

**A FRESH LOOK AT THE FULFILLMENT
PASSAGES & PATTERNS OF MATTHEW
*THROUGH THE EYES OF A 1ST CENTURY JEWISH DISCIPLE***

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the unique use of the fulfillment patterns and passages found in, and in many cases unique to the Gospel of Matthew. Although there are several commentaries regarding this Gospel, the Jewish theme of fulfillment is not necessarily emphasized, therefore the full beauty and greatness of Matthew's Messiah is often veiled.

The introductory chapter of this thesis will present the research problem or inquiry regarding Matthew's fulfillment theme. The next section of chapter 1 will note the Research Thesis Statement, Delimitations of the Research Topic, Focus of Research Detail, Key Terminology and Research Assumptions. Lastly and very importantly, chapter 1 will revisit the research problem, and how we came by the problem initially, by reviewing church history in order to understand how The Gospel of Matthew's Jewish perspective was quickly set aside and remained veiled through the centuries.

Chapter 2 will introduce and reflect upon three key elements that aid in unlocking Matthew's perspective. These include: Matthew's Jewish Background, Messiah's Crucial Statement found in Matthew 5:17, and lastly the nature of Matthews' fulfillment themes.

Chapter 3 will move into the text of Matthew's Gospel and will begin examination of Matthew's use of the fulfillment passages and patterns. Chapters 4-7 will cover the remainder of the Gospel. The examination will consider both the obvious and obscure texts of Matthew. The thesis chapters are broken down according to this writer's view of the overall Messianic themes of Matthew, rather than just simply using the underlying fulfillment themes which are the main focus of this thesis.

Chapter 8 will be the conclusion of this thesis. This chapter will explore both the concluding implications of this study, and the concluding applications of this study.

It should be noted that early in this thesis, e.g., with the establishment of the main arguments and Matthew's early fulfillment texts, source references were more heavily relied upon; more so than later in this thesis. Reasons being: number one, with the formulation of the argument for the need of a 1st century Jewish perspective it was necessary to seriously consider the reliable views of others. Number two, moving into the latter chapters of Matthew, other authors appear to lose sight of the fulfillment parallels and patterns that Matthew continues to reveal, allowing this author to further develop these thoughts in light of Matthew's continued employment of them.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

An Introduction to the Research Problem

The Gospel of Matthew presents the reader with a very unique perspective and understanding of Israel's Promised Messiah. Scholars would agree that the First Gospel is vastly Jewish in background, style, origin and understanding; and has an important relationship to the Old Testament (OT) prophecies regarding Israel's Messiah. It is in this context that Matthew frequently used the term *fulfillment* in relation to these OT prophetic texts. He desired to prove that Jesus had met and completed all the requirements of Israel's promised Messiah King; while demonstrating the unique life of Christ and His kingdom. Could all the OT prophecies found in the Law and Prophets that referred to Messiah and that were so beautifully fulfilled in detail by this Jesus simply be coincidence? According to Matthew, certainly not; Matthew the disciple viewed his Messiah as the One who brought about a beautifully rich fulfillment of these OT prophetic texts. Stott reinforces this thematic emphasis in Matthew; "What then is the major feature of Jesus according to Matthew? It can be stated in one word: *fulfillment*."¹ Because, in the fulfillment passages there appears to be a much richer, much deeper and even higher meaning underneath Matthew's use of the *fulfillment* concept. R. T. France observes, "It is thus for Matthew not only the explicitly predictive portions of the OT that can be seen as 'fulfilled' in Jesus, but also its historical characters, its narratives, and its cultic patterns, even the law itself."²

Consider Matthew's early use of these prophetic fulfillments as the Messiah's life beautifully paralleled and was patterned after that of His chosen people. His Messiah identified with Israel in His birth (1:18-25). In His growing up; bondage and release from Egypt (2:13-15). As well as in sorrow and suffering by persecution and massacre (2:16-18); and His call from obscurity and lowliness as with Israel (Nazarene, 2:23). Are these fulfillment texts mere coincidences? Or did Matthew have a clear objective? It could be accurately concluded that one of the main purposes of Matthew's Gospel was to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the one and only true Messiah of Israel in every way possible. His life was one that not only beautifully patterned Israel's history, but also fulfilled the perfect servant role that Israel had failed to accomplish. His Messiah was the perfect servant spoken of in Isaiah (e.g. 42:1-4; 49:3-6) who would fulfill what Israel failed to do. It may be that in these fulfillment texts Matthew reveals to his readers a richer meaning of what true fulfillment means in the mind of a true 1st century Israelite as himself.

With this challenge in mind, the lack of understanding regarding Matthew's continual and sometimes obscure use of OT fulfillment texts and patterns and how they relate to his own Jewish people and Messiah may be due to the lack of an OT Jewish perspective and background regarding a New Testament interpretation of Matthew. According to the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS) the patristic writers in the early centuries were influenced by a replacement theology type mindset which led to an anti-Semitic interpretation of biblical text thus ignoring the Jewishness of

¹ John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ*, (Downers Grove: IVP Book, 2001), 23.

² R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 11.

the biblical text. “The patristic writers are perceived by some to be incurably anti-Semitic or misogynous or both... it is my view that modern racial anti-Semitism was not in the minds of the ancient Christian writers [E.g. Matthew].”³ The ACCS also identifies another problem that has led to a lack of Jewish interpretation of the Scripture and that is allegorical interpretation. “We notice immediately the frequent use of allegorical interpretation among our exegetes on Matthew.”⁴ The ACCS further states, “This method of interpretation spread with great success throughout the East and later in the West... Augustine also noted that readers and listeners would be more inclined to appreciate a concept if it was expressed in a veiled fashion through the use of allegory rather than through a direct, nonallegorical manner.”⁵ It is this author’s contention that these anti-Semitic tendencies certainly led to, or enhanced the popularity of *allegory* as a model of interpretation of the Scripture, which has caused great harm in regards to the understanding of the Jewishness of the Scriptures, including Matthew and Matthew’s people, Israel.

Research Thesis Statement

Matthew’s use of the fulfillment and identity passages and patterns in relation to the OT prophetic texts reveal a depth of Jewish knowledge and understanding regarding his Messiah’s unique life and intertwined relationship with Israel, not easily recognized due to allegorical interpretive influences, let alone a far removed modern day Gentile perspective.

Delimitations of the Research Topic

The primary focus of this study is the Gospel of Matthew; the Gospel of Mark, Luke and John may be reflected upon; but essentially this study is delimited to the Gospel of Matthew. It is the Gospel of Matthew and his use of OT texts and references that will be considered in relation to Israel and her Messiah; this study is delimited to the OT texts and references that Matthew references. In light of the above, in the narrowest sense, this study is delimited to Matthew’s use of the fulfillment passages and patterns as it connects with the Jewish fulfillment/identity theme or pattern that Matthew reveals to his readers.

Focus of Research Detail

The primary focus of the research is to expose the depth of Jewish understanding, backgrounds and purpose regarding Matthew’s fulfillment passages and patterns. The exploration of the Jewish backgrounds and their importance regarding the biblical interpretation of the specific terms and OT texts; (“In addition to explicit quotations, numerous illustrations and echoes of Scripture may be discerned in every part of the Gospel, roughly twice as often as in Mark, Luke, or John. Virtually every major theological emphasis of Matthew is reinforced with Old Testament support...”⁶) OT texts which relate to Matthew’s over all purpose as he documented his view of his Messiah.

³ Manlio Simonetti ed., Thomas C. Oden gen. ed., *Matthew 1-13 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, *New Testament 1a* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), xxv.

⁴ Simonetti, “Matthew 1-13,” xl.

⁵ Simonetti, “Matthew 1-13,” xli.

⁶ G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1.

Key Terminology

Fulfillment: The key term in this study of Matthew is *fulfillment*; Matthew commonly used this term in his texts, and yet in other texts he may not have used this specific term but assumed it's concept to be understood in the theme of the text.

Identity: A term or word not necessarily used but understood when relating to the unique relationship between biblical Israel and their Messiah.

Parallelism: A pattern of life that both Israel and Messiah had experienced.

Messiah: As Matthew the Gospel writer recognizes Him in relation to the Israelite people.

Law & prophets: A term which has created some controversy of interpretation, which will be reflected upon in light of the Gospel of Matthew.

Research Assumptions

Matthew, the tax collector and disciple of Christ, is the assumed author of this First Gospel. There will be an overview, but not necessarily any debate regarding the authorship. Matthew's Gospel will be considered very Jewish in nature, as it already has been mentioned. The thesis research will strive to prove this factual.

Definition of terms such as *fulfillment* will be assumed as commonly defined by accepted Bible dictionaries without further research regarding the Greek on this writer's part. The Messiah will be assumed to be the *fulfillment* of the OT prophetic texts, as this study will focus on the possibly richer fulfillment/identity theme as used by Matthew.

Church History's Relationship to the Research Problem

Development of the Problem

According to Davidson, "Allegorical exegesis was common in antiquity... and it had been widely applied... both by Jewish and Christian writers, especially Philo and Clement, whose concern was to find deeper meanings... fueled by Platonist assumptions that invisible, heavenly truth was necessarily represented in veiled or shadowy form in ordinary human language."⁷ Ferguson states this regarding Philo the Alexandrian Jew, "The allegorical method of interpreting sacred literature was adopted by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria... who harmonized the Mosaic religion with philosophy."⁸ Observably, Alexandria was a hotbed of such influences as Philo of Alexandria. His expertise in this form of interpretation had wide ranging affects, not only on the Gnostics of Alexandria but also the early church fathers and the Christian school (University) that was established in Alexandria, Egypt.

The Epistle of Barnabas is an excellent example of a late 1st or early 2nd century Apostolic Father who employed the allegorical interpretive method as a means of understanding the Scriptures. According to Roberts-Donaldson, "The writer of this epistle

⁷ Ivor J. Davidson, John D. Woodbridge and David F. Wright, eds. *The Birth of the Church, Volume One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 260, 261.

⁸ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1987), 357.

is supposed to have been an Alexandrian Jew of the times of Trajan and Hadrian.”⁹ Clement of Alexandria ascribed this epistle to Paul’s companion; while Origen considered it to rank among the inspired Scriptures. It’s obvious that in Alexandria, allegory was never questioned as a means of a proper hermeneutic, but embraced as the logical means of interpretation.

The Alexandrian church in its early stages was seriously influenced by true Gnostics who would eventually become labeled as the true heretics. “The principal figures in Alexandrian Christianity during the first two-thirds of the second century were more gnostic than catholic in their doctrine – Basilides, Isidore and Valentinus, for example.”¹⁰ It was later in the 2nd century when orthodoxy gained ground on the devout, extreme Gnostics.

Not until the last third of the [2nd] century do we have clear evidence that catholic Christianity establishing its predominance in Alexandria... with the...great catechetical school...leaders Pantaenus, Clement and Origen – and some of them were suspected (not without reason) of being unduly influenced by gnostic speculation.¹¹

It was these latter scholars who established a theological school in Alexandria, further strengthening its philosophical influence on the church. Even though these latter scholars were considered orthodox, they held on to a few Gnostic tendencies.

Pantaenus who was converted from Stoicism was the school’s first leader. His successors were Clement of Alexander, and Clement’s student, Origen. Under Origen, the school reached its pinnacle. The school produced many great writers such as, Africanus, Dionysius, Gregory, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Didymus. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem was also educated in this school under Clement. It was in this school of Alexandria where allegorical interpretation grew and thrived. The two great theologians who fueled these practices were Clement and Origen.

Clement never reached the heights of his successor, Origen. Clement claimed that Christians were the ‘true Gnostic,’ and it was such influence which propelled Origen to seek higher levels of spiritual understanding. And, “The most common means of achieving this [spiritual wisdom] is by use of allegory.”¹² It was no surprise that Origen became greater and more influential in the future church than his teacher. “What Origen did was to extend the range of allegories possibilities...”¹³ Would there be a limit to its interpretive uses, or its effect on those who were to come after him?

Continuation of the Problem

According to Freedman, Allegory was a means in which Alexandrian theologians also sought to preserve the integrity of the biblical text against accusations regarding seemingly irrational Scriptures. “Moreover, the allegorical method proved to be the best

⁹ www.earlychristianwritings.com/info/barnabas.html, (accessed April, 10, 2014).

¹⁰ F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 420.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Davidson, “The Birth of the Church,” 260.

¹³ Ibid., 261.

way of preserving the sacredness and integrity of the biblical text against any critique of the Bible's crude or apparently nonsensical passages... Thus, the allegorical method must be seen as serving a particular set of theological convictions."¹⁴ Sadly, the criticism of seemingly crude or misunderstood biblical texts could then be easily dismissed or ignored due to the seemingly higher allegorical nature of the mysterious biblical text itself. Yet, in supposedly preserving the sacredness of the biblical text through an allegorical interpretation of the nonsensical passages, the Jewish nature of the biblical text was easily neglected.

It did not take many years before allegorical interpretation became embedded in the Christian tradition. "The Hellenistic philosophical developments ... found their climax in Neoplatonism."¹⁵ Neoplatonism originated in the same thought world as Origen. "This philosophy [Neoplatonism] was the background of the work of the Cappadocians in the fourth century and through them influenced Greek Orthodox theology, and it was decisive in the intellectual development of Augustine and so through him had a great impact on the medieval Latin development."¹⁶ The Alexandrian tendencies of Origen and Neoplatonism now expanded into new territories in the west. "Eventually, the allegorical method developed into the leading approach to the Bible in the early Church, both East (Greek) and West (Latin), while the Antiochene approaches which promoted a more literal or historical reading of the Bible (such as Theodore's five books *Adversus Allegoricos*) disappeared altogether."¹⁷ Most scholars continued to embrace allegory as their means of interpreting Scripture, not only keeping this method alive, but also allowing it to become a part of the accepted traditions of the Orthodox Church.

Augustine, who was familiar with Philo's writings, never condemned Philo's use of allegory. He criticized Philo for not being Christ nor Church centered in his use of allegory. Through allegory Augustine synchronized Neo-Platonic tendencies with Christianity, just as Philo did with platonic thought in Judaism. Yet Augustine established a theological framework to the allegorical method more so than those before him. "Therefore, it would be wrong to count Augustine among the propagators of an uncritical allegorical method in biblical interpretation... [yet] the influence of Augustine on the later biblical exegesis of the Latin Middle Ages was enormous."¹⁸ As noted by Freedman, even though Augustine placed restriction on the use of allegory and more so than others before him, he did indeed employ its use which further secured its place in Orthodoxy by keeping it alive and significantly affecting the generations that followed.

Following Augustine, the early medieval development of biblical interpretation came from the monasteries. The 5th through 8th century monks' method of interpretation was dominated by allegorical methods. Cassiodore of the late 5th century is an example. "The commentaries that Cassiodore wrote... show him to be an heir of the allegorical

¹⁴ D. N. Freedman ed., *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary (ABD)*, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 434. Logos Bible Software.

¹⁵ Ferguson, "Backgrounds of Early Christianity," 391.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Freedman, "ABD, Vol. 3," 435.

¹⁸ Freedman, "ABD, Vol. 3," 436.

exegetical tradition.”¹⁹ Cassiodore also became head of a flourishing monastic community. Gregory the Great, of the late 6th and early 7th centuries, was another who was strongly influenced by Augustine. “[He] was a master of this approach to the Bible and one of the chief illustrators of the advantage of allegoresis.”²⁰ Not only did Gregory promote allegorical interpretation, he also promoted monasticism while advancing superstition and the security allegedly found in the church.

John Scotus Erigena of the 7th century is an example of philosophical speculation and syncretism. He was an individual thinker with a broad system of belief; “and his influence on the future lay mostly in his having introduced earlier Eastern Theology in the medieval West.”²¹ The 10th century witnessed Remigius’s gift to the church, which was allegorical interpretations of both Genesis and Psalms. Allegorical interpretation was so accepted during this time period that Isho bar Nun of the 12th century, was considered unique due to his more literal approach to interpreting the Scriptures. Russian theologians also embraced the allegorical method as witnessed in Cyril of Turov and Hilarion of Kiev among others. Also, Ibn Gabirol, a 12th century Jew, “... followed the tradition of Philo in bringing together Judaism and Platonic Philosophy...”²²

Yet during the reign of allegorical interpretation, scholasticism questioned and challenged the use of this interpretive method. But despite the challenge, Thomism could not prevail over the scholars’ affection for the allegorical method in the religious realm. “In fact, here allegorical readings increased even further and continued to challenge theologians to fight back.”²³

The Problem yet Today

Allegorical interpretation was alive and well heading into the 16th century. The Reformation would change some of that. “... the influence of Antiochene hermeneutics would eventually re-emerge, especially in the Protestant Reformation...”²⁴ Yet, despite the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church repeated the same error of the Sages centuries earlier. Traditions and practices usurped the authority of the Scripture. Sadly, the teachings and practices of allegorical interpretation with a strong Gentile perception of the Scriptures remain healthy to this present day within the Roman Catholic Church.

The Reformers brought a new look, but did not control the use of allegory. Gonzalez notes that the Reformed movement following Calvin became stale; “Christian faith is much more vital than the disquisitions of scholastic theologians or the speculations of philosophers... rediscover[y of] the profound personal implications of the Christian faith”²⁵ was the result. The major reactions were rationalism ultimately leading to liberal theology; and Pietism, ultimately leading to future Christian movements worldwide. But in either form, use of allegory may be traced throughout these various

¹⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Volume II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 70.

²⁰ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 3,” 437.

²¹ Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II,*” 137.

²² Gonzalez, “*A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II,*” 238.

²³ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 3,” 437.

²⁴ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 3,” 435.

²⁵ Gonzalez, “*A History of Christian Thought,*” 301.

historical church movements, but they were never to be as strong as in the pre-Reformation Catholic Church.

Allegorical interpretation of Scripture was able to survive throughout church history in one form or another, whether defined by these specific names or not. The 21st century Christian who desires to properly interpret the Scriptures in order to discover the original intent of the biblical authors must be honest with the past. Christianity has carried unneeded baggage of the past centuries into the present. Continual reevaluation and reflection upon biblical truth and practices must be foremost, not the philosophical teachings and doctrines of men; men who with good intentions have enabled unbiblical practices at times to prevail. As D.A. Carson astutely penned, “Moreover, Christian thinkers have often mistaken their own tradition for the sum of all truth... If deconstruction helps some to overthrow the hegemony of *mere* traditionalism, let us be thankful.”²⁶

Allegorical interpretation unfortunately became one of those traditions of men which can be easily traced back to the 1st century, as witnessed in Philo, the Alexandrian Jew who synchronized both Greek and Hebrew thought. That is why this author contends that allegorical interpretation was *not* developed as a proper method of interpretation, but as a means to synthesize two different worlds of thought. History proves that Philo fell into a trap when he placed Platonism alongside his Jewish Scriptures. The early church followed this same pattern in its use of allegory, and that method of interpretation is still being used today by various Bible scholars, whether the method of interpretation is called allegorical or metaphorical. 20th Century author Stanley Grenz, similar to the early church fathers insensitivity to the natural Jewish theme and fulfillment of Scripture states; “...Amillennialists conclude that promises originally given to Israel are fulfilled in the church. As a result of their attempt to apply this principle consistently, Amillennialists in contrast to premillennialists traditionally are unsympathetic to expectations of a widespread eschatological conversion of Israel.”²⁷ This mindset has not only promoted an indifference regarding a messianic future for Israel, but has actually promoted anti-Semitism throughout the history of the Church; again resulting in a lack or an ignoring of the Jewish emphasis of the Scripture. Again, that is why this author contends that the author of Matthew never intended his gospel to be allegorized, but to be taken literally as he traces the *literal, scriptural fulfillments* of his Messiah and Lord.

Fixing the Problem

In the modern church there are those who have strived to combat this error within the church by recalling and developing the early Antiochene method of interpretation; the *normal/literal, grammatical/historical* method of interpretation. That is the method of interpretation that this writer seeks to adhere to as well.

Normal meaning: the reading of the word in its normal usage, recognizing figures of speech and symbolism when evident, but not seeking a hidden or mystical meaning of the text through metaphor. Words are taken for their actual meanings whenever, and wherever possible. It does not allow the exegete to manipulate the text to support preconceptions or traditions.

²⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 101.

²⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 155.

Historical meaning: the exegete believes the original author had a real audience, and the word written was for his audience. The writings were written by real people as they were borne along by the Spirit of God; the readers were genuine people experiencing real life on planet earth. It recognizes the writer and recipients as will be recognized in the First Gospel.

Allegory, or spiritualizing, or the use of metaphor has allowed the original Jewishness of Scripture, the authors and the recipients to be forgotten, or in the least misrepresented or misunderstood. This literalist, in similar fashion as the Antiochene theologians, will strive to consistently employ the use of the *normal/literal, grammatical/historical* method of interpretation of the Scriptures. This should result in a natural flow of thought in the Gospel of Matthew that will be consistent with both the Old and New Testaments and within the letter itself. There will be no need to spiritualize or allegorize in order to make sense of difficult passages. Matthew *must* simply and literally be approached from a 1st century Jewish perspective. Messiah made sense to the Jewish Matthew, and he made sense to 1st century Jewish recipients.

This student of the Scripture believes that the *fulfillment theme of Matthew* is very Jewish, and will prove that the fulfillment passages and patterns of Matthew exalt the existence of the One perfect Jewish Messiah in His uniqueness, and His distinctive relationship to His covenant people Israel.

As argued above, the Jewish fulfillment theme of Matthew is in need of further exploration regarding Matthew's use of the fulfillment texts, patterns and themes. Because of the use of allegorical interpretation by the early church fathers and its effect on those today, the Jewishness and beauty of the Messiah has been neglected; Matthew never intended this to happen. This author desires to bring to the forefront the absolute genuineness and glory of Israel's true Son; Jesus Christ the Son of David!

CHAPTER 2 THE 3 COMPONENTS TO UNLOCKING MATTHEW'S JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

A. The Jewish Background of the First Gospel

The Date of Matthew's Gospel

Regarding the date of the First Gospel's writing, the two common views are that of an early writing (pre temple destruction) and that of a later writing (post temple destruction). The majority of conservative Bible scholars have placed the writing of the First Gospel somewhere around 50-58 AD, while liberal scholars prefer a later date. Although it is difficult to put an exact date on origination, evidence appears to favor the earlier conservative time frame. There are a number of reasons why the earlier date is preferred.

As will be contended in the following sections, Matthew has a strong Jewish emphasis similar to the earlier written epistle of James. The Book of Acts accounts for a great number of Jews who were saved and were part of the early church. These Jewish Christians had questions regarding their current condition without the presence of their Messiah, their messianic future and the fulfillment of the Jewish covenants (e.g. Acts 1:6; 3:19-21). Matthew sought to explain, confront and answer these Jewish related matters.

There is also reason to believe that Matthew was written before the destruction of Jerusalem since there is no mention of this national catastrophe in the gospel itself. Silence is not always the best argument, but with this Gospel's emphasis on Jewish concerns, it would be highly unlikely that Matthew would have ignored this extremely important life altering Jewish event, if indeed it had already taken place. And if that were the case, that would place the writing before 70 AD. (It is recognized by this writer that The Gospel of John was most likely written long after the destruction of 70 AD with no mention of the destruction by John. Yet, in light of that, John's audience was far more removed from Judaism and from Jerusalem itself, and from Matthew's Jewish audience).

Stanley D. Toussaint made reference to the emphasis on Peter in the First Gospel.²⁸ This fits with the prominence and authority that Peter had in the early days of the church (Acts, chapters 1-10), which had been revealed to him by Christ Himself (Matthew 16:19-21).

Lastly, the early church fathers advocated the early writing of the First Gospel. The history and background of Matthew was still fairly recent, and they being much closer to the apostles and the actual situation, obviously enabled them, in the very least, to make fairly accurate claims.

Yet in relationship to this author's work, whether one agrees with an early or later writing, it does not adversely affect the character of the fulfillment theme of Matthew. In either view, the Gospel remains very Jewish in nature, as will be demonstrated.

The Evidence of Matthew's Authorship

There is strong support both externally (evidence outside of the gospel) and internally (evidence within the gospel) that Matthew the tax collector is the author of the

²⁸ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1928), 17.

First Gospel. The external evidence that Matthew is the author of this gospel is found in tradition. The fact that the early church fathers gave it the heading of, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, attests to his authorship. Pseudo Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origin all agreed it was Matthew's gospel. Also, "Irenaeus, around the beginning of the third century, declared Matthew wrote his Gospel 'among the Hebrews.'"²⁹ Externally, the witness of these church fathers adds a fair amount of certainty that Matthew did pen the First Gospel.

Concerning the internal evidence; it is realized in the use of his words and descriptions. The First Gospel has more mention of coins than any of the other gospels. This would fit Matthew, for he was a tax collector. Matthew's humility reveals itself in the references concerning himself, for he consistently identifies himself as the *tax collector* (9:9; 10:3), one despised by the Jews (9:10, 11; 18:17). The other gospels do not emphasize Matthew as a lowly tax collector (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

Not only was it the use of certain words familiar to a tax collector, but themes as well; themes familiar to one in Matthew's position. The author of the First Gospel was unafraid of emphasizing the constant overall negative reaction or indifference of the Jewish leaders to the Messiah (2:2-6; 3:7; 12:14; 21:45, 46; 23:1-39). On the same note, the author also notes the positive roles and reactions of many sinners and Gentiles to the Messiah (2:1, 2; 12:18-21; 15:21-28; 28:19). Consider, in the First Gospel's genealogy of Messiah, the author made absolutely certain that he mentioned Rahab and Ruth, both Gentile women. This was not a common practice among the Jews, and the author had every opportunity to leave these women out of the account as he purposefully overlooked others in his ancestral account of the Messiah (His omissions appear purposeful, possibly for simplification of Messiah's genealogical account [1:17]). This being the case, could it be Matthew the tax collector who authored the First Gospel? Matthew the tax collector would have been a scourge and an outcast according to the Pharisaical mindset and affected Jewish community (5:46, 47; 9:11; 18:17), and would have no issue with recording and emphasizing the negative reactions of the leaders and the positive roles and reactions of sinners and Gentiles to the Messiah (11:19; 21:31, 32). It seems that Matthew the tax collector could have easily identified with Gentile lowliness and did not hesitate to record it.

An argument against Matthew's authorship is due to the fact that Matthew did not appear to be a dominant character in the Gospels or in the early church; such as Peter, James or John. Yet Beale and Carson make these points in defense of Matthew's authorship.

"His elementary school education and subsequent synagogue attendance, even if abandoned at some point in his adult life, would have steeped him in the contents of and interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures [and combined with other features]... lead some scholars to suspect that his role as one of Jesus followers may have resembled that of a Christian scribe."³⁰

²⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew, The New American Commentary (NAC)*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 36.

³⁰ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 1.

And if this was the case, and it appears to be, Matthew would have been qualified to accurately pen this narrative of his Messiah.

(It must not be forgotten that it is the Holy Spirit that is intimately involved with the pens of biblical authors [2 Peter 1:21]. And secondly, where does the Scripture teach that disciples of Jesus, such as Matthew need superior academic qualifications to carry out God's own work? God delights in using the foolish even a tax collector to confound the wise, which ultimately brings glory to Himself as Matthew so beautifully demonstrates [1 Cor. 1:26-29]! Was not the chief disciple and apostle a fisherman?)

Lastly and fittingly, Morris correctly claims in regards to the First Gospel's author; "He was clearly a knowledgeable Jew, well acquainted with the kind of teaching we find in the Mishnah and the Talmud, and some would say not averse to the use of Midrash. He does not find it necessary to explain Jewish customs..."³¹ Could this have been Matthew the tax collector? Considering the external, internal and historical evidence the answer would appear to be a firm yes.

The Focus of Matthew's Gospel

There is little doubt; Matthew's audience was primarily Jewish. That is why, "...the most Jewish Gospel, the Gospel written by a Jew for Jews, is placed first."³² Whether converted or unconverted, Matthew covered the needs, questions, and programs concerning the Jewish mind at all levels. The early recipients of the gospel were Jewish. The gospel was preached early on in the synagogues of the Jews. The numerous uses of Old Testament prophecies, and rabbinical writings reflected Jewish understandings and beliefs. That is why "...it does not surprise us that one of the four gospels was directed especially to them [Jews] and answered questions uppermost in their minds about Jesus..."³³ And that "Such subjects as law, ceremonial defilement, the Sabbath, the kingdom, Jerusalem, the temple, David, the Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, and Moses are all discussed from the Jewish viewpoint for Jewish readers."³⁴ In regards to the Hebrew flavor of Matthew, Hendriksen also agrees; "Hebraistic, that is, characterized by the thought patterns and spirit of the Hebrews."³⁵ And yet from another perspective, but along the same line of thought, the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament* further exemplifies the Hebrew character of Matthew by pointing out that there are 61 OT quotations from Matthew as compared with 31 in Mark, 26 in Luke, and 16 in John.³⁶

Another example of Matthew's attentiveness to his Jewish audience is supported by his use of the term, *kingdom of heaven* (literally heavens). This term is used 31x by Matthew and is used exclusively by Matthew among all the NT writers. The term *kingdom of God* which is considered synonymous with *kingdom of heaven* is used prolifically throughout the other gospels and the entire NT, while Matthew uses *kingdom*

³¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According To Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1992), 2-3.

³² William Hendriksen, *Matthew, New Testament Commentary (NTC)*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 98.

³³ Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), 115.

³⁴ Toussaint, "Behold the King," 17.

³⁵ Hendriksen, "Matthew," 83.

³⁶ Morris, "The Gospel According To Matthew," 3.

of God 4 times. “The conventional argument is that the plural ‘heavens’ in this variant does not refer simply to the transcendent realm, but is a ‘circumlocution,’ an expression which avoids uttering or writing the Divine Name (YHWH)...”³⁷ Matthew’s term is a Semitic expression that would have been easily comprehended by the Jewish people, but not necessarily the Greeks. For “The Jews, out of reverence for God, avoided uttering the divine name, and contemporary literature gives examples of substituting the word ‘heaven’ for God (1 Macc 3:18, 50; 4:10; see Lk 15:18).”³⁸ Matthew, respecting his Jewish culture and writing directly to the Jewish people, inexhaustibly used the term *kingdom of heaven*, and seldom used the term *kingdom of God*. His purpose was to reach his own people by respecting their reverence for YHWH.

As the Bible student reads the NT and especially the Gospels and Acts, it is recognized that the Jews were a mixed group; some believed, some rejected, and some were undecided concerning their Messiah. (In the early days of the church, the Jewish people, whether saved or lost gathered at the Temple and/or in their local synagogues and it was in these locations where the apostles preached the gospel and taught the word of God to the Jewish crowds as referenced in Acts 4:1-4; 17:1-4; 18:4; 19:8-10). Matthew also encouraged the believers as he laid out the plan of God. Keener also notes, “But most of all, Matthew probably functions as a discipling manual, a ‘handbook’ of Jesus basic life and teaching, relevant to a Jewish community engaged in the Gentile mission and deadlocked in a scriptural polemic with their local synagogue communities.”³⁹ Yet, Matthew did not only address those who believed, Matthew also challenged and condemned the unbelievers, because of their rejection of Messiah. Matthew appealed to the undecided with a convicting presentation of Messiah. No matter what their spiritual condition was, these truths about Messiah concerned Matthew’s people at all levels of Jewish thought. The simple deduction is that Matthew’s splintered Jewish society was the focus of his account.

The Purpose of Matthew’s Gospel

This author passionately agrees with R.T. France, “...in the first century after the writing of the New Testament gospels it was Matthew which quickly established itself as *the gospel par excellence*...”⁴⁰ By God’s grace and anointing, He used a tax collector to demonstrate the numerous OT scriptural truths concerning his Messiah, Jesus Christ; he encouraged all the readers of his narrative to consider Him. He proved that Jesus Christ had met all the requirements of Israel’s promised Messiah King. He also explained the plans of Messiah: what had been carried out among His people, what plans were to be carried out among the Gentiles, and what plans were yet in Israel’s future. Throughout these truths he demonstrated the unique life of Christ and His kingdom. Could all the Old Testament prophecies that referred to Messiah, and were so beautifully fulfilled by this Jesus simply be a coincidence? According to Matthew, absolutely not! It could only be

³⁷ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 4,” 50.

³⁸ W. A. Elwell and P.W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary (TBD)*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 775. Logos Bible Software.

³⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (IVPNTC)*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁰ R.T. France, *Matthew Evangelist and Teacher*; (Eugene, OR: Wipit & Stock Publishers, 1989), 17.

concluded that one of the main purposes of his writing was to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the One and Only true Messiah of Israel. “*In general* it can be said that the purpose of this Gospel *was fully to win the Jews for Christ*; that is, to gain those still unconverted and to strengthen those already converted.”⁴¹ And the proof is the Hebraistic character of the Gospel that met the need of the 1st century Israelite.

There is little doubt that lying deep within the hearts and minds of many Israelites was the question, “What now since we rejected Messiah?” (Acts 1:6; 2:37; 3:19-26). That is why the rejection of Christ by the Jewish leadership was thoroughly recorded in this book. Matthew also responded with truths concerning the yet future church that Christ promised to build (16:18). He also made it clear that the tribulation and the millennial kingdom were yet in Israel’s future, although the Father only knows when this will be fulfilled (Chapters 24 and 25). In reflection, it would simply appear that the purpose of the First Gospel was to answer the questions foremost in the minds of the Jewish community in which the author belonged.

The Themes of Matthew’s Gospel

As observed previously, Matthew’s Gospel is very Jewish and deals with 1st century Jewish issues. That is why, “In the first decades of the church the book of Matthew was the most highly revered and widely read of the four gospels.”⁴² And it is in this context that Matthew has one main theme, with various underlying themes that would answer these numerous early church questions.

There is absolutely no doubt, the overall theme of Matthew is the person of The Lord Jesus Christ, Israel’s promised Messiah, the Son of David. France strongly declares that “...the central theme of Matthew gospel is ‘fulfillment.’”⁴³ Which in reality, the fulfillment theme finds its identity in the Messiah. And as the fulfillment theme in Matthew unfolds it “seems to operate at many levels, embracing much more of the pattern of OT history and language than merely its prophetic predictions.”⁴⁴ There is little uncertainty that “The theme of fulfillment is clearly one of Matthew’s favorites.”⁴⁵

Underlying themes are He is rightfully both King of the Jews, and a Light to the Gentiles.⁴⁶ Matthew traced Christ from his proper genealogy – physical birth – ministries – Calvary – and authority over the church in conclusion. All along, Matthew used Jewish prophecy to prove Jesus Christ as the true Jewish Messiah; the one who perfectly fit every biblical prerequisite, and the one who included Gentiles in his program.

The book also follows the reaction of the Jewish people to this promised King; from obscurity and curiosity, to recognition and popularity, and finally hostility and death. Matthew also noted the relationship and response of the Gentiles to this Jewish

⁴¹ Hendriksen, “Matthew,” 97.

⁴² Jensen, “Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament,” 114.

⁴³ France, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 10.

⁴⁴ France “The Gospel of Matthew,” 12.

⁴⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13, Word Bible Commentary (WBC)*, 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), lx.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 49:6, Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Messiah. Gentiles were purposefully included in Messiah's genealogy; the Oriental astrologers came to worship Christ in chapter 2. The fulfillment of the prophesied outreach to the Gentiles recorded in Matthew 12:28-31. Christ's final words were to preach to *all* nations.

The book focused on Jewish concepts and disciplines of the Davidic King, his unique person and nature of his kingdom, his conflict with Jewish traditions, the results of Jewish rejection, the future church, and the great tribulation. This is evidenced in the Sermon on the Mount, the many parables, the many miracles and provisions of the kingly Christ, the kingdom authority of the disciples, and the warnings concerning the time of Jacob's trouble. And yet, underneath all of these key features is the unique use of fulfillment by Matthew. "A striking example of his Jewishness is his emphasis on the fulfillment prophecy;"⁴⁷ fulfillment from a uniquely Jewish outlook.

This unique fulfillment theme is that this Messiah not only took on Jewish identity, but that He also identified with Israel's historical narrative in the numerous fulfillment passages. "Key patterns of activity ascribed to God recur in strikingly discernible patterns such that the believer can only affirm the same hand of God at work in both events. The apologetic is more subtle than with directly predictive prophecy but no less persuasive."⁴⁸ Because Matthew recognized the importance of the fulfillment paradigm, he put less emphasis on the chronological order of Christ's life and more so in regards to His correlation to the Jewish narrative fulfillment patterns. "But we have learned enough of the structure of the First Gospel to know, that its arrangement is determined by the plan of the writer rather than by the chronological succession of events."⁴⁹ Yet, as one follows the events of Matthew it becomes clear, especially in the earlier chapters, that Matthew's account follows or patterns itself according to Israelite history, rather than the chronological order of Messiah's own life as recorded in Luke. The theme of Matthew is the Lord Jesus Christ, and His relationship to Israel recognized in the fulfillment themes and patterns. It is what dominates Matthew's thoughts and writings.

Summations

The First Gospel proves the absolute genuineness of the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah. It held the unbelieving Jew who despised and rejected Jesus Christ accountable. It proved that there was no reason to doubt that Jesus Christ is the true Son of David. Matthew encouraged the believing Jew, for God was not done with their nation or their people. Matthew proved to the Jewish people at all levels, that this Jesus Christ was the very King whom they had been expecting. Compiling all the evidence of Matthew, there is no other conclusion. And beautifully threaded throughout, is the significant and sustained theme of Jewish OT fulfillment, which had been lost or overlooked by many biblical scholars due to their lack of a 1st century Jewish perception and life. As France so acutely observed; Matthew

⁴⁷ Morris, "The Gospel According To Matthew," 3.

⁴⁸ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 2.

⁴⁹ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: 1896), 42.

“...strikes all readers in its sustained concern to present Jesus in the context of Judaism... Such questions were inescapable for a church still close to its Jewish roots...Modern Christians... should realize that they live in a very different world from that of the early Christians, for whom the ‘Jewishness’ of Jesus and his church was not just a matter of historical interest but an existential concern crying out for answers, answers which Matthew’s gospel offered to provide.”⁵⁰

It is a 1st century Jewish emphasis that this author will endeavor to demonstrate throughout, and its vital relationship with Matthew’s unique and continual fulfillment theme and patterns which he recorded for his contemporary Jewish audience.

⁵⁰ France, *“Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,”* 19.

B. The Messiah's Crucial Statement, Matthew 5:17

Overview

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

What did the Messiah mean by this pivotal statement? What was His objective? Why did Matthew find this statement important enough to include it in his Sermon on the Mount, in which the other gospel writers chose to exclude?

For some, Matthew 5:17 has long been a debated text regarding its interpretation and practical outcome. Douglas J. Moo admits, “Study of Matthew 5:17-19 is complicated by the complex and debated tradition history of the verses.”⁵¹ Paul W. Walaskay would heartily agree with Moo regarding the interpretation of Matthew 5:17-20; “THIS PASSAGE IS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT in the New Testament. It is loaded with problems that are theological, exegetical, and practical.”⁵² Is it really that problematic or is it possible that the difficulty may be related to the lack of a Jewish emphasis regarding the text?

With this in mind, these important questions and concerns relating to Jesus' claim will be considered, for Matthew 5:17 may be a key which unlocks or in the very least clarifies Matthew's understanding of his Messiah. This important topic discussion will begin with a broad overview then will narrow down to the biblical text itself. (As emphasized and described in the previous section the interpretive emphasis of Matthew 5:17 will be from a 1st Century Jewish perspective; which may aid the Bible researcher to grasp the Messiah's meaning in Matthew 5:17).

Transition from Temple to Torah

According to Russell, somewhere between the 4th century and the Maccabean Revolt (167 B.C.) the transfer of emphasis from the temple to the Torah took place. He clarifies that, “The triumph of the Maccabean Revolt and the development of the Synagogue and the schools both in Jerusalem and in the Dispersion would further enhance the reputation of the Torah.”⁵³ During this time, the temple priesthood fell into political trappings surrounding Jerusalem; there was also political fighting within and without the Jewish community; these problems may have led to a growing disrespect for the priesthood and temple. This did not mean that the temple had no place within Judaism, for Antiochus Epiphanies IV's desecration of the temple proved otherwise. But the point being, that the Torah became the greater identity of the Jewish people. It was the promises in the Torah which set them apart as God's special people. Russell claims that “The ritual of the Temple had been replaced by reverence for the Torah; the priest had given way to the Rabbi; the Temple was supplemented by the Synagogue. Judaism thereafter was to be essentially a religion of the book.”⁵⁴ Consider, it was disobedience to

⁵¹ Douglas J. Moo, “Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law,” [JSNT 20 (1984) 3-49]; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; Deerfield, IL, 24, <http://search.ebscohost.com>: (accessed 11/08/11).

⁵² Paul W. Walaskay, “Matthew 5:17-20,” *Union PSCE*, October 2002, 417, <http://search.ebscohost.com>: (accessed 11/08/11).

⁵³ D.S. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960) 44.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

the Torah that caused Israel to lose her sovereignty and temple centuries before. One can then understand why strict adherence to the Law and the traditions were engraved in the minds of the Pharisaical leadership; which in turn were pressed upon the people.

The Torah and Traditions

During the intertestamental years there also grew a mass of interpretations of the Torah, which supposedly surrounded and protected the sacred text. These writings and numerous oral teachings of the Jewish Fathers became known as ‘the tradition of the elders’ (15:2). These traditions had the highest place of honor alongside the Torah, and in some cases more so. Both, according to many sages were considered more authoritative than the Prophets, and the Writings. It was into this world that the Lord Jesus entered; it was this rabbinical teaching the Lord Jesus challenged (5:43) and came into conflict with (15:3-9). There is little doubt that the Rabbis questioned and argued over the Messiah’s relationship to their Law. For Jesus’ teachings and practices had challenged their Judaism!

His teaching did not underscore the rabbinical oral traditions, He rather denounced them (Chapter 23). He did not quote the Jewish Fathers to add authority to His teaching. “So we are not surprised to read at the end of the Sermon that it was the *authority* of Jesus which impressed the bystanders ([Matt.] 7:28-29).”⁵⁵ Jesus teaching far surpassed that of the Rabbis. His teaching was entirely spiritual. It lifted the humble and condemned the proud. It was unbiased, un-hypocritical; full of grace and truth. Simply stated, Jesus was an anomaly, He shocked Judaism at its core! “Christ came to found a Kingdom, not a School; to institute a fellowship, not to propound a system.”⁵⁶ With this in mind, it is this author’s contention that Jesus Christ came to establish His kingdom, and not to set aside the Law or the Prophets in any manner, but to *fulfill* them, and bring about their intentioned purposes through fulfillment; and that is why Matthew included Messiah’s statement (Matt. 5:17) in the Sermon on the Mount; fulfillment being an integral part of His first coming, and filling up the meaning of all the Law and Prophets.

Matthew’s Thematic Parallel and Fulfillment

As this thesis will argue, and as noted in the Introduction of the Research Problem, Messiah’s life beautifully paralleled that of His chosen people. Matthew clearly portrayed Jesus as a true Israelite in every way possible, and yet where Israel failed, Messiah fulfilled. As will be researched in greater detail in the following sections, Matthew’s Messiah identified with Israel in His birth (1:18-25). In His growing up; bondage and release from Egypt (2:13-15); as well as in sorrow and suffering by persecution and massacre (2:16-18); His call from obscurity and lowliness as with Israel (Nazarene, 2:23). Jesus necessary baptism, as Israel identified with Moses (3:13-17); His wilderness temptation (4:1-11), and quite *possibly* the giving of the Law as with Moses (chapters 5-7); the miracles equating to the miracles in the wilderness wanderings and throughout Israel’s history (chapters 4, 8, 9, 14ff); the sending of the 12 spies into the promised land (chapter 10); the offer of rest to his people as with the promised land (11:28, 29). The rejection of Messiah similar to Kadesh Barnea (Chapter 12); the rejection of the present generation entering the land of rest (12:39-42); the feeding of

⁵⁵ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 165.

⁵⁶ Edersheim, “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol.1,” 528.

multitudes as in the wilderness (14:13-21; 15:32-39); the passing of blessing on to another generation (21:43); and the experience of rejection as Israel had experienced God's temporary rejection (but Jesus suffered wrath not for His sin as Israel had, but for the sins of mankind, 27:27-56). Could all of these parallel and fulfillment texts be mere coincidence? By no means! Did Matthew have a clear objective? Absolutely!

The Crucial Text: Matthew 5:17

Viewing the text itself, there are four observations that aid in clarifying this debated statement of Messiah's. *Number one*, Messiah did not come to abolish the Law, nor did He come to keep it, but to fulfill it. (It must be acknowledged that keep and fulfill have different meanings. Jesus Himself was challenged by the Rabbis for not encouraging His disciples to keep the Law [12:1, 2]). *Number two*, the terms Law and Prophets cannot be separated. Both are joined together; giving it a much broader overall meaning. *Number three*, Law and Prophets must not be misconstrued with the word *commands* found in the following verses. *Number four*, every detail of the Law will find itself completely fulfilled one day (5:18). Further consideration will now be given to each of these four observations.

Number one, Messiah did not come to abolish the Law, nor did He come to keep it, but to fulfill it. Matthew had made it clear what he meant by his common use of the word *fulfill* by the time the reader approaches the Sermon on the Mount (as noted above in the Parallel/Fulfillment patterns). Therefore Moo claims, "Moreover, the idea of the fulfillment of the law is in accord with the broad scope of fulfillment in Matthew, including, as it does, historical events with no clearly predictive element (c.f 2.15)."⁵⁷ That is why in Matthew's mind it made sense that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them. Moo continues,

In all details, the Scripture remains authoritative, but the manner in which men are to relate to and understand its provisions is now determined by the one who has fulfilled it... In his direct statements about the law Jesus upholds the continuing validity of the entire OT Scriptures, but also asserts that this validity must be understood in the light of fulfillment... The whole law came to culmination in Christ.⁵⁸

Number two, the terms Law and Prophets cannot be separated, as is the case in Luke 24:44 when Messiah explained to disciples His earthly purposes; "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the *Law of Moses* and *the Prophets* and the Psalms concerning Me (*emphasis added*)."⁵⁷ In Matthew's gospel itself, the terms Law and Prophets are referred to as a unit four times (5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40). Banks notes the similarities of Matthew 5:17 and 11:13 regarding the relationship between the terms Law and Prophets.

This aspect of the Law's operation is explicitly insisted upon by Matthew in 11:13, which speaks not only of the Prophets but also of the Law as prophesying... What I would argue then, and it is this possibility that seems to have been constantly overlooked, is that precisely the same meaning should be

⁵⁷ Moo, "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law," 25.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 27 - 29.

given to the term *pleroun* [fulfill] when it is used of the Law as that which it has when it is used of the Prophets.⁵⁹

One must also consider, that abolish also applies to the term Prophets as noted by France, “Moreover it is not only to the Law that this verb applies, but also to ‘the prophets.’”⁶⁰ This being the case, it would make sense that the terms Law and Prophets then refer to the entire OT text, not just a narrow view of the Mosaic Law, or even that of the Major Prophets; and that is consistent with Matthew’s use of the terms Law and Prophets in his gospel (7:12; 11:13; 22:40). This deduction would be consistent with Matthew’s *parallel* and *fulfillment* concepts (mentioned earlier) which he found to be true regarding the entire OT text. Blomberg would agree, “Fulfillment of Scripture, as throughout chaps. 1-4, refers to the bringing to fruition of its complete meaning. Here Jesus views his role as that of fulfilling all the Old Testament.”⁶¹

Number three, Law and Prophets must not be misconstrued with the word *commands* found in the following verses. If Law and Prophets are a general term for the entire OT and relating to Messiah’s relationship to it, the commands must be more specific as to the instructions that follow in the Sermon. (Later in this thesis regarding the Sermon on the Mount, it will be quite clear that Jesus’ commands superseded that of the Rabbis and therefore must be held distinct from the general use of the terms Law and Prophets). The ABD clarifies the distinctions. “The first principle (5:17) assesses the intention and purpose of Jesus as a Torah teacher and refutes the idea that he had come to abolish the Torah. The second principle (5:18) affirms the authority of the written Hebrew text of Scripture. The third (5:19) defines the status and authority of Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah in the Christian community.”⁶² Again, His commands are pointed and refute and supersede those of the Rabbis (5:21). While the terms Law and Prophets are broad, relating to Matthew’s parallel fulfillment concepts; the term *commands* appear very specific relating to the near texts that follow 5:19.

Number four, every detail of the Law will find itself completely fulfilled one day (5:18). As previously noted, Matthew regarded certain aspects of the OT having come to complete fruition in Christ. Carson reaffirms what has and is being considered; “In vs 17–20 Jesus places *the Law* alongside *the Prophets* as finding fulfillment in him (for this sense of the law as ‘prophesying’ until Jesus came cf. 11:13; and Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24). To *fulfill* is to bring about that to which Scripture pointed, and that is what Jesus has now done.”⁶³ Yet, Blomberg astutely points out, “With the coming of Christ, many aspects of the law are brought to complete fruition... In other instances certain requirements of the law endure until Christ’s coming again.”⁶⁴ To this Campbell would agree; “By fulfilling the Law, some aspects of Old Testament legislation were to be rendered obsolete. For example, the sacrifices and ceremonies associated with redemption and atonement were,

⁵⁹ Robert Banks, “Matthews Understanding of the Law, Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20,” *The Australian National University*, Canberra, Australia, 231.
<http://search.ebscohost.com>: (accessed 11/08/11).

⁶⁰ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 194.

⁶¹ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 103.

⁶² Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 5,” 1108.

⁶³ D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary (NBC), 21st century ed.* (Mt 5:17–48) (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994). Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁴ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 104.

in fact, to be done away with because Jesus came to fulfill them and to usher in perfect righteousness.”⁶⁵ Yet, as Blomberg noted there are yet promises and aspects of the OT that have yet to take place. Again, that is why Matthew went into greater detail than any other gospel writer regarding Christ’s second coming (Chapters 24 and 25). The disciples were perplexed at Jesus death and ascension and were left with questions regarding Israel’s future kingdom. When would be the covenant promises made especially to Abraham and King David concerning her land and kingdom be fulfilled? Every aspect of the Law and Prophets will one day come to complete fulfillment. The Messiah declares that the OT fulfillment would extend to the smallest Hebrew letter, the “jot” (lit., *yôd*), and even to the smallest stroke of a Hebrew letter, the “tittle.” Jesus second coming will bring about the complete fulfillment and completion of the OT covenant promises.

Considering the crucial implication of Matthew 5:17, one must consider the realization of France’s reference to Banks astute summary of Matthew’s text, “...it is not so much *Jesus* stance towards the Law that he is concerned to depict: it is how the *Law* stands with regard to him, as the one who brings it to fulfillment and to whom all attention must now be directed.”⁶⁶ The Messiah as the author of the OT knows that the entire Scripture finds its reality in Him. “... The focus of God’s purpose is now to be found in Jesus rather than in the Old Testament in its own right.”⁶⁷ This is what the Rabbis did not comprehend. The Law and the Prophets pointed to the Messiah (Luke 24:44; John 5:39), and because this is true, “The prophetic teachings [Law and Prophets] point forward (principally) to the actions of Christ and have also been realized in them in a more profound manner.”⁶⁸

Summations

The intertestamental years proved difficult for the Jewish people. The Torah took on new meaning and importance. The Torah and all the traditions that surrounded it became the greater identity of the people. The Torah in some sense superseded the Temple. The Rabbis in some sense superseded the Priests. Both the Rabbis and the people were misguided both in theology and application. It was Jesus who shocked their world with His authoritative teaching. It was He who came into conflict with the Jewish leaders. It was He who claimed that He would never abolish the Law and Prophets, but that He was the true fulfillment of the Law and Prophets; and in actuality the entire OT.

Matthew skillfully recorded this most amazing *parallel* and *fulfillment* concept. Jesus not only fulfilled and brought about the true purposes and intensions of the OT prophetic Scripture; He also fulfilled Israel’s history, not through play-acting as Neusner states (which will be examined in the next section), but living out Israelite history Himself. Matthew recognized his Messiah as being in the truest and in the fullest sense the fulfiller of the entire OT. The NNIBD correctly states, “Jesus did not come to give a new law. He came to uncover the intentions of the law and the prophets and to bring them

⁶⁵ I. D. Campbell, *Opening up Matthew* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 44. Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁶ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 195.

⁶⁷ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 195.

⁶⁸ Banks, “Matthews Understanding of the Law,” 231.

to their fullest expression.”⁶⁹ Is Matthew 5:17 a troublesome passage as some might think? Possibly not, if considered from a 1st century Jewish perspective such as Matthew’s.

It is this author’s observation, that Matthew 5:17 is simply a statement of fact according to Matthew. His Messiah by no means bypassed the Law or the Prophets as some Rabbis may have claimed; He was the rightful one, and the only one who could possibly fulfill and bring to fruition and completion all that was spoken in the Law and Prophets regarding his Messiah. Hebrews 2:17 states, “Therefore, in all things He (Messiah) had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” According to Matthew, Messiah was not only from the loins of Abraham, He was the true son of David, the new Moses, the perfect Israelite, who fully lived and breathed true Jewishness from His birth to His death. As Blomberg so astutely claims, “Jesus embodies all of the promises of the Old Testament; indeed, he is the goal of all Scripture, as all of the law and the prophets are fulfilled in him (5:17).”⁷⁰

As will be revealed in the following chapters of this thesis, Matthew will make it abundantly clear to his readers what and who he considered his Messiah to be.

C. Matthew’s Fulfillment Themes

Israel’s Historical Narrative and Identity

This third insight relating to Matthew’s fulfillment theme regards Israel’s own historical narrative and identity. According to Ben-Sasson, Israel’s identity was defined by God’s call and covenants; “For the Israelites, however, the tradition of redemption from the ‘house of bondage’ and the journey through Sinai to the Promised Land became the corner-stone of their faith, not only in the Pentateuch and the historical books of the Bible but also in the writings of the Prophets... as well as in the Psalms...”⁷¹ As noted in the previous section, the Law and Prophets equating to the whole of the OT, defined Israel’s faith and existence as a people. It is their faith, and their very own historical narrative that sets them apart as God’s chosen nation. Their history involves all of Israel; more than just Jacob and his sons who were brought into Egypt; or Moses and his near generations that were brought out of Egypt and led into the Promised Land; or King David and the promises associated with his reign. The argument being, Israel’s historical narrative involves all of Israel of every generation, including Matthew’s Israel and Matthew’s Messiah. Also, as discussed in the previous section, could all the fulfillment parallels between Israel and the Messiah be a mere coincidence? According to Matthew, absolutely not! Messiah was not only an Israelite by birth, but by life; Matthew recognized that the Lord Jesus Christ lived out Israel’s history. Stott would agree, “...Matthew sees in the story of Jesus a recapitulation of the story of Israel.”⁷² And it is this concept of a master historical narrative of Israel that Jacob Neusner a modern day

⁶⁹ R. F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, Eds. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (NNIBD)(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995). Logos Bible Software.

⁷⁰ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 27.

⁷¹ H.H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 43.

⁷² Stott, “The Incomparable Christ,” 24.

Rabbi and scholar, has defined in his understanding of his own Jewish roots and identity. He claims, “From the exile in Babylonia, the authorship of the Torah recast Israel’s history into the story of the continual existence of the people.”⁷³ Neusner also defines this master narrative by its relationship to the three major feasts of Israel: *Passover, Israel’s Deliverance from Bondage; Shavuot, Israel’s Receiving the Torah; and Sukkot, Israel’s Season of Rejoicing*. Regarding these feasts, Bright asserts, “They [the great annual feasts] ceased to be mere nature festivals and became occasions upon which the mighty acts of Yahweh toward Israel were celebrated.”⁷⁴ According to Neusner they are more than simple celebrations unto themselves, it is in these celebrations that Israel is reminded of their master narrative in which every Israelite generation is defined and which every Israelite generation belongs.

Passover, Israel’s Deliverance from Bondage

Neusner alleges that Israel’s master narrative begins with their passage into Egypt, their subsequent centuries of slavery, and the great deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians. “The master narrative of Judaism begins with the story of the origins of Israel: the descent of Israel into Egypt, four centuries of slavery there, then God’s sending Moses to the Egyptian Pharaoh to liberate Israelite slaves and lead them to the Promised Land.”⁷⁵ Eisenberg would agree with Neusner, that Passover is central in the Jewish mind and is expressed through the feast. “As the paradigmatic story of freedom and redemption and God’s special choosing of the Children of Israel, Passover has become the central holiday of the Jewish people.”⁷⁶ The ABD references the Scriptures as the basis for Israel’s Passover narrative. “Scripture presents the Passover as the key element of a rite commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the bounty of divine redemption.”⁷⁷ To which Ferguson⁷⁸ would also agree, that Passover was a celebration of divine redemption.

In the celebration of the Passover meal, Neusner credits a formula recited during the Passover celebration for capturing the moment and the reality of Passover for the then present Jewish generation honoring Passover, which places them alongside their forefathers who lived through the actual events. “For ever after, in every generation, every Israelite must think of himself or herself as having gone forth from Egypt.”⁷⁹ It was during this special feast that Israelites become play-actors and seek to live out the roles of their forefathers; they more than imagine having been there with Moses, they become participants in the reality of the divine deliverance. “...it is how every day Jews transform themselves into the ‘Israel’ of which Scripture speaks... Jews think of themselves as having gone forth from Egypt... thus the family states, recapitulating the entire narrative of Judaism’s Israel.”⁸⁰

⁷³ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, An Introduction*; (London, England: Penguin Books, 2002), 57.

⁷⁴ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 171.

⁷⁵ Neusner, “Judaism, An Introduction,” 11.

⁷⁶ Ronald L. Eisenberg, *JPS Guide, Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 265.

⁷⁷ Freedman Ed., “ABD, Vol. 6,” 755.

⁷⁸ Ferguson, “Backgrounds of Early Christianity,” 559.

⁷⁹ Neusner, “Judaism, An Introduction,” 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 15.

What is Neusner saying? That Passover has a much richer purpose and deeper meaning than that of mere celebration of remembrance; all of Israel of every generation is to see herself as having gone forth from Egypt, a redeemed people led to the Promised Land. Passover, representing divine deliverance from Egypt, is Israel's divine redemptive identity which the Jewish Matthew understood as a fellow Israelite, an identity in which a Gentile may not understand. The Passover feast marks the first identifier of Israel's story.

Shavuot, Israel's Receiving the Torah

The next celebration feast that defines Israel's master narrative is the next great event that took place in Israel's historical account, and that is the receiving of the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai. As Neusner explains, "Shavuot embodies the second component of Judaism's definition of Israel..."⁸¹ And it is this Torah that differentiates Israel from all other nations.⁸² Ben-Sasson considers Mount Sinai a decisive moment in Israel's history that more than defined them, it transformed them religiously. "Israel's transformation from a mere tribal grouping to full nationhood may well find expression in the religious metamorphosis symbolized by the revelation at Mount Sinai."⁸³ As Ferguson notes, Shavuot was originally established as a harvest celebration, but "...the festival eventually received a historical and redemptive significance as commemorating the giving of the law at Sinai."⁸⁴ The giving of the Law at Sinai became the definition of the Feast of Shavuot.

As all Israel was to view herself as having come forth from Egypt in the Passover feast, in the same manner all of Israel of every generation was to view herself as standing at Mount Sinai and receiving the Law of Moses with all Israelites. "...so now at Shavuot every Israelite through all time is regarded as standing at Sinai and receiving the Torah."⁸⁵ Eisenberg claims that this anniversary celebration of the giving of the Torah "... should be understood as the culmination of the process of redemption from slavery that began on Passover..."⁸⁶ The reality being, that Israel's deliverance from Egypt was the beginning of redemption which was brought to completion by the receiving of the Torah from the hand of God. Also, according to Neusner, Israel's inheritance of the future world is dependent on her obedience to the Torah. "If Israel inherits the world to come, that is because of its loyalty to the Torah, which includes suffering in this age in expiation for its sins of rebellion."⁸⁷ Possibly, that is why the tax collector demonstrates Messiah as the one who truly is loyal to the Torah in all aspects?

Sadly to say, Israel throughout her history has continually struggled to live up to her Torah responsibilities. Matthew vividly points out the failure of the Jewish leaders to embrace her Messiah, and to carry out the heart of the Torah (22:36; 23:23, 24). And more so, that Israel's future life is dependent upon the Messiah's return and salvation (Chapter 24 and 25). Matthew also makes it clear where Israel failed Messiah succeeded (Chapter 4). He did what no other Israelite could do; He fulfilled the Law and Prophets!

⁸¹ Neusner, "Judaism, An Introduction," 17.

⁸² Ibid, 22.

⁸³ Ben-Sasson, "A History of the Jewish People," 45.

⁸⁴ Ferguson, "Backgrounds of Early Christianity," 559.

⁸⁵ Neusner, "Judaism, An Introduction," 17.

⁸⁶ Eisenberg, "JPS Guide, Jewish Traditions," 298.

⁸⁷ Neusner, "Judaism, An Introduction," 23.

Sukkot, Israel's Season of Rejoicing

The third and final component of Judaism's definition according to Neusner is the Feast of Sukkot. "Sukkot forms the third and final component of Judaism's definition of Israel: as a pilgrim people, wandering in the wilderness, expiating the sin of a generation that rebelled against God."⁸⁸ Sukkot, also known as Tabernacles was one of the main three feasts of Israel, along with the previously discussed Passover and Shavuot. It was commanded in Leviticus 23:39-43, and was to be celebrated for seven days beginning on the fifteenth day of the lunar month of Tishri. This festival was a time of rejoicing and commemoration. "... This joyous festival is named for the temporary shelters in which the Israelites dwelled as they wandered through the wilderness."⁸⁹ Ferguson claims that it was the most popular feast among the Jewish people, and also had redemptive meaning. "It too was given a redemptive significance, commemorating the living in tents during the time of the wilderness wandering."⁹⁰

As with the Passover and the Giving of the Torah, Sukkot also expresses Israel's Judaism; Neusner defines Sukkot as Israel's third and final essential component and is celebrated in the same manner as the previous two feasts. All Israel of all time is to see herself as a wandering people, and their play-acting involved in the feast, identifies them as closely as possible with Moses' generation, the ones who actually wandered in the wilderness for forty years. "So the Israel of Judaism comes to realization in moments of active, participatory narrative, when people both repeat and act out a chapter of the master narrative..."⁹¹

Matthew testifies that the Messiah would far more than simply partake of these three main identifying feasts of Israel, by mere play-acting, He would literally in every way live out their history as a chosen people. He literally became Israel in every way. He was the reality of their history and their feasts. At least Matthew thought so.

Israel's Son of David

Not only did Matthew recognize the fulfillment of Israel's narrative in the life of his Messiah, he also recognized an underlying fulfillment theme related to King David.

From the very beginning of Matthew's genealogical account Jesus is proclaimed as the king, the One who is heir to King David's messianic throne (1:1). Huffman notes, "Matthew seems preoccupied with David, mentioning him five times in 1:1-17."⁹² Added to this, is Matthew's designation of David as a king (1:6), which he did not attribute to any other in David's lineage even though everyone named in the second grouping (from David until Babylon), could have been given that title (1:17). Matthew also determined to center the three groupings of his ancestral account in terms related to King David (1:17). "... the first group being its origin and rise to power, the second group being its decay

⁸⁸ Neusner, "Judaism, An Introduction," 24.

⁸⁹ Eisenberg, "JPS Guide, Jewish Traditions," 227.

⁹⁰ Ferguson, "Backgrounds of Early Christianity," 559.

⁹¹ Neusner, "Judaism, An Introduction," 11.

⁹² D. S. Huffman, J. B. Green and S. McKnight Eds., *In Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Genealogy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 255. Logos Bible Software.

and downfall, the third group being its quiet restoration by the promised ‘Son of David.’”⁹³

The First Gospel references Israel’s King David seventeen times, while there is a total of twenty two references in Mark, Luke and John. The First Gospel uses the messianic term, ‘Son of David’ nine times, while Mark, Luke and John a total of six times. That is why Blomberg affirms, “One of the most distinctive titles for Jesus is *Son of David*... [which] fits the Jewish orientation of Matthew...”⁹⁴ In the NT as a whole however, the Messianic title of Son of David plays a minor role as compared to the titles of Son of God or Son of Man.⁹⁵ Yet as Blomberg states, in Matthew’s perspective the term Son of David was very important, for it defined Jesus as the royal Messiah of Israel. “Son of David likewise emphasizes Jesus as the royal fulfiller of Israel’s messianic hopes.”⁹⁶ Even though the title Son of David is not referenced nearly as much as Son of God or Son of Man, it is significant, for the true Son of David would be the king par excellence.⁹⁷

This Messianic hope of Israel’s Son of David rested upon the promises sworn by God to King David. This is another key feature of Israel’s establishment as a nation which her eternal future rested upon, the covenant established with King David. This covenant with David’s household had many promises associated with it as promised in 2 Samuel 7:8–17.

I will appoint a place for My people Israel... that they may dwell in a place of their own... nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore... Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house... When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... I will be his Father, and he shall be My son... My mercy shall not depart from him... And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.

From Matthew 1:1, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham...,” Matthew leaves no doubt in his readers minds that he ascribed to Jesus the Messianic title of the *Son of David*. Bauer points out that when the Son of David is used as a title for Jesus, it points to Him as the royal Messiah from the loins of King David and “...as such he fulfills the promises God made to David regarding the eternal reign of David’s ‘offspring’ (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12–16), and he acts as the unique agent in bringing the rule of God... to the earth, a rule that is characterized by salvation and blessing.”⁹⁸ And in Matthew’s understanding, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled that promise as King David’s offspring and began ushering in the messianic period through many signs and wonders. That is why Matthew associates many healing miracles with the title, Son of David.

⁹³ “Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Genealogy,” 255.

⁹⁴ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 28.

⁹⁵ “Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Son of David,” 767.

⁹⁶ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 4” 638.

⁹⁷ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 2,” 47.

⁹⁸ “Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Son of David,” 766.

The appeal of many, who were in need of physical restoration, was an appeal to the Son of David. So whether it was the blind men (9:27; 20:30); or the demon-possessed, blind and mute man (12:22); or the Canaanite woman, whose daughter was demonically possessed (15:22), they appealed to the Son of David. It was Jesus ministry among His people and even among Gentiles when the title “Son of David is the address used especially by the marginalized and helpless who appeal to Jesus for healing.”⁹⁹

Matthew also witnessed the response of the people after the demon-possessed, blind and mute man was healed by Jesus (12:23); they asked this messianic question, “Could this be the Son of David?” Matthew also records the response of the diaspora Jews making their way into Jerusalem during the Triumphal Entry (21:9), “Hosanna to the Son of David!” From the very beginning of the First Gospel and throughout the gospel, Matthew recognizes the Davidic fulfillment theme and its importance in relation to the people of Israel. This being the case, this Davidic theme will be interwoven within the major theme of Matthew, which is Messiah’s recapitulation of Israel’s historical narrative as defined in the fulfillment narrative of Matthew.

Related to the Son of David theme, is the term Jesus most used regarding Himself, and that is the term Son of Man. Even though this thesis will not emphasize this term, it must be mentioned for this term does relate to the Son of David theme; both are very messianic in nature. For both themes speak of kingly rule and authority, and a future kingdom.

The O.T. books of Ezekiel and Daniel related this term ‘Son of Man’ to the Messiah. In Daniel chapter seven, it describes the Son of Man as having an everlasting dominion, kingdom and glory. It is clear that this term, Son of Man, is no doubt related to Christ’s messianic claims, therefore it relates to His deity, as much as His humanity. Only those with ears to hear would truly understand this term when Christ used it to describe Himself.

Israel’s New Moses

Moses was Israel’s leader, deliverer and law giver. Moses led and delivered the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage through miracles, signs and wonders; he interceded for Israel at Mount Sinai and established his people as God’s covenant people through miracles, signs and wonders; and he led Israel in the wilderness for forty years and brought them to the brink of the promised land through miracles, signs and wonders; it is no wonder “...Moses is arguably the most prominent person in the Hebrew Bible, and he looms large in early Jewish and Christian writings.”¹⁰⁰

While Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel and the recipient of a faith based covenant relationship with God which was passed on to Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-4; 15:17-21; 17:1-8), Moses in contrast was not only the nation’s deliverer, but the mediator of the Sinai covenant which was offered to and received by all Israel. Moses was “The liberator and lawgiver of Israel, the most important person in the OT... [for]

⁹⁹ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 2,” 47.

¹⁰⁰ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 4,” 909.

Moses is the founder of Israel's religion."¹⁰¹ It was this Moses, Israel's most popular leader who became associated with, and helped define Israel's narrative. Israel's redemption and establishment as God's covenant people through the Torah found its origination in Moses. Ben-Sasson describes this glory that became associated with Moses; "... The biblical tradition itself attributes the transmission of this revolutionary ideology [at Mount Sinai] to the remarkable personality of Moses, a Levite."¹⁰² In some sense, Moses was Israel, and Israel was Moses. Recall the three defining feasts of Israel previously discussed; all three major feasts find their origination, identity and purpose in Moses and his role as God's shepherd of Israel.

It is not surprising that the NT author of Hebrews compares Messiah to Moses, for Moses was held in high esteem among the Jews. "For this One [Messiah] has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house." Yet, in all of Moses' glory, he fell short of the glory of the new Moses. Moses himself declared (Deuteronomy 18:15), "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren." And it is this special prophet that Matthew revealed to his audience. Matthew describes the new Moses as a deliverer, lawgiver, miracle worker, leader, shepherd and the one close to God who established a New Covenant. Not only did Matthew describe his Messiah as a true Israelite, and as the true Son of David, he also unveils Him as the new Moses. Due to the very Jewish nature of these three fulfillment themes it is not surprising that "Jesus' person and ministry so fulfill the purposes of all the Old Testament... Matthew repeatedly cites Old Testament passages, over half of them not found in any other Gospel, which he introduces with a fulfillment formula..."¹⁰³ Because He is Israel, the seed of David, the new Moses.

As the law became associated with Moses, so did biblical authority. Jesus Himself referenced Moses as the OT authority (8:4; 19:7, 8). And it was Jesus the Son of God who being the new Moses established His authority, which is observed not only through His numerous miracles, but by His words as well. This statement of Messiah, "You've heard it said... but I say unto you," Jesus used many times establishing His authority among the Israelites. It was noticed, for the crowds declared, "... when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes," (7:28-29; also see 22:29-33). Matthew's Son of God was the new Moses, and this being the case, and similar to the Davidic theme, this theme will be interwoven within the major theme of Matthew, which is Messiah's recapitulation of Israel's historical narrative as defined in the fulfillment narrative of Matthew.

Summations

Chapter 2 argued the need to recognize and embrace these three key elements when approaching the First Gospel. This writer believes they more just help the student; they open up the window of understanding into Matthew's 1st century Jewish world and in turn his gospel.

¹⁰¹ . G. W. Bromiley, Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Vol. 3, Revised (Wm. B. Eerdmans. 1979-1988), 415. Logos Bible Software.

¹⁰² Ben-Sasson, "A History of the Jewish People," 45.

¹⁰³ Blomberg, "Matthew," 30.

CHAPTER 3 THE INTRODUCTION & INFANCY OF THE KING (MATT. 1-4)

Introduction

Chapter 1 focused on the research issue, (the setting aside of the Jewishness of the Scriptures), and how the interpretive problem developed over time within the church itself. Chapter 2 concentrated on three possible components that open up the book of Matthew for today's reader.

Chapter 3 of this thesis will examine the historical narrative of Matthew's gospel, chapters 1-4, which are the early stages and ministry of the life of Messiah.

Again, reiterating the research thesis statement, "Matthew's use of the fulfillment and identity passages and patterns in relation to the OT prophetic texts reveal a depth of Jewish knowledge and understanding regarding his Messiah's unique life and intertwined relationship with Israel, not easily recognized due to allegorical interpretive influences, let alone a far removed modern day Gentile perspective." With this in mind, may the tax collector open the minds of his modern day readers to his amazing Messiah!

From Birth to Childhood, Chapters 1-2

Matthew 1:1-20

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham..." Matthew 1:1

From his first sentence, Matthew begins to argue and prove that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah of Israel. He was an Israelite, the true Son of David. He does not begin his genealogy with the first man, Adam, as did Luke. For the sake of his Jewish audience he began with David and Abraham; knowing that their birth and calling as a people began with the calling of Abraham; and their future glory rested on the offspring of the beloved King David. Matthew testified to his readers that Jesus was truly a descendent of Abraham, the father of their nation, and Messiah being that descendent truly was one of His own people, an Israelite indeed. Thus begins the fulfillment theme of Matthew.

Matthew also stressed that Messiah was in the lineage of King David, for it was foremost in his mind. As previously discussed in this thesis, Matthew is enamored with this very important Jewish Davidic theme. What is placed first before the reader is the thought, "Jesus the Messiah, is the Son of King David, the son of Abraham our father!" It seems that the writer wanted to remove all doubt in the Jewish minds and prove that Christ was a true Jew in Abraham and in the kingly line of David. Not only did Matthew begin with mentioning David as a key figure, he continues the Davidic theme throughout the first portion of chapter 1 (1: 6, 17). He even comforts the Jewish reader by confirming that Joseph is the son of David (1:20). Thus begins the Davidic theme of Matthew.

The concept of a new Moses also begins in Matthew chapter 1, but is only in seed form. Prophetically, Genesis 49:10 claims, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." At the time of Matthew's writing, and as already discussed, Moses was considered the law giver of Israel; yet before Moses, the prophecy indicated that a ruler and law giver would come from the tribe of Judah. Moses was from the tribe of Levi

(Exodus 2:1, 2). Jesus the Messiah was from the tribe of Judah (1:2, 3). Thus begins the underlying theme of the new Moses.

Jesus Christ beautifully met all the legal criteria of the Messiah's prophetic genealogy. He alone had the right and authority to carry out and fulfill the promises and covenants found in all the law and in the prophets.

Matthew 1:22-23

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us'."

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah promised a sign to unbelieving King Ahaz (who belonged to King David's dynasty), if Ahaz so desired it. King David's God desired to prove His faithfulness to David's offspring and his people. But King Ahaz refused the sign, and as a result God gave a sign despite Ahaz, the sign being that a virgin (or young girl) would conceive and bear a son who would be named Immanuel. Regarding the context of Isaiah and Matthew's use of this OT Scripture, Beale notes that "The majority of scholars deny any predictive element [as referring to a future messianic child]... better... however, is the concept of double fulfillment..."¹⁰⁴ Beale also states, "... a handful of very conservative scholars insist on seeing solely a messianic prophecy here..., [yet] most recognize that there is at least a provisional fulfillment in Isaiah's day, given the explicit statements of 7:15-16."¹⁰⁵ Keeping this in mind, the idea of a double fulfillment, or in the least a pre-fulfillment in some sense does seem apparent in the Isaiah text. The son could then refer to Isaiah's own son, but yet with a greater prophetic messianic meaning relating to Messiah. Keener maintains, "...all the names of Isaiah's children were meant as signs pointing beyond themselves... 'God with us'[would]..., more aptly point than to the son of David rightly called 'Mighty God'"¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, the answer to Ahaz's unbelief, and all of Israel's woes would find their answer in the fulfillment of Isaiah's unique prophecy, which Matthew understood to be this Child which he saw to be the reality of God's promise to King Ahaz.

There does remain controversy over Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew's use of this text, yet Fruchtenbaum is confident that this text teaches that, "Messiah will be a God-Man. Messiah will be a king. Messiah must be born prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD."¹⁰⁷ Although the Isaiah text may seem obscure, and possibly Isaiah's own son may appear to be the fulfillment of the prophecy, Matthew recognizes that there is something more to it, and recorded that this prophecy in due course was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The Messiah would be born of a girl; the reality of Genesis 3:15, finding its culmination in a young virgin named Mary.

¹⁰⁴ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 5.

¹⁰⁵ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 4.

¹⁰⁶ Keener, "IVPBBC: NT", (Mt 1:22-23).

¹⁰⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 37.

Matthew 2:5-6

“So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

The next aspect of Matthew’s fulfillment theme relates to the birthplace of King David’s son. It is in this context that Matthew affirms that it is Israel’s leaders, when asked by King Herod the birthplace of their Jewish king, quote the prophet Micah (5:2). It was Micah who prophesied that Bethlehem of Judea would be the birthplace of Israel’s ruler, who would be the Shepherd.

Matthew did not see a need as did Luke, to show his readers how the Messiah’s family journeyed to Bethlehem from Nazareth. For Matthew, it was the fact that his Messiah perfectly fulfilled the specific prophecy regarding the birth of Israel’s King, the Son of David. And regarding this biblical fact the Jewish leadership confessed to it before King Herod!

Bethlehem was an insignificant town to the Jewish leaders, for it was the home of lowly shepherds. According to Edersheim “it was repugnant to Israel.”¹⁰⁸ Morris also notes, “The passage is saying that Bethlehem’s greatness consists only in that it is the birthplace of the great leader, and this is as plain in Micah as in Matthew.”¹⁰⁹ But does Matthew see something more? Could it be that Messiah had humble beginnings as Israel had? Could it be that Messiah had humble beginnings as Israel’s first great king, King David the shepherd? (These two questions will be answered when considering Matthew 2:23, for there are fulfillment similarities between the Bethlehem and Nazareth quotations by Matthew). Yet, could it also be that Messiah would be a humble servant as prophesied by Isaiah (53:1-3), and later reflected upon by Matthew (12:18-21).

It must be considered that Bethlehem was the home of shepherds. A watch tower was constructed in this area, so the shepherds could view their sheep destined for sacrifice in the temple. Bethlehem, the provider of the temple sacrifices, ultimately provided another sacrifice, the last sacrifice, the one wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. The providers of the temple sacrifices, the shepherds, were the first to witness the Lamb of God, the true Shepherd of Israel. They were also the first to announce the glad tidings of their Messiah.

Does not this Messiah fulfill the role of God’s servant in every aspect, even a humble birth in a manger for animals, in a town of little interest to the Jewish Rabbis? Messiah the Son of David, the Ruler and Shepherd of Israel at His birth not only fulfilled prophecy but began his lowly servant role as foretold in the Scriptures.

Matthew 2:6 is the first of many parallel passages in Matthew that link the lives of King David with his offspring, Jesus Christ. And with this truth, the kingly theme of Messiah is sustained; He being King David’s offspring by birth and by life.

¹⁰⁸ Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus Messiah,” Vol. 1, 181.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 39.

Matthew 2:13-15

“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’ When he awoke, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called My Son.’”

Matthew is revealing to his readers that His Messiah not only fulfilled the direct prophecies concerning him, but that he also identified with the nation itself, in what this author describes as a *parallel pattern* in which Messiah lives out Israel’s history. Israel as a people first went down into Egypt, and that is why Messiah did as well. He was more than simply playacting as Neusner would describe it. As Israel saw herself as a redeemed people taken out of Egypt, the Messiah fully identifies with her by reliving her history. Matthew desired to prove to his readers that Jesus was a complete Jew. Blomberg rightly states that,

“Matthew sees striking parallels in the patterns of God’s activities in history in ways he cannot attribute to coincidence. Just as God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again God is bringing the Messiah, who fulfills the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt as he is about to inaugurate his New Covenant.”¹¹⁰

Yet, what is interesting is that Hosea 11:1 is an obscure verse that simply states that Israel was God’s son who was called out of Egypt, and simply refers to Israel as a nation. “In context Hosea 11:1 refers plainly to the Israelites leaving Egypt in the exodus; Matthew applies this text to Jesus because Jesus epitomizes and fulfills Israel’s history (Mt 1:1).”¹¹¹ In the original OT text there is visibly no hint that it would one day refer to Israel’s own Son and King. Beale would agree, “Hosea 11:1 is a reference to the exodus, pure and simple... 11:1 reflects synonymous parallelism...”¹¹² Keener wisely observes that Matthew cleverly builds almost every paragraph in the first four chapters of his gospel with at least one text from the OT that pertains to Jesus early life.

Notice, Matthew only quotes a portion of Hosea 11:1, that portion which reflects Israel’s being called out of Egypt, for Hosea 11:2 continued by explaining Israel’s immediate disobedience to the Father once she leaves Egypt. Matthew will clearly demonstrate that His Messiah was quite the opposite, where Israel failed, He will perfectly fulfill.

Beale makes mention that Matthew 2:15 is the first of several parallel passages in the early portion of Matthew that link the Messiah with Moses. Could it be that this child is the new Moses, the future prophet that Moses promised? If He was, would it not make sense that His life in some sense then paralleled that of Moses? For Moses made it quite plain, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren,” (Deut. 18:15). According to the tax collector, Jesus Christ was being

¹¹⁰ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 67.

¹¹¹ Keener, “IVPBBC: NT,” (Matthew 2:15).

¹¹² Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 7.

raised up as a true Israelite, just like Moses, and was from amongst His Jewish brethren. Israel came out of Egypt, Moses came out of Egypt, and Israel's true Son and Prophet came out of Egypt!

Matthew 2:17-18

“Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’”

According to the Jewish people, Rachel was, and still is considered the symbol of Jewish motherhood, so much so that there is a statue of Rachel today in Jerusalem holding a torch in her right hand while her left hand embraces two children.

Ramah was a plateau near Bethlehem that was the location of Rachel's death and burial. It was where Jacob had set up a pillar, and revered his beloved wife; it was where Israel wept for his wife.

Years later, Ramah was the meeting place for the captives of Judah who were led away by the ruthless Gentile king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. A bitter bondage was the future for the healthy and chosen captives; others such as the women, the old, the young, and the weak, were ruthlessly slaughtered since they were only a hindrance to their bloody conquerors. Because of the cruel deaths, and the heartrending departure of family and friends, another bitter wailing had taken place at Ramah. Israel's disobedience to their God brought about persecution by the Gentiles. Yet the wailing in Ramah was not complete, “2:17–18... refers to the figurative weeping of Rachel, who was buried in Bethlehem (Gen 35:19). Jeremiah said she mourned for her descendants carried off into captivity during the Babylonian exile... but Rachel had cause to mourn anew at Herod's murder of her people.”¹¹³

Herod was similar to the Pharaoh of Egypt who ruled over Israel during the time of the birth of Israel's first deliverer, Moses. Herod was brutal, and killed the Israelite children, just as Pharaoh had done. More so, Herod played a role in the fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures concerning Messiah. It was Herod's brutality that caused Joseph and Mary to flee with the child Jesus down into Egypt. This fulfilled the Scripture concerning Christ's identification with Israel and their being called out of Egypt. When Herod killed the Israelite children, it caused a great time of weeping for the Jews and also fulfilled Scripture concerning Israelite suffering.

Yet again, Matthew's OT quotation is neither predictive nor prophetic, “But there is nothing here or in ancient Jewish literature to suggest that anyone specifically looked for a similar event to recur in the context of the birth of the Messiah.”¹¹⁴ Why is it that Matthew mentions this text as clearly coming to fulfillment in his Messiah?

There was one who was the true representative of Israel, the Son of David, the Messiah, and the true Prophet. It was He who was the fulfillment of Israel's history. A cruel Gentile king was in power during the birth of Messiah; Herod the Great. It was he who slaughtered the innocents next. Did not the Jewish leaders stand by and ignore the

¹¹³ Keener, “IVPBBC: NT”, (Mt 2:17–18).”

¹¹⁴ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 9.

claims of the Gentile Wise Men? Again the Jewish leadership, similar to their forefathers ignored the prodding of their God. For the third time there was wailing in Ramah. This was the re-echoing of the cry that had taken place over 500 years before. This time, as stated by Matthew, was the fulfillment, or the completion of that dreadful, bitter weeping that had taken place long before. It was done in hopes of extinguishing Israel's true king. The full prophetic scene of Jeremiah 31:15 was realized in the mothers of the male children two years old and younger in Bethlehem. Messiah had not only fulfilled, but identified with his people again in their suffering.

Yet again, we easily recognize another parallel between Israel's first deliverer, Moses, and their ultimate deliverer, Jesus Christ. Not only did they share similar origins in Egypt, they needed preservation from ruthless Gentile kings. "There may well be 'new Moses' typology in baby Jesus, like baby Moses being preserved from the threat of death ordered by a wicked ruler for the baby boys around him."¹¹⁵ Keener even goes a step further and considers the following verses in Matthew 2 as another parallel in the lives of Moses and Messiah, "Matthew's first readers would have undoubtedly caught the comparison Matthew implies between Jesus and Moses here."¹¹⁶ For Exodus 4:19 states, "Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, 'Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead.'" And Matthew 2:19-20 similarly state, "Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.'" Both prophets being young children were preserved as numerous other Israelite children were brutally slaughtered. Both prophets were called back into their lands after the deaths of their people's cruel leaders.

Matthew 2:23

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

Matthew interestingly mentions the lowly city of Nazareth as the dwelling place of the Messiah. He does not quote a specific OT passage or prophet as he has previously, but he references the fulfillment of an OT messianic theme found in a number of the prophets. There is no doubt that Matthew is arguing the humility of his Messiah. According to both Fruchtenbaum and Edersheim, the Nazarene was looked down upon by the Galileans, and the Galileans were looked down upon by the Judeans. Morris also argues the obscurity of the community of Nazareth. "It was apparently not an important place; it is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Talmud, the Midrashim, or Josephus..."¹¹⁷ The disciple Nathaniel also knew that to be from Nazareth was somehow associated with lowliness and asked the question of Philip in John 1:46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" According to the tax collector? Absolutely!

Also bearing in mind, Keener does not consider the use of more than one prophet as a reference as unusual and specifically makes mention of the thematic concept of the "branch" as a title for the Messiah. "But ancient authors sometimes blended texts together, and both Jews and Greeks used plays on words to make points in

¹¹⁵ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 10.

¹¹⁶ Keener, "IVPBBC: NT," (Mt 2:20-21).

¹¹⁷ Morris, "The Gospel of Matthew," 49.

argumentation, so this text could be a play on the Hebrew word *nētser*, ‘branch,’ a title for the Messiah (Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12; cf. Is 11:1).” The prophet Isaiah spoke of this branch that would come forth from the stem of Jesse (“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,” Isaiah 11:1), and ultimately coming forth from the seed of David. Isaiah’s prophecies emphasized that this branch or Messiah would be God’s humble servant who would be lowly, despised and rejected. It appears obvious that Matthew was speaking of Isaiah as one of the prophets who foretold the humility of Messiah. To be called a Nazarene easily fulfills the servant theme specifically noted in Isaiah 53:2, 3, and eluded to other prophecies.

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Again, bearing in mind the overall theme of Messiah’s Jewish identity, does it not make sense that Jesus’ humble beginnings would be of the same nature as Israel’s humble beginnings? Remember Israel’s call from Egypt as God reminded them in Deut. 7:7, 8.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Matthew’s Jesus is the ultimate Israelite, who in his mind recognizes his Messiah recapitulating his own Jewish history. Israel was brought out of Egypt and born out of obscurity and lowliness, Messiah was brought out of Egypt and was born out of obscurity and lowliness also. Yet, there seems to be more. For there is another leader of Israel who was raised out of obscurity and lowliness, that is Israel’s beloved King David.

King David’s humble beginnings began in the small community of Bethlehem, as did the Messiah’s many generations later. He was the youngest of his family and was a lowly shepherd who faithfully carried out his tasks. He was not born into royalty, nor was he the people’s choice to be the King of Israel, but he was God’s choice. As the ABD affirms, “David’s story begins with his dramatic rise in fortunes, from humble beginnings as an insignificant shepherd in his father’s house to his acclamation as king over all Israel in his own capital city, Jerusalem.”¹¹⁸ In the same manner, Jesus was a Nazarene who was not born into royalty, nor was He the people’s choice, but He was God’s choice. David, the man after God’s own heart was chosen not because of his physical stature, but because of his humble heart! Psalm 78:70–72 declares,

He also chose David His servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds;
From following the ewes that had young He brought him,
To shepherd Jacob His people,

¹¹⁸ Freedman “ABD, Vol. 2,” 41.

And Israel His inheritance.
So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

No doubt Matthew knew the importance of mentioning Bethlehem, Egypt and Nazareth as the modest beginnings of the Messiah's early life. For His Messiah is both the Prophet like Moses, and King of Israel like David; for both men being central figures in the calling, life and history of Israel foreshadowed something far greater. The reality came to pass in the fulfillment by Jesus Christ!

From Obscurity to Popularity, Chapters 3-4

Matthew 3:1-3

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’”

The coming of John the Baptist was foretold by the prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) and was fulfilled according to Matthew. This prophetic message of Isaiah declared a special day when Israel's restorative hopes would be fulfilled. Some consider this promise as the ushering in of a new exodus in the life of Israel. “Isaiah 40:3 is in the context of Isaiah's prophecy of a new exodus, when God would again deliver his people and lead them back to Jerusalem from all the nations among which they were scattered.”¹¹⁹ And even possibly “John's location [the wilderness of Judea] symbolizes the coming of a new exodus, the final time of salvation...”¹²⁰

It is commonly recognized that in Bible times a herald, or forerunner, would be sent out to clear the roads of obstacles, repair pot-holes and level the rough areas in the road prior to the journey of a king. Yet, it was more than just preparing the roads leading to Jerusalem; it was also preparing the hearts of the people for the King who would reign in Jerusalem. John the Baptist was that forerunner, the herald or the ambassador of the King, the King who was presently among His people. John's message therefore was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”.

John, the cousin of the Messiah, was in many ways similar to Elijah. He wore similar clothing, ate similar food, and preached forthright as Elijah. According to Jesus, he could have been the Elijah of prophecy (Matt. 11:14). Similar to Elijah, he desired to bring the hearers to a decision concerning their king. He was extremely bold and honest regarding the condition of his people and their leaders. He spoke a clear message of repentance, and he called them out of the synagogues and temple into the desert. He made their responsibility clear. First, they were to repent. This was challenging to the Jew, for the Jewish teachers thought that they were already fit for the kingdom, for were they not the sons of Abraham. Second, they were to identify with John's message, and his kingdom message through baptism (being symbolic of true inward cleansing). This was to be the commitment on their part, to be part of that remnant acknowledging Jesus Christ as Israel's Messiah.

¹¹⁹ Keener, “IVPBBC: NT” (Mt 3:3).

¹²⁰ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 14.

Yet, in the greater theme of fulfillment could it be that John the Baptist being a prophet in his own right, similar to Isaiah, or Jeremiah or Ezekiel was enforcing, or rather announcing Old Covenant authority by introducing the New Covenant reality, which is the Anointed One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit or with fire? It should be emphasized that John was introducing Israel's messianic hope, the mediator of the New Covenant when he made reference to the fact that Jesus Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Holy Spirit is at the very core of New Covenant truth. "I will put My Spirit within..." (Ezekiel 36:27).

John the Baptist was announcing and introducing the Messiah, the Jewish King to His people Israel. John declared that this was the King who would have authority over his people Israel; the kingdom that was foretold, the kingdom that was expected, and the kingdom that would come to pass through the new deliverer, the new Moses. And Matthew decisively states that John the Baptist fulfilled Isaiah 40:3 just as God said it would happen.

Matthew 3:15

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him."

Matthew records Jesus very own words regarding His purpose in being baptized, and it was to "fulfill all righteousness." This author agrees with Blomberg's simple deduction regarding this statement, "To fulfill all righteousness means to complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to God. In so doing, Jesus identifies with and endorses John's ministry as divinely ordained and his message as one to be heeded."¹²¹ And within that fulfillment, there appears to be at least six truth related purposes linked to Jesus' baptism.

Number one, Jesus as the Messiah was to receive a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him..." (Isaiah 42:1). Number two, to fulfill all righteousness of the law and prophets; as Israel was to be identified with John's messianic hope, so must the Messiah be identified with it as well. "Jesus' response seems to stress his identification with Israel in obedience to God's law (cf. 5:17)."¹²² Number three, the new Moses needed to be publicly introduced to Israel as God's Anointed One. Number four, Messiah needed to identify with John's message, the believing remnant and sinners (If Messiah was truly recapitulating Israel's history, how could He bypass their required baptism?). Number five, the Davidic King was publicly acknowledged and authenticated by His heavenly Father (Isaiah 42:1).

The sixth truth again relates to Jesus identification with the history of Israel. As the people of Israel were called out of Egypt and were on the brink of their wilderness wanderings they were in a sense baptized and identified with Moses and in the Red Sea. "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea..." 1 Cor. 10:1-2). Could it be that if Messiah was truly living out Israel's history,

¹²¹ Blomberg, "Matthew" 81.

¹²² Keener, "IVPBBC: NT," (Mt 3:15).

and He Himself on the brink of a forty day fast in the wilderness, needed to pass through a baptism as Israel had? This author believes there is validity to this identity truth. Consider the servant prophecy of Isaiah.

The servant prophecies of Isaiah reveal unique features of the servant, and two of these features are witnessed in God's prophetic authentication of the Messiah. Number one, God calls this special servant by the name of Israel. Number two, God would be glorified in this messianic servant. "And He said to me, 'You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified'" (Isaiah 49:3). Jesus' baptism confirms that Messiah is Israel, in the sense He is the perfect Israelite; and contrary to the nation of Israel itself, He will faithfully glorify God! He therefore must fulfill all righteousness as no other has ever accomplished; not only by simple obedience to the Father's will, but by becoming Israel itself and living out their history in perfect submissiveness!

In conclusion to Jesus baptism, Edersheim even considers the dove as symbolic of the people of Israel. "But we go farther, and assert, that the dove was not the symbol of the Holy Spirit, but that of Israel. As such it is so universally adopted as to have become almost historical."¹²³ Edersheim goes on to state that if there must be a reason for the dove "it would lie in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the ideal typical Israelite, the Representative of His People."¹²⁴ Edersheim's claim actually makes sense in light of the fulfillment passages and patterns so relevant in Matthew.

Matthew 4:1-11

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry." (4:1-2)

Knowing the history of Israel, it should not surprise the reader of Matthew's Gospel that Jesus was immediately led into the wilderness by the Spirit after passing through baptism, for Israel had been led into the wilderness by the Spirit immediately after passing through the Red Sea. Once again, Messiah as the true Israelite lived out their history.

The Old Testament Scriptures made it clear that Israel as a nation had failed in respect to their obedience to God. This was especially evident during their forty years of wilderness wanderings. As a people called out of Egypt, they failed in all aspects of their testing. Israel as a disobedient son failed; Messiah as an obedient Son would fulfill. The Feast of Sukkot reminds the Israelite of their 40 years of wilderness wanderings. Yet, Jesus would do much more than simply celebrate that feast, he would live out their history and fulfill what they never accomplished, and that is victory in the face of temptation. "But where in both instances Israel as a people or Moses as a leader failed the test, Jesus passes his."¹²⁵ And there appears to be at least six parallels during the wilderness trials.

Number one, both Israel and Christ were called sons; both sons were called out of Egypt. Number two; it was in the wilderness in which the testing took place. Number

¹²³ Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus Messiah, Vol. 1," 287.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Beale, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 14.

three, the Spirit of God had led, and was present with both Israel and Christ. (“...One of the most common recitations of God’s acts in the Old Testament was that he ‘led’ his people in the wilderness [see especially Is 63:14], where they were tested.”¹²⁶) Number four, a point of testing regarded food; Israel ate manna for forty years. Messiah’s test was intensified; Messiah had no food for 40 days. Number five, Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years. Messiah was intensely tested in the wilderness forty days. Finally, they both had the same Scriptures in which to trust from the book of Deuteronomy. “The three texts from Deuteronomy (6:13, 16; 8:3) cited here (4:4, 7, 10) were commands God gave to Israel when he tested Israel for forty years in the wilderness. Unlike Israel of old, Jesus as Israel’s representative (1:1; 2:15) passes the tests.”¹²⁷

Messiah fulfilled for Israel what they never had; victory in temptation. This must have struck a chord in the Jewish minds as they considered this servant. Messiah proved that He was the ultimate obedient son. He was the Ultimate Jew! “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15).

Lastly, some consider these forty days of the Messiah’s fasting as a parallel relating to Moses fasting, for “... Moses also fasted forty days and nights; Jesus may appear here as a new Moses, the new lawgiver (see Mt 5:1–2).”¹²⁸ Morris also agrees with Keener on this parallelism between Moses and Messiah. If Jesus Christ is the new Moses, and which He is, this correlation must be another feature to this unique life of Messiah and His relationship to His own.

Matthew 4:13-16

“And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’”

Jehovah had afflicted the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali due to their covenant disobedience. This resulted in their captivity and spiritual darkness. Jehovah foretold of another day when this region of the Gentiles would see a great light. “Zebulun and Naphtali were the OT territories closest to first-century Galilee. Jesus obviously is the light dawning on the peoples of those regions...”¹²⁹ Matthew declared that Messiah at the beginning of his earthly ministry fulfilled this very prophecy, and brought light to this region because He was that light. The Messiah inaugurated the restoration process as forecasted by Isaiah.

There are also two other truths related to the Isaiah text Matthew quotes. Number one, Messiah would be a light to the Gentile nations. (Matthew began in chapter 1 with a Gentile theme and sustains it throughout his gospel; this Gentile theme will be reflected

¹²⁶ Keener, “IVPBBC: NT” (Mt 4:1).

¹²⁷ Ibid, (Mt 4:1–11).

¹²⁸ Ibid, (Mt 4:2).

¹²⁹ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 18.

upon when the Gentile prophecy in chapter 12 is discussed). And number two, this restoration process would be accomplished by the one sitting upon the throne of David.

As soon as the Messiah had victory in the wilderness He entered the remotest areas of Israel and began the restoration process of those peoples who were in darkness. He was obedient Israel who carried out God's will in contrast to the nation of Israel. He was accomplishing for Israel what Israel could not accomplish for herself.

Summations

"God with us;" These three words have a far greater implication than one could ever imagine. Messiah became an Israelite, not only in body, but in life and purpose also. He was the ultimate Israelite. Neusner makes this important philosophical statement regarding the thinking of his people, Israel.

"Archeological facts, accordingly, do not bear upon the issues of faith, because for Rabbinic Judaism the Torah – God's instruction – yields no one-time history, but the eternal truth in the form of story... For Judaism, the past is present, and the present is part of the past, so past, present, and future form a single plane of being."

That is why the fulfillment passages and patterns of Matthew reveal a deeper understanding of his Messiah than meets the Gentile eye. As noted early, Neusner argues that Israel sees itself through the eyes of its historical narrative. Past, present and future Israel all came out of Egypt, all went through the Red Sea, all wandered in the wilderness and all received the Mosaic Law. And that is why Matthew's Messiah recapitulates Israel's history, for He truly is Israel.

Chapter 3 (Matt. 1-4) fulfillment parallels:

1. Messiah like Israel was born a true Israelite, the Son of David.
2. Messiah like Israel and King David had a very humble birth.
3. Messiah like Israel and Moses was brought out of Egypt.
4. Messiah like Israel and Moses suffered at the hands of a Gentile king.
5. Messiah like Israel and King David had a very humble upbringing.
6. Messiah like Israel and Moses went through the water of baptism.
7. Messiah like Israel and Moses went into the wilderness of temptation.
8. Messiah unlike Israel overcame temptation in the wilderness.
9. Messiah unlike Israel was a light in the Gentile regions of darkness.

Messiah's Jewish identity is emphasized by Matthew beginning from His very birth. His recapitulation of Israel's, King David's and Moses's own historical narrative is easily recognizable. Messiah's victory where Israel failed is also easily recognizable. "Throughout the gospel, Matthew develops the title [Son of God] in terms of the obedient servant who recapitulates the history of Israel, the Son of God in the OT, and who proves

he is the true Son and Israel by withstanding temptation and doing the will of the Father (e.g., 2:15; 3:17; 4:1–11).”¹³⁰

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

¹³⁰ Freedman, “ABD, Vol. 4,” 638.

CHAPTER 4 THE AUTHORITY & CHARACTER OF THE KING (MATT. 5-10)

The Sermon on the Mount, Chapters 5-7

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...” (5:1-2).

“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (7:28-29).

Reflection

Neusner identifies the Passover, the celebration of the Jewish exodus as the first main identifier of Israel’s Judaism. It corresponded to Israel’s call as a people out of the house of bondage and preparing their way to the Promised Land. It was accomplished with miracles, signs and great wonders. It is the story of God’s call and God’s redemption. It is the first of Israel’s three main feasts.

“The story the family tells about itself as Israel makes their play-acting at supper plausible as they turn their lives into metaphor, themselves as actors... it is how every day Jews transform themselves into the ‘Israel’ of which Scripture speaks... Jews think of themselves as having gone forth from Egypt... thus the family states, recapitulating the entire narrative of Judaism’s Israel.”¹³¹

Yet, Matthew the tax collector reveals in his commentary on the life of the Messiah, something much greater than mere play-acting at the Passover table. The Messiah took part in Israel’s history by reliving it. It is obvious from Scripture that Messiah took part in the Passover celebrations, but Matthew clearly declared that Messiah was born out of humble beginnings as was Israel and King David. Messiah went down into Egypt and suffered with His people as Israel had. He came through the water and was led into the wilderness as Israel was. Israel’s life was Messiah’s life; Messiah’s life was Israel’s life. The Messiah is Israel in every way.

According to Neusner the next great event on the Jewish calendar is the feast Shavuot, celebrating the receiving of the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai. So where does Matthew take us next? Matthew takes us to the mountainside where Messiah will teach His Law to the Jewish people.

As Israel’s exodus out of Egypt defined their redemption, the Torah further defined their covenant relationship to their covenant God. As noted earlier in this study, the Torah became the centerpiece of their national identity during the intertestamental years. Neusner claims that “Israel gained great merit because it alone was willing to accept the Ten Commandments. The Israelites deserve praise for accepting the Torah.”¹³² And that God loved Israel because Israel had accepted the Torah and was agreeable to carry out God’s purposes in the Torah.¹³³ But it was not only their acceptance of the

¹³¹ Neusner, “Judaism, An Introduction,” 15.

¹³² Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture ; Introduction to Rabbinic Midrash*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub. 2004), 50.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 99.

Torah that would set them apart as a people, but also the merit associated with their devotion to the Torah. “Israel attains merit through Torah study, and thereby Israel is able to endure while the nations come to naught.”¹³⁴ Yet it would seem that the new Moses would contradict this honorable mindset. As He took His rightful position on the mountainside to clarify the Torah he denounced the Pharisaical standards, which were the epitome of righteousness among the Jewish people.

Sermon Overview

In his well-written commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Blomberg delineates eight of the most common views pertaining to the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. In general, concerning these various interpretations, each would agree with Walvoord, “That the Sermon on the Mount presents ethical content. . . .”¹³⁵ But as to the purpose of the ethical content is where the differences occur. The following views are a summary from Blomberg’s commentary:¹³⁶

1. It is a higher ethical teaching for the clergy, which originated before or around medieval times.
2. Its function is that of the law (as in Pauline teaching), purported by Martin Luther.
3. It is to be taken literally and obeyed completely as instructed by Anabaptists.
4. The paradigm of the social gospel proposed by protestant liberals, which when obeyed would usher in the kingdom of God on earth.
5. The Sermon’s ethics are not to be taken as absolute, but more of a guide to the consciousness of man’s finitude alongside of divine encounter. This theory has been promoted by existentialists.
6. It was an interim ethic for those of Jesus’ day who mistakenly believed that Christ would come back in their day. Albert Schweitzer devised this view.
7. It is future millennial kingdom teaching as taught by some dispensationalists.
8. It is Jesus general teaching on the kingdom which has an already/not yet tension. The teaching is meant for all Christians in all ages, but not fully realized until Christ’s return. Blomberg and other scholars hold to this view.

From Matthew’s perspective His Messiah had disrupted Judaism! His teaching did not underscore the rabbinical oral traditions, He rather denounced it. He did not quote the Jewish Fathers adding authority to His teaching. “So we are not surprised to read at the end of the Sermon that it was the *authority* of Jesus which impressed the by standers (7:28-29).”¹³⁷ Jesus’ teaching far surpassed that of the Rabbis. His teaching was entirely spiritual. It lifted the humble and condemned the proud. It was unbiased, un-hypocritical; full of grace and truth. Simply stated, Jesus was an anomaly, He shocked Judaism at its core! “Christ came to found a Kingdom, not a School; to institute a fellowship, not to propound a system.”¹³⁸ With this in mind, it is this author’s contention that Jesus Christ

¹³⁴ Neusner, “Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture,” 44.

¹³⁵ John F. Walvoord, *Matthew Thy Kingdom Come* (Kregel Pub.: Grand Rapids, 1974) 44.

¹³⁶ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 94-95.

¹³⁷ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 165.

¹³⁸ Edersheim, “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 1,” 528.

came to establish His kingdom, and not to set aside the Law and the Prophets in any manner, but to fulfill them, and bring about their intentioned purposes; and the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount being an integral part of His first coming, and filling up the meaning of all the Law!

The Purpose of the Sermon

With the historical background in mind, this writer will explain his view of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Recall that by the time Messiah had come onto the scene, the Jewish teachers had thoroughly corrupted the Law. Their interpretations and additions had become the tradition and standard of their conduct. It was an extremely external code of conduct, and was totally unrelated to conditions of the heart (Pharisaical Judaism). When Christ confronted these false traditions and interpretations, the teachers claimed that He was against the Mosaic Law and the covenant established by their God. Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, did not destroy the Law but appeared to properly interpret the intent of the Law and fulfill it.

As previously discussed Messiah's life beautifully parallels that of His chosen people. But where Israel completely failed as God's chosen servant, the Messiah completely fulfilled as God's chosen servant. Guthrie astutely points out; "OT history vividly demonstrates the failure on the part of the Israelites to fulfil[l] their part of the bargain. Jesus alone perfectly fulfilled man's side of the covenantal agreement and this supplies at once the justification for regarding the moral teaching of Jesus as the perfect interpretation of the real intention of the law."¹³⁹ Jesus taught the sermon and fulfilled its many aspects, and it strongly appears that He brought it to its real and final climax. Consider Fruchtenbaum, "Fulfillment here means to 'fill up the meaning of,' or to bring to its highest meaning. It is exemplified by Yeshua's teaching on the Law in Matthew 5-7, and the pattern of his life."¹⁴⁰ Blomberg states, "...Jesus views his role as that of fulfilling all of the Old Testament."¹⁴¹ What is the point of stressing this parallelism and fulfillment? Is it possible that the Sermon was the parallel of Moses giving the Law to his people? Blomberg notes this parallel, "Jesus goes up to the mountainside just as Moses did at Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. Many have seen Matthew's portrait of Jesus, therefore, as the new Moses or new lawgiver."¹⁴² Jesus was on a mountain as was Moses, the teaching and terms of both leaders were alike in nature (conditional). Could it be possible that the Messiah, the author of the Law, needed to clarify the true teaching of the Law? And as He perfectly taught the Law, He perfectly fulfilled the Law in every aspect. That is why He did not need to destroy the Law, but He brought it to its intended goal; in prophecy and obedience.

Second, standard and agreement: The majority of biblical scholars agree that the Sermon sets a standard that is very high with practical ramifications. Walvoord correctly notes, "In the progress of this narrative [sermon], Jesus not only proclaimed lofty general principles, but also made particular application to current situations."¹⁴³ Jesus in His

¹³⁹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill, 1981) 894.

¹⁴⁰ Arnold G Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Ariel Ministries: Tustin, CA, 1989) 898.

¹⁴¹ Blomberg, "Matthew," 103.

¹⁴² Ibid. 96-97.

¹⁴³ Walvoord, "Matthew Thy Kingdom Come," 45-46.

sermon immediately gets to the core issues; those are issues of the heart. “Jesus taught . . . that the demands of the law were not only external conformity, but also internal conformity. While one does not violate the letter of the law until he commits an act of adultery, he does violate the righteousness of the law by lusting.”¹⁴⁴ Walvoord quotes Pink as saying, “Its larger part was a most searching exposition of the spirituality of the Law and the refutation of the false teaching of the elders.”¹⁴⁵ Jesus skillfully went beyond mere behavioral acts and raises a spiritual standard unattainable by flesh. “It is indeed true, that the Words of Jesus, properly understood, marks the utmost limit of all possible moral conception.”¹⁴⁶ The NBD powerfully points out, “. . . the Sermon still demands a quality of ethical conduct which is breath-taking in its dimensions. . . It is neither an impractical ideal nor a fully attainable possibility.”¹⁴⁷ Jesus’ teaching was certainly idealistic, and yet it did not conflict with the OT teaching of the Law, but personified it and amplified it.

Were the issues of the heart that Jesus emphasized foreign to Old Testament Law? McClain answers this question by quoting Naegelsbach; “. . . it is true that men knew even under the Old Covenant that the law, in order to be fulfilled. . . must be in the heart (Deut. 30:6; Ps. 40:8; Prov. 3:1).”¹⁴⁸ Were the conditional statements of the Old Covenant similar to the Sermon? “Accordingly, it certainly seems to correspond to the Divine Revelation in the ‘Ten Words’ from Mount Sinai.”¹⁴⁹ Edersheim saw a direct correlation between the teaching of both Moses and the Messiah. Blomberg quotes Lapidé on this point; “Jesus is not proclaiming a new law but announcing what he believes is the legitimate interpretation of God’s will as contained in the already-existing Torah.”¹⁵⁰

Reflecting upon the standard of Messiah’s teaching and His agreement with the Old Testament, it would appear that the Messiah has recognizably interpreted the Law in its truest sense, resulting in a standard of righteousness that not even the Pharisees themselves could keep (5:20). And if that were not enough to make His point, Jesus declared an even higher standard; a standard of perfection; likeness to God (5:48).

“To treat it as a universal code of ethics, however, not only fails to recognize the clear sense of separation between ‘you’ and ‘them’ which runs through its text, and the ‘family’ relationship with God which it presupposes in its audience. . . .”¹⁵¹ This author agrees with France’s observation pertaining to the Sermon’s audience. Jesus is teaching His Jewish disciples and His Jewish nation. This would correspond with the fact that the Old Covenant was given to Israel alone. This author’s impression is that the Sermon was meant for the Jewish people in light of the presence of many years of misguided rabbinical teaching.

¹⁴⁴ Fruchtenbaum, “Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic,” 705.

¹⁴⁵ Walvoord, “Matthew Thy Kingdom Come,” 44.

¹⁴⁶ Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus Messiah, Vol. 1,” 528.

¹⁴⁷ R. H. Mounce, and others, *Sermon on the Mount. New Bible Dictionary, 3rd ed.* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1080. Logos Bible software.

¹⁴⁸ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (BMH Books: Winona Lake, IN, 1959), 159.

¹⁴⁹ Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus Messiah, Vol. 1,” 527.

¹⁵⁰ Blomberg, “Matthew,” 97.

¹⁵¹ France, “Matthew Evangelist and Teacher,” 164.

The conditional aspects placed within the Sermon significantly reflect the conditional aspects of the Old Covenant; both the blessing and cursing. Blomberg articulates that the hermeneutical pattern of the Sermon reflects that of Sinai.¹⁵² These conditional aspects of Jesus' teaching would have brought about a real awareness of Israel's national and personal failures, and a need for something far greater; perhaps a New Covenant?

Considering these points, the question must be asked, "Who among the Jewish nation would have even come close to fulfilling the demands of the Sermon?" The most revered among the nation, the Pharisees themselves could not attain to this righteousness. If the Pharisees could not, where did that leave the rest of the Jewish nation? And why did Jesus mention the failure of Pharisaical righteousness (5:20)? "He mentions the scribes and the Pharisees precisely because they were a paradigm of the greatest righteousness imaginable within Judaism."¹⁵³ And they all fell far short of God's glory!

Now to define this author's interpretive view in a simple statement; Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is Messiah's interpretation of the Law in contrast to years of distorted rabbinical teaching. Jesus personified and personalized the Law. God really did desire a heart response from His chosen people. Yet there had been hundreds of years of failure under the conditional Mosaic Covenant (A New Covenant far surpassing the old covenant was needed. Mount Calvary would become the conversion from the Old to the New). This writer views the Sermon as: "Kingdom/Law truth still under the Old Covenant." Messiah was the new Moses establishing His authority over His people, yet under the Torah for the New Covenant was yet to be established.

The New Lawgiver

"Israel will be saved through the merit of the ancestors, atonement, study of Torah, practice of religious duties... Among these [ancestors], Moses stands out; he has no equal. The special position of the humble Moses is complimented by the patriarchs and by David, all of whom knew how to please God and left an inheritance to Israel the merit they had thereby attained."¹⁵⁴

According to Matthew, one greater than Moses was present among his people; and in many ways was similar to Moses as he has already revealed. Now in the account, comparable to Moses who went up on the mountain to receive the Law (Exodus 19:2, 3), Messiah went up on the mountain to disseminate the Law. Matthew, unlike Mark and Luke makes sure that his readers understand the locale from where Jesus deliberated. Matthew brackets the Sermon on the Mount by stating Messiah's locale. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying..." (5:1-2); thus began the Sermon. "When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him" (8:1); and thus ended the Sermon. The narrative being so similar to Sinai, the 1st century Israelite could hardly miss the truth that Matthew desired to disclose. Again, the tax collector demonstrates that Jesus did more than just celebrate the Feast of Shavuot; He lived it out and established Himself as the new Moses, and He did it with the authority of

¹⁵² Blomberg, "Matthew," 98.

¹⁵³ Blomberg, "Matthew," 105.

¹⁵⁴ Neusner, "Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture," 85, 86.

the King, for He did not receive the Law as Moses (Exodus 24:12), He imparted it (Matt. 7:28, 29)!

The Son of David, the New Moses, Matthew Chapters 8-9

Ten Miracles

“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ and Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him’” (8:5-7).

Beale notes that “Matthew 8-9 comprises the first large narrative section within the body of this gospel. Thematically, it is unified by a series of ten miracles, mostly of healing.”¹⁵⁵ As a first century Israelite reading Matthew’s story, what could these ten miracles remind you of? Could it be the ten miracles associated with Moses? (“...some commentators have suggested that Matthew wants his readers to remember Moses’ ten miracles”)¹⁵⁶ Could it be the miracles of God’s provision in their wilderness wanderings? Could it be the promises associated with the promised Davidic Kingdom? Or could it possibly be all three?

Moses, Israel’s great deliverer, by the power of God rescued his people from the bondage of the Egyptians through 10 plagues; judgments equating to suffering and death; for he was the lawgiver! Messiah, Israel’s ultimate deliverer, by His own power rescued his people from the bondage of depravity through 10 miracles; phenomena equating to wellbeing and life; for He was the life giver! Moses brought Israel out of the house of bondage, Messiah desired to bring them into the Kingdom of David. His authority was established with greater miracles than that of Moses.

The witness of Matthew powerfully demonstrates Messiah’s authority over all things. Authority over defilement (8:3); over sickness (8:13, 16); over mankind (8:22); over creation (8:26); over the spirit realm (8:32); over sin (9:2); over lameness (9:6); over men and tradition (9:9-17); over death (9:25); over blindness (9:30); over demonic oppression (9:33); and over every disease and sickness (9:35). It is no wonder that the Apostle John announces this great contrast, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Neusner claims the final component of Israel’s identity is found in the Feast of Sukkot.¹⁵⁷ Sukkot commemorates Israel’s forty years of wilderness wanderings and God’s provision during those years. Could it also be that Matthew was demonstrating Messiah’s ultimate provision of the Messianic hope of Himself? It does seem possible that Matthew chapters 8 and 9 reflect that time period in Israel’s history of God’s miracle provisions.

Lastly, there is no misunderstanding that the Son of David was present. The miracles were the ushering in of the promised utopian Kingdom promised to King David. The demonstration of Messiah’s character, authority and grace far surpassed that of both Moses and King David.

¹⁵⁵ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 30.

¹⁵⁶ Keener, “IVPBBC: NT” (Mt 8:1-4).

¹⁵⁷ Neusner, “Judaism, An Introduction,” 24.

Matthew 8:16-17

“When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’”

As the servant Messiah of Isaiah’s prophecies, the Lord Jesus fulfilled these humble Scriptures by identifying with his people in their sickness, disease, and spiritual depravity. He restored what sin had taken away. He replaced darkness and fear with light and hope. Edersheim eloquently stated, “By His Incarnation and Coming, by His taking our infirmities, and bearing our sicknesses, for this in the truest and widest sense is the meaning of the Incarnation of the Christ, He became the Healer, the Consoler of humanity, its Savior in all ills of time, and from all ills of eternity.”¹⁵⁸ And Matthew unquestionably identifies him for us in his gospel. The humble servant was present, He was near, and Israel’s hopes were to be found in this humble servant of Jehovah. The servant king demonstrated the love of heaven that beautiful evening in Capernaum. King David’s servant king was at hand.

Matthew does not let his readers forget the Davidic theme in this section as well, for it is the two blind men who affirm this truth, “two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’” (9:27).

The 12 Sent into the Land, Chapter 10

“These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (10:5-7).

The Messiah was still focused on the presentation of the “Kingdom at Hand.” He was establishing His teachings, His miracles, and His authority, now it was time to send the twelve out among His people Israel in order to spread the news and prepare the people for the Messianic Davidic Kingdom. Yet, in Matthew’s Jewish mind is there something more to this event?

The number twelve, being sent by their leader, possible hostility, told not to fear? What event in the life of Moses and the wilderness Jews was next? Was it not Moses sending out the twelve spies into a hostile land promised to Israel? Was it not for preparation of entering the Promised Land, the land of rest?

Again, Matthew notices striking similarities in the life of His Messiah in regards to his people Israel. If chapters 5 through 7 reflect Sinai, chapters 8 and 9 possibly reflect the wilderness years, it also seems apparent that chapter 10 reflects the moving forward towards the Promised Land. Messiah sent His twelve announcing the new era that was about to begin. The Kingdom and King were at hand.

¹⁵⁸ Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus Messiah,” Vol. 1, 487.

Summations

Messiah's life up till this point in the First Gospel recapitulated Israel's own history. In His birth, in His exile, in His calling, in His baptism, in His wilderness testing, in His giving of His Law, in His provision of miracles and in His sending out of His twelve disciples; there is little doubt that Jesus is Israel, as Israel is Israel. He is not only a true Jew through the bloodlines of His father David; He truly is the fulfillment of all the OT prophecies by not only bringing them to their rightful completion and purposes, but by living out and fulfilling the true life story of Israel. Matthew undoubtedly opens Gentile minds to the reality of his King. Matthew understood that his Jewish audience needed to know that the Nazarene was in every way a complete Jew.

Chapter 4 (Matt. 5-10) fulfillment parallels:

1. Messiah like Moses goes up on the mountain.
 2. Messiah like Moses deliberates the Law.
 3. Messiah unlike Moses establishes His own authority.
 4. Messiah like Moses performs 10 miracles.
 5. Messiah unlike Moses brings life rather than death.
 6. Messiah like Moses sent out 12 men into the land.
- Messiah's reliving of Israel's own history is easily sustained.

CHAPTER 5 THE REJECTION & NEW COURSE OF THE KING (MATT. 11-16)

The Rejection of Messiah, 11-12

“Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent” (11:20).

The author of the First Gospel has been beautifully demonstrating to his 1st century Jewish audience the remarkable life of their new Moses, their Son of King David, their servant Messiah by demonstrating His unique life as He fulfilled the prophecies and life parallels of Israel. Yet, Matthew is far from finished; he has yet to take his readers down the path of Israel’s unbelief at Kadesh Barnea and its results. Chapter 11 of Matthew marks a turning point in this remarkable account of Messiah. However, the intertwining pattern of Messiah and Israel’s historical account continues.

John the Baptist himself asked the question of the Messiah, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (11:3). Messiah’s answer was simple, “Look at the evidence, the fulfillment of messianic prophecy!” But sadly, it was not enough to convince many in Israel, especially the leadership. It is at this point that Messiah began to denounce the cities which had observed the most miracles. Like historical OT Israel, judgment is pronounced.

Chorazin, according to Eusebius, was located two miles north of Capernaum, while Bethsaida of Galilee was located two and one half miles east of Capernaum. This associated them with the Capernaum area and the many miracles accomplished by Messiah in this area of Galilee. They had obviously been exposed to a tremendous amount of Christ’s miracles, but did not respond by faith.

When the Lord Jesus departed from Nazareth, he made his abode in the area of Capernaum. This town, according to Josephus, was an insignificant town of his day, yet the Lord Jesus made it His chief center of activity during a large part of His public ministry. It was here that a number of disciples were called, the centurion’s son was healed, the nobleman’s son was healed, Peter’s mother-in-law was healed, and unclean spirits were cast out. The fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4, was fulfilled one evening as the crowds gathered around and all manner of sicknesses were healed. Not only were many miracles accomplished, Christ did much teaching, such as His discourse on the ‘Bread of Life.’

News of these wonderful happenings must have traveled quickly to nearby towns. The inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida could not have resisted the idea of witnessing this unique individual, and would have traveled to visit nearby Capernaum. Messiah may have visited these neighboring cities on occasion as well, because of their proximity.

There can be no doubt left in one’s mind that this entire geographical region was offered the Messiah, by signs, wonders, miracles, and by the words of Messiah Himself. The Messianic Scriptures were fulfilled right before their very own eyes! The principle of, *to whom much is given much is required* is clearly delineated by Christ as he spoke of the woes concerning these cities surrounding Capernaum. Simply, the Messiah mentions these two cities specifically because of their unbelief.

What had prevented Moses' generation from entering the Promised Land? Was it not fear; a lack of faith in God's promises, which He had authenticated with numerous miracles in Egypt and in the desert? That generation died in the wilderness, never experiencing the rest that was promised to them. The woes that the Messiah pronounced upon Chorazin and Bethsaida came to pass. They never experienced the messianic rest promised through David's Son. Ruins are all that is left of these cities where the Messiah had once offered Himself. Sadly, like their forefathers the people did not respond in faith.

The Offer of Rest

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (11:28-30).

"The rabbis often spoke of taking on 'the yoke of the Law', and under their direction that burden could become heavy."¹⁵⁹ It was the new Moses who properly taught the people after several years of legalistic burdensome teaching. The Messianic King appealed to His people, He Himself offered something much greater; a rest to the weary, an easy yoke for the weak, a lighter burden for the struggling, and spiritual teaching which would bring spiritual refreshment to the soul. The Jewish reader at once must have been reminded of Isaiah 40:28-31;

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases
strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, the King now present among them had the authority to offer the rest He had offered them so long ago. But they would not!

"Verses 28 to 30 are not in Luke [nor Mark and John] and are among the special treasures of Matthew's Gospel."¹⁶⁰ The question must be asked again, "Is there more to this appeal than meets the Gentile eye?" Why was Matthew the only author who recorded this wonderful appeal by Jesus Christ? Could there be a fulfillment parallel in this text as well?

The promise associated with Moses and his generation was rest (Deut. 25:19; Joshua 1:13). As they entered the land, they were to find the land already prepared for them, a land full of abundance in which they were simply to claim by faith. The Lord appealed to that generation and promised to lead them into rest. Consider the author of Hebrews;

¹⁵⁹ D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer & G. J. Wenham, Ed. *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition, 4th ed.* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 919.

¹⁶⁰ A. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament (Mt 11:28)* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Logos Bible Software.

For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (3:16-19).

If Matthew 10 resembles the sending of the twelve spies, is it possible that the promise of messianic rest in Matthew 11:28-30 resembles that of the promise of rest in the new land? Another rejection was taking place, this time it was not rejection of the Promised Land, but the rejection of the Promised One; the new Moses, the true King of Israel. As a nation, just like their forefathers, the decision was being clearly made. This generation would suffer the consequences of unbelief.

The Gentile Theme, Fulfillment of Prophecy

Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust' (12:16-21).

Matthew beautifully interjects the servant passages of Isaiah 42:1-4 at this point; the emphasis being that this humble chosen servant of God would be unassuming and would not contend with His people regarding their rejection of Him, and would go on to proclaim God's message to the nations. Why did Matthew place the fulfillment of these prophetic passages at this point in his gospel? The ultimate rejection was about to take place and Matthew wisely recognizes the two-fold ministry of the Messiah. Number one, restoration of Israel; number two, Messiah as a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6, 7; 49:6, 7). Since Israel's restoration was not coming to pass at this point in time in Messiah's life, Matthew forewarned his readers by revealing the Gentile fulfillment that was in the process of taking place. Yet, in some way Matthew has not surprised his recipients.

From chapter one, the tax collector has spoken clearly regarding Messiah's relationship to the Gentiles. The Gentile women mentioned in the genealogies in the bloodlines of Messiah (Rahab and Ruth); the Gentile astrologers who recognized Israel's King; the Gentile centurion with great faith; and Jesus' teaching of the Gentile response to God's kingdom (8:10-13).

The Jewish emphasis of Chapter 10 may seem to be a contradiction of the predictive elements of 12:18-21 with a Gentile emphasis, but by no means is it. It is Israel's historical order that Matthew is concerned with. Chapter 10 is the offer of the Kingdom on earth to Israel under the offspring of King David; the leaders have rejected that King (9:34; 12:9, 24). Matthew simply demonstrates that the servant Messiah is now turning toward Gentile restoration and outreach; which eventually will become the church (16:18). Matthew will strongly argue the future restoration of Israel, but in the meantime it's on hold.

Matthew Chapter 12 revealed the hearts of Israel's leadership. It was another Kadesh Barnea; Israelite history was fulfilled once again. ("Again, in Matthew's

perspective Jesus is understood as summarizing the whole experience of Israel as well as bringing it to fulfillment.”¹⁶¹) Like their ancestors of old they hardened their hearts. The ultimate rejection materialized. The Jewish leadership had blasphemed the Holy Spirit by attributing His power to that of Beelzebul. “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men” (12:31). In this context Matthew emphasized the Gentile aspect of Messiah’s ministries. Since Messiah was not able to restore Israel at that time due to her unbelief, it appeared that the focus of Jesus’ ministry began to focus on the nations. McClain stated that, “Although the announcement of the coming Kingdom was initially restricted to the nation of Israel (Matt. 10:5-6), the preaching of the kingdom made clear that the Gentiles would share in its benefits.”¹⁶² That is why Matthew at this point in his gospel introduced the fulfillment of the prophetic reality regarding Messiah’s ministry to the Gentiles. “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Jesus in His sermon had said to His Jewish people, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (5:14). God desired His people Israel to be a witness to the nations; Israel herself understood that, “Jewish tradition considered Israel... and Jerusalem (as well as God and the law) the light of the world. The ‘city’ here may thus be Jerusalem...”¹⁶³ Sadly, instead of converting the nations to their God, the majority of the time Israel became like the nations. How then would God accomplish this great task of reaching the Gentiles? Through His faithful messianic servant Israel (Isaiah 49:3); as Jesus proved faithful in the recapitulating Israel’s wilderness testing He will prove faithful as the Light to the Nations. “Moreover, Jesus will prove faithful where the nation had been faithless; in numerous respects he recapitulates the history of Israel as a whole...”¹⁶⁴ He begins the process of reaching out to the nations and noticeably announces at the very end of chapter 12, “For whoever [Jew or Gentile] does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” (12:50).

Like Moses and the people of his day, a new generation will now reap the benefits of the leader’s rejection of Jesus Christ.

The Next Generation, Matthew Chapters 13-16

Matthew 13:14, 15

“And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’”

It is no wonder that the parabolic teaching of the Messiah was introduced after His being rejected by the leaders. The parabolic teaching of Matthew 13 which had been predicted in Old Testament Scripture had a twofold purpose. Number one, it kept the

¹⁶¹ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 10.

¹⁶² McClain, “The Greatness of the Kingdom,” 295.

¹⁶³ Keener, “IVPBBC,” (Mt. 5:14).

¹⁶⁴ Beale, “Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 8.

truth hidden from the deaf ears of the ones who were rejecting him. Number two; it was a way in which He could reveal truth to His disciples, and to those who had ears to hear. The Matthew 13 parables simply appear to be related to the near future and are a result of Israel's rejection of their Messiah. (It is obvious throughout the remainder of Matthew, that each of Jesus' parables fit with the very topic at hand).

Isaiah revealed that Messiah would bring justice to the nations and be a light to the Gentiles. This truth had only been in seed form in the Scriptures, and was not realized in full by the Jews at the time of Christ. The parables in chapter 13 appear to set forth the reality of the future expansion pertaining to the establishment of the future church; including the Tribulation period as well.

The preaching of the nearness of the kingdom *was no* longer being preached. The announcement of the "Kingdom is at hand," was silenced by the leadership's rejection of their King. The Davidic kingdom program was being set aside for the coming parenthetical period of the yet future church. (Yet, Matthew continues to support the truth that Jesus is the Son of David [12:23; 15:22]). Chapter 13 reveals the shift towards this coming reality of the church, and the false system that would parallel it until the second coming of Christ.

Matthew 13:35

"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'"

The Messiah began to reveal mysteries that had been kept hidden from previous generations; it would appear that these mysteries pertain to the future; the period between the two advents of Christ, or the time period between His death and Second Advent.

The following chapters would be a learning time for the disciples, preparing them for a future without the physical presence of their King. Messiah would also make it clear that Israel would yet have a future messianic period with their new Moses, their Son of David. Christ's dealings with the Canaanite women (15:21-28); His transfiguration (17:1-13); and His emphasis on Daniel's prophecy and His Second Advent (Matthew 24-25), insist on a future fulfillment for Israel. As Matthew also has proved to this point, the exact fulfillments of Messiah's First Advent found in the OT Scriptures, Matthew fully anticipates a day when Messiah will fulfill the remainder of the OT prophecies promised to Israel and to King David! Christ's words were emphatic, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (5:17-18). Jesus will fulfill to perfection the OT prophecies with His Second Coming!

Like Moses, Messiah would bide His time until His death. Like Moses, He would have to wait for the promised utopian kingdom. Like the generation that followed Moses, they would be the ones prepared for the next event on God's calendar; namely the church that was yet to be born (16:18).

Summations

Chapter 5 (Matt. 11-16) fulfillment parallels:

1. Messiah like in the OT offers Israel rest.
2. Messiah like in the OT the offer is rejected.
3. Messiah like in the OT postpones the fulfillment of that rest.
4. Messiah like Moses fulfills His role as the humble servant.
5. Messiah like Moses prepares the other recipients.

Once again, the identity theme continues. Yet at the same time, with these parallel fulfillments diminishing the recapitulation theme of Messiah's life diminishes along with it. With Israel's rejection of His kingship and His focus turning toward the future church, Messiah's relationship now with Israel is one of reaffirmation rather than recapitulation which Matthew will strikingly denote.

CHAPTER 6 THE REAFFIRMATION & WARNINGS OF THE KING (MATT. 17-25)

The Reaffirmation of the King, Matthew 17

As recognized in the last chapter, with the Jewish leadership's rejection of their King, Jesus Christ, Messiah's focus began to change. Chapters 13-16 of Matthew reflect many changes. Messiah begins to speak in parables; the herald of the King, John the Baptist is beheaded; the nearness of the kingdom is no longer preached; Messiah devotes more time to training His disciples for His departure; the Pharisees become more antagonistic towards Christ and His disciples; Jesus' criticisms of the Pharisees become harsher; the church is introduced; Messiah introduces the policy of silence; and He introduces His death and resurrection. It is no wonder at this point that Matthew documents the transfiguration of Christ. For it is the reassurance of the completion of the OT prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Jesus strongly affirmed, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (16:28). Who were those witnesses? Peter, James and John! What they saw was a preview of the future, of the resurrected Son of Man who will sit on David's throne. What a reaffirmation for these three regarding their rejected King!

The significance of the transfiguration of Christ is remarkable, for this event confirms a number of truths.

Number one, God the Father authenticates the rejected Christ before the three disciples. Despite losing public popularity among the people, it does not change the Father's opinion of His own Son, nor the future kingdom of Israel.

Number two, very importantly, it authenticates the agreement of Christ with the Law & Prophets; Moses representing the Law, and Elijah representing the Prophets. Not only does it confirm their relationship, it affirms Christ's own words with finality and authority given to Him by His Father (Heb. 1:1-5).

Number three, the transfiguration anticipates the future earthly kingdom of Christ, proof that He would be resurrected and one day seat Himself upon the throne of David. For the three witnesses, it was a foretaste of what was to come for their people.

Number four, it guarantees the fulfillment of all prophetic Scripture anticipating His Second Advent (II Peter 1:19-21).

Number five, this unique occurrence reinforces Jesus' own love for us by having to veil His glory for a second time.

Number six, this event marks the second time the Father's voice speaks from heaven reaffirming His Son before the inner three disciples who would play pivotal roles in the church that would be born at Pentecost!

There is little doubt that this event which Peter, James and John witnessed was apocalyptic in some sense; for it was a verification of the person and future realizations of the rejected Messiah, and especially those realities that directly related to the inner three and their Jewish people. Again, Matthew is wisely answering the questions foremost in the Jewish minds regarding their own future as a nation. He will be crucified, He will die and He will rise from the dead; He is coming again, the future is guaranteed!

This experience spoke volumes to these three eye witnesses of His majestic glory. “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).

The Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:4-5

“All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

The above verses came to pass as the author declares; it appears to be Messiah’s final offer of Himself to Israel. Yet, had He not already predicted the outcome of His first coming; that being rejection and death? This being the case Matthew could only quote the first half of the Zechariah prophecy, for the second part will be fulfilled with His coming again. The prophecy is therefore a split prophecy and will be fully completed with two comings of the Messiah. The fulfilled portion again reflects the humble servant that Matthew has so very clearly displayed for his readers; the unfulfilled portion will be fulfilled by the coming Prince of Peace who will sit on David’s throne. “I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth’” (Zech. 9:10).

At the Triumphal Entry many of the diaspora Jews along with the Jewish children and the lame, delightfully called out to Jesus, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” In many Jewish hearts there was a strong desire for the establishment of David’s throne, but it was not to be so at this time. The leaders of Israel who had authority over these crowds despised Jesus Christ, and were appalled at the children’s praise given to Jesus, the true Son of David. Messiah mockingly questions these leaders as He quotes Psalms 8:2, Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?” The leadership remained defiant despite the rebuke of the children.

Matthew once again displays for his readers the truth regarding the Davidic Covenant reality of Jesus Christ, displayed and to a point understood by the babes or disadvantaged in Israel. Matthew had already recorded this for his readers. “The blind man healed by Jesus, believed that Jesus was the ‘*Son of David*’ (Matthew 20:30, 31). So the blind man believed that Jesus was indeed the coming Messiah. Often in every age, many commoners have better theology than the religious leaders or other people of fame and position.”¹⁶⁵

The Davidic theme is sustained despite the final rejection of David’s son. At this point in Matthew’s gospel Messiah’s days were literally numbered.

¹⁶⁵ J. G. Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2008), 373.

Matthew 21:13

“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

Following his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus promptly fulfilled another prophetic Scripture. He as God, had authority over His temple, He displayed this by cleansing the temple of the ungodly practices that were taking place within it. Due to the Temple caretaker’s blatant disrespect for God’s temple, Jesus referred back to Isaiah and declared the true purpose of his Father’s house, and showed his righteous obedience to the truth by His extreme action. Jesus was in control and held authority over these misguided leaders. And unlike Israel, Jesus would remain the perfect obedient Son and fully carry out the Father’s intended purposes.

The Parable of the Landowner/Tenants

“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country” (21:33).

Introduction to the Parable

The Messianic Scriptures were fulfilled right before their very eyes! Nearly the entire geographical region surrounding Jerusalem had witnessed the Messianic signs, wonders, miracles, and teachings. Yet as quickly as it all began, the end was in sight. The Leadership of Israel had made her choice. The importance of this parable which Jesus taught after His rejection illustrates the deteriorating and near severed relationship between God and His chosen people Israel. Matthew obviously placed this parable after Jesus great entry into Jerusalem so that his readers would have an illustrated confirmation of what had taken place, both in their past and in the present. This writer has chosen this parable from the three that consider the theme at hand, for this parable in some sense fits with the OT pattern of Israel which has been the overall theme in this thesis.

This section will survey the Old and New Testament backgrounds regarding the vineyard and its metaphorical meaning and relationship to the Messiah. It will also include the interpretation and the lasting effects of its meaning. The Gospel of Matthew will be the main source of this section’s focus, while reflection of other various Scriptures will be used to establish the broad setting. In light of the controversial issues of this parable, there will be a brief discussion of two major theological views concerning present day and future Israel.

As already discussed, the decision had been made, the course had been set; Israel’s leadership had just committed the unpardonable sin; hatred filled their heart, evil filled their minds; and murder became their objective; they rejected their Messiah and sought His death. Matthew had plainly delineated these facts so far in his Gospel. Edersheim articulates the circumstances that have led to this point, “The Synagogues of Galilee are no longer the quiet scenes of His teaching and miracles; His Word and deeds no longer pass unchallenged. . . . All these new incidents are due to one and the same cause; the presence and hostile watchfulness of the Scribes and Pharisees...”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶Edersheim, “The Life and Times of Jesus Messiah,” 497.

Since the Messiah at this point in time was not able to restore Israel and set up the Davidic kingdom, due to her unbelief, the focus of Jesus' ministry turned toward the nations. The Isaiah prophecies that Matthew interpreted revealed that Messiah would bring justice to the nations and be a light to the Gentiles. There is no doubt that this parable reflects back and considers what has taken place in Israel.

The Historic Vineyard

The Old Testament community of Israel had treasured numerous possessions. These possessions were treasured for their beauty, for their symbolism, and sometimes necessity of life. One such possession of great worth was the vine or vineyard. The grapevine was a treasure from God that can be traced throughout the Scriptures; from Noah to Christ, and in the historical progression of Israel the symbol of the grapevine took on significant meaning.

One of the most striking or noteworthy facts about the vineyard is the symbolism that it represented. "It was used as a symbol of the religious life of Israel itself, and a carving of a bunch of grapes often adorned the front exterior of the synagogue."¹⁶⁷ Josephus describes a wall of the temple; "...it had also golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height..."¹⁶⁸ Edersheim describes the gigantic golden vine as the symbol of Israel.¹⁶⁹ This symbolism had personal meaning to the Israelites. As a symbol for Israel it represented peace and prosperity.¹⁷⁰ The fact is God had referred to the Israelites as His vine which he took out of Egypt and planted and established. "You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it" (Psa. 80:8).

God considered Israel His choice vine; He spoke to them in a very personal way in Isaiah 5:1&2a, where He described what He accomplished for this nation. God placed Israel on a fruitful hill, fenced it, cultivated it, planted the choicest vine, built a watchtower and made a winepress. God saved His people out of Egypt, and gave them a good land and the covenants where they could live in fruitfulness, which would have been a great pleasure to Him. In reality, the construction of a vineyard in OT times was very costly and difficult compared to the other forms of husbandry in and near the land of Israel. In symbolic reality God could do nothing more than which He had already accomplished for His people Israel to make them a fruitful vineyard for Himself.

Despite all His work and patience with Israel, she brought forth wild grapes as affirmed by Isaiah. "What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" (Isa. 5:4). Jeremiah further declared that the noble vine became a degenerate and strange vine (Jer. 2:21). Hosea confirmed that Israel was an empty selfish vine (Hos. 10:1). The seeming reality of Matthew's parable is this; the householder is God, the vineyard is Israel. Israel had failed as God's vineyard or vine. The 1st century

¹⁶⁷ Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 111.

¹⁶⁸ Flavius Josephus, William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1987), S. Wars 5.210.

¹⁶⁹ Edersheim, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah." Vol. 1, 89.

¹⁷⁰ Freedman, "ABD," S. 2, 810.

Jewish disciples would have easily understood this parable in light of their own OT history.

Yet, the concept of the vine did not end with Israel's failure. In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son to be the obedient fruitful Son that Israel failed to be. As already discussed, what Israel the disobedient son failed to do, Jesus Christ the obedient Son fulfilled. Jesus accomplished all that His Father desired of Him. "Therefore Jesus as 'the true vine,' fulfills what God had intended for Israel."¹⁷¹ Christ rightfully and authoritatively declared, "I am the True Vine" (John 15:1). And just as His Father was the vinedresser in the OT, so was His Father the vinedresser in the NT.

The Parable of the Vineyard

As previously noted, due to the Messiah's rejection, He introduced and taught about a new period of time that was coming, and Peter's role in it. A church was to be established, not as a replacement of Israel's kingdom, but as it would appear a prelude to it. After the Messiah had introduced His parabolic teaching, He continued to do so, with each of His parables interwoven with the situation and teaching at hand. That is why the parable of 'The Wicked Vineyard Tenants' is spoken by the Messiah at this time; His crucifixion was very near, as the parable foretold His death. The need for this parable was prompted due to the argument surrounding Jesus' temple cleansing authority. Israel's leadership, "As the custodians of the spiritual life of the nation, they had the right to ask this question."¹⁷² The parable authoritatively taught who the authority was, and Israel's position in relation to that authority.

The parable describes a landowner (God) who established a beautiful vineyard and leased it out (to Israel) and left on a journey. When the owner expected fruit at harvest time he sent servants one after another (the prophets of Israel) to the vineyard; they were ill-treated or killed. The owner thought it best to send his son (Christ), but to no avail they threw Him out and killed Him and desired to take what did not belong to them; they usurped the son's authority and brought judgment on themselves.

After explaining the parable, Jesus asked the chief priests and Pharisees how the land owner would respond upon returning to his vineyard. Their own answers condemned their own ambitions; "get rid of the tenants, and lease the vineyard to those who would responsibly tend it." The Messiah then quotes the Psalms regarding His rejection, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (118:22, 23). It is at this point a very sad and very controversial statement is made in regards to Israel. "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it" (21:43). Matthew describes the messianic implications of this parable when quoting Psalm 118:22–23; Jewish leadership rejected the greatest stone of a building, they easily recognized they were the ones being condemned by this teacher. They were aware of their forefather's failure and of the OT truths regarding their identity as Jehovah's

¹⁷¹ John F. Walvoord, and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT*. (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1985) 325.

¹⁷² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989), S. Mt 21:23. Logos Bible Software.

vineyard; they were quite aware of the parabolic reality spoken by the Messiah. The pride and power of the Jewish leadership was quite evident in this parable. Consider Keener;

“Landowners always had power, socially and legally, to enforce their will on the tenants; a few reportedly even had squads of hired assassins to deal with troublesome tenants. Here the tenants act as if *they* are the ones with power, and they exploit it mercilessly (as opposed to the ideal of a *benevolent* landowner). This attitude fits the Jewish tradition that Israel martyred many of the prophets God sent.¹⁷³

God’s judgment of Israel’s leaders was justified. The reality of the parable did come to pass for Israel. They eventually lost their authority, Jerusalem and their temple in 70 AD. As for the Messiah, Israel’s leaders had rejected Him and His kingdom, He *accepted* His Cross, opening the door for the gospel to go to all nations (28:18, 19). Both Jew and Gentile would be invited to trust in Him, and through faith would become the church. The Father accepted the work of His Son, and therefore accepts all who come through Him.

The New Testament Church

Two important questions arise from this parable: First, who is the new people or nation mentioned in 21:43? Second, is God finished with Israel as a nation, with all of the promises made in regards to a Davidic kingdom? The answer to number one has already been answered in Matthew 16:18; a church was to be born including both Jew and Gentile.¹⁷⁴ It was this church that would be a new entity, a new people. And in regard to the word ‘people’ consider Carson.

A people suggests not just a change of leadership but that the very composition of the people of God was to change (along the lines suggested in 8:11–12). It was not, however, a simple matter of Jews being replaced by Gentiles (that would have needed a reference to ‘peoples’ in the plural, the normal Greek term for Gentiles); rather a new community of God’s people was being created (175*cf.* on 16:18), in which both Jews and Gentiles would find their place. What would characterize them was not their nationality, but that they would *produce fruit* (*cf.* 3:8, 10; 7:15–20; 12:33–37; 13:8, 26; and especially 21:18–20).¹⁷⁶

It is this writer’s view, that the Messiah became the One in whom the fruit will be produced through the New Covenant, which He would establish at Calvary. Whoever trusts the Messiah becomes one with Him and part of His body, the church. As the believer abides in the True Vine fruitfulness is accomplished by the Messiah in them (John 15:1-17). Fruitfulness is the very core of the New Covenant promises declared in the OT Scriptures. It would be Jesus Christ as the True Vine who would carry out His work through His own body, the church made up of both Jew and Gentile. (The glorious truth for both Jew and Gentile under the New Covenant is, that they are *in Christ*, the True Vine, the obedient Son, the moment they trust in Him alone for salvation [Gal.

¹⁷³ Keener, “IVPBBC, NT,” (Mt 21:35).

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 12:18-21; Matthew quotes Messianic prophecy revealing future ministry to the Gentiles.

¹⁷⁵ Carson, “NBC,” Mt 21:28.

3:26]. Christ declared, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” In order to bear fruit, the believer only needs to abide, remain or continue in Him, for the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide on the vine. What Israel never accomplished, Christ did, and continues to accomplish in those who abide in Him).

Since the Messiah has been building His new entity the church since Pentecost with His new people, does this mean He is finished with the nation of Israel? Does this parable teach or justify what some call Replacement Theology, which is prevalent in certain theological circles?

Matthew has shown how the Messiah had reached out to the Gentiles during His earthly ministry. Jesus continues to reach Gentiles through His church. It has never been God’s intent to completely set Israel aside, but their rejection of Him forced Him to set aside the restoration of Israel for a time, so he may fulfill the second aspect of his plan as already reflected upon; and that is being “a light to the nations.” Matthew throughout his letter has not taught any form of Replacement Theology, he has taught the two-fold aspect of Messiah’s ministry as prophesied in Isaiah 49:6. “Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Later in his gospel, Matthew will turn to end time events pertaining to the time of Jacob’s Trouble, which reveals Messiah’s future anticipated work among His people the Jews.

Conclusion to the Parable

Another question arises; where is Israel at today? The Parable of the Wedding Feast, which followed The Parable of the Tenants describes Israel both during Christ’s day and today. The Lord Jesus spoke this parable to the disciples concerning the Jewish nation. The characters of this parable were the king, representing God; His son representing the Messiah; the servants, representing it would seem, John the Baptist, the disciples and apostles; the original invitees representing slumbering Israel, and the new invitees representing all peoples. The majority of Israel today, is like the first invitees to the feast; too busy about their own affairs and unconcerned with the greater things of God. And yet, before Christ’s Second Advent what will be the condition of the Gentiles?

Some theologians claim that there is no future earthly kingdom for Israel. It is a system of biblical interpretation that according to Archibald Hughes holds that, “...the New Testament is the foremost and final authority in any enquiry, and it is also the interpreter of the Old Testament.”¹⁷⁷ This interpretive view relies on allegorical interpretation in order to justify there being no future earthly Davidic kingdom for Israel. Grenz, writing as an amillennialist, admitted that all the promises originally made to Israel now belong to the church, resulting in that the church has replaced Israel in God’s program. He also admits that amillennialists are unsympathetic to Israel and the possibility of her conversion, and look forward to no earthly millennium.¹⁷⁸ Does the church fulfill the concept of the Davidic kingdom? Did Jesus teach of a future day for Israel? Does the parable of the vineyard tenants teach that God is finished with Israel, therefore eliminating the promised Davidic kingdom?

¹⁷⁷ Grenz, “The Millennial Maze,” 153.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 155. 150.

When Jesus delivered the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, he mentioned Dan. 9:27 as an event yet unfulfilled, he also spoke of many future circumstances and events that would come to pass. He spoke of the destruction of the favored Jewish temple, and a scattering of and a re-gathering of His people. It would appear a re-gathering of Israel is yet in the future. In regards to the new nation (most likely the church), maybe it is not replacing Israel, but stalling her future re-gathering. Consider Jamieson and Fausset regarding the ‘new people mentioned in the parable’ before Israel’s restoration. “...that is, the great evangelical community of the faithful, which, after the extrusion of the Jewish nation, would consist chiefly of Gentiles, until ‘all Israel should be saved’ (Ro 11:25, 26). This vastly important statement is given by Matthew only.”¹⁷⁹

Stepping back for a moment, consider Matthew’s historical pattern that has been a central theme of this thesis; what happened to that generation of unbelievers in Moses day? Did they inherit the Promised Land? Did they experience the land of rest; the land of fruitfulness that flowed with milk and honey? No, they all died in the wilderness not having experienced the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises! It was the new generation under Joshua and Caleb who experienced the Land of Promise. Could it be that in some sense the new generation of Jesus parable be the future church that He introduced at the time with His death and resurrection? Failure of one generation is the blessing of the next. And what generation was the next, the church which began at Pentecost and is still alive to this present day. The OT historical pattern of Matthew’s Israel and Messiah is yet sustained.

The OT prophecies must be brought to fulfillment in light of God’s faithfulness. Romans 9-11 sheds light on where Israel is at today. This writer believes that the nation of Israel will one day find her identity in the Messiah, just as the present day ‘new people’ of God have experienced. May God fulfill every promise that He has made, and every detail of those promises; those to Abraham, David, Israel and to His church. The OT prophecies and patterns of Matthew were so perfectly fulfilled, why would his 1st century Jewish readers expect anything less regarding their future and the promises and prophecies given directly to them. That is why Matthew more so than the other gospel writers, emphasizes the Second Advent, because it clearly pertains to Israel’s future promised kingdom.

The Promise of the Second Advent, Chapters 24-25

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’” (24:3).

Introduction

Approaching the end of his first advent, the Lord Jesus spoke of a future day, an unparalleled time of great tribulation which the world had never experienced. He also explained that at the conclusion of this great tribulation the Son of Man would appear in great glory, and establish his kingly throne. All nations would then be brought into his

¹⁷⁹ Robert Jamieson and others, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), S. Mt 21:43.

presence for judgment. The Lord Jesus described in detail this prophetic time period to his disciples. It was in answer to the questions which they had requested of him: “And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?”

This prophetic narrative of Scripture has been entitled, “The Lord’s Olivet Discourse.”¹⁸⁰ Presently, this Discourse has been a central point of interpretive division in the body of Christ. In the church today it may be one of the most controversial teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it has been interpreted from two opposing theological views.

Following will be an overview of the Olivet Discourse. It will briefly discuss three Olivet Discourse topics: a comparison of the three gospel narratives; a comparison of the opposing preterist and futurist views; and lastly, a brief explanation of Matthew’s account.

A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels

Three Gospel authors Matthew, Mark, and Luke documented what is called The Lord’s Olivet Discourse.¹⁸¹ Each gospel writer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit recorded what he desired his readers to know and understand. Each narrative shares many common themes, but each discourse also differs in details. This section will be a concise comparison of the three synoptic accounts.

The first noticeable difference in the accounts is the length and detail of Matthews’s account compared with the other two. As emphasized early in thesis, many Bible scholars agree that Matthew’s Gospel is very Jewish and deals with Jewish issues. And of course, one of the Jewish issues was Daniel’s 70th week, the time of Jacob’s Trouble, or the abomination of desolation. All three accounts documented this same discourse, because this future time would have far reaching effects into the Gentile world also. Yet Matthew also added lengthy parabolic teaching absent from the other accounts, to enable his Jewish readers to fully comprehend the importance of this teaching and to remain faithful to the prophecies regarding the fulfillment of the parabolic teachings.

One major theme shared by each narrative is the discourse’s gaze into the prophetic future. Also common to all three narratives was its description of a desperate unparalleled time, or an epoch that would involve all the nations of the earth that would end with the Son of Man coming in power and glory. Within these themes, there were similarities and differences concerning the details.

All three gospel portrayals begin by describing the locality of the discourse when it was spoken. All reported that the discourse was given at Herod’s temple. Each began with the disciples’ apparent admiration of this great structure. All three recorded the Lord’s response to the disciples’ appreciation of their temple. Christ’s reaction opened the opportunity to develop his discourse in regard to future events. Matthew and Mark moved the setting of the discourse to the Mount of Olives. Only Mark mentioned whom

¹⁸⁰ “Sometimes known as the Synoptic Apocalypse, this is the last major discourse of Jesus recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke (Mt. 24:3–25:46; Mk. 13:3–37; Lk. 21:5–36), and is the longest and most important section of teaching about the future in the Synoptics.” (D. R. W. Wood & I. H. Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, 1996).

¹⁸¹ The harmony of the gospels used was from Logos Bible Software Series X, The Scholar’s Library.

the disciples were who came to seek answers concerning the second coming, while each author mentioned the disciple's question which inaugurated the dialogue.

Evaluating the beginning portion of the discourse, each narrative is very similar in its description of the beginning events, other than Luke did not note what Matthew and Mark recorded: "the beginning of sorrows,"¹⁸² which appears to be the starting point of the future events. As Christ described the persecution that would arise, and warned of strong opposition to the saints, he gave one promise of hope and one declaration of truth that Luke did not record, which are: "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."¹⁸³ And, "the gospel must first be preached to all nations."¹⁸⁴

Each gospel writer also described a time of desolation. Matthew and Mark noted that this desolation was spoken of by Daniel the prophet.¹⁸⁵ Between the mention of Daniel and the coming of the Son of Man, Matthew documented the most detail. Matthew and Mark documented this as a time of great tribulation which the world has never seen,¹⁸⁶ and also described the warnings of Christ in that time frame.¹⁸⁷ Luke left out these two points. But Luke added another dimension. Unique to his story is the term, "the times of the Gentiles."¹⁸⁸ Luke added a time frame by describing an era which would come to an end when the 'times of the Gentiles' are complete.

The parable of the fig tree was confirmed by all three authors. From this point on, the gospels differ greatly. Luke comes to an abrupt end with the warnings of Christ. Mark continues with one simple parable of a man and his steward, and then ends his account. Matthew continues on at length with parabolic teachings and warnings of the Lord Jesus Christ, which easily makes sense due to the fact that Israel's future is at risk with Messiah's departure at hand. This topic will be revisited later in this segment.

A Comparison of Preterist and Futurist Views

Full Preterism, as defined by Michael A. Fenemore, "...is the belief that all Bible prophecies, including those concerned with the Second Coming of Jesus, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Rapture and the Judgment came to complete fulfillment in AD 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem just as Jesus predicted they would..."¹⁸⁹ Contrary to the preterist, a futurist believes that there are many Bible prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled regarding eschatological issues such as: the Second Coming of Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Rapture of the church, the restoration of Israel, and the Judgment. What defines these two contrasting theological views of the Lord's Olivet Discourse will be considered.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD is absolutely essential to preterist eschatology. The majority of preterist theologians, including partial preterists would agree that 70 AD is essential to understanding their view of the Olivet Discourse. The

¹⁸² Matthew 24:8 & Mark 13:8.

¹⁸³ Matthew 24:13 & Mark 13:13.

¹⁸⁴ Matthew 24:14 & Mark 13:10.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew 24:15 & Mark 13:14.

¹⁸⁶ Matthew 24:21 & Mark 13:19.

¹⁸⁷ Matthew 24:23-26 & Mark 13:21-23.

¹⁸⁸ Luke 21:24.

¹⁸⁹ Michael A. Fenemore. www.preterism.info/preterism.htm. Accessed 4/21/2014.

futurist Randall Price claims that, “Preterism, however, which forces the fulfillment of most prophetic texts, particularly the fall of Jerusalem and the temple, into the events of the first Jewish revolt, views the destruction of the Jewish people as the central focus of prophecy.”¹⁹⁰ Price claims this due to the consequences of preterist views which are not nearly as sympathetic to a future for Israel as is the case with futurists.

When Jesus delivered this discourse, he spoke of many future circumstances and events that would come to pass. He spoke of the destruction of the favored Jewish temple, and a scattering of God’s people. He also used the term, “this generation” intertwined with the culmination of these prophetic events. Preterists claim that “this generation,” that Christ mentions was that generation living when Christ delivered the Olivet Discourse. They argue the fact that this prophecy of Messiah was to shortly come to pass based on this term. At first glance, it appears to be a probability. Therefore, the preterist perceives The Lord’s Olivet Discourse as having come to complete fulfillment by 70 AD. Included in this fulfillment would be the many truths the Apostle Paul had spoken of, and looked forward to as well.

The preterist also differs with the futurist concerning the physical aspect of prophetic fulfillment. While the futurist claims a physical, literal, fulfillment of prophecy, the preterist may insist on a spiritual (allegorical) fulfillment. The preterist claim is that portions of prophetic Scripture do not have to be fulfilled physically or literally, but spiritually. (The prophetic word may be symbolic in nature; symbolic of spiritual truths.) Consequently, the Olivet Discourse guarantees no future for Israel. The argument being, as the New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant; the spiritual church replaced the physical nation of Israel. This transaction took place in 70 AD. The preterist views the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem as God’s final dealing with the unbelieving nation of Israel. The preterist therefore does not look forward to a future physical Messianic Jewish kingdom; for he is living in the spiritual kingdom at this very moment, which is the preterist reality of the physical kingdom promises.

Since Preterism has built such a tremendous eschatological system on the events of AD 70, it has left itself very vulnerable to futuristic eschatological ideas. Futurists would wholeheartedly disagree with the claims of Preterism. A reading of the Matthew 24 text, along with numerous Old Testament passages does not seem to easily fit with Israel’s destruction in 70 AD.

Years ago, J.C. Ryle, who was certainly not a dispensationalist, made the following observation (*Expository Thoughts in the Gospels*, in his comments under Matthew 24): “But we must not suppose that this part of our Lord’s prophecy is exhausted by the first taking of Jerusalem. It is more than probable that our Lord’s words have a further and deeper application still.”¹⁹¹

The futurist does not deny the destruction of Jerusalem, nor does he deny 70 AD prophetic fulfillment of portions of the Olivet Discourse. But the futurist does reject the complete fulfillment of the discourse by 70 AD. There are too many unfulfilled details. The futurist seeks logical answers to these questions from Preterists: If the Lord returned

¹⁹⁰ Randall Price. 2005. A.D. 70: Preterism’s Prophetic Dead End. *Israel My Glory*, January/February, 22.

¹⁹¹ <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/proph/luke21.htm>. (Accessed 4/17/2014).

in AD 70, where were all the eye witnesses (Matt 24:30-31)? There was judgment in 70 AD, but where was the deliverance and re-gathering of his people (Matt 24:31)? Was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD really as broad and as catastrophic as the Lord predicted (Matt 24:21)? If the Lord's Second Advent was to destroy Jerusalem in AD 70, why was his second coming placed after the tribulation, or judgment (Matt 24:29-31)? Where is the judgment of the Gentiles along with Israel if the Olivet Discourse was completely fulfilled in 70 AD (Matt 24:21-22; 25:31-46)? Reflect on this one last point:

In Matthew 23:39, the Lord Jesus made it clear that the Jewish nation would not see the Lord Jesus again until they would say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" This implies that He will not come again until the nation is repentant. Since the nation was not repentant in 70 AD, Christ could not have come at that time.¹⁹²

It is evident that the futurist does not believe that the full realization of the Olivet Discourse came to pass in 70 AD, nor does the futurist rely on allegory to modify the plain meaning of the biblical text. Therefore, the last portion of this section will briefly consider this writer's futuristic literal interpretation of Matthew chapters 24 & 25.

Matthew's Olivet Discourse

The OT Scriptures declared a day that would be like no other, namely the time of Jacob's trouble, or the Great Tribulation. As the Messiah was ready to leave this earth, He explained in detail to the disciples a period of troublesome times which would precede his second coming, namely the beginning of birth pangs (Daniel's 70th week), the hard labor pangs (Jacob's Trouble, or the Great Tribulation), and then the birth of the millennial kingdom. By taking a futuristic theological glimpse at chapters 24 and 25, it appears possible that these scriptural events may also align themselves with the seals and events of the book of Revelation. They were yet future, were Messianic in nature, and again focused on Israel. These events are clearly different than that of the rapture of the church, as described by Showers.¹⁹³ This coming judgment on the whole earth will cause Israel to repent. Israel will say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"

By the time the reader approaches Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse, Matthew had already introduced the King (Chapters 1-3); revealed the character of the King (Chapters 4-7); described the authority & quality of the King (Chapters 8-10); exposed the rejection of the King & its results (Chapters 11-13); illustrated the new course of the King (Chapters 14-16); and declared the reaffirmation of the King (Chapters 17-20). There yet remained one unanswered question concerning Israel's future; what about the future Messianic kingdom which was not coming to pass as a result of Israel's national rejection of their Messiah? With more detail than any of the other gospel writers, Matthew records the words of the Messiah that pertain to the Jewish realities yet to come.

¹⁹² For the basic views of Preterism visit www.theopedia.com/Preterism (Accessed 4/16/2014).

¹⁹³ Renald Showers, *Maranatha Our Lord, Come*, (Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1995), Part 1.

The following is a modest futuristic outline of Matthew chapter 24. It was largely compiled from Renald Showers,¹⁹⁴ Arnold Fruchtenbaum,¹⁹⁵ and Walvoord and Zuck's¹⁹⁶ interpretive views.

1. 4-14 The first half of the 7 year tribulation (Daniel's 70th week)
2. 15-20 The mid-point of the tribulation, the abomination of desolation
3. 21-28 The last half of the tribulation, called the great tribulation or the time of Jacob's Trouble, spawned by the abomination of desolation
4. 29-31 The coming of Messiah at the end of the 7 year tribulation
5. 32-35 The signs for that tribulation generation
6. 36-51 The explanation of the details of Messiah's return

These events described by the Messiah also closely parallel the 7 seals found in the Revelation of Jesus Christ which was written years after the destruction of the Jewish temple. Notice the similarities:

- Matt. 24:5 = Rev. 6:1-2, first seal: Possibly the beginnings of antichrist
- Matt. 24:6-7a = Rev. 6:3-4, second seal: No peace, wars and rumors of wars
- Matt. 24:7b-8 = Rev. 6:5-8, third and fourth seal: Famine and death
- Matt. 24:9-12 = Rev. 6:9-11, fifth seal: martyrdom of the tribulation saints
- Matt. 24:15-21 = Rev. 6:12-17, sixth seal: the beginning of great tribulation
- Matt. 24:22-31 = Rev. 7:1-19, seventh seal: the last years of the Daniel's 70th week

Futurist scholars may vary on where they draw the lines between the fulfilled and unfulfilled portions of Matthew 24, or even if these Revelation passages parallel those of Matthew 24, but they unanimously embrace a greater future fulfillment of certain portions of Matthew's text. Preterists point out that this futurist approach seems to disregard the seeming nearness of Jesus' proclamations. It seems that the Lord is speaking directly to the disciples and not to a future generation. Yet, when Jesus mentions "this generation," He could easily be making mention of that generation that will be living during that specific time of fulfillment. Preterists also dislike the idea of separating the fulfillment of the text. Yet, it is apparent that portions of Old Testament prophecy find complete fulfillment with two physical advents of the Messiah, as already observed with Messiah's Triumphal Entry.

In Matthew chapter 25 the author further recorded the teachings of Christ which explained the responsibility of his people through practical parables. Matthew, throughout his gospel, used the parables of Christ to further explain the topic or theme at hand. Now the Lord interjected two more parables which explained His Second Advent at the end of the age.

¹⁹⁴ Showers, "Maranatha Our Lord, Come," Part 1.

¹⁹⁵ Fruchtenbaum, "Israelology," Chapter X.

¹⁹⁶ Walvoord and Zuck, "The Bible Knowledge Commentary," NT, 76-81.

The first of these is the ‘Parable of the Ten Virgins,’ and the theme is that of watchfulness. This parable appears to represent the Israelites at the time of awaiting Messiah’s return at the end of the age. The context of Matthew 24 and 25 is the tribulation, and it appears to make sense that this parable demonstrates the condition of Israel during this time.

The virgins illustrate the eastern wedding custom of that day. They were part of a wedding ceremony that was to go out and meet the bridegroom who at that time was not present. Some of the virgins were prepared and ready for the groom’s appearance. Some were not ready and revealed this by their nonchalant attitudes concerning the groom’s appearing, which may be the case with future Israel. Some of the Jewish people will be eagerly anticipating the Lord’s return; some will not.

This parable shows the importance for each Israelite to be spiritually prepared and ready for the return of their bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The end result is very different for each group. The prepared will enter into their millennial kingdom with their groom and King. The unprepared ones will enter judgment, not the millennial kingdom.

The second of these parables is the ‘Parable of the Talents,’ and the theme is laboring for the master. The parable of the talents represents the personal responsibility of each individual’s gifts, attitude, and labor while awaiting the return of their master. There is little doubt that this parable was misunderstood by the audience. The culture at this time was very familiar with the master and servant relationship. “This parable of the Talents stressed the need to serve the King while He was away.”¹⁹⁷

In conclusion, in the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse there is tremendous practical application; even though this author prefers a futuristic view of the majority of the discourse, this does not rule out its relevance for this day.

Throughout the discourse, judgment and salvation are undoubtedly expressed as major themes. Along with that, the individual’s future outcome is determined by their personal response to the Lord. There is also tremendous warning and preparation for future tribulation. During this time the saint is challenged to remain watchful and alert to the circumstances surrounding him. The saint is also challenged to remain faithful to the Lord during his absence. The saint is promised reward upon the King’s return. And one of the greatest events is eagerly anticipated by the saint, the Lord’s Second Coming to this earth to gather His people and rule over them for eternity. And what a day it will be; no longer will faulty human government rule!

Reflections

Matthew the tax collector, as witnessed throughout his narrative is a literalist. He recognized that this perfect Son of David in every way became the ideal Israelite. He not only became Israel in every way possible by reliving their history perfectly, He fulfilled the OT Scriptures to the very smallest letter. From His birth through His rejection He fulfilled the exact details related to His first coming. That being the case, Matthew again astutely demonstrates that Messiah’s second coming would be a reality in relation to Israel’s messianic future as He explained these future fulfillments to His Jewish disciples. Matthew has no need to rely on an allegorical view of the Scripture to demonstrate the

¹⁹⁷ Walvoord, and Zuck, “The Bible Knowledge Commentary,” NT, 80.

realities of both a future Davidic kingdom and the church. Both entities beautifully fit within the framework of the OT prophecies; at least they do according to the tax collector.

Sadly, reflecting upon the teachings of the early church father Origen who was an allegorist, Matthew 24 is not a physical literal event; he calls it, “the allegory of the Mount of Olives.”¹⁹⁸ He explains Christ’s coming not as a physical restorative fulfillment of OT prophecies, but simply Jesus’ coming refers to Jesus entering into one’s soul. The physical aspects of Jesus’ teaching regarding the temple and future events are allegorized and defined as only mystical fulfillments pertaining to individuals in the church. Reading further into his interpretation of the text, it is easily recognized there is no future for Israel in Origen’s thinking. “Therefore neither Jesus nor the Kingdom of God is to be found among the Jews, because they were abandoned ‘like a booth in a vineyard and like a hut in a cucumber field and like a city besieged,’ on account of the crime they committed against Christ.”¹⁹⁹ Yet, the Apostle Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, the one ordained by Christ, would strongly disagree (Rom. 11:25-27).

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory” (25:31).

¹⁹⁸ Simonetti, “Matthew 14-28,” 187.

¹⁹⁹ Simonetti, “Matthew 14-28,” 187.

CHAPTER 7 THE LAST DAYS & SUPREMACY OF THE KING (MATT. 26-28)

The Last of the Fulfillment Passages

Matthew 26:54-56

“How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?’ In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, ‘Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.’”

As the end of Messiah’s time on earth drew near He continued to fulfill the Scriptures regarding His servant role. Just as Matthew has noted all along, Messiah was carrying out His role as the humble servant who would give His life as a sacrifice for the sins of others. Again, Matthew summarizes the prophets as He had previously when he called Jesus a Nazarene. In both cases it regards the humble nature of the Messiah at His first coming. Messiah remained focused on that role; Matthew remained consistent with reflection upon OT Scriptures. “But in treating him as a malefactor they were simply doing what the Scripture so long ago foretold. He was ‘numbered with the transgressors’ Isa. 53:12). Foolish and wicked men can never overthrow the purposes of God.”²⁰⁰

Matthew 27:9, 10

“And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.”

Matthew attributes the above OT text to that of the prophet Jeremiah, even though it may also reflect Zechariah 11:12, 13 also. “Characteristically Matthew sees a fulfillment of prophecy in these happenings. But he presents his readers with a problem in that he says the words were *spoken through Jeremiah the prophet* when in fact they appear to be a rather free citation of Zechariah 11:13...²⁰¹ and possibly with an addition of other portions of Jeremiah. Yet, the point Matthew is making is that it was the blood money that had been awarded to and belonged to Judas the betrayer. Matthew notes the physical detail in which this reality was fulfilled. And years later during the time of Matthew’s writing of his gospel, the reality of this fulfillment was still recognized.

Matthew 27:35

“Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: ‘They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.’”

The above Scripture is the last Scripture mentioned by Matthew pertaining to the fulfillment passages that he quotes from the OT. Again, Matthew describes the literal detail in which this reality was finally fulfilled.

Similar to the previous fulfillment Scriptures, it was Israel’s true Son of David, their new Moses who fulfilled them all to the very letter just like He vowed in the early days of His ministry. Matthew believed His promise of flawless fulfillment of the Law

²⁰⁰ Morris, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” 677.

²⁰¹ Morris, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” 696.

and the Prophets, and has demonstrated the reality of them to his 1st century Israelite receptionists!

The Supremacy of the King

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

As Matthew understands it, all failed except God’s humble servant! The Jewish leadership failed to recognize their Messiah and set Him up to be crucified (26:1-5). Judas failed by selling out his teacher in the last hours (26:14-16). The disciples failed by abandoning their Messiah in the last moments (26:56). The Sanhedrin failed by finding the perfect Son of God worthy of death (26:66, 67). Peter failed by denying his Lord three times before the bystanders (26:69-75). Pilate as governor failed by not standing up for the innocent Servant and succumbed to the mob (27:24-26). Pilate’s soldiers failed as they abused Jesus and mocked Him as if He was an imposter (27:27-31). The passersby failed by hurling insults at Israel’s true King (27:39, 40). All that stood by, including the chief priests, the elders and the thieves on either side of Jesus mocked and ridiculed King David’s true Son, the promised King of Israel. According to Matthew, there was only one who took up his cross and bore the shame that accompanied perfect obedience, and that was the perfect servant of the prophets who became Israel for the sake of Israel. Isaiah (53:3-9) plainly declares the reality of the Servant’s first coming.

“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked - But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.”

Matthew does not surprise his audience, the near future was going to be the establishment of the church; the ‘times of the Gentiles.’ It was to be Christ’s disciples who would become the apostles to the church. By the supreme authority of their Messiah they were to go to the nations preaching the supremacy of their Jewish Messiah who not only gave His life for the Jewish people, but for the Gentiles also. A New Covenant was now established by the blood of the servant Messiah, a working covenant was now in place. The shocker was that Gentiles would be fellow heirs and partakers of Israel’s own covenant of promise (Eph. 2:11-18).

Yet, the reader mustn't forget, that Matthew has explained that his people will one day enjoy the return of their true Son of David, their new Moses. The throne of David will have an occupant; their Law of Moses will be replaced by the New Covenant. Not only should Israel anticipate this day, but today's church as well.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This Author's Personal Experience

I was standing at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Our small group was among the hundreds that were there welcoming in the Sabbath. The energy and excitement was a new and exhilarating experience for me. I was among the many Jewish people who consider themselves, *People of the Book*.

It was October 19th, 2012. I was with a tour group lead by *The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry*. It was our sixth day in Israel, our third in Jerusalem. I was not only stimulated from learning about the biblical history on our trip, but I was also eagerly learning about the present day Jewish people themselves. Fortunately, the vast portion of our education had not been coming from a Christian/American guide, but from a Reform²⁰² Jewish guide who was both a biblical and modern day historian. But also, many of our interactions were with Israelite citizens. This evening at the Western Wall was important for me, because I've had a hunch regarding NT biblical interpretation, and especially regarding the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew. A modern day Jewish scholar by the name of Jacob Neusner²⁰³ had challenged my thinking regarding NT Jewish identity and I wanted to find out if what he claimed was true today. Because of that, I was going to interview Hasidic Rabbis²⁰⁴ regarding their Jewish national/biblical identity.

After graciously approaching three Rabbis, I asked them the question, "What is the importance of your identity with the Torah especially regarding Passover?" Their answer was, "It is who we are, we live out our history in the Passover, so much so that we will put packs on our backs and walk around the Passover table identifying with our people of the past who wandered in the desert." Maybe Jacob Neusner is right?

I next sought three military men; the one who spoke English said that he was a Reform Jew from the Ukraine who had made aliyah²⁰⁵ with his parents when he was a young boy. I asked him the same question. His answer was nearly the same, "We are taught from when we are young that we are people of the book and of the land, it is our identity, and it is our history." These interviews took place at the Western Wall on the Sabbath; whether secular or Ultraorthodox, the Jewish men and women came to pray and to worship at what was left of Herod's 1st century Temple where their forefathers once worshipped.

The next day, I had the privilege of talking with a Conservative Jewess.²⁰⁶ We had a more lengthy and unique conversation. She began to ask me questions about Messiah as

²⁰² Reform Jews are considered themselves fairly secular and somewhat religious.

²⁰³ "The story the family tells about itself as Israel makes their play-acting at supper plausible as they turn their lives into metaphor, themselves as actors... it is how every day Jews transform themselves into the 'Israel' of which Scripture speaks... Jews think of themselves as having gone forth from Egypt... thus the family states, recapitulating the entire narrative of Judaism's Israel." *Jacob Neusner, Judaism, An Introduction; (London, England: Penguin Books, 2002), 15.* Neusner claims that Israel has a master narrative set forth in the Torah that was lived out in NT times as well as today.

²⁰⁴ These Ultraorthodox Rabbis are easily recognized by their distinctive dress and easily distinguished from the crowds at the Western Wall.

²⁰⁵ The heartfelt call of a Jewish individual back to their God given Promised Land of Israel.

²⁰⁶ A Conservative Jew is somewhere between the secular and ultraorthodox Jew.

I had related to her my thesis subject concerning NT Jewish identity. When I explained to her my perspective on how Jesus recapitulated the life of OT Israel she listened very intently. She was captivated not on how Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy, but how His life patterned that of Israel's. Again, it was all about Jewish identity. Neusner seemed right again.

We had traveled to the northern border of Israel overlooking a Hezbollah controlled Lebanon community, where we met a very unique individual whose Hebrew name in English is *Lion*. He was a seventy-two year old man who had made aliyah as a young man. He had fought in four of Israel's wars as a paratrooper. He was no nonsense. He considered himself an anarchist who was fighting like OT Joshua for his land and people, not necessarily for his government. Even though he was non-religious, he considered himself part of the land and reliving the book. His Jewish identity related to the OT; he was like an OT forefather struggling to possess and keep the land.

South of Jerusalem, we met another Jewish man from California who made aliyah when he was seventeen years old. He looked as though he belonged to the hippie movement of the 1960s. But like the rest I had met, he knew his biblical Jewish roots. As he spoke to us, he rehearsed Israel's history beginning with Abraham. He identified with the history of his OT Jewish forefathers. He said, "I don't know how it is, but the land and history is in us and we must discover why."

What I discovered in Israel was a substantiated confirmation of the claims of modern day Rabbi Jacob Neusner. Because of this distinctive mindset of the Jewish people, it is my contention that we must endeavor to read the NT Scripture in light of Jewish understanding, and especially the NT books which were written directly to Jewish readers such as, The Gospel of Matthew.

This Author's Personal Outlook

The author of Hebrews powerfully declares as he writes to his fellow Hebrews, "...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him..." (Heb. 2:3). Matthew the tax collector who became Matthew the disciple, was one of the twelve who heard Him and was taught by Him; and who eventually penned a narrative about his Messiah from his own 1st century Jewish standpoint. This being the case, the questions must be asked, is Matthew's perception of the Messiah different than that of many Church Fathers who through the centuries have given us their allegorical opinions on the Messiah, which generally come from a Gentile perspective? Is Matthew's perception of the Messiah different than that of a far removed 21st century Gentile? Honestly, we would have to answer yes to both!

As a Gentile, the Gospel of Matthew was very confusing to me. The first time I opened up a Bible it was to the NT, and to the First Gospel. I can't remember if I made it through the first chapter. It was not like reading the Gospel of John. It was different, and I did not know why. It was not until years later that I became aware of the Jewishness of the Scriptures, and especially NT books like Matthew, James, Hebrews and others which in every way are Jewish to their very core. It was this awareness that drove me during my Bible School years to explore the historical backgrounds of the Jewishness of the Scriptures, and also how the Jewish mind differs from that of the Gentile. This study

naturally led me into Church history. I was surprised to see the anti-Semitism, the allegorical interpretations and the disregard by many scholars for the Jewishness of God's book. That is why I believe that Matthew's Gospel brings us back to the reality of the 1st century Jewish Messiah.

Matthew was emphatic as was the author of Hebrews; in every way Jesus was and is a true Israelite! "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren..." (2:17). And if you were to ask these two authors who were Jesus' brethren? It certainly was not Gentiles! Jesus, the Messiah lived among the Jewish culture of the 1st century. That is what Matthew has declared to his audience. From His bloodlines and birth to His Coming back and establishing the throne of David He is Jewish. And according to the eyewitness of Matthew, His Messiah is the perfect One that we can expect to flawlessly fulfill all the prophecies and promises made to Israel and to the Church.

What are the implications of these facts? We must follow Matthew's example and take the Scriptures literally. We must respect the Jewishness of the sacred Scriptures and with that the covenant promises made to Abraham, Israel and David; recognizing that certain covenant fulfillment may be on hold for a time, but eventually will come to pass with Messiah's Second Advent; as the Jewish Apostle Paul so wisely teaches regarding Messiah's coming again for His brethren.

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: *'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My [New] covenant with them, when I take away their sins'*" (Romans 11:25-27).

We should also respect the Jewish people today. Church history, much to our shame is full of anti-Semitism. The Holocaust museum in Jerusalem bears witness to this.²⁰⁷ As Paul declared, blindness has happened in part to Israel, but Messiah will restore His nation. So how can the repentant Church today practically demonstrate her concern for the Jewish people? First, by believing God's promise to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you..." (Gen. 12:3).

Second, by believing the teaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles; Paul's admonitions to the Gentile Romans were:

Present Messiah to them, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16);

Physically minister to them, "For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things" (Rom. 15:27);

Pray for their salvation, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1);

²⁰⁷ While visiting the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, very sadly, there were quotes from prominent early Church Fathers who encouraged anti-Semitism.

Pray for their national restoration, “And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom. 11:23);

And by anxiously anticipating the fulfillment of the Second Advent, “And so all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26).

The Apostle Paul knew that the remaining unfulfilled OT promises must be brought to fulfillment in light of God’s faithfulness. In Romans 9-11 he sheds light on where Israel is at today. I believe that the nation of Israel will one day find her identity in the Messiah, just as the present day Church has found her identity in Him. God must fulfill every promise that He has made, and every detail of those promises; those to Abraham, Israel, David and to His Church.

The First Gospel so articulately reveals how numerous OT prophecies and patterns were so perfectly fulfilled. Why would Matthew himself and his 1st century Jewish readers expect anything less regarding their future and the promises and prophecies given directly to them? That is why Matthew more so than any the other gospel writer emphasizes the uniqueness of his Messiah in relation to the Jewish OT, and emphasizes the Second Advent, because it clearly pertains to future fulfillments promised to Israel.

The First Gospel foremost, proves the absolute genuineness of the Lord Jesus Christ as Israel’s one and only Messiah. Matthew holds the unbelieving Jew who despised and rejected Jesus Christ accountable. He proved that there was no reason to doubt that Jesus Christ is the true Son of David. He also encouraged the believing Jew, for God was not done with their nation or their people. Matthew proved to the Jewish people at all levels, that this Jesus Christ was the very King whom they had been expecting. Compiling all the evidence of Matthew, there is no other conclusion. I believe Matthew; and like Alfred Edersheim I truly believe Jesus Christ is Israel’s Messiah!

He was the one perfect Man, the ideal of humanity, His doctrine the one absolute teaching. The world has known none other, none equal. And the world has owned it, if not by the testimony of words, yet by the evidence of facts... If He be not the Messiah, there has at least been none other, before or after Him. If He be not the Messiah, the world has not, and never can have, a Messiah.²⁰⁸

That is why I thank Him for grafting me, a Gentile sinner into His New Covenant. I have not replaced Israel, that is why I eagerly anticipate the perfect fulfillment of the OT promises yet unfulfilled, for Jesus own words were, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18).

I love the Bible; and I love the Jew.

I love the Bible because it is the inspired revelation of God’s boundless love to a lost and dying world; because it tells of sins forgiven, of a Savior who loved us and died for us, and who rose again from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. I love the Bible because it tells of joy and peace and forgiveness in this world, and of endless bliss in the world to come.

²⁰⁸ Edersheim, “Life and Times of Jesus Messiah,” Vol. 1, 180.

I love the Jews, because my savior was a Jew. I love the children of Israel because they gave us the Bible. I love them because the first Christians were Jews - because Peter and Paul, those flaming Jewish evangelists of the first century, gave the gospel message to the Gentile world. I love the Jews because they are God's chosen people who will yet be the greatest and most highly honored race and nation in the world.²⁰⁹

Thank you Mr. Davis for such profound insight! May the Church today live in expectation of the future fulfillments of Christ at His Second Coming!

²⁰⁹ George T.B. Davis, *Jewels for Messiah's Crown*, (Philadelphia: The Million Testaments Campaigns, 1939), 7.

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