that does not have one-to-one predictive fulfillment in the details of the story of Jesus. Jesus' birth was in Bethlehem, which served as the epicenter of Herod's decree of infanticide, but the passage cites Ramah. The inclusion of Rachel, who was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, does not seem to be appropriate when Jesus is the descendant of Judah. And, despite the death of innocent children being extremely tragic, the historically informed relatively small number of children actually executed would not necessarily produce nationwide sorrow, as the lack of historical data seems to corroborate. Wright proves helpful, once again, explaining that Matthew's point seems to be that "the prophet Jesus of Nazareth could legitimately be claimed as the Messiah because not only had he actually been born in Bethlehem (as the Scriptures foretold), but also the movements by which he ended up a resident of Galilee were also consistent with the fulfillment of Scripture."[52]

The combination of this citation and that found in 2:15 seem to be closely related. Grounded in promise and hope despite horrific contexts for Israel, slavery in Egypt and deportation to Assyria and Babylon, these contexts provide the context which Matthew parallels in the early years of Jesus' life. At this point, it is valuable to remember the tool

[51] Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 70.

[52] Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 66.

the macro lenses of interpretation provide for modern western readers. Commenting on these two fulfillment quotations in Matthew 2, Schreiner observes,

> Since we are products of our modern Western culture, we still tend to read a given OT statement in only a grammatical-historical manner, considering it almost exclusively from the perspective of the human author's understanding and point in time. But Christ has bound together the disparate strands of the temporal flow into a unity of essence and meaning. The supernatural has impregnated history so deeply that there must be a further meaning to historical events.[53]

This modern Western reading can be the trap into which even modern conservatives fall. Holding a high view of Scripture and desiring to bridge the gaps between modern reading and ancient authorship, these readers may be tempted to stop with the micro lenses. Macro lenses serve to equip the modern reader to avoid these traps.

How does this understanding of Matthew's figurative usage of the Jeremiah citation assist biblical interpretation? Schreiner explains,

> The movement of Jesus mirrors and completes the struggle of Israel as a nation. Not only does Matthew begin echoing Genesis and Abraham, but he also quickly transitions to the early movement of Israel as they come out of Egypt. The new Israel foreshadows a future return from exile in his geographical movements. Jesus not only walks in the footsteps of Israel—he is Israel.[54]

This last statement is an important distinction from scholars who intend to see Jesus as representative of Israel. The theological ramifications of Jesus being substance to which ethnic Israel typologically foreshadows is significant and challenges presuppositions committed to holding on to a literal future for ethnic Israel. Despite the potential of someone seeing this distinction as semantics, Schreiner's conclusion seems to align with Matthew's development more clearly with these fulfillment quotations.

It is this final point that seems to be Matthew's purpose. In so identifying, he is clearly demonstrating historical correspondence and escalation in the person and work of Jesus. In so doing, he assists the reader with the vivid and impactful reminder that we must both understand Scripture in its own terms and that redemptive history finds its ultimate

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[53] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 217n31.

[54] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 218.

fulfillment in Christ. Such an education equips the modern reader with the all-important lens to look for and expect every section of Scripture to follow this motif.

Practically, the insight gleaned from the biblical theology aspect of Matthew's Jeremiah 31:15 citation informs reading the rest of the New Testament. Much of the conflict found in Acts between Jews and Christ followers along with the confusion seemingly constantly addressed in the epistles between the function of Old Testament Law and the "law of Christ" seems to be clarified by Matthew's first two chapters. Recognizing that Matthew is demonstrating Jesus to be the true Israel provides helpful lenses that the Christians of Acts and the time of the epistles were still discovering. Matthew's insight is strategically placed at the front of the New Testament and serves as important lenses for reading forward with proper understanding of how those scenes fit in the big story of redemptive history. This serves not only the transition of planting the New Testament church but also all the way to the culmination of Revelation.

As I have been working to demonstrate, full bloom aspect and biblical theology are closely tied. They are not in disagreement, categorically different, or even formally distinct. Instead, full bloom aspect takes biblical theology to a practical application that emphasizes the backward reading where biblical theology often will emphasize the forward escalation of the big story. Hays assists, "By reading backwards through the lens of the story of Jesus, we can see that Jeremiah's words are newly filled with unexpected meaning."[55] The "unexpected" meaning is an excellent choice of words. Rather than demonstrating a changed or over-spiritualized meaning, the light of Matthew's usage provides the necessary illumination to see what was always present. The dimly lit authors and audience of the Old Testament had to settle for outlines and shadows. Said another way, full bloom aspect offers a "working back from actual events that happened in the

[55] Richard B. Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020), 76, Logos Bible Software.

early life of Jesus to certain Hebrew Scriptures in which [Matthew] now sees a deeper significance than they could have had before."[56]

The back-and-forth combination of these macro lenses serve the reader to recognize purpose that limiting interpretation to the micro lenses will not produce. Hays summarizes the value produced by the macro lenses: "For Matthew, this is not merely one more grim repetition of the cycle of violence in history. . . . Rather, Matthew is signaling that Jesus is the new king who has come to break the cycle of violence, to end the exile of God's people, and to institute the new covenant that Jeremiah saw through a glass darkly."[57] This recognition must have been the realization the disciples experienced after their impromptu Emmaus lecture by Rabbi Jesus Himself.

Conclusion

Just as the previous fulfillment formulas have revealed, Matthew is not teaching that these Old Testament passages were intended to predict a future Messiah by his citation of Jeremiah 31:15. In fact, Hays well states, "Jer 31:15 in its original context is not a prophecy about a future event in which a ruthless king will slaughter babies in order to assure the destruction of God's messiah."[58] The citation connecting the tragedy of infant children in Bethlehem and the surrounding regions to the defeat and exile of Northern Israel continues to develop Matthew's point that Jesus *is* Israel, the true Israel. This transforms the way we can—and should—read Scripture.

This fulfillment quotation combines with the previous two to inform us of the role ethnic Israel plays in the progression of redemptive history. It educates us on ethnic Israel's ultimate purpose; namely, to serve as a shadow that finds its substance in Christ. It also provides lenses that allow us to anticipate the future of redemptive history in the

[56] Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 66.

[57] Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture*, 76.

[58] Hays, *Reading with the Grain of Scripture*, 76.

way Rabbi Jesus seemed to be teaching His disciples and was very interested in ensuring that they were understanding this instruction for reading Scripture backwards and forwards. These benefits seem incredibly valuable to ensure that the understanding and application should be clear for everyone, resulting in universal interpretive agreement. However, one final fulfillment formula in chapter 2 will remind us of the need for humility and a lifetime of interpretive wrestling.

CHAPTER 6

FULL BLOOM AND "CALLED A NAZARENE"

Like a master teacher, Matthew has crafted a brilliant lesson plan through the first two chapters of his Gospel. Not only is he providing points of detail from the early life of Jesus, but he is also developing a theology that connects them. At the same time, he is also training the reader in the art and science of biblical interpretation that he learned from his rabbi, Jesus Himself. The progression has revealed more than a formulaic plan of a professor who knows his destination and provides students with progressive breadcrumbs that will allow them to assemble a loaf of bread at the end. His curriculum is more complex and beautiful than that, and the guiding tool he uses is the fulfillment quotation formula.

The initial class began with a fulfillment quotation that intends to introduce his objective by putting the cookie jar on the lower shelf. It is not that much of a stretch to recognize the parallels between Isaiah's prophesied child, his young mother, and a desperate context for God's people and the historical context of Jesus' birth. However, as we follow Matthew's details and examine the passage he cites, we begin to see that the parallels are not one-to-one. The "fulfillment" to which Matthew refers is not predictive but is something more.

His second class stretches his students. However, he primes us by including historical details that no other Gospel author provides. Those details undeniably draw a reader familiar with the story of Israel back to their days in Egypt under the paranoid and oppressive Pharaoh who put the male Hebrew infants in his crosshairs, commanding their execution at birth. However, Matthew's fulfillment quotation seems to depart from the Old Testament context in ways that the Isaiah fulfillment did not. Instead of the narrative

describing baby Jesus traveling out of Egypt, the details emphasize his traveling *out* of the land of promise and *into* actual Egypt. This challenges the reader, but Matthew weaves his purpose for seeing the progress of Jesus' early life as "fulfillment" of the Hosea passage. The investigation of the Hosea context combines with Matthew's Gospel progression to introduce the beauty of the portrait of Jesus he is painting. This beauty is not readily available through an exclusively linear and escalating approach to interpretation.

The third class leverages the learning achieved and stretches the interpretive muscles. The citation, in its original context, is challenging to understanding how Jeremiah interprets the details he provides. Yet, the guardrails modeled by Jeremiah combined with the consistency of Matthew's interpretive guardrails contribute to the tremendous value this class offers modern readers. The beautiful imagery offered by following Matthew's model of interpretation is akin to the dreaded art appreciation class many undergraduate students are often required to attend. Prior to the class, many students view art through lenses of appreciation that are often clouded. However, for those willing to keep an open mind, the instruction of theory, the lives of the artists, the various contexts surrounding the art, and other details can turn a statue or painting otherwise relegated to a glance into a long gaze of deep appreciation.

The fourth and final class offers the most challenging content and exercise. The final fulfillment quotation in chapter 2 is unique because it does not contain a direct citation from the Old Testament. Many Bible readers who recognize this anomaly tend to either explain it away or quickly read past. However, Matthew includes this fulfillment quotation with purpose. It is crucial to the development of his Gospel and promises to provide a most advanced training for biblical interpretation.

Survey of the Interpretive History

The interpretive history of this passage is complicated. Many scholars and commentators have written about Matthew's purpose, but the amount of content is often

extremely small compared to their analysis of the other fulfillment passages. Vlach summarizes the reason behind this: "One puzzling issue is that there is no specific OT text that explicitly states the Messiah would be called a 'Nazarene.'"[1] This recognition is an important starting point for the analysis that follows. France prepares the complicated journey by recognizing, "Here there can be no uncertainty about the surface meaning."[2] The surface meaning appears to be undeniable. Matthew sees Jesus' residence in Nazareth as a fulfillment of some Old Testament concept. However, Matthew, the professor, is interested in the reader going deeper. Armed with the tools gained from the previous three fulfillment quotations, he might have had a sparkle in his eye like a professor who knows the treasure of discovery that the complicated process he presents will provide.

While discovery is promised, the extensive varying approaches and conclusions of generations of scholars requires a pause. Certainly, there are passages and areas of theology where the level of certainty for conclusions will be extremely high. However, the humility of approaching Scripture with a recognition that some interpretive conclusions and theological positions will need to be held with charity may be one of the purposes of Matthew's unique fulfillment formula at the end of these important first two chapters.[3]

Most scholars provide a brief survey of the various options for interpretation and then provide a hedged opinion or, in some cases, simply avoid expressing an opinion altogether. For instance, after acknowledging the interpretive difficulty France concludes,

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[1] Michael Vlach, *The Old in the New: Understanding How the New Testament Authors Quoted the Old Testament* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2021), 173, Kindle. Vlach's analysis of this verse corroborates both my observation of comparatively small analysis content as well as his consistent and excellent three guardrail approach to biblical interpretation.

[2] R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 129, Logos Bible Software.

[3] While this observation dips into an important topic that goes hand in hand with biblical interpretation, an extended discussion extends beyond the scope of this project. An excellent book that offers a starting point for an approach that does not compromise the importance of convictions and conclusions but also highlights the importance of charity is Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage*, The Gospel Coalition Booklet Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020).

"It is the simple apologetic point that Jesus' upbringing in Nazareth was scripturally authenticated."[4] Is this Matthew's point? Are we left with the tension of needing to move on without resolution? Are the gaps between modern readers and the ancient context in this case too great, and must we conclude that the lack of resolution simply does not deter from the point of the Gospel, leaving us content to move on? We must acknowledge the potential of these realities. However, Matthew has provided the first three fulfillment quotations and the exercise of the guardrails to guide the analysis.

Following the guardrail analysis of these earlier passages provides the potential for a better understanding than we would have if we had hastily read past this passage. Such an exercise offers the potential treasures that Matthew intends us to find, like a pirate from long ago who strategically planned a treasure map with both the journey and the destination in mind. The first step, then, is to consider any way guardrails can be applied to the Old Testament. Before diving into the Old Testament, a brief bridging of context between verses 19 and 22 will be helpful.

Bridging the Context (Matt 2:19-22)

The passage opens with the historical note that what follows occurs "when Herod had died" (Τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἡρῴδου). Many might quickly read past these historical details, but they contribute greatly to the ensuing narrative. When Herod the Great died, his son Archelaus was designated ruler of Judea, the region in which Bethlehem was located. Like his father, Herod, Archelaus "was notorious for his cruelty."[5] Since the cruelty of his father included the execution of infants, the reign of Archelaus provided a challenge for the young family's plans to return to Bethlehem of Judea. Like

[4] France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2," 129.

[5] Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker; Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2007), 69, Logos Bible Software.

the warning of 2:13, "an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph" (ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ᾽ ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσὴφ) providing instruction.

The instruction centers on Joseph's family leaving Egypt and "returning to the land of Israel" (πορεύου εἰς γῆν Ἰσραήλ). This path now mirrors the people of Israel out of Egypt to the land of promise. Davies and Allison see a parallel in this instruction to that of Moses in Exodus 4:19: "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."[6] This is likely in Matthew's view as he continues to draw out details that tie the story of Jesus to Moses and Israel. Some scholars consider the phrase, "land of Israel," which occurs only here in the New Testament, as an intentional tie-in by Matthew to the exodus of Israel.[7] The combination of this phrase and the connection to Moses' life moves the reader to follow Matthew's typological connection of Jesus to Israel and to Moses. France observes, "Here the Moses-typology of this chapter comes most visibly to the surface of the narrative, even though the parallel is being drawn now not with Moses' escape in his infancy but with his adult life."[8]

Archelaus longed for the title of king. However, Gundry observes, "Caesar Augustus withheld the title till Archelaus should prove his worth."[9] The massacre he ordered immediately following his father's death was one of many missteps by the tetrarch, and Rome would dispose him from his position in AD 6. No wonder the young father needed additional instruction. There seems to be a Matthean treasure embedded in the terms the scribe uses. He describes Archelaus as "reigning over Judea" (βασιλεύει τῆς

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[6] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (London: T & T Clark e, 2004), 271, Logos Bible Software.

[7] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 90n5.

[8] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 90, Logos Bible Software.

[9] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 38, Logos Bible Software.

Ἰουδαίας). This verb is typically associated with the action of a king. In using this term, Gundry sees theological intention:

> Theologically, the use of βασιλεύει despite Augustus's refusal to confirm the kingly title, the specification of Judea the place of former rejection (cf. vv 1, 5), and the preposition ἀντί, "in place of," with "his father" all imply that Archelaus is another illegitimate rival with whom the Jewish leaders would cooperate in plotting the death of Jesus the true king of the Jews.[10]

The general designation of the land of Israel allows for what follows—a father strategically assessing the situation of returning to Bethlehem and protecting his family. Joseph's analysis leaves him "afraid to go there" (ἐφοβήθη ἐκεῖ ἀπελθεῖν). The Lord does not leave him alone with his own logic. He provides further instruction "in a dream" (κατ' ὄναρ).[11] Joseph's response to the divine warning was to settle in the "district of Galilee" (τὰ μέρη τῆς Γαλιλαίας), the region governed by another one of Herod's sons, the less threatening Antipas.[12] It is this move that brought Joseph to the unexpected town of Nazareth. It was unexpected due to the historical insignificance of the town and lack of mention in the Old Testament. However, further analysis of this context will be reserved for the guardrail analysis of verse 23. As Matthew embeds a fourth fulfillment quotation in the narrative, the springboard for Old Testament analysis occurs with Matthew's unique plural use of "the prophets" (τῶν προφητῶν) in verse 23. Blomberg sees this phrase as a catalyst for a wider analysis of the Old Testament rather than for a specific passage: "[Matthew] may be indicating that he is not quoting one specific text but summarizing a broader scriptural theme."[13]

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[10] Gundry, *Matthew*, 38.

[11] While the mention of an angel of the Lord delivering the instruction is not included here, it is likely—given the flow of the narrative—that the delivery is from an angel of the Lord, once again.

[12] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 69.

[13] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 70.

Applying the Guardrails to The Old Testament

Since Matthew does not cite a specific verse in the Old Testament, it would seem the best place to start would be the Matthean passage itself and to remember the ancient context. Patrick Schreiner helpfully reminds the modern reader of the reality of the historical gap and the potential challenges it can provide to biblical interpretation: "We have become so comfortable with the story that we forget what a shock this would be to those who first heard it."[14] Exercising the tools gained by the analysis of the previous fulfillment quotations, the reader is conditioned to turn to the Old Testament for context.

Matthew has demonstrated an insatiable desire to connect the reader to the development of the Old Testament. This is what led R. T. France to well observe, "Nor can I believe that the Matthew to whom scriptural fulfillment was so important could have written 2:23 unless he was himself convinced that Jesus' residence in Nazareth really did in some way fulfill *the Old Testament*."[15] The confidence of this observation invites us to consider that Matthew wants the reader to expand the investigation beyond a specific verse and its surrounding context to instead consider the development of the entire Old Testament.

Verse 23 draws the reader's attention to the town of "Nazareth" (Ναζαρέτ) and Jesus' identity as a "Nazarene" (Ναζωραῖος). While the opinions on the significance of Matthew's connecting the place with the identity are voluminous, three primary options seem to be the majority views. First, some believe that Jesus' identity is associated with the Nazarite vow of Numbers 6:1-21, seeing a typological connection with Samson.[16] Their emphasis is on the Greek term Ναζωραῖος occurring in the LXX only in Judges 13 in reference to Samson. Second, some conclude that the historical context for Nazareth in

[14] Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 80, Logos Bible Software.

[15] France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2," 130, emphasis added.

[16] France provides a short list of scholars who subscribe to this opinion. France*, The Gospel of Matthew*, 93n14.

Jesus' day is thought to be the driving force behind Matthew's connection. Vlach recognizes, "Nazareth did not have a good reputation. It hosted a Roman garrison, and Jews who lived there were at times viewed as traitors for associating with the enemy. Being called a 'Nazarene' could be a term of derision, like being labeled a 'hillbilly' today."[17] The third option is the potential wordplay between the Greek name for the town and the consonants found in the Hebrew term for branch (נֵצֶר - *neser*). This would tie Jesus back to the prophecy concerning the promised future branch in Isaiah 11:1—a passage that extends back and forward to trace the redemptive plan of God most vividly.

To which of these options should the reader turn with great confidence? The answer is difficult, but one option seems less likely than the other two. Despite Davies and Allison emphasizing the "holiness" of the one who committed to the Nazarite vow,[18] the connection between Jesus and Samson does not seem to be in view. There is certainly barrenness with Samson's mother, but there is no evidence she was a virgin. France adds that Samson's "notoriously amoral lifestyle is not an attractive option as a type of the Messiah."[19] While the other two options carry their own challenges, they do seem the most consistent considering the preceding narrative as well as Matthew's literary strategy. The challenges and details of these options will be considered further in the analysis of Matthew 2:23. However, the connection with the Davidic branch and the unexpected rise of the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament are, at a minimum, consistent with Matthew's interpretive modeling up to this point.

The Development of the Messiah as Branch

Two agricultural terms seem to interchange with each other throughout the prophets in reference to God's plan for His people. The terms are *semah* (צֶמַח) and *neser*

[17] Vlach, *The Old in the New*, 173.

[18] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 276-77.

[19] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 93.

(נֵצֶר), both translated "branch" in passages, and translators have concluded many of these to be clear Messianic references. The former occurs in passages such as Jeremiah 23:5: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."[20] One passage that connects *neser* with Messiah is Isaiah 11:1: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." These two verses connect the agricultural branch to the line of David. The foundation for recognizing the theme of David, the son of God, and God's redemptive plan has been laid earlier in this project.

Despite Matthew writing in Greek, the predominately Jewish audience would have likely recognized the embedded wordplay. Gundry observes, "Since Nazareth does not appear in the OT, we must look for a subtle connection between the NT place-name and an OT messianic title."[21] Gundry also reminds the reader of Matthew's Hebrew wordplays in Matthew 1:17, 21:

> Undeterred by his Greek medium, Matthew has already treated us to Hebrew wordplays on the numerical value of the name "David" and on the name "Jesus" (1:17, 21). In the latter, the use of Ps 130:8 depended on an association of פָּדָה, "redeem," with a word of similar meaning, viz., יָשַׁע, "save" in the hiphil. Furthermore, not only do the righteousness and servanthood of the messianic Branch cater to Matthew's interests. So also does its sprouting like a shoot out of the stump of David's dynasty (see υἱὸς Δαυίδ in the Greek Index for the Davidic Christology of Matthew). Its easy rejection (cf. Isa 14:19: "like a rejected branch"—though not messianic) agrees with the obscurity of Nazareth and the theme of Jesus' rejection in Matthew.[22]

These literary tools and interpretive training draw the attention of the reader squarely on the most vivid "branch" prophecy of the Old Testament: Isaiah 11:1. There, the hope of the branch from Jesse's roots stands in stark contrast to the strong "trees" of Judah's enemies, specifically Assyria (cf. Isa 2:13). Despite God's promise that these

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[20] Other passages with clear messianic references include Jer 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12. Other passages may also connect *semah* with Messiah, but these are the most obvious.

[21] Gundry, *Matthew*, 40.

[22] Gundry, *Matthew*, 40.

enemies will be reduced into "smoldering stumps" (7:4), the threat still existed. Isaiah had already prophesied that Judah's "oak" (1:30) would be burned (1:31). Yet, the hope for Judah would come in the form of a "shoot from the stump of Jesse" and a "branch from his roots" (11:1). The prophet provides more detail in verse 2: "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."

The idea of "wisdom" connects significantly with the flow of Matthew's narrative. Schreiner observes,

> Jesus is the wise king from the line of David to whom wise men come and give their gifts. Now he is also the "branch place" and the "branch person" because the branch is the descendant of David. In the OT, this branch is especially associated with wisdom. The branch shall "deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jer. 23:5). The branch "shall build the temple of the Lord" (Zech. 6:12), like the action of wise Solomon. The branch shall have "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding" resting on him (Isa. 11:2).[23]

This seems to connect beautifully with the way Matthew has been connecting the details of Jesus' early life with the references and events of the Old Testament. Combine that with the historical context of naming cities after the Jews in exile returned to their homeland. Hamilton assists,

> Eusebius connects the villages of Nazareth and Cochaba to those who were able to trace their Davidic descent (*Hist. eccl.* 1.7.14), which might indicate that families of the line of David had used words like "branch" (נֵצֶר) (Isa. 11:1) and "star" (Aramaic, כּוֹכְבָא) (Num. 24:17) to name their villages because of the messianic significance of these terms.[24]

In Matthew's wordplay of Nazarene with Nazareth, he draws attention to the "branch" aspect of Jesus that connects Him with God's redemptive plan for human history. The literary device should move the reader not only to Isaiah 11:1 and the other branch passages but to the Genesis through Revelation flow of God's big story. In doing so, he not only moves the reader to see how this event fits within the big story of Scripture but

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[23] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 81.

[24] James M. Hamilton, Jr., "'The Virgin Will Conceive': Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 245-46, Logos Bible Software.

also read back and forth throughout all of Scripture to appreciate Jesus as the branch, once again exercising the aspects of biblical theology and full bloom aspect.

The Development of the Unexpected Nature of Messiah

It is not possible to dogmatically conclude Matthew intended wordplay between the Greek form of Nazarene and the Hebrew term *neser*. However, the historical context of the Nazareth of Jesus' day offers additional insight. Blomberg summarizes this historical context: "'Nazarene' was a slang or idiomatic term for an individual from a very remote or obscure place . . . This interpretation would fit well with the attitude toward Nazareth reflected in John 1:46 and is perhaps to be preferred in light of the context of Matt 2."[25] The many royal overtones of the messianic prophecies would not leave the average Jew expecting their king to grow up in a town so despised.

While the average Jew may not expect this, a discerning Jew may have. Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah will enter Jerusalem in an unexpected way, "humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (9:9). Isaiah describes the messianic suffering servant as one who "he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa 53:2). Beyond these verses, the fact that the Messiah would suffer, as Isaiah 52-53 conveys, further demonstrates the unexpected nature of Messiah. Sticking with the Isaiah 53 passage, the imagery of the messianic plant growing up "out of dry ground" seems to further highlight what France calls "the unexpectedness of the servant's origins."[26]

Whether the wordplay between Nazarene and *neser* or the unexpected origins and nature of the prophesied Messiah, Matthew clearly seems to be drawing the reader to take into consideration the broader scriptural themes of the Old Testament. Both options seem to be consistent with not only the flow of Matthew's narrative but also the

[25] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 70.

[26] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 95.

interpretive training he is providing. In following these options, we are, once again, trained to apply biblical theology and full bloom aspects to interpreting the passage at hand. Doing so has provided treasured vistas of Christ throughout redemptive history. From this Old Testament analysis, we are ready to dig into Matthew 2:23.

Applying the Guardrails to Matthew 2:23

As attention returns to the Matthean passage, Professor Matthew has trained the student of interpretation to follow a consistent process to arrive at his intended destination. However, verse 23 seems to contradict—or at least violate—the already established process. France anticipates the natural argument: "By alleging a quotation which is not in fact found anywhere in the Old Testament, is he not in fact giving the game away at the very point where he needs to play his strongest card?"[27] Considering the previous three fulfillment quotations, the opposite is true. Matthew has trained us to expect the unexpected. For us it may be unexpected, but it is very much intentionally designed by the professor. To see this, we must grab our micro and macro lenses.

Matthew 2:23: The Micro Lenses

The historical aspect, once again, transports the modern reader into the original context. Traveling to "the district of Galilee" (τὰ μέρη τῆς Γαλιλαίας), Joseph would settle his family outside of the jurisdiction of cruel Archelaus. The landing point was the "city called Nazareth" (πόλιν λεγομένην ⸀Ναζαρέτ). The historical context of Nazareth[28] has been briefly discussed, but a more in-depth analysis will prove fruitful.

[27] France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2," 129. France does not agree with this argument but sets it up as the "natural" argument that arises from Matthew's decision to provide a fulfillment quotation without a clear Old Testament citation.

[28] Grant Osborne acknowledges scholarly debate as to the existence of Nazareth in the time of Jesus. He provides a very convincing, though brief, argument to demonstrate that the city existed. Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 102n27, Logos Bible Software.

Compared to other towns in the region, Nazareth had its challenges. First, it did not have Old Testament connections. France observes that "it probably came into existence late in the OT period."[29] The tribal heritage and history of towns in Israel were very important not only to the citizens of the town but also to the nation itself. This may account for the observation by Michael Wilkins that the founders "gave the settlement a consciously messianic name, connecting the establishment of the town with the hope of the coming *neṣer* ('Branch') of Isaiah 11:1."[30] Second, the town was relatively small, with a population of approximately 480 people.[31] Third, the history of the region likely contributed to the population, including many Gentiles. Schreiner explains, "It had a more mixed population (ever since the Assyrian conquest in the eighth century BCE). It is even known as the district of the gentiles (Isa. 9:1)."[32] Fourth, there appeared to be a popular cultural stigma of Nazareth. In response to Philip's declaration that he had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45-46) This may have been largely impacted by the perception of Nazareth as consisting of an "uncultivated rural population."[33]

Matthew uses Joseph's settling in Nazareth as the springboard for his fulfillment formula, "so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled" (ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν). The fulfillment quotation contains three significant departures from the prior formulas. First, the preposition ἵνα is replaced by ὅπως. While significance in the word change is not something most scholars address, Leon Morris sees the exchange

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[29] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 91.

[30] Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 116, Logos Bible Software.

[31] James F. Strange, "Nazareth (Place)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1050, Logos Bible Software.

[32] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 81. He provides several other informative factors that could have also contributed to the stigma.

[33] R. H. Mounce, "Nazareth," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 500, Logos Bible Software.

as Matthew's intention to "bring out the sense of purpose."[34] Gundry also adds that the preposition is used as "a conjunction that in introductions to fulfilled prophecies Matthew reserves for citations climaxing a series of items."[35] This seems to recognize this final quotation as an intentional climax of Matthew's purposes in chapters 1 and 2. The second and third departures are related. He uses the plural form of "prophets" (προφητῶν) and introduces the quotation by the conjunction ὅτι instead of the expected participle λέγοντος. Osborne follows a majority of scholars by recognizing that Matthew is "making the actual quote an indirect one."[36]

The term "Nazarene" (Ναζωραῖος) serves as a bridge between the historical and grammatical aspects. France observes, "Whether or not Ναζωραῖος originated as a term for one from Nazareth, by the time of Matthew it had clearly acquired this connotation."[37] This is also evident from Acts 24:5: "For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἱρέσεως).

The grammatical analysis of Nazarene and Nazareth draws attention to the root *naza*, which phonetically corresponds to the Hebrew term *neser* (נֵצֶר) that is translated "branch." Some argue against Matthew's wordplay, citing the lack of correspondence

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[34] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 49n67, Logos Bible Software.

[35] Gundry, *Matthew*, 39.

[36] Osborne, *Matthew*, 102; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 91; Gundry, *Matthew*, 39; Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 49; Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 70. Logos Bible Software; D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 97, Logos Bible Software; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 275; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 40, Logos Bible Software; Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 116-18, Logos Bible Software; Vlach, *The Old in the New*, 174.

[37] France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2," 130.

between the consonants in the Greek and Hebrew languages.[38] However, Osborne appears to effectively connect the original author and audience: "The primary problem of this is the fact that this only works in Hebrew, but writing for a Jewish Christian audience, Matthew could expect his readers to catch the wordplay."[39] The "branch" wordplay for a Christian Jewish audience would turn their attention to the development of the anointed "branch" throughout the Old Testament.

The connection with the messianic development of the Old Testament is offset by the verb Matthew uses in conjunction with the term Nazarene, "He would be called" (κληθήσεται). I agree with France's conclusion: "This is about derogatory name-calling."[40] He cites Matthew 26:7: "And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.'" The term is the same found in 2:23, Ναζωραῖος, and appears to convey a note of disdain. The history and grammar combine to communicate both the sense of Davidic imagery as well as humble origins. With this foundation, the macro lenses will bring Matthew's purpose into full bloom.

Matthew 2:23: The Macro Lenses

Matthew has trained the reader to interpret Scripture the way his rabbi, Jesus, trained him. This final fulfillment quotation seems to provide a final exam intended to reveal whether the student has mastered the skill. The unique grammar and departure from the previous formulas combine with the historical context of Nazareth to stretch both the ancient and modern readers. Many modern readers struggle with interpreting this passage influenced greatly by their own presuppositions, especially those who draw conclusions

[38] It should be noted that France does not see Matthew using wordplay here. This is interesting, since this project has mostly walked in step with France. However, this reminds us that human interpreters are limited and should approach interpreting the Bible with humility. It also reinforces the importance of the four guardrails proposed in this project.

[39] Osborne, *Matthew*, 102n30.

[40] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 94.

using only the micro lenses. In doing so, they often fall into the trap Schreiner describes as "the assumption that Matthew can only allude to intertexts in an explicit way."[41] Doing so reveals the strong influence of modern interpretation that the guardrails seek to overcome. Schreiner adds, "Few throughout history have read the Bible in such a way."[42] Biblical theology and full bloom aspects stretch the modern reader to understand the Bible in its own terms. These lenses will guide us to understand the significance of Matthew's fulfillment quotation.

Matthew's use of "prophets" (προφητῶν) reminds the reader that the scene of Jesus' life fits strategically within the big story; a story that corresponds to history and escalates. One prophet that refers to the future Messiah as "branch" is Jeremiah. Abner Chou sees Jeremiah as a key thread Matthew uses in these opening chapters to connect the big story: "It is interesting to see the overlapping and confirming contexts brought about by Matthew's use of various Old Testament texts. Jeremiah's context of Exodus to new Exodus confirms what we observed about Hosea."[43] The fact that Jeremiah identifies the one who will lead the new Exodus as the branch connects Matthew's wordplay to Jeremiah's prophetic development.[44]

> Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness." (Jer 23:5-6)

Matthew's quotation from Jeremiah in 2:18 sets the stage for the big story connection between the citizen of Nazareth and the escalating plan of redemptive history. Carson

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[41] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 137n15.

[42] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 137n15.

[43] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 138n65, Logos Bible Software.

[44] The terms used in Jeremiah and Isaiah for *branch* are different. However, they are recognized as synonyms in Hebrew. Wilkins, *Matthew*, 117.

summarizes, “The heir to David’s throne has come, the Exile is over, the true Son of God has arrived, and he will introduce the new covenant (26:28) promised by Jeremiah.”[45]

The connection of branch to Messiah is also found in Isaiah 11:1, a passage that Wilkins recognizes as “one of the most popular texts of Davidic messianism in early Judaism.”[46] In addition to this likely influencing the naming of the town by the settlers, Matthew likely leveraged this popular passage with his wordplay to draw the readers to Isaiah’s prophecy and development of Messiah with redemptive history. Isaiah uses the term again in 60:21: “Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch (נֵצֶר) of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.” Isaiah’s use is strategically “demonstrating the solidarity of the remnant with the promised Branch of Isaiah 11:1.”[47] It would seem Davies and Allison hit the center of Matthew’s instructional point: “Jesus culminates Israel’s history in chapter 1, in chapter 2 he repeats it.”[48]

This close connection between Jesus and ethnic Israel aligns with the understanding of the Jews at the time of Jesus’ ministry. Wilkins observes that, in the Qumran community, “‘Branch of David’ became a favorite appellation for the expected Messiah.”[49] The linking of *neser* and *semah* in Jewish literature also advances the understanding that the Jews of Jesus’ day connected the Messianic expectations of 2 Samuel 7:12-14 with the Branch of David as well as messianic prophecies such as Genesis 49:10.[50] Matthew seems to connect all of these concepts by drawing the reader to the fulfillment of what the prophets spoke throughout the entire Old Testament.

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[45] Carson, *Matthew*, 95.

[46] Wilkins, *Matthew*, 117.

[47] Wilkins, *Matthew*, 117.

[48] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 282.

[49] Wilkins, *Matthew*, 117.

[50] Wilkins, *Matthew*, 117.

The connection between Jesus and Israel is further developed by recognizing that the promised Branch has just been in exile in Egypt. However, His return was not to the city of David, Bethlehem, or the royal city of Jerusalem but rather the "branch town" and all the stigma associated with it. With Matthew's masterful development, this should not come as a surprise. Schreiner explains that the reader should understand that "Jesus must first be exiled"[51] before He can take His rightful place and reign.

Seeing the branch connection in Matthew 2:23 to the development of redemptive history in the Old Testament draws on historical correspondence and escalation. It reminds us that Matthew is not demonstrating a fulfillment of predictive prophecy but instead displaying the majestic beauty of the understanding produced by interpreting this passage with micro and macro lenses. Jesus is the Righteous Branch who will lead His people out of their ultimate bondage of sin and the sin-cursed creation in the new Exodus. The path of His early life also parallels the path of Israel, including exile to the unexpected branch town of Nazareth. It is this development that sets up a backward and forward reading of Scripture that will also prove immensely practical for the church today.

The full bloom aspect of this passage illuminates the role of Israel, Jesus, and the church. Benjamin Gladd well summarizes, "The first Gospel readily connects Jesus' genealogy, birth, journey to Egypt, baptism, and ministry to the nation of Israel."[52] Understanding the role of Israel in redemptive history serves as a source of conflict throughout history. Glimpses of God's big story plan occurred throughout the Old Testament. Passages such as Isaiah 25:6-7 reveal that God's people include representatives from every nation: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples,

[51] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 82.

[52] Benjamin Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 80, Logos Bible Software.

the veil that is spread over all nations." However, the focus on Israel tempted the people and the leaders to see their role as central rather than the purpose for which they were intended.

In a sense, Israel's purpose, like Adam's and Solomon's, was to serve as a shadow pointing the substance that is Christ: "These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col 2:17). Christ, then, serves as the revealed epicenter of redemptive history. His people are those identified not by ethnicity or religious ceremony but instead by faith in Christ and His dwelling with them. How does this broad application flow out of Matthew 2:23? Gundry begins the answer: "The Davidic origin of the Branch provides a fitting capstone to Matthew's version of Jesus' nativity, which began with a reference to 'Jesus Christ the son of David' (1:1; cf. Rev 22:16). Thus Matthew marries phonetics with Christology."[53]

As the capstone, the entire structure of chapters 1 and 2 should be reviewed in light of the fulfillment quotations. Gladd assists, "As the 'firstborn son' of God, the nation of Israel came out of Egypt, but they disobeyed and incurred judgment. Jesus repeats the pattern by traveling out of Egypt, even as a child."[54] More than demonstrating patterns, Jesus is displayed as the true Israel. This designation seems to be one that Jesus promoted Himself. France explains, "The Synoptic Gospels give some evidence of a tendency by Jesus to apply to *himself*, without further explanation, Old Testament texts which originally referred to *Israel*."[55]

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[53] Gundry, *Matthew*, 40.

[54] Gladd, *From Adam and Israel to the Church*, 80.

[55] R. T. France, "Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel: A Study of the Teaching of Jesus," *Tyndale Bulletin* 26 (1975): 67, Logos Bible Software. France includes texts such as the Deut 6-8 passages from the temptation account of Matt 4, which is significant in that it follows the declaration by the Father that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God (3:17), a designation already recognized as referring to Israel (2:15). He also includes Hos 6:2 and the promise of a third day restoration for Israel that Jesus applied to Himself and His resurrection (Matt 12:40; cf. Luke 18:31-33; Mark 8:31). One additional passage would be Ps 118, specifically v. 22 (Mark 12:10-12) and v. 26 (Matt 23:39).

I must acknowledge that such conclusions are not without their challenges. France adds, "The evidence that Jesus regarded himself as the true Israel is not overwhelming."[56] This has been the consistent tenor of this project. The gaps between the original context and the modern reader require humility and charity as the guardrails are applied to biblical interpretation. However, these conclusions regarding Jesus and Israel do seem to align with the flow of redemptive history and the instruction Matthew's fulfillment quotations provide. It moves passages from categories of "controversial" or "impossible to understand" to developments that connect consistently not only with the past but also later biblical texts throughout the New Testament. The conclusions of Jesus succeeding where Israel failed, thus establishing Himself as the substance to which their shadow points, make sense of these difficult fulfillment quotations. France adds that such an idea "is needed to do justice to the use of the Old Testament . . . if we are not to credit Jesus with a blithe unconcern for the context and original meaning of the passages he referred to."[57]

The illumination provided by these two chapters and the culmination of Matthew 2:23 provides three invaluable tools as we put our pencils down and prepare to leave Matthew's classroom. First, full bloom aspect has revealed not only the illumination but also the exercise to recognize that Scripture is not always a linear instruction. It provides beauty and majesty much in the way poetry contributes to beauty and majesty in literature. The exercise of reading forward *and* backward, the recognition that fulfillment is not always predictive, and the freedom to search for understanding from *beyond* the passage at hand without changing or discrediting the context of that passage works beautifully in concert as a gift. It also seems to better fit the interpretation of the original authors. Second, it provides a filter to process Israel and the church that seems to avoid presuppositions that conclude the church has replaced Israel or that ethnic Israel will,

[56] France, "Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel," 68.

[57] France, "Old Testament Prophecy and the Future of Israel," 68.

once again, play a central role in redemptive history. This seems to be the resolution of the struggle of the disciples to "understand" what Jesus taught them. It harmonizes with the resolutions to the Jew-Gentile conflicts of Acts, and it fits well with the writings of the apostles, including the point of Galatians. It moves topics such as the temple and the dwelling place of God from the shadow of the Old Testament to the substance of Christ and aligns with the theology of Paul that believers are the "God's temple" and that "God's Spirit dwells" in them (1 Cor 3:16). The culmination of redemptive history that God will dwell with His people in a place where there is no temple "for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev 21:22) seems to be the logical conclusion. Finally, full bloom aspect reminds the Christian that two simultaneous, even apparently contradictory, truths can coexist. In this Matthew 2:23 context, Jesus is *both* the rightful heir to the throne of David *and* suffers exile and humiliation. Just as the rest of the story informs the present context of Jesus' life, it also sets the confident expectations for the future. Blomberg summarizes this practical application beautifully: "Suffering, rejection, and even death are never God's final word for either Christ or his disciples. But they often must precede exaltation."[58]

Conclusion

This last of the fulfillment formula quotations of Matthew 1–2 has provided three treasures. First, it has equipped us to row further into the choppy waters of uncertainty than many who are tempted to stop so that we continue to grow familiar with the vessel of biblical interpretation modeled by Jesus and the biblical authors. Second, it has provided some strong biblical theology and full bloom aspects vistas that have grown our appreciation for the developing purpose Matthew has in planting Old Testament references along Jesus' early life. Third, it has reminded us that we are modern readers working to bridge tremendous gaps to accurately understand and apply God's Word.

[58] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 70.

Some passages offer a very short bridge and we arrive at the destination of understanding quickly and with great confidence. Others require an extensive journey that takes time, often presents twists and turns, and then offer a destination that reminds us of our humanity and desperate need for the Holy Spirit, the rest of Scripture, and humility.

This journey has provided similar but varying approaches to understanding the use of the Old Testament by the New. Despite covering only two chapters in Matthew's Gospel, the analysis has illuminated the fact that Matthew's approach appears to reflect Jesus' approach, which also aligns with the approach of the Old Testament authors. Schreiner summarizes the journey through Matthew 1–2 well. He says that Matthew "perceives the entire OT as one unified story that can be stitched together. The cornerstone on which this unity is built is the messiah. If it is not a unified story about Jesus, then his method would be madness. *As it stands, it is art*."[59]

This is the beauty of full bloom aspect. It reminds us that biblical interpretation reveals art. Art reveals the expertise and character of the author. This seems to be the objective of the ultimate Author, the Holy Spirit. Jesus instructed the disciples on the road to Emmaus to see Christ throughout the entire Old Testament (Luke 24:27). He instructed the religious leaders to do the same (John 5:39). He intends for His disciples to understand (Matt 13:51-52). He entrusted His disciples with the guardrails necessary for a consistent and faithful process that would accomplish this. It is Matthew who now entrusts this process to us.

[59] Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe*, 137, emphasis added.

CHAPTER 7

CULTIVATING FULL BLOOM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

This project turned out to be more academic than I had planned. I set out to create a resource that could easily translate to the local church. I believe that can still happen, and I am convinced more than ever before of the crucial value this content provides. Listening to a recent episode of "The Ben Shapiro Show" vividly illustrated this value.

The conservative social commentator engaged with Christian leaders who recently marched with Black Lives Matter supporters. He alleged that these Christians support the concept of reparations by their citing Scriptures, such as Exodus 34:6, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" as evidence that current generations of Americans must repent of the sins of their forefathers and endeavor to repay the descendants of those mistreated. Of course, this is not a project intended to investigate social justice or any other cultural hot topics. What is germane is Shapiro's response, "now *to my ears*, *what that sounds like* is God recognizing that history has consequences in the Bible."[1] I agree with Shapiro and disagree with the position he characterizes of the Christian leaders. His conclusion seems to be the point of that text rather than the alleged position of the leaders. However, is the best process to know what God's Word is actually saying "what that sounds like" to each of us? How do we determine who is right?

[1] Ben Shapiro, "Why A Leftist Just Yelled at Tucker Carlson in Front of His Child," *The Ben Shapiro Show*, Episode 1,304, Monday, July 26, 2021, https://app.podscribe.ai/episode/73863255, emphasis added.

This question echoes across many landmarks of my local church experience nearing a half-century. Most of the churches I have attended, ranging from a handful of adults sitting on folding chairs in a living room to a multi-campus ministry numbering in the tens of thousands, have all agreed that the Bible is the foundation for absolute truth that must guide thinking, speaking, and behavior for all Christians. What I have found through the years is that there are a lot of conclusions drawn from the same Book that disagree with each other. How do we determine who is right?

It is not just the local church or professing Christians. During this project, I have heard presidential candidates, two Presidents, news commentators, Hollywood actors, professional athletes, and social influencers use the Bible to support their own convictions—and expect those convictions to bolster their being right and those who disagree being wrong. How do we determine who is right?

In Kansas City, some friends and many acquaintances attend the largest United Methodist church in the world. The pastor of this church teaches that sections of the Bible are not inspired by God and that homosexual lifestyles are not at odds with God's design. This has greatly influenced and confused many professing Christians. They hear from our church the exact opposite of this pastor's teaching and have asked me directly, "How do we determine who is right?"

My Story . . . On Repeat

I remember asking these questions at an early age. Cherished Sunday school teachers who had invested in my life for years taught me that the Bible tells me that Jesus loves me and that He lets humans choose Him or reject Him. Later, mentors showed me verses that stated that no one chooses God on their own (Rom 3:10-12) and that He predestined those who would believe (Eph 1:4-5). I grew up in a church that valued God's Word and also their love for Israel! They belted out hymns that anticipated the rapture of the church and made me scurry into my parents' arms with stories about the tribulation, hoping to "scare" me into "making a decision for Christ."

As I grew in my love for God's Word, I also found the varying beliefs of people important to my life confusing. By God's grace, this confusion did not repel me from God's Word but, like the Bereans, challenged me to study it more. I was introduced to the formal practice of biblical interpretation by a family friend, Pastor John MacArthur. As I listened to him, he not only taught me the passage from which he was preaching but also equipped me with tools to study the text myself. I realized quickly that the approach he used was often referred to as historical-grammatical hermeneutics.[2]

I learned that the historical context and original language grammar of the Bible was crucial for understanding God's Word accurately. I was hooked! I asked for an English-Interlinear Bible and *Strong's Concordance* for Christmas as a middle schooler. However, I quickly realized that some Hebrew and Greek terms have multiple meanings. Undaunted, I forged ahead, learning more about biblical Greek and adding resources such as Bible background dictionaries and encyclopedias. I would wrestle with the texts for a bit but then quickly grab my study Bible or commentaries and iron out the wrinkles of my understanding, bolstered by the convictions of pillars of the faith, such as John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, and Al Mohler.

Attending a conference for church leaders, I experienced a fork in the road. Flanked by men I held in high regard, MacArthur made a dogmatic statement about an end times conviction he held with a session entitled, "Why Every Self-Respecting Calvinist is Premillennial." I saw the reaction of the other men and began reading comments on social media. All these men held a high view of Scripture, agreed on the gospel, and had faithfully proclaimed God's Word for decades. Yet, in this statement, MacArthur fired a shot across the bow that rattled me. I had spent years building an understanding of God's Word equipped by these godly preachers, but I struggled to land on a conviction myself in several areas of theology. Should not a historical-grammatical hermeneutic bring

[2] This approach is often referred to with an addition, "*literal* historical grammatical hermeneutics."

everyone to the same conclusions? This question is often what moves church members and leaders to conclude such tensions are either to be left unresolved or that they should simply defer to these other theological giants, allowing for Christians to "agree to disagree."

Yet, as I read the Old and New Testaments, the personal study of God's Word is at the epicenter of those on whom God shines His favor. It is a "lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). It is "more to be desired than gold" (Ps 19:10). It is the tool of sanctification Jesus identified in His "High Priestly Prayer" (John 17:17). It is the resource by which humanity is equipped for everything they need for "life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). This seems to indicate that each Christian has a responsibility and privilege to study, understand, and live out God's Word like Ezra the scribe (Ezra 7:10).

I agree that there must be charity toward those who hold differing convictions. I also recognize that there are varying tiers of theological triage. However, Matthew models a path forward that promises spiritual nutrition, health, and—most importantly—more effective discipleship if we will recognize and exercise the additional interpretive tools he provides.

Taking Matthew's Full Bloom to the Local Church

I have teased this value to some Christian friends by sharing with them that I believe the interpretive guardrails provided by Matthew promise to equip every Christian with the tools they need to open any passage of Scripture and to be able to understand it with a high degree of accuracy and confidence. They immediately test me with books such as Leviticus or sections such as the genealogies. I respond with even greater enthusiasm with a resounding, "Yes! Those too!"

In a recent conversation with a new attendee to Ascend Church, I was told that his men's Bible study was currently studying the book of 1 Kings. I asked him how the study was going. His response was, "Fine. But there is so much repetition that it is hard to stay focused." I responded that this was because they were likely sticking with the crusty

outer layer of biblical interpretation and not digging to see the treasures below the surface. Such convictions have been misused by Bible teachers. In fact, I began this project by recognizing the valid warning of some not to "over-spiritualize" a Bible text. The value of the guardrails modeled by Matthew is both the discovery of spiritual truths that are faithful to the original context *and* assistance to the Bible reader of the ability to understand those passages in light of the big story of Scripture. How can this be achieved? Ascend Church will be ground zero for what I pray will be a shockwave of excitement, equipping, and effective application for faithful biblical interpretation. Let me briefly unpack this in two ways: three practical equipping stages and then a brief passage example.

The Full Bloom Boot Camp

I plan to start the application with a church-wide invitation to those in our church who want to get trained to grow in biblical interpretation through what I plan to call the full bloom boot camp. The benefit I plan to emphasize is that growth in biblical interpretation will produce growth in theology. A theological disciple is an equipped disciple; equipped to better love their spouse, shepherd their children, thrive in their singleness, steward their finances, work for their employer, manage their employees, and respond to shifts in culture. The list is seemingly endless.

The boot camp will be designed to lay the foundation for the four guardrails of biblical interpretation, highlighting the gaps that exist between the original authorship of Scripture and the modern reader. I will then walk them through the four fulfillment quotations of Matthew 1 and 2, allowing them to put the guardrails into action. A requirement for joining this boot camp is the willingness to lead or participate in a second generation of the boot camp. The benefit of this boot camp is that it will train them to read Scripture with the micro and macro lenses that Matthew learned from his rabbi, Jesus. It will also move them to see the importance of understanding Scripture the way Jesus

intended: connecting the dots of how the biblical facts fit together in a way that influences how we think, speak, and live this side of eternity.

The Full Bloom Field Training

The full bloom field training is designed to take the tools gained from the boot camp into the realm of personal Bible study and discipleship application. This is designed for those who have participated in the boot camp. It will provide two categories of application.

First, we will take some of the "even this, Pastor?" passages, such as Leviticus and genealogies and exercise the guardrails learned in the boot camp to understand the Bible in its own context, in light of completed revelation. Second, we will begin to recognize themes within the story of Scripture. These themes will include God's dwelling with His people, the Son of God, the Exodus, Salvation through Judgement, and the Covenants.

As we begin to exercise the resources gained from boot camp, the goal will be to grow the ability of these men to recognize how the Bible fits together. They will begin to move away from the stereotypical approach to Scripture that some areas should only be read by the experts, and some should be avoided all together. It is my expectation that both confidence in interpreting God's Word as well as excitement to teach it to others will be the practical outworking of this training.

The Full Bloom Assimilation

Throughout this training, I will be looking for individuals who can make this training an ongoing resource for our church. This final step in the full bloom training process will be an opportunity for these individuals as well as those who simply want to round out the training to assimilate what they have learned into the life of Ascend Church. Instead of a more formal approach of teaching and learning, it will lean more toward a "think tank" function.

I do not pretend to have all the answers. However, this approach of biblical interpretation was modeled by Christ and replicated by the authors of Scripture so that Christ followers for all generations could rightly divide God's Word. One of the realizations of rightly dividing God's Word is the importance of applying it (John 14:15; Matt 28:20). This think tank will be an opportunity to explore how biblical interpretation can be assimilated into our church in a way that impacts our church culture. From kids' ministry classrooms to student discipleship, to small groups, to conversations in the lobby, to equipping and strengthening leaders, and then ultimately lived out through church planting, biblical interpretation provides the foundational starting point to answering the question, "how do we determine who is right?" As the members of Ascend Church grow as theologians, they will grow in all areas of their lives up "into Him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15).

Passage Example

I briefly mentioned a passage that my esteemed professor, Michael Vlach, used to demonstrate the eschatological priority of Israel. Simeon's words are recorded in Luke 2:32: "A light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." What a glorious statement that must have been shocking to Jesus' young parents. Surely, a light for revelation and glory for Israel was something they could comprehend, though likely not completely, but what about "a light for revelation to the Gentiles"? Taken at face value, there is clear indication that God's redemptive plan would include both Jew and Gentile. However, does this statement serve to advance the dogmatic conclusion that a future restoration of ethnic Israel is certain?

This question plagued the disciples (Acts 1:6), fueled controversy in the early church (Acts 11; 15) and required entire letters to address it (Gal). It continues to be a debated topic—sometimes hotly—in evangelicalism today. I will leave my own conclusions on the matter for another context, but I offer full bloom aspect and the other

three guardrails of biblical interpretation as a starting point for understanding Simeon's words.

Simeon lived in the early days of Jesus' life. The prophetic connections by John the Baptist, the teaching of Rabbi Jesus, and the revelation provided by the disciples were not accessible to him. We must evaluate his statement with the full bloom of these additional sources. When we consider this statement with the light of passages such as Romans 9:6; Galatians 3:28; 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9; and Revelation 5:9-10, it moves us to consider that the plan of God for a people called by His name intended to extend beyond ethnic, social, and economic borders that would be identified exclusively by faith in Christ and God's presence dwelling with them. Doing so guides the reader by the big story and encourages reading backward and forward. This seems to be what Matthew modeled and serves the modern reader to help avoid modern presuppositions and understand the Bible in its own context. The majesty of the tapestry that results will grow our wonder and awe in a way that cannot help but spur greater study and greater mission, all to the glory of God.

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ABSTRACT

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AND THE VALUE OF "FULL BLOOM ASPECT" FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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Matthew's first two chapters provide fertile ground for debate surrounding his four fulfillment quotations. In an age when biblical interpretation often defaults to the authority of the reader or leans heavily on presuppositional systems, Matthew provides tools for biblical interpretation in these quotations with a goal of demonstrating the interpretive method Jesus taught His disciples. He invites the reader to learn and practice them as well. The journey of discovery reinforces tried and true interpretive aspects such as historical and grammatical contexts. It also introduces, for some, the aspect of biblical theology, which reminds the reader that every passage of Scripture is a scene in a larger story. The real discovery is full bloom aspect—the exercise of using the illumination of the progression of revelation to shine light on earlier passages, revealing the beauty intended by the Author of Scripture.

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