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The Prophecies Of The King

Let's start by understanding Matthew's line of argument? What's he trying to do with chapter 1? He's trying to show that Jesus was the Messiah genealogically. What is he trying to do with chapter 2? He's trying to show that Jesus was the Messiah prophetically. Don't lose the forest for the trees. Matthew's point in the first eleven chapters is that Jesus is the Messiah and he has several ways of accomplishing that purpose.

We started the prophetic evidence last week in Matthew but what we did was emphasize not the prophecies but how the world received the King. What did we see? We saw that the Jewish leadership had a pathetic response to the King. It's just absolutely pitiful. They can quote chapter and verse of the OT that foretold the location of the birth of the King but they had no interest in going to Bethlehem to view the King. The Gentiles, however, had a wonderful response to the King. They came from 800 miles away to view the King and give Him their obeisance and offer Him gifts. Why gifts? Because they want to be blessed in the kingdom to come. They're from the nations and they know the kingdom is Jewish but they want their nation to be blessed in the kingdom. So these are the two responses Matthew includes in his argument. Why? To show in miniature the direction of what is coming on a larger scale. By in large the Jewish people reject the King and His kingdom and instead the Gentiles accept Him. Very, very strange but that's the path along which Matthew's kingdom argument begins.

This week we want to emphasize the prophecies. Jesus was the Messiah prophetically. Beware, this is a very hairy issue in the NT. There's no question Matthew and the other NT authors quote the OT as fulfilled in Jesus. But just how are the NT authors quoting the OT? What's their method? This is an area of great disagreement that works out in great

divergence theologically. We will also look at, in the background, how Satan tried to destroy the Messiah at his birth through Herod.

But the main issue we want to take up is how Matthew quotes the OT to show Messianic fulfillment. Over and over Matthew says “thus it was fulfilled...” He quotes the OT more than 50 times and alludes to it more than 75 times. This is substantially more than either Mark, Luke or John. Why? Because Matthew’s audience is Jewish. The OT is largely Messianic. So if you’re going to prove to a Jew that Jesus is the Messiah there better be OT prophecy that was fulfilled in Jesus. That would be necessary to a Jew. The question is how is Matthew quoting the OT because there are passages he quotes as being fulfilled, that when we go back and read that passage we wonder, how did Matthew get that out of the passage? Matthew 2 has historically been a good place to discuss this because the chapter has four quotations of the OT and each one seems to differ as to class or category. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, “When the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, it does so in four different ways...There is one example of each of the four ways in Matthew Two, so this will be used as the basis for explaining them.”ⁱ Before we look at four quotations let me note the importance of this issue. Currently in scholarly circles and among some evangelicals there is a movement to de-Messianize the OT. In other words, to claim that there are not many, if any, direct predictions of the Messiah in the OT. Rydelnik, professor of Jewish Studies at Moody Bible institute says, “it is becoming increasingly popular to reject the idea that the Hebrew Bible has specific predictions of the Messiah.”ⁱⁱ The reason for this growing movement is the seeming difficulty of seeing how the OT texts quoted are predictive of the Messiah. Frank Thielman writes, “the difficulty in seeing such texts as references to the Messiah and the circumstances of his life seems to demand some other approach.”ⁱⁱⁱ By “some other approach” Thielman means some other approach than a Messianic predictions approach. This seems out of touch with Jesus’ words in Luke 24:44 where he said “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus, at the very least, by these words, considered all three divisions of the Hebrew OT to contain direct Messianic prophecy. Rather than minimizing the Hebrew texts predictions of Him, Jesus seems to approach the OT as essentially a Messianic document. Sailhammer agrees saying, “It was...written, in my opinion, as the expression of the deep-seated messianic

hope of a small group of faithful prophets and their followers.”^{iv} Far from containing a mere few, if any, direct Messianic predictions, the OT is first and foremost a Messianic document. In short, the OT directly predicts a tapestry of interwoven truths concerning the Messiah who would come. The NT authors claim that these predictions were fulfilled in Jesus. Such fulfillments were essential to proving that Jesus was the Messiah. By looking at the four ways Matthew 2 quotes the OT as Messianic predictions fulfilled in Jesus should help in convincing us of the Messianic nature of the OT. It should also point the way in giving us a hermeneutic for doing exegesis of the OT. By hermeneutic we mean ‘rules of interpretation’ and by exegesis we mean the application of the rules in a consistent fashion in order to arrive at the author’s intended meaning of the text. While we can employ this same hermeneutic we need to be cognizant that we cannot claim inspiration for the resulting interpretations.

Let’s look at the four categories from the four quotations in Matthew 2. What we’ll do is back up and cover the first one since we’ve already covered it in the verse-by-verse, then as we work our way forward verse-by-verse we’ll fit the others in when they come up. The first one is Matthew 2:5-6. What category is this? *Literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment*. Very straightforward. But how do we get there? What’s the context? Herod, in v 3, was troubled by the news from the Gentile magi. What news? That the King of the Jews had been born. Why was that troubling news? Because Herod was the king. The news is of a rival King. Observe in verse 4 that Herod knew enough of the OT to know that it predicted the coming of a Jewish King who was Messiah.^v He was not ignorant of the prediction. What was he ignorant of? The birthplace. So he called in the chief priests and scribes of Israel to do what? Identify the birthplace of the Messiah. These men should know. What was their answer in verse 5? “in Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’ ” What kind of prophecy is this? Literal. Just an ordinary literal prophecy. What do we mean ordinary literal? Bethlehem of Judea means Bethlehem of Judea. It’s a specific geographic reference well-known to Jews in Micah’s day; well-known to Jews in Matthew’s day. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Is there any other information they reveal? The nature of the Messiah. What will He be like? At the end of the quotation: a shepherd, alluding to 2 Sam 5:2. How

fitting, a shepherd from the shepherd's town of Bethlehem. Is this difficult? No, even a Gentile can understand this one. There's nothing like the hairy questions that surrounded the Isa 7:14 reference earlier in Matt 1:23. That got us involved in all kinds of questions: is this double fulfillment or double reference. How you answer that, I think is important, and I've switched back and forth in my view but it's probably better to see it as a double reference. What do we mean by double reference? That there are two prophecies in the original context and each has its own respective fulfillment, one prophecy to Ahaz fulfilled in Ahaz's day, the other to the whole house of David fulfilled in Matthew's day. They're not overlapping, they are separate prophecies butted up against each other, each with its own literal fulfillment. In Matt 2:5-6 we find another literal fulfillment but it's easier because we don't have any of those issues with Mic 5:2. It's easy, Gentiles can grasp what Matthew is doing.

However, the later quotes in this chapter are not so easy for Gentiles. That's why there's such a debate among scholars as to how Matthew is getting Messianic prophecy out of the later OT passages he quotes. Gentiles struggle to see it and it's just another evidence that this book was written to Jews not Gentiles. If it had been written to Gentiles Matthew would have given big long hairy explanations from the OT so that they made sense. He didn't do that so they aren't written to us. For us to understand them we have to go through big long hairy explanations. But here with this first one it's no problem. So what's the first category? *Literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment*. This is a common and expected way the NT authors quote the OT.

We come to verse 13. What's the background? Where did we leave off last time? Verse 8, Herod had sent the magi down to Bethlehem in order to investigate the situation, identify the Child and report back to him His location, all under the guise that he was going to come and worship Him. Of course, we know he was not at all interested in worshipping Him; what he was interested in was minimizing damage by identifying his location and eliminating him. Herod was an extremely paranoid ruler. Anyone who was a threat he eliminated. He was a murderer from the beginning, a ruler who took on Satanic characteristics, an anti-Christ if you will. Augustus said it was preferable to be Herod's pig than Herod's son since a pig had a better chance of survival. So in verse 12, the magi, "having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another

way.” By the way, that word “warned” always refers to a dangerous situation. The magi were in danger. We don’t know what Herod was planning for the magi but he was obviously planning something. They didn’t come to worship Herod, did they, so where did their allegiance lie? With the rival King. So I suspect Herod considered them a threat and planned to murder them. But graciously God revealed to them in a dream that they should avoid Herod and return to their country some other way.

Picking up in verse 13, on the same night the magi had a dream someone else had a dream. Who was it? Joseph. **Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”** Why is Herod going to search for the Child now? Because the magi are not going to return to him. He’ll soon realize that they’re not coming back and so it’ll be left to him and his men to make a search. What does this do for Joseph and Mary? It buys them some time. Time for what? Time to escape.

Did they waste any time? Not at all, verse 14, **So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.** The emphasis is on the immediacy of the departure. Observe the obedience. Was Joseph concerned with obedience to God? Absolutely. He didn’t wait around a few days. He may have had a few days but Joseph was a righteous man. If he got a command he followed the command. Now Joseph and Mary were poor. How did they finance the trip? Scan back up to verse 11? They just received “gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” The customary gifts for one who was a king at his birth. So they suddenly had some cash flow. See how God works out all the details of life? Gentile astronomers came from the east and supplied their needs. They couldn’t have financed a trip to Egypt the day before, but now they can finance the trip. God provided. Also observe, it’s an extended trip, the angel said in verse 13, stay there **until I tell you**, so it ensures another dream and revelation at a later time when they’re down in Egypt and that’s down in verse 19.

Verse 15, **He remained there until the death of Herod.** Herod died in 4BC so Jesus was born before 4BC. The monk who gave us our calendar over 500 years later didn’t get all his calculations exactly correct. In any case, after Herod died they are going to return from Egypt and this is cited as the

fulfillment of an OT passage. Note the word fulfill. **This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet.** There's no question Matthew considered this a fulfillment of this passage. But this creates a difficulty because what passage is he quoting? Hosea 11:1, **"OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."** Let's turn there. It's a quote from the Hebrew text not the Septuagint. Matthew did this deliberately because the LXX says "Out of Egypt I called My children." Matthew went to the original Hebrew text which is more specific, says **"MY SON."** Looking at the passage in the original context, what problem do you see? Who is the passage referring too? "Israel." "When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." That's parallelism. The "son" is "Israel" not the Messiah. Is there any indication in Hos 11:1 that this is prophetic? No. It's historic. It's a historic statement of God bringing Israel out of Egypt under Moses. There's no prophecy here. Now do you see the difficulty? Carson points out the difficulty saying, "...so blunt an appeal to what God has absolutely hidden seems a strange background for Matthew's insisting that Jesus' exodus from Egypt in any sense fulfills the Hosea passage. This observation is not trivial; Matthew is reasoning with Jews who could say, "You are not playing fair with the text!"^{vi} Think about it: would you let me do that? I don't think so. You'd say, "Hey, you can't turn a historical reference into a prophecy, that's not proper." So what is Matthew doing? Is he giving a fuller sense, a *sensus plenior*? If you go that route then Matthew would be recognizing the original intent of Hosea 11:1 as a historical comment but the Holy Spirit gave a fuller sense through Matthew in the citation. That's one way people handle this. What's the problem with that? Would a Jew accept that claim? I don't think so. Matthew's purpose is to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. You wouldn't use a questionable method. The only thing that would convince the Jews was if Matthew used a method of interpreting the OT that was readily acceptable. So we have to dig in; there has to be more to **"OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."** What else could we try? Double fulfillment. One prophecy with two fulfillments. What's the problem with that? Hosea 11:1 isn't a prophecy to begin with; it's a historical statement. So it can't be a double fulfillment. Something else must be going on. What does Matthew clearly see? A parallel between the nation Israel coming out of Egypt and the Messiah coming out of Egypt. So there's a correspondence or a pattern or an illustration. When we see these correspondences what are we talking about? Typology. What's a type? A type by nature is prophetic. It has a historical reality that pre-figures a future reality. The type then is fulfilled in its anti-

type. What's the type here? The historical? Israel coming out of Egypt. What's the anti-type? Messiah coming out of Egypt. This is an example of typology. But the question is whether it's valid typology. Would it have apologetic power with Jews? Only if it has an OT basis. Does it? There are two OT concepts that Matthew and every Jew knew well that form a basis. First, that *the son of God terminology was first applied to the whole nation Israel, then narrowed to the house of Solomon and finally came to rest on the Messiah.* Ultimately the Messiah, following the pattern of the nation Israel, was the Son of God. The first passage is the application of the terminology to the whole nation Israel, Exodus 4:22. Turn there. What does Moses say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn." The whole nation Israel was seen as the son of God soon to be born out of the womb of Egypt. The second passage in the narrowing of the application of the terminology to the house of Solomon in 2 Sam 7:14-15. Turn there. God said to David speaking of his son after him, verse 14, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him." Finally, what Matthew is pointing out in Matt 2:15 is that the application of the terminology would ultimately come to rest on One individual King from Solomon's line, whom He identifies as Jesus, the Messiah. So there is this connection of this terminology that originally referred to the entire nation Israel, was narrowed to the kingly house of Solomon and came to rest on Jesus the Messiah. While that connection is important it still does not explain how a historical reference in Hosea can be considered the fulfillment of prophecy by Matthew. The second key concept is *the correspondence between the nation Israel coming out of Egypt and the future Messiah coming out of Egypt.* Is there any indication in the OT that the Messiah would follow the pattern of the nation Israel and come out of Egypt? If so that would make one the type and the other the anti-type. Turn to Balaam's oracles in Numbers 23 and 24, especially oracles two and three. Balaam was commissioned by the king of Moab, Balak, to curse Israel. The problem for Balak was every time Balaam opened his mouth to curse Israel he blessed them. What we want to do is compare a subtle shift between his blessing in oracle two and three and show that oracle two looks at the nation Israel whereas oracle three by parallel looks at the Messiah. I'm suggesting this is what lay in back of Matthew's quotation of Hos 11:1. In Numbers 23:18 we see the second oracle. "Then he took up his discourse and said, "Arise, O Balak, and hear; Give ear to me, O son of Zippor! ¹⁹"God is not a

man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? ²⁰“Behold, I have received *a command* to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it. ²¹“He has not observed misfortune in Jacob;” the individual, “Nor has He seen trouble in Israel;” the nation. “The LORD his God is with him,” the individual” And the shout of a king is among them.” The nation. Notice the “them” refers to the nation. Verse 22, “God brings them out of Egypt, He is for them like the horns of the wild ox.” There’s a statement of the historical exodus of the nation. God brings them out of Egypt. To be thorough let’s read the rest, ²³“For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination against Israel; At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done! ²⁴“Behold, a people rises like a lioness, And as a lion it lifts itself; It will not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain.” Now come to the third oracle in 24:3, “He took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened; ⁴The oracle of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered, ⁵How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel!” The nation again in view. Verse 6, “Like valleys that stretch out, Like gardens beside the river, Like aloes planted by the LORD, Like cedars beside the waters. ⁷“Water will flow from his buckets, And his seed *will be* by many waters,” notice the singular him, “And his king shall be higher than Agag [or Gog], And his kingdom shall be exalted. ⁸“God brings him out of Egypt, He is for him like the horns of the wild ox.” Those same phrases used “them” in the prior oracle.” Who’s the singular “him?” I suggest the “king” of verse 7 and “his kingdom.” Just to be thorough he continues, “He will devour the nations *who are* his adversaries, And will crush their bones in pieces, And shatter *them* with his arrows. ⁹“He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him? Blessed is everyone who blesses you, And cursed is everyone who curses you.” When you finish analyzing these two oracles you see this comparison which establishes the typology firmly in the Scriptures.

The Typology of the Balaam Oracles^{vii}

Israel's past experience a type of the King's future experience

Israel	King
Numbers 23:21-24	Numbers 24:7-9
God brings them out of Egypt	God brings Him out of Egypt
God is for them like the horns of an Ox	God is for Him like the horns of an Ox
Israel is like a lion	The King is like a lion

As Rydelnik says, “The writer’s strategy was intended to establish a pattern or type: what God will do for Israel, He will also do for the future king of Israel”^{viii} This would form a strong argument for the Messiahship of Jesus. What Jew of the kingly line of Solomon ever went down to Egypt and came out of Egypt, following the same pattern of the nation? The list would be short indeed; it may include only one name ever, Jesus. Why didn’t he just quote Num 24:8? Because it would not include the Son of God theme. Hosea 11:1 did. Matthew was therefore able to cite one verse that brought both themes together; that Jesus was the son of God and Jesus followed the pattern of Israel coming out of Egypt, “**OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.**” It is therefore a typical fulfillment. Rydelnik concludes, “Matthew understood that the Pentateuch had established Israel as a type of the future King Messiah. Furthermore, he understood that the Torah had established a specific parallel between Israel and the future king, namely, that God would bring them both out of Egypt. Hence...Matthew saw it as perfectly sound, when narrating God’s deliverance of Messiah from Egypt, to cite Hos 11:1, which speaks of God bringing Israel out of Egypt.”^{ix}

In other words, what we’re saying is that Matthew was not just reaching out into space and grabbing a verse out of context and giving it a new spin. Matthew puts us to shame in his knowledge of the OT. Rather than thinking we have such a great grasp of the Bible it seems more accurate to conclude that we have not even begun to plumb the depths of it very well at all. The second category then is *typological fulfillment*.

Picking back up with Matthew 2:16, **Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew**

all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. He was enraged, I suggest, for two reasons; first, in that the magi did not return and he was not able to carry out the evil he had planned for them. This meant that the news of a Jewish king would spread further than he would have liked it to; second, in that **he had been tricked** and was unable to identify the location of the Child king. This meant that he was not able to limit the damage as he originally intended. Now that that was no longer an option he **sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.** I detect this is a satanically inspired rage. He almost had the Messiah at His birth but he has narrowly escaped. Now the slaying of the male children was devastating to these mothers, to have Roman soldiers march in, take your toddler and destroy him was very painful. You can see why the people feared Herod. He was a tyrant and totally unpredictable. How many children were slain? Bethlehem was a small town, too little to be numbered among the clans of Judah. Therefore Walvoord says, “The number of children thus slain has been estimated to be from six to as many as thirty.”^x So the numbers are small but not unimportant.

Verses 17-18 point out this fulfilled another OT prophecy. **Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:** ¹⁸“A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE.” Okay, another strange quotation from the OT. Is it stated to be fulfilled? Yes. Matthew says “that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled.” What’s the OT reference? Jer 31:15. Let’s turn there. What’s the context? Back all the way up to chapter 30, verse 23, “Behold the tempest of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth.” Judgment. What judgment? The exile to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. God was exercising judgment on them for their sins. In chapter 31 He’s trying to console them with another message. Notice verse 3, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. ⁴Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel...” What’s the message? Salvation. Judgment-Salvation. In this case they’re suffering the judgment but God is putting hope before them because in the end there will be Salvation. It’s in this context that he utters verse 15, the passage Matthew cites, “A voice is

heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.” ¹⁶Thus says the LORD, “Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded,” declares the LORD, “And they will return from the land of the enemy.” The LORD’s trying to temper their weeping. Verse 17, “There is hope for your future,” declares the LORD, “And *your* children will return to their own territory.” Matthew picks up verse 15 and says when Herod slew the boys this verse was fulfilled. How can that be? Let’s look at this passage. Who is Rachel? Among the Jews Rachel is the mother of all Jewish mothers. These mothers are seen as weeping? Why? Because their sons were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and his armies. Where did it take place? In “Ramah?” Where is Ramah? If you flipped over to Jer 40 you’d see it was the place all the Jewish captives were gathered, chained and sent off to Babylon. So the picture is of the mothers of these boys weeping because they were gathered at Ramah to go into captivity to Babylon. It was a difficult time. What then is Matthew doing by picking this up and saying, thus it was fulfilled what Jeremiah said when all the boys around Jerusalem were slaughtered? He’s making an application of what happened in Jeremiah’s day. They are similar situations. We thus have to broaden our understanding of the term fulfillment to include the concept of application. It’s not arbitrary, we do this all the time. We take a passage in its original context and we deduce the principle and apply it to other areas of life. For example, take the passage in 2 Cor 7 that says we should not be yoked with unbelievers. In the context it’s talking about what? Yoking ourselves to false teachers. How is that verse usually applied? To marriage. Don’t marry an unbeliever. Is that valid? Of course, Why do we do that? Because it’s a valid principle to carry over to another area. That’s all Matthew is doing here. He’s taking the principle of mother’s weeping over sons at the time of the exile to Babylon and applying it to the mothers of Bethlehem weeping over their sons in the time of Christ. We could equally make the application to Jewish mothers at the time of the Holocaust as their sons were loaded on railroad cars and taken to concentration camps. You could probably find a hundred instances where you could apply Jer 31:15. The question is would Jews of Matthew’s day have accepted this method of handling the text? Rydelnik says, “It uses the text in a way that protorabbinic writers did before AD 70, seeking to apply ancient biblical texts to their contemporary situation. Applicational fulfillment recognizes that ancient texts have continuing relevance. By quoting these texts the writers

understood a principle in a biblical passage and then applied it to their contemporary situation.” So the third category is *applicational fulfillment*; the author takes a principle from the OT and applies it to a contemporary situation, saying, thus it was fulfilled. The term fulfillment then must be broad enough to include application of principles to fresh situations.

We return to Matt 2:19, **But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, 20Get up, take the child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the child’s life are dead.**” Now that the threat was eliminated it was time for the typological fulfillment of verse 15, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” But notice, they are told to go to a place no more specific than **the land of Israel**. It’s quite general, Joseph has a lot of leeway as far as where he can go. **So Joseph**, verse 21, **got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel**. Perfect obedience. Now, he probably intended to bring his new family to Bethlehem and raise Jesus there. **But** verse 22, **when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there**. Why was Joseph afraid to go there? **Archelaus** was a son of **Herod** and like father like son. One of Archelaus’ first acts “was to murder some three thousand people in the temple because some of their number had memorialized some martyrs put to death by Herod.”^{xi} So rather than go into Archelaus’ realm Joseph was afraid to go there. Notice the middle of verse 22, **Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee**. That word **warned**, by the way, is the same word we saw in verse 13 of the magi being warned. We said it means there was danger. So Joseph was right, Bethlehem of Judea would have put them in a dangerous situation. So they went north into the **regions of Galilee, 23and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”** Another quote from the OT that Matthew says was fulfilled. What’s the problem with this quote? It’s not a quote. Search the OT all the way through and you’ll never find this. What then are we to do about this one? You see how hard this is? It’s not easy stuff. I realize that. It’s not easy for me either. How can you say something was fulfilled that was spoken through the prophets when it’s not found anywhere in the prophets? One answer is you could say it was a prophecy that was not recorded. What’s the problem with that? Matthew says it was spoken by many prophets, plural, so it’s highly unlikely it was not recorded. Another

solution is to say that **Nazarene** is a play on words with the Hebrew *netzer* in Isa 11:1. Netzer means “branch” and in context refers to one who would arise from the insignificant roots of Jesse. So Matthew was referring to this obliquely by referring to the town of the insignificant city of **Nazareth**. This is a far stretch and not at all clear in the Greek that Matthew has any such thing on his mind. There was no connection. It raises more questions than it answers. A further problem with this view is that one prophet Isaiah said that whereas Matthew says plural prophets said this. So why does Matthew say the prophets said this if they didn’t say it? He’s not quoting them, he’s summarizing them with this expression, “**He shall be called a Nazarene.**” So we need to know what a 1st century Jew thought of Nazareth if we want to know what aspect of Messiah Matthew attributes to the **prophets**. We’re all familiar with what Nathaniel said when he was told about Jesus of Nazareth. He quipped, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth.” So we know Nazareth had a bad rap. Nazareth was a city along the northern edge of the Valley of Megiddo. It overlooked the valley. Historically this valley has been associated with the military and military battles. Nazareth was a military installation, well-known for its connection to the Roman military. There were a lot of Roman soldiers in Nazareth so it was not looked well-upon by religious Jews. What would they be accused of? Working with Romans. Then you’ve got the entire Galilee and this whole region was not looked upon favorably. Where were all the rabbi’s and religious people? Around Jerusalem and the Temple. The Galilee was an area of commerce. A famous road, the *Via Maris* passed through the Galilee. Lots of trade went on and so the Jews had a saying that “if a man would be wise let him go to Jerusalem, if he wants to be rich let him go to Galilee.” The area was highly productive, down around Jerusalem you couldn’t grow a thing except rocks, rocks and more rocks. But in the Galilee they had the fishing business, they had fertile land and vegetation, it was easy to get rich in the Galilee. So all the Jews in Jerusalem thought of Jews in the Galilee as materialists, just trying to get rich, whereas those in Nazareth were doubly cursed, they were in bed with Rome. So the saying of Nathaniel, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” reflects the thought of the time that Nazareth was despised, utterly despised, it was a figure of speech for despised. Now plug despised into verse 23, “He shall be called despised.” Did the prophets teach that the Messiah would be despised? They sure did. Isa 53:3, “He was despised and forsaken of men...despised and we did not esteem Him.” In Ps 22:6 David prophecies of the Messiah saying, “I am...despised by the people.” Nazareth

was a despised city and thus anyone who came out of Nazareth was despised. Thus Matthew says the prophets predicted the Messiah would “be called a Nazarene” in order to depict visibly the prediction that He would be despised. Joseph’s moving the family to Nazareth then would form the background of how the nation viewed their King. This category is called *summary fulfillment*.

In conclusion, Matthew has brilliantly used the OT. He shows us four categories of how he interpreted it in this chapter. First, in 2:5-6 Matthew uses literal prophecy with literal fulfillment. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and would be a Shepherd. Jesus fulfilled this literally. Second, in 2:15 Matthew uses typological fulfillment. Israel was a type of the future Messiah in that they were the son of God who was delivered out of Egypt. Jesus fulfilled this typologically when he was delivered out of Egypt. Third, in 2:18 Matthew uses applicational fulfillment. Jewish mothers wept at Ramah when their sons were taken into exile to Babylon. The weeping of Jewish mothers over the death of their young boys in and around Bethlehem fulfilled this in an applicational sense. Finally, in 2:23 Matthew uses summary fulfillment. The prophets predicted that the Messiah would be despised. The move to the despised town of Nazareth fulfilled this prediction by being consistent with Jesus’ reputation as despised and rejected.

It is important to recognize that as strange as Matthew’s quotations may seem to us, they are thoroughly grounded in the OT. Not once did he arbitrarily grab a verse from the OT, pull it out of context and say it was fulfilled Messianically when there was no valid evidence for it serving as a prediction of the Messiah. Matthew’s deep and thorough knowledge of the OT Scriptures reveals his view of the OT as one that is highly Messianic.

Yet as brilliant as Matthew is in his knowledge and handling of the OT, God is even more brilliant in His securing the safe arrival of His Son into the world contra Satan’s tactics through the evil Herod. The attempt on the life of the King at His birth was foiled. Next time we will leap more than 30 years ahead to John and the preparation for the presentation of the King to His nation.

ⁱ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*, p 146.

ⁱⁱ Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, p 1.

iii Cited by *ibid.*, Rydelnik, p 1.

iv Cited by *ibid.*, Rydelnik, p 7.

v Herod's own knowledge of the OT verifies that the OT is a Messianic document. He expected there to be some Messianic prediction of the location of the Messiah's birth. Herod, in this sense, is more closely aligned with the Messianic nature of the OT than many modern scholars.

vi Carson, D. A. (1984). Matthew. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 92). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

vii Chart modified slightly from Rydelnik, p 103.

viii *Ibid.*, Rydelnik, p 102.

ix *Ibid.*, p 103.

x John Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*, p. 24.

xi *Ibid.*, Walvoord, p 24.

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