
December 2023

Forward Pointing Introductory Formulas in the Gospel of Matthew: A Solution to One of Matthew's Most Problematic Scripture Citations

Donald C. McIntyre
Liberty University, dcmcintyre@liberty.edu

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Recommended Citation

McIntyre, Donald C.. 2023. "Forward Pointing Introductory Formulas in the Gospel of Matthew: A Solution to One of Matthew's Most Problematic Scripture Citations." *Eleutheria: John W. Rawlings School of Divinity Academic Journal* 7, (2). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol7iss2/5>

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Abstract

This paper will seek to interpret one of the most problematic passages in intertextual studies. Matthew 2:23 does not have a clear Old Testament referent, and this presents a problem. How can an unknown prophecy be fulfilled; where is the text cited to be found? However, by keeping the original in mind during interpretation, it seems that Matthew was intentionally creating a hermeneutic of suspicion creating a deliberate rhetorical effect. This paper will seek to determine how Matthew artistically arranged and derived the significance of the Old Testament for his contemporary readership in light of the Christ event. It will be argued that the unknown citation of Matthew 2:19-23 can be found in the next identical citation formula resolving the suspense created by the allusion citation of Matthew 2:23 highlighting the narrative material between the two passages as a sort of *inclusio*.

Keywords

Matthew, Matthean, Nazarene, Matt. 2:23, Intertextuality, Galilee, School of Saint Matthew, Use of the Old Testament

Cover Page Footnote

Donald C. "Mac" McIntyre (DMin, Knox Theological Seminary) is a PhD candidate at Liberty University working on Matthew's use of the Old Testament and concurrently a PhD student at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, PA.

Forward Pointing Introductory Formulas in the Gospel of Matthew: A Solution to One of Matthew's Most Problematic Scripture Citations

Intertextuality, as it regards the New Testament authors employment of Old Testament passages, has been the source of much consternation in Biblical studies.¹ Authors have poured over the issue and have failed to reach a clear consensus on what the Apostles are doing with Old Testament texts. This paper will seek to interpret one of the most problematic passages in intertextual studies. Matthew 2:23 does not have a clear Old Testament referent, and this presents a problem.² How can an unknown prophecy be fulfilled; where is the text cited to be found? However, by keeping the original in mind during interpretation, it seems that Matthew was intentionally creating a hermeneutic of suspicion creating a deliberate rhetorical effect. This paper will seek to determine how Matthew artistically arranged and derived the significance of the Old Testament for his contemporary readership in light of the Christ event. It will be argued that the unknown citation of Matthew 2:19-23 can be found in the next identical citation formula resolving the suspense created by the allusion citation of Matthew 2:23 highlighting the narrative material between the two passages as a sort of *inclusio*.

Forward Pointing πληρόω

The term πληρόω is often glossed “to fulfill” or “to make full, *fill (full)*” however there are other glosses/senses.³ These linguistic options have only

¹ Jonathan Lunde, “An Introduction to Central Questions in the New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Zondervan Counterpoints Collection (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 8.

² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 92 who is representative of the view notes that This conclusion is the more appropriate in view of the fact that “‘He shall be called a Nazorean’ does not in fact occur anywhere in the OT, nor, as far as we know, in any other contemporary literature. As a matter of fact Nazareth, as a relatively newly founded settlement, is never mentioned in the OT, or indeed in any other non-Christian Jewish writing before it appears in an inscription listing priestly courses in the third or fourth century a.d. The search for a specific OT source for ‘He shall be called a Nazorean’ is therefore likely to be futile.”

³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature [BDAG]*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 828, which includes other senses: “[2] to complete a period of time, *fill (up), complete*; . . . [3] to bring to completion that which was already begun, *complete, finish*; [4] to bring to a designed end, *fulfill* a prophecy, an obligation, a promise, a law, a request, a purpose, a desire, a hope, a duty, a fate, a destiny, etc. . . . [or] a prayer; . . . [5] to bring to completion an activity in which one has been involved from its beginning, *complete, finish*; . . . [or 6] *complete* a number.” Jared M. August, “The Climax of Christ: Toward a Broader Semantic Range of Pleroo in Matthew's Formula-Citations” (dissertation, Baptist Bible Seminary, 2018) has argued that the

muddied the debate; does Matthew's employment indicate a literal prophecy, a typological prophecy, or simply an allusion?⁴ This problem is compounded in Matthew 2:19-23 since there is no Old Testament passage which states that the Messiah, whom Matthew is seeking to identify with Jesus of Nazareth, would be called a Nazarene. Popular sentiments among the *intelligentsia* of Jerusalem would by no means seek to equate the Messiah with a Gentile-dominated area like Nazareth of Galilee if John's testimony is to be regarded as a trustworthy assessment (John 7:52). There does seem to be an apologetic purpose to Matthew's quotation formula, but there is no text which provides a word for word citation for his quote. Therefore, the reader who is familiar with the Old Testament in Matthew's time may, like contemporary readers, have been frustrated with Matthew's seemingly mistaken reference. This demands further examination. This would force the reader to continue reading until Matthew eliminated the tension thereby created. This will be the method of exegesis employed in this paper.

Exegesis of Matthew 2:19-23

This text is part of the infancy narrative that follows immediately from the birth narrative of the opening chapter. Chapter 2 describes the coming of the magi, Joseph's dream warning him to flee to Egypt, and the problematic passage concerning the flight to Egypt. Though the flight to Egypt is also a problematic use of the OT in the NT, McIntyre has addressed this recently and questions on the intertextuality issues of that text can be examined there.⁵ This text picks up immediately after the slaughter of the innocents and Rebekah's cry.

Verse 19 begins the falling action of the infancy narratives. The climax was reached in the previous section where it was clear that the primary issue was

term should be understood as "climax," however his argument involves an assessment of this formula and what may be another like it in Matt. 26, which has led the present treatment to reject the gloss he offers.

⁴ For a succinct summary of major positions in the interpretation of Messianic prophecy, see Michael A. Rydelnik, "Interpretive Approaches to Messianic Prophecy," in *The Moody Handbook of Prophecy* (Chicago: IL, The Moody Bible Institute, 2019) pp. 83-88.

⁵ Donald C. McIntyre, "Matthew Doesn't Mean What You Think He Means, and Why It's Significant: A Form Critical Evaluation of Plēroō's relation to Peshar Formulas and its Solution to an Age-Old Problem." *Eleutheria* 5, no. 2 (2021): 163–189. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol5/iss2/11>.

Herod's attempt to eliminate a potential rival.⁶ History has shown that Herod was more zealous to protect his power than anything else.⁷

This travelogue presents a problem for readers who rightfully expected that the Messiah's ministry would be centered in Israel. This minor problem of a miniature Exodus, being far less cataclysmic than the mass murder of infants in the previous section, still needs resolved. The falling action of narratives has the function of tying up the loose ends of their stories, and this section of the infancy narrative is no different.⁸ It will do this by moving the messiah back to Israel, through the death of Herod—announced by angelic revelation to Joseph. Though this verse is a narration by Matthew, and not direct speech, it orients the reader to receive the material that will come in the following verses that would otherwise seem unnatural.

Discourse analysis has shown it is natural to see a progression in sentence structure from old information to new information.⁹ Matthew begins with old information in Herod, and then new information: that Herod died, and an explanatory temporal conjunction forming a logical relationship where an angel appeared after the death of Herod. The purpose of this narration must await the next verse.¹⁰

⁶ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 23–24 and 33, notes that “Chap. 2 is quite independent of chap. 1. . . it serves to place the narrative in geographical context by calling attention to place names. . . even more important, however, is the stress on the *opposite reactions* to the Christ from his earliest days, as exhibited in the magi and Herod. . . Chap. 2 is therefore a unity consisting of a story of acceptance and rejection” where “Herod's attempt to destroy the child leads to the flight of the holy family to Egypt, his death allows their return to Israel.” Therefore, it is Herod's reaction that drives the whole unity of Chapter 2 in reference to the travelogue. The question becomes whether the family will be safe from Herod and his son, with the climax being the slaughter of the innocents in contrast to the safety of the boy Jesus in Egypt.

⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 62 notes concerning Herod that “As he grew older, he became increasingly paranoid about threats against his person and throne. He had numerous sons, wives, and others close to him put to death because he feared plots to overthrow him.”

⁸ Leland Ryken, *How Bible Stories Work: A Guided Study of Biblical Narrative*, Reading the Bible as Literature (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 90, notes that stories “are rounded off with a note of closure and finality. Part of this closure is known as the *denouement* of a plot. This refers to the tying up of loose ends—bringing the reader up to date on the final outcome of the issues that have made up the preceding story” this can be done through a variety of ways which Ryken notes, but the final one in his brief explanation is at play in this section which is “narrating the physical departure of one or more characters to a new place, thereby drawing a boundary around the preceding action.”

⁹ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 187, “Speakers tend to start with what is already established or knowable in the context and then add new or ‘nonestablished’ information to it.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 states, “Δέ is a coordinating conjunction like καί, but it includes the added constraint of signaling a new development . . . The use of δέ represents the writer's choice to

Verbal aspect studies are helpful for this verse as it moves the prominence from Herod's death, a participle form, to foregrounded present indicative of the angel's appearance.¹¹ Herod's death is not as important to Matthew's argument as it is that the angel appeared.¹² In Matthew's birth narrative, only Joseph receives angelic revelation in contrast to the birth and infancy narrative of Luke. It seems that Joseph's role in the messianic kingdom is prominent in this aspect. However, the indicative revelations that Joseph receives were never just gratuitous information. There will be corresponding imperatives in light of the new indicative fact; just as was the case in the previous occurrences of angelic intervention.

Verse 20 begins after an introductory exposition of the scene with the Angel's direct speech. Alter has noted that direct speech is particularly important for interpreting biblical narrative, though his studies were limited to the Old Testament this is still a useful interpretive grid.¹³ As the angel begins to speak, he begins with the imperative then the indicative. The angel commands Joseph to go. Though the English shows a series of commands, there is a progression. "Arise" is a participle form, subjugated to the aorist and present forms that follow. The second verbal form is *πάρλαβε* "take!" which is aorist in form, and therefore mainline to the author's argument, and the angel's speech act.¹⁴ However, the foregrounded verb in the present imperative is *πορεύου*—"go!" It is time for Joseph to leave Egypt, and he is to take his family with him. He is safe to do this because the LORD has already, in theory, gone on before him: "those who sought the life of the child are dead" (Matt. 2:20). This similarity to the Exodus narrative 12:31 where Pharaoh commands the people to "Arise, go. . . both you and your

explicitly signal that what follows is a new, distinct development in the story or argument, based on how the writer conceived of it."

¹¹ See works such as Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York, NY: Lang, 1993); Stanley E. Porter, "In Defence of Verbal Aspect," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 26–45, The Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1993), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474266666.0007>; Buist M. Fanning, "Approaches to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek: Issues in Definition and Method," in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and D. A. Carson, 46–62, The Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1993), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474266666.0008>; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1990); Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2008).

¹² Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, 124.

¹³ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 81.

¹⁴ Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2015).

people” after a violent judgement seems an appropriate allusion when viewed in conjunction with the Hosea reference in 2:11.¹⁵

Verse 21 is succinct, giving mainline un-emphasized verbal forms where Joseph does exactly what Joseph has done throughout the second chapter of Matthew 2, he simply obeys the commands of the angel. However, one should notice that this verse is identical to 2:14 except for the description of movement, “He rose, taking the child and his mother.”¹⁶ The differences between 2:14 and 2:21 therefore require examination. As Joseph departed Israel, he did so under the guise of night, and this is intentional. Darkness in biblical literature denotes sin and danger.¹⁷ The author set up the departure in 2:14 by explaining the portents of what was to follow. By contrast, there is no such bad omen in 2:21, the danger of a sinful ruler is now gone in Joseph’s mind. However, the form of ἀνεχώρησεν—“he went” to Egypt—as a completed task is different from the εἰσῆλθεν of 2:21. In changing this form, Matthew highlights the fact that this journey will not conclude the way Joseph expects; he begins to move, but he will not settle upon arrival, as he did in Egypt. Joseph’s travelogue will be modified from original intention with another minor conflict before coming to the end of the infancy narrative.

Verse 22 begins with the contrastive conjunction δέ informing the reader of the change which was foreshadowed through the εἰσῆλθεν of the previous verse. Joseph hears that Archelaus is king. The emphasis is rightly upon Archelaus’s reign, which causes the unhighlighted verbal form of Joseph’s fearful response. This fear causes Joseph to hesitate to return to Judea. He is then instructed (participle form, and therefore subjugated to stronger verbal forms) to move to the region of Galilee. The foreground verb is Archelaus’s reign, and every action in this verse hinges upon that fact.

Verse 23 is the verse under consideration. The connective καί notes that Joseph again obeys the command and went and dwelt in a city which is called Nazareth.¹⁸ The name of the city is foregrounded since it is important for the entire narrative and its presumed apologetic purpose of explaining Jesus’s

¹⁵ Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 105–107.

¹⁶ Noted in more detail by Davies and Allison Jr., 259, who note that “the common structure is: genitive absolute + ‘behold’ + ‘the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph saying’ + ‘rise, take the child and his mother’ + command to move to a designated land + an explanatory ‘for’-clause.”

¹⁷ Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 193.

¹⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000, 296.

origins.¹⁹ Not only is the verb of naming foregrounded in the text, but the phrase is also fronted. Greek word-order is commonly accepted as SVO, however, this sentence unlike the others is OSV, where the object is a nominative complement.²⁰ This fronting of the direct object is emphatic in the quotation formula.²¹ The grammatical construction presents no problems, showing Matthew's apologetic concern to defend the Nazarene provenance of Christ which would indeed need explaining.

What is unexpected is the explanation of why Jesus came from Nazareth. Matthew employs a redundant quotative frame which is a forward pointing device drawing attention to what is going to be said.²² This is a form which seems to be one of Matthew's favorite literary devices, explaining that an action occurred, and it occurred in conjunction with something that was written or prophesied, and then quoting a source. The term πλήρωω "to fulfill" has a range of meanings, and causality is inherent in the term. BDAG's fourth option has become the standard understanding of the term: "to bring to a designed end, *fulfill* a prophecy, an obligation, a promise." However, under the same options for the lexical entry, the idea of fulfilling a destiny seems more appropriate, due to the lack of a clear referent in the immediate context.²³ This lack of a clear referent is where the problem lies. The explanation makes little sense because there is no prophet who said that the Messiah would come from Nazareth. Matthew is clearly seeking to portray Jesus, via the genealogy of Matt. 1:1-17 and the subsequent revelation to Joseph in Matt. 1:20-23, as the Christ (Matt. 1:1). How could Matthew claim that the prophets made such a prophecy concerning Nazareth when there is none to be found? For this problem there have been multiple solutions offered which must be examined.

Previously Proposed Solutions to the Lack of Hebrew Referent

Blomberg notes that there are three primary solutions to the lack of the Hebrew referent, which deviates from the preceding citations of the infancy narrative: (1) the lack of referent could be a word play between "Nazarene" and the Hebrew *nēšer* ("branch"), (2) Matthew could be using "'Nazarene' as a derogatory slang term for someone from the insignificant little town of Nazareth in Galilee," or (3) Matthew could be alluding to Judges 13:7, creating a

¹⁹ Hagner, 23, who notes that with this chapter, as a narrative unity, "We now reach the 'whence' (*unde*) in contrast with the 'who?' (*quis*) of chap. 1."

²⁰ Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew 1-14: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 39

²¹ Runge, 184.

²² *Ibid.*, 387.

²³ Bauer, *BDAG*, 828.

comparison between Jesus and Samson, “since this verse also includes a promise that the woman will conceive and bear a son, similar to Matt. 1:21.”²⁴ Barnett suggests that (4) the word play between branch and Nazareth is due to the town being a Davidide clan village upon the resettlement of the area during Hasmonean times.²⁵

Critique of First Option

It is generally accepted that Hebrew culture throughout biblical times was oral in nature. As such, the community was accustomed to hearing the scriptures read to them in the synagogues and in their relationships with Rabis, of which Jesus was counted (see Mark 9:5, 11:21, John 1:49, etc.).²⁶ Assonance was a popular literary device among Jewish teachers and scriptural authors.²⁷

However, the explicit nature of Matthew’s scriptural citations seems to imply that he preferred clear referents for his scriptural assertions, even when those scriptural referents were not always easily correlated to his message.²⁸ This well-known idea of a Davidic branch coming out of a stump is a biblical theme that can be explained through many different texts, and as such it fails to narrow the text to a specific referent.

²⁴Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 11.

²⁵Paul Barnett, *Jesus & the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times* (pp. 93-94). Intervarsity Press - A. Kindle Edition., where Barnett argues that, “We may surmise that the long uninhabited village, which found no mention in the Old Testament, came to take its name from the Davidides who settled there during the Maccabean era. The similarity between netzer and Nazareth is apparent. . . According to Eusebius, who quotes Hegeisippus, an earlier authority, these men affirmed Jesus as the Messiah/Christ (whose kingdom was heavenly not political). Since Nazareth was a Davidide village where Jesus’s extended family lived, it is likely that Jude’s grandsons came from that same place. The book of Acts speaks of the rise of Christianity in Galilee (Acts 9:31). It is probable that the relatives of Jesus, though dismissive of his messianic claims during his ministry (Jn 7:5), became leaders in the nascent church of Galilee.

²⁶See Craig S. Keener. *Christobiography*, (p. 430-431), who states, “Synagogue liturgy eventually included recitation; while that full practice is debated for this period, it is clear that Jewish people regularly recited the Decalogue, Shema, and many psalms and hymns.”

²⁷Alter, p. 118 after acknowledging the “oral context of biblical narrative,” which is used to explain the different forms of repetition extant in the text, notes that “What we find, then, in biblical narrative is an elaborately integrated system of repetitions, some depended on the actual recurrence of individual phonemes, words, or short phrases” etc. Assonance would be an example of phoneme repetition.

²⁸For discussion on explicit citations see Turner, *Matthew*, table: “Matthew’s Use of the Hebrew Bible” p 18, table: “Introductory Formulas” on p. 19, and discussion on “Biblical Texts Cited in Matthew’s Fulfillment Citations” on p. 23, notice 2:23 has a question mark noting difficulty, and on p. 22 he notes the difficulty with Matt. 26:54-56. Other passages present no such problem as far as referent is concerned.

This argument likely has the strongest evidence of the following proposals for a few reasons. First, the Davidic branch theme was well known. Second, assonance was a popular literary device in Jewish culture. Finally, historical setting shows an expectation of the Davidic branch being raised up. If this interpretation cannot be bested, it would be preferred. However, this interpretation fails to explain how Matthew could associate a town with Davidic expectations through assonance when the Messiah's expected genesis was from the town of Bethlehem. Though his apologetic nature is at play, and evident in the text in many places, assonance as an apologetic is probably too shaky a foundation to build upon. It is for this reason other options must be, and indeed have been, assessed. Representatives of this first option include Nolland and Hagner, though Osborne combines this with the second option listed immediately below.²⁹

Critique of Second Option

Blomberg asserts that "The fact that this is the only place in the entire Gospel where Matthew refers to 'prophets' in the plural (rather than a singular 'prophet') as the source of an OT reference suggests that he knows that he is not quoting one text directly but rather is summing up a theme found in several prophetic texts."³⁰ This textual observation is a strength which must be reckoned with. Adherents to this option include August (who bases his interpretation on the argument of France), D. A. Carson (who also allows for the first option to have some influence on the wording), Blomberg, Davies and Allison, and Luz.

The problem with this attractive observation, however, is that it provides no solution to the lack of a clear referent for the introductory formula. Instead, it simply gives the interpreter the freedom to seek a biblical theology which justifies their own conclusions. This has led to speculation that builds upon the cultural rejection associated with the Galilean territory which was noted well above via way of John's gospels and Matthew's direct speech citations of Jewish intelligentsia. These arguments allude to the despised nature of the Messiah from the Isaianic servant songs being similar to the despised nature of Nazarenes and Galileans living in Gentile communities. If Matthew provides clear scriptural referent for his other nine of the ten πλήρωω passages, nine of ten γέγραπται passages, and all five of the "you have heard it said" formula quotations then the weight of evidence seems to imply that there is a clear referent to be found for the two which do not have a clear scriptural referent.³¹

²⁹Nolland, 131; Hagner, 40; and Osborne 102.

³⁰Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 11.

³¹Turner, *Matthew*, 19. These ten are distinct grammatically, noted on p. 20, "All ten of the preceding formulas have the verb πληρώω with the substantive participle τὸ ῥηθέν (*to rhēthen*,

Critique of Third Option

The third option is attractive because the three most famous Nazarenes in the Bible were used by God to deliver their people. Judges (13:7) with the account of Samson is problematic for modern reader; however Jewish readers and Biblical authors had no problem counting Samson as a hero of the faith (Heb. 11:32). Likewise, Samuel, the second famous Nazirite also delivered his people from foreign oppression and restored worship from a corrupt priesthood (1 Sam. 2:27-3:21, 7:3-17). The third Nazarene, John the Baptist is perhaps the strongest link to Nazarites being used to usher in God's Kingdom, and also engaged in political struggles with corrupt foreigners in power in Israel (Matt. 3:2, Luke 1:14-15). Though all three of these accounts of Nazarenes revolve around barren women, Mary was young and of marriageable age. The Jewish interpretive strategy of *qal wahomer* could satisfactorily explain the analogy.³²

However, like the first option, this option fails to adequately explain why Jesus grew up in Nazareth instead of Bethlehem from Scripture. Jesus's own life would have destroyed the allusion to the Nazirite vow; his first miracle making over 120 gallons of wine (John 2:6), Matthew 11:19 showed Jesus's reputation as a winebibber and Matt. 26:29 shows that Jesus had no intention of presenting himself as a Nazirite then or in the future. This option must be rejected as unfeasible for more reasons than its failure to give a clear textual referent.

Critique of Fourth Option

Though Barnett's argument is creative, and builds upon the assonance which has proven popular, it is unnecessarily difficult. It does not explain the fact that there is no direct evidence of a text (biblical or otherwise) from which Matthew would have quoted and avoids the main issue of the introductory formula lacking a clear referent. There is no historical basis for Barnett's hypothesis that the village was Davidic. Though he states that Jesus's family would have been among his loyal supporters after his death, Jesus enjoyed no such popularity during his life (Mark 6:3, John 7:2-3).³³ The following Jesus did have during his earthly ministry can be explained other ways; for example, over

what was spoken) as its subject and the preposition *διὰ* (*dia*, through) expressing the means of the speech. Five of the formulas are introduced by *ἵνα* (*hina*, so that, 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 21:4), three by *ὅπως* (*hopōs*, so that, 2:23; 8:17; 13:35), and two by *τότε* (*tote*, then), which takes the indicative *ἐπλήρωθη* (*eplērothē*) instead of the subjunctive *πληρωθῆ* (*plērothē*, 2:17; 27:9). *ἵνα* and *ὅπως* are synonyms, so nothing should be made of this word difference" however, it is used six other times without being introductory.

³² Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010), 112.

³³ Barnett, p. 93.

30 years it would be expected that a sinless, and therefore morally good person, would have made friends giving him a welcoming audience. Furthermore, Christ's closest disciples came from Galilee and could just as easily explain the areas prominence in the gospels and Acts (Matthew 4:18-22, John 1:43-45). The ad-hoc nature of Barnett's interpretation, which is easily explained by less ad-hoc interpretations, makes this perspective unlikely.

With the options for interpreting the referent of the passage unknown, the conclusion regarding final interpretation must await further explanation from the gospel of Matthew. As the narrative progresses, the next occurrence of πλήρωσ is found in Matthew 4:12-17, which happens to provide a direct prophecy which places the ministry of the Messiah in the location of Galilee.

Exegesis of Matthew 4:12-17

Verse 12 begins a new section with the transitional conjunction now. Some unknown period of time has elapsed so that Jesus had now heard the news about John the Baptist. The referent to John is clear since the only John mentioned was the Baptist in the Baptismal scene of 3:1-17. He had been arrested, which has been glossed over and will not be pertinent to Matthew's narrative until chapter 11. For the time being, Matthew seems content to keep the emphasis on Jesus, whom he had introduced as the Christ (1:1), the descendent of Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Judah, and David, as the paragon of blessing according to the appropriate OT covenants and rightful heir to the throne. Chapter 2 had earlier announced Jesus as the proper King of the Jews (2:2-6), Chapter 3 had announced Christ as the Son of God (3:17), and therefore he is rightfully the center of the narrative. It is Christ's movements that will be of central concern to the narrative, and Jesus now returns to Galilee after the testing in the wilderness.³⁴

Verse 13 describes that Jesus's return to Galilee is centered in Nazareth, the town which Joseph had returned the family to in 2:22-23. However, Jesus again moves from His familial home to live in Capernaum by the Sea, which was located in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali (Josh. 19:10-16, 32-39). The announcement of the Christ living outside of the ancestral land allocated to Judah (15:1-64) is peculiar but immediately explained by the narrator.

Verse 14 commences by way of the resultant conjunction ἵνα showing that Christ's new home of record was not mere happenstance but was necessitated to fulfill, πλήρωσ aorist passive, what was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. There is

³⁴ For a discussion on the testing of the wilderness see Donald McIntyre, "The Testing of Jesus in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Intertextual Hermeneutics," *Eleutheria* 5, no. 1 (2021): 90–109, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/eleu/vol5/iss1/9>.

a redundant quotative frame drawing attention to what follows through two verbs of speech: ῥηθὲν and λέγοντος.

The quotation is a composite quote from Isaiah 9:1-2 and 42:7. The form of Is. 9 is thoroughly LXX while the form of 42:7 is not clear enough to distinguish. Its immediate connection to another LXX form, however, suggests that it is LXX dependent as well.³⁵ Nonetheless, these texts must also be understood in their OT context. The apologetic nature of Matthew's argument for a Galileean home of record for the Messiah has now been firmly established through OT usage to persuade reasonable detractors.

Isaiah 7-9 has been pivotal to Matthew's argument since the first chapter with the Emmanuel citation of Matt. 1. Chapter 8 of Isaiah, which immediately precedes the quoted passage, discusses the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz and the deliverance of Israel from Assyria and Damascus. Chapter 8, however, warns Isaiah not to fall prey to the political conspiracies plaguing his contemporaries; Emmanuel will spare his people since God is with them. This oracle of salvation in the first half of Isaiah 8 immediately precedes the warning to Isaiah because the Holy Lord will be honored, even though He be a stone of offense and rock of stumbling to both of Israel's houses. It is important to note historically that the oracle of salvation that begins Isaiah 9, quoted in Matthew, is given when the tribes under consideration (Zebulun and Naphtali) are in exile under Assyrian domination. Isaiah tells them of a coming deliverance and exodus through the birth of a Son in Isaiah 9:6-7. If Chou is correct that the Biblical authors could allude to OT texts in greater contexts, then the Immanuel passage of Matthew 1, the Davidic dependence of the genealogy of Matt. 1:23, and the Matt. 2:6 allusion of the ruler from Micah would lend credence to the salvation oracle of Isaiah for Naphtali and Zebulun is being fulfilled in Christ at the current moment in the narrative.³⁶

The second part of the composite quotation comes from Isaiah 42:7 which is also a salvation oracle. Here Isaiah prophesies that God will open the blinded eyes and release from prison (a fitting exilic metaphor) those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:8-9 also alludes to the fact that God will not share his glory with any other, and yet the book of Matthew alludes to the fact that Christ shares the glory of God as His announced Son (Matt. 3:17).³⁷ With the Old Testament context sufficiently explained, and Christ's origins properly announced as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, Christ can now begin his earthly ministry, which Matthew begins in verse 17.

³⁵Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 19.

³⁶Chou, 122.

³⁷Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 18.

Verse 17 concludes the travelogue which ends chapter 4, with Jesus now being an independent adult, able to leave the house and care of his earthly father because he is fully dependent upon his heavenly father (4:6). With his earthly maturity (4:1-16) and spiritual maturity (4:1-12) now firmly established, Jesus now branches out into his public ministry of preaching. His message is categorized as being one of repentance due to the fact that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The “at hand” modifier is fronted for emphasis and often missed in English translations. Jesus’s message is of an urgent nature, and that urgency would categorize further aspects of his earthly ministry and be pivotal to Matthew’s narrative going forward.

Proposed Interpretation of Matthew 2:19-23 in light of Matthew 4:12-17

Though many have found the word play to allude to the Isaiah passage cited above, they have done so without tying in the fact that this was the intention of the author.³⁸ By recognizing the use of this unspecified referent’s role as a forward pointing device, their association with Is. 47 is strengthened, and the weaknesses of their arguments, which allow for multiple referents, is removed.

The reader, having been jarred by an unidentified textual referent which was introduced for emphasis through a redundant quotative frame, would find their interest heightened; they would begin asking questions of the public reader, or of themselves if reading privately. With no answer to be found in the immediate context, the reader would continue reading, wondering where the author got the quotation from.

Between 2:19-23 and Matthew 4:12 are pivotal narrative actions. Chapter 3 begins the ministry of John the Baptist whose preaching was one of repentance which warned of a coming person who would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and the fire of judgement (3:11-12). As soon as John’s preaching was summarized, Jesus is reintroduced into the narrative (3:13). Jesus is baptized and announced as God’s son by none other than God himself. Jesus is then anointed for service through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. The allusion to the Spirit descending is similar to the anointing of the first two kings of Israel (Saul in 1 Sam. 10:10 and David in 1 Sam. 16:13). However, the note of a dove is peculiar and may be an allusion to Noah, who was also shown to be a New Adam, in Scripture, inaugurating a new covenant of renewal after judgement.³⁹ After this

³⁸ Hagner, 40; Carson 97.

³⁹ Davies and Allison Jr., 332 note this option, though ultimately rejects it and all other 15 options presented. However, the reference to Noah in the genealogy of Matt.1 and the commendation of Christ like Noah during the flood account seem to imply a strong possibility. By use of the term “inaugurating” the distinction is meant to be separated from the idea of progressive

bold announcement, the quality of Jesus to serve as a deliverer and covenant mediator must be established, so he is led up to the wilderness by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1). After successfully proving His merit to serve as mediator, drawing strong allusions to Moses, Jesus is ministered to by angels, and begins his public ministry of preaching. The forerunner passes from the scene, and the Messiah who is the new Adam, new Noah, promised Son of Abraham, and promised Davidic King now takes the stage, and he immediately begins preaching repentance to an area of political instability fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah.

With the prophecy of Isaiah cited clearly, the tension of the Messiah's location in Nazareth is now resolved and the reader can rest. However, by creating an unresolvable tension for the reader, Matthew has drawn attention to the narrative actions in between. In these passages Jesus is connected to God as His Son, a Davidic King referencing Psalm 2, connected to Noah through the dove, connected to Moses through 40 days of wilderness testing, and connected to Isaiah's deliverance prophesied Is. 9 and 42 through his location in Nazareth and Capernaum of Galilee. Matthew is able to show how Jesus is fulfilling multiple Messianic expectations before he ever begins his public ministry, while alleviating the common misconception that no prophet could come from Galilee. Instead, the biblical witness that Matthew presents shows that none-other than the prophet like Moses, whom the people would hear (Deut. 18:15) would come from Nazareth.

The attraction of this solution is that it shows that there is indeed a specific textual basis for the redundant quotation formula. The redundant quotation formula is not used haphazardly; it is designed to slow down a narrative and draw attention to what follows as central to the argument of the author. In drawing attention to an apparent misquote, the author jeopardized his credibility to an obviously well-read Jewish audience. However, through his resolving the problem in the subsequent employment of the same formula, Matthew has created an *inclusio* which draws attention to the narrative that lies between the two. This aspect of the narrative is pivotal. While many may not have necessitated a virgin birth or a morally upright individual (as seen in second temple Messiah movements) they were now forced to reckon with the idea that Christ was a worthy Messianic candidate and was approved by God preemptively before testing under none other than the chief of demons. Through this narrative, the prophecy to Eve was already being alluded to through his triumph over the serpent in the very area where her and Adam had previously failed.

The fact that Matthew alludes to prophets (plural) in 2:23 seems to be intentional. However, with the referent now narrowed to be inclusive of at least the two Isaiah passages listed in Matt 4:15-16, a boundary of sorts has been

dispensationalists so that there is a partial initiation of the eschatological promises that await a complete fulfilment (i.e. consummated) in the millennial kingdom.

created. Blomberg feels that this plural form may not allude to any specific passage but a biblical theological theme: “The fact that this is the only place in the entire Gospel where Matthew makes reference to ‘prophets’ in the plural (rather than a singular ‘prophet’) as the source of an OT reference suggests that he knows that he is not quoting one text directly but rather is summing up a theme found in several prophetic texts.”⁴⁰ However, he offers no other prophetic texts to fit this description. This is because no other passages exist that promise deliverance for the area of Galilee.

Instead, the use of the plural prophets may be remedied through extending the referent of the formula to all salvation oracles delivered to the tribes under Assyrian domination. The Messiah of Israel would be the salvation not only of Judah, but also the Northern Kingdom. Therefore, if the salvation of the Northern Kingdom, under Gentile dominion during the time of Christ (as was all Israel), was to happen it would only happen through the work of the Messiah. This would make the Isaiah referent a part for whole application where the Messiah would be called a Nazarene, because he must be the light to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and it was only through his light being shone in those areas that they would realize the salvation oracles given to them by other prophets. Such salvation oracles could include Ez. 37.

This is an uncomfortable solution to the plural; however, Jerome seems to have come to a similar conclusion by different means; as Luz observes, “Jerome passes on a Jewish Christian exegesis that typologically relates the time of the Assyrians and the time of Jesus, claiming that since the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to be led into exile, they were also the first to be freed from their errors by Jesus.”⁴¹ Though this interpretation is plausible, the solution of a clearly intended referent found in Is. 9:1-2 and 42:7 provides a less ad hoc interpretation, evincing the common “part for whole” interpretive method displayed throughout Jewish exegesis, and literary artistry by which the author introduces intentional ambiguity for apologetic effect only to later resolve the narrative tension with the next use of the formula in 4:15-16.

⁴⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 11.

⁴¹ Luz and Koester, *Matthew*, 159.

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