

Matthew 2

Matthew 2

Overview

This chapter continues the emphasis on the fulfillment of Scripture from the previous one (Table 1). The report of the angel's message to Joseph is built around Isa 7:14. Similarly, each section of this chapter shows how the Lord's birth fulfills the Old Testament.

1:18-25	2:1-12	2:13-15	2:16-18	2:19-23
Announcement to Joseph	Wise men to Bethlehem	Flight into Egypt	Slaughter of the Innocents	Return to Nazareth
22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.	5 for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.	15 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.	17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.	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. ???
Isa 7:14	Mic 5:2 (MT 1)	Hos 11:1	Jer 31:15	

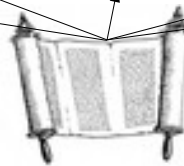


Table 1: Fulfillment Claims in Matthew 1-2

- The visit of the wise men leads the Jewish sages to cite Mic 5:2, enriched from Samuel.
- The holy family flees into Egypt to full the typology of Hos 11:1.
- Herod slays the children of Bethlehem to fulfill Jer 31:15.
- The settlement of the holy family in Nazareth fulfills a theme common to all the prophets.

We will see more such citations in Matthew, but these two chapters offer the densest condensation. Matthew wants there to be no question in our mind that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT, the culmination of God's promises.

1-12, Wise Men from the East

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king,--This individual, known to history as Herod the Great, was the patriarch of a family of puppet kings over Judah, under Roman authority, who are prominent throughout the NT (Figure 1). His father was Idumean (Edomite, descended from Esau), and his mother a Nabatean (a nomadic tribe of uncertain origins that occupied Edomite territory).

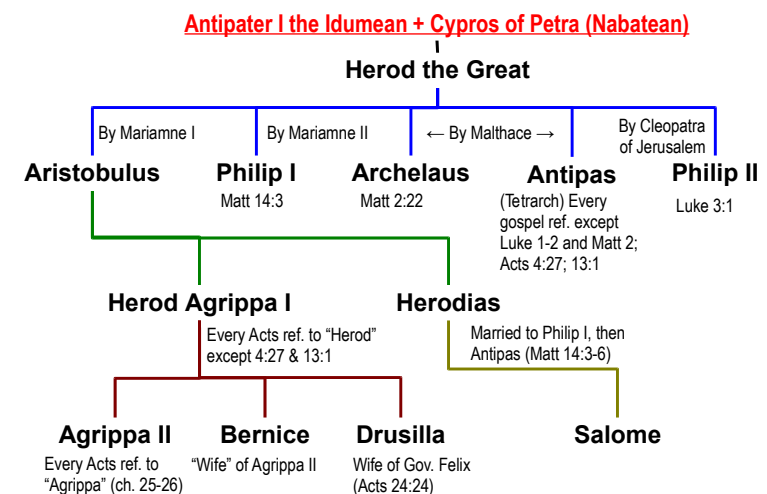


Figure 1: The Herodian Dynasty

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Thus he was not a Jew, and did not meet the Mosaic qualification for a Jewish king,

Deu 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

Given the care with which Matthew has documented our Lord's origins, this is a striking contrast. Like many modern dictators, he held power by his loyalty to the superpower of the day; the Roman senate elected him "king of the Jews."

Herod was noted for his cruelty. He put to death one of his ten wives and three of his eight sons. Caesar Augustus, under whose patronage Herod ruled, hearing of the slaughter of the innocents and Herod's cruelty to his own family, is reported to have said, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son" (Macrobius, Saturnalia 2.4.11).

behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,--The "wise men" are *μαγοι*, sometimes translated "Magi." This term appears in the LXX only in Daniel, where AV has "astrologers," and they are probably connected to the Zoroastrian religion, which was fascinated with the stars. Daniel was made their head, 5:11. From their own religious background, they would have been interested in any astronomical phenomenon. In addition, from their history with Daniel, they would have known

- his prophecy of ch. 9, setting the approximate date
- perhaps through him, of Balaam's prophecy (Figure 2)

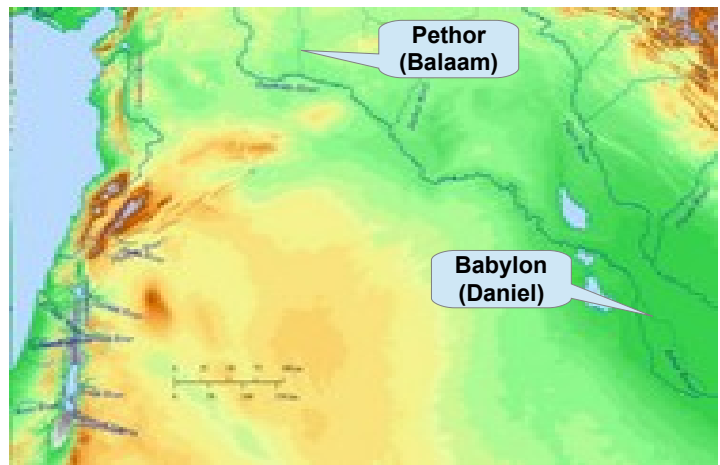


Figure 2: Geography of the Wise Men

Num 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel**, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

So when they see an unusual heavenly event, they make their way to the capital of Israel to inquire.

These wise men are an example to us in two ways.

First, they are a fruit of Daniel's faithful testimony among his colleagues. He was known to his neighbors as a worshiper of the true God. He may never have seen any "converts" during his lifetime, but five centuries later, because of his faithful testimony, these men come to seek Christ.

Application: Our service to the Lord should be motivated by our obedience to him, not the results that we see. One sows, another waters, but God reserves to himself the power to bring the increase. We will not always see those results, but we can be confident that God's word will not return to him void.

Second, they are an example of eagerly anticipating the Lord's coming. Throughout the NT, we are

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exhorted to look forward eagerly to the Lord's appearing, and to prepare ourselves for it:

2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto **all them also that love his appearing.**

1Th 1:10 And **to wait for his Son from heaven**, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Tit 2:13 **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;**

Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and **unto them that look for him** shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. **Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

Application: Like the wise men, we should be eager for his return.

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?--Compare with the history of ch. 1, and contrast with Herod's qualifications. Herod was not born as king, but had to grasp and hold that position with Roman might. Now the wise men suggest that someone has been born to that title.

for we have seen his star in the east [at its rising],--The event could have been a supernatural appearance, but several astronomical phenomena have been plausibly suggested,¹ and Matthew's language does not require the detailed movement of the star that we usually associate with the story.

and are come to worship him.--"Worship" is the consistent translation in the LXX of השתחוה "to prostrate oneself." Nearly 75% of the OT instances describe the veneration of a deity, and when the gesture is offered to men, it recognizes them as God's instruments.² In the NT the emphasis on divine worship is even more pronounced, and when it is offered to men or even to angels, they reject it :

Acts 10:25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, **Stand up; I myself also am a man.**

Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, **See thou do it not:** I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:

Rev 22:8 And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. 9 Then saith he unto me, **See thou do it not:** for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

Against this background, it would be a mistake to understand the "worship" of the wise men as simply

1 The two most promising are a repeating conjunction of Jupiter (the royal planet) and Saturn (indicating the western lands) in 7 BC (May, Sept, Dec) and Feb 6 BC (when they were joined by Mars), and a nova or comet reported by Chinese astronomers in 5 BC. The conjunction was noted in Babylonian records, so it did attract the attention of the ancients. See E.J. Houdous, "The Gospel of the Epiphany," CBQ 1944, pp. 69-84 for an excellent discussion of the description of the star in this passage.

2 TDNT v. 6 p 761.

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human respect. At the least, they recognize the one whom they seek as God's representative. When Joseph and Mary, unlike Peter with Cornelius or the angel with John, allow them to carry out their intention (v. 11), they are conveying to them the message that Joseph heard from the angel, that this one is truly "God with us" and worthy of our worship in the fullest sense of the word.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled,--The focus of his concern was probably the statement, "born king of the Jews," since he did not meet the birth qualifications to be king. Someone with the appropriate credentials would be a direct threat to his throne.

and all Jerusalem with him.--No doubt they were afraid of how Herod would react; when you live near a madman, you want him to stay calm.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together,--"Scribes of the people" emphasizes their lay character in contrast with the priests, noting the use of the phrase in Num 11:16 and Jos 1:10. Thus all of the people recognize the Messianic promise. Their failure to follow the wise men to Bethlehem shows that they do not share their enthusiasm for the Lord's coming.

Application: We must be careful not to fall into such a "dead orthodoxy," knowing the right answer, but with hardened hearts that do not respond appropriately.

The phrase "of the people" also reminds us that Herod was an alien king whose place is threatened by a true-born prince, and he must turn to the people of that prince to learn the ancient prophecies.³

he demanded of them where Christ should be born.--He was not himself a student of the Scriptures.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,--The chief priests and scribes have no difficulty answering the king's question, based on Micah 5:2. This passage was universally recognized among the Jews as referring to Messiah; the Targum⁴ (the ancient Aramaic translation of the Old Testament) renders it,

out of thee shall come forth before me the Messiah, that he may exercise dominion over Israel.

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.--Their response combines features of Micah 5:1 (ET 2), and two verses in Samuel (Table 2)

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have* been from of old, from

Micah 5:2	Samuel	Matt 2:6
But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah,	1 Sam 17:2 Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah , whose name was Jesse;	And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda ,
<i>though</i> thou be little among the thousands of Judah,		art not the least among the princes of Juda:
<i>yet</i> out of thee shall he come forth unto me <i>that is</i> to be ruler αρχων in Israel;		for out of thee shall come a Governor ηγουμενος .
whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.	2 Sam 5:2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel:	
	and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed ποιμαινω my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain ηγουμενος over Israel.	a Governor ηγουμενος , that shall rule ποιμαινω my people Israel.

Table 2: OT Sources of Matt 2:6

³ See Notes for the grammatical construction, which favors the contrast with Herod.

⁴ Cited by Gill

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everlasting.

1Sa 17:12 Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name *was* Jesse

2Sa 5:2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

If we compare the passage in Matthew with these verses, we notice several differences that repay closer examination.

- Micah speaks of “Bethlehem Ephratah,” referring to an obscure place name that appears only a few times in the OT. It is useful in distinguishing this Bethlehem from another one in the northern tribe of Zebulun (Josh 19:15). The scribes use a more familiar geographical reference, and one that recalls the first verse in the OT (1 Sam 17:12) in which David and Bethlehem are mentioned together.
- Micah refers to “the thousands of Judah,” while the scribes refer to “princes.” A “thousand” is a military division of a tribe with 1000 men in it, and the term naturally came to be used of a person who led such a group (what the Romans would call a chiliarch). In a discussion focused on a person (the Messiah), the scribes naturally focus on the leader rather than the group.
- Micah says that Bethlehem is “small among the thousands of Israel,” while the scribes say that it is “not the least.” Micah’s statement means that Bethlehem was too small to be reckoned by itself as a military “thousand.” When Joshua enumerates the cities of Judah (Josh 15), it is not even mentioned. Micah mentions this smallness to emphasize by contrast the privilege Bethlehem has of hosting the Messiah. The scribal paraphrase makes this contrast explicit: Bethlehem’s smallness is overcome by her privilege in producing the Messiah.
- The LXX of Micah describes the one who is to come forth from Bethlehem as ἀρχων. The scribes use a different Greek word, a participle from ἡγεομαι. In doing so, they are linking in another verse from Samuel (2 Sam 5:2), where ἡγουμενος is the title that God gives to David. This linkage is reinforced by Micah’s description of the Messiah’s “goings forth,” the same verb ἔσσει used of David in 2 Sam 5:2.
- With 2 Sam 5:2 firmly in mind, the scribes now add from that verse the promise that Messiah, in the line of David will “rule” (ποιμαίνω “shepherd”) “my people Israel.”

Thus the modifications made by the chief priests and scribes have the effect of emphasizing the Messianic impact of the prophecy.

Application: The chief priests and scribes are a sober reminder that someone can have accurate knowledge of the facts of the Bible and still fall far short in their obedience. They know the promised birthplace. They know that the king will be from the line of David. If the wise men know from Daniel that the time has come, the chief priests and scribes no doubt know the time as well. Yet they do not rush to Bethlehem to welcome the king. Their sterile orthodoxy is an anticipation of the opposition that our Lord will face from them in the latter chapters, and a warning from us how we ought to walk before the Lord.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the

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star appeared.--From the sequel, it appears that he is already planning to destroy the child, and if the star marks his birth, the time of its appearance would tell him how old the child might be.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.--Here is evidence that the star was not shining a spotlight on the ground in front of them, else Herod could have followed it himself. He expects that they will have to ask around to identify the child.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east [at its rising], went before them [urged them on], till it came [having risen] and stood over [it reached its zenith] where the young child was.--Hodous's translation is perhaps truer to the astronomical uses of the verbs:

And behold! the star which they had seen in the rising (near the horizon) kept serving as a guide to them, until, after it had risen, it stood in the zenith (at that locality) where the Child was.

Once more the star rises, climbing until it reaches its zenith, just as they discover the child.

And how would they discover the child? Luke tells us that the shepherds did not keep their discovery of the Messiah to themselves:

Luk 2:17 And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The people of Bethlehem knew of the Messiah, but (no doubt due to fear of Herod) did not publicize it. But when the wise men arrived, they had no difficulty finding the child.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.--“Great joy” is the portion of those who seek the Messiah. This expression appears only four times in the gospels, two in Matthew and two in Luke, in each case at the beginning and the end:

Shepherds in the fields: Luk 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of **great joy**, which shall be to all [the] people.

Wise men: Matt 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding **great joy**.

Women at the tomb: Mat 28:8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and **great joy**; and did run to bring his disciples word.

Disciples at the ascension: Luk 24:51-52 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with **great joy**:

Our Savior's earthly career begins and ends bringing “great joy” to his people. At the birth, note an interesting contrast between Luke and Matthew. Luke's angel promised joy “to all the people” (singular), that is, to Israel, but the rejoicing of the wise men shows the fulfillment of Isaiah's broader promise that the Messiah would rule over all nations.

Application: What is it that brings us joy? Most people today are following after the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. These references to great joy show us where true believers

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find their fulfillment, according to Isa 61:10, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother,--

Given Matthew’s emphasis on Joseph, it is striking that he is not mentioned. Perhaps he, with other men of Bethlehem, had already met them. It would be surprising if such an impressive group of visitors could enter a small town without a number of the men coming out to inquire of their purposes. In fact, we can imagine that their inquiries about a newly born child would lead them first of all to Joseph, who would then bring them to the house.

and fell down, and worshipped him:--As we have seen, this action reflects their conviction that he at least represents God, and Mary and Joseph do nothing to discourage them.

and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.--We have previously studied the significance of these gifts in light of references to them in the OT and the NT (Table 3):⁵

Gold	The Lord Jesus is the tabernacle of God among his people.	→ His Deity
Frankincense	The Lord Jesus offers perfect worship to his Father.	→ His Humanity
Myrrh	The Lord Jesus woos us as his bride by his sufferings for us.	→ Our Redeemer

Table 3: Gifts of the Wise Men

- Gold was used extensively to decorate the temple, and emphasizes his deity.
- Frankincense is what he would need, as a righteous man, to offer in sacrifice to God.
- Myrrh anticipates his royal wedding, to a bride that he must first purchase to himself by his sacrifice.

When we studied Isa 60, we noted that this is an example of “manifold fulfillment,” in which an initial prophecy may be repeated down through time, sometimes in words and sometimes in events that foreshadow or partially realize the promise, until the actual fulfillment. These gifts of the Magi are one more link in a long chain about how Gentiles bring their homage to the descendants of Abraham (Figure 3), a chain that stretches from Genesis 12 all the way to Revelation 21.

Application: We will see this pattern many more times in Matthew. It reminds us of the stability of God’s purposes. The events that take place around us are not just accidents, nor are they just single actions that God has promised once and then fulfilled. They are part of a vast fabric, purposed in eternity past, toward which he is working in every event. As we grapple with details that we see as local in space in time, we should be encouraged that they fit into God’s overall picture.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.--We should be encouraged that whatever the plottings of men, God is greater.

5 <http://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas1GiftsOfTheWiseMen.pdf>

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13-23, Escaping the Herods

Each of the next three paragraphs, describing how the infant Christ is delivered from the Herods, ends with a prophecy. There are two main lessons to draw from this narrative.

First, The prophets foretold not only his virgin birth, but also the opposition to him. Thus the rejection that is a major theme of the gospel is further evidence that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

These prophecies repeatedly fit see the pattern of manifold fulfillment that we have already seen, in which the Lord backs up an initial promise with a series of prophetic events and words, pointing to the final fulfillment. The examples we will see here all amplify facets of God's initial promise to Abraham in Gen 12.

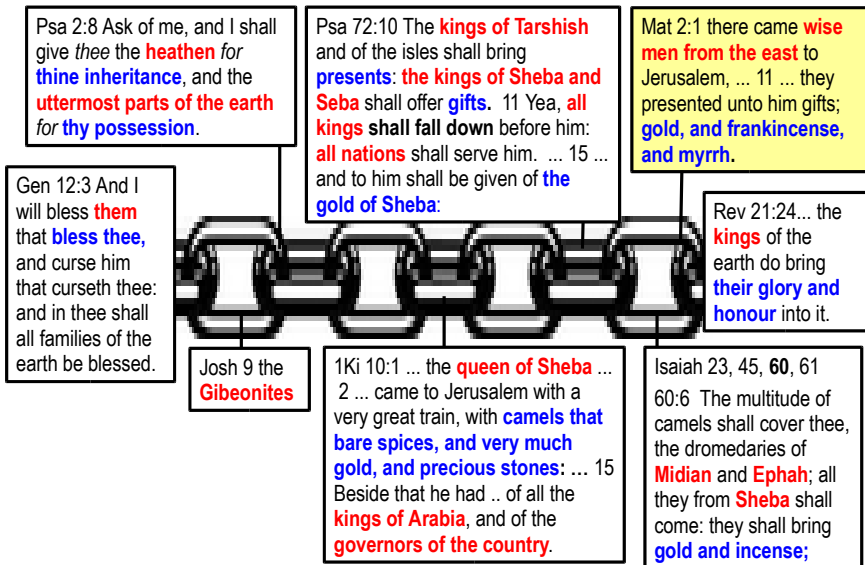


Figure 3: Manifold Fulfilment in the Gifts of the Wise Men

Application: A first recurring application throughout this chapter is that God keeps his promises. He promised to send the Messiah, and he did. We can count on him to fulfill the promises he has made to us.

Second, note how God uses means to accomplish his purposes. In the garden, our Lord said to Peter,

Mat 26:52 Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

One would expect the son of God to come with invincible angelic defenses. In the garden, our Lord said to Peter,

Mat 26:52 Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

But God uses the obedience of the wise men and Joseph to defend his son.

Application: This protection is the second persistent application. When we are tempted to be fearful, we should remember that, in the words of Cowper's great hymn, "God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." He will never abandon us, but he may use our difficulties to give others the privilege of sharing in his providential care for us. Conversely, let us remember that our obedience to the Lord has consequences beyond our relation to him, and is often part of his broader purpose.

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13-15, *The Flight into Egypt*

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.--Herod is not the first cruel king to oppress the children of Israel and try to destroy their infants. We immediately think of the story of Pharaoh in Exodus 1:

Exo 1:15-16 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: 16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools; if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live.

To Matthew's Jewish readers, the parallel between Pharaoh and Herod would be even stronger. Here's how Targum Jonathan, a pre-Christian Aramaic paraphrase of the OT, expands these verses:

Targum Jonathan to Exo 1:15: And Pharaoh ... had seen in his dream, and, behold, all the land of Egypt was placed in one scale of a balance, and a lamb ... was in the other scale; and the scale with the lamb in it overweighed. Forthwith he sent and called all the magicians of Egypt, and imparted to them his dream. ... Jannis and Jambres, the chief of the magicians, opened their mouth and answered Pharaoh, "A certain child is about to be born in the congregation of Israel, by whose hand will be destruction to all the land of Egypt." Therefore did Pharaoh, king of Egypt, give counsel to the Jewish midwives, ... 16 "When you attend Jewish women, and see them bear, if it be a male child, you shall kill him; but if a daughter, you may let her live."

Pharaoh's wise men, like Herod's chief priests and scribes, warn their monarch of the birth of a Jewish rival.

Josephus also recounts this tradition (Ant 2:205-206). In addition, he reports a dream to Amram, the father of Moses, assuring him of divine care for the coming child (Ant 2:210-216).

Ant 2:210 ... Amram, one of the nobler sort of the Hebrews, was afraid for his whole nation, lest it should fail, by the want of young men to be brought up hereafter, and was very uneasy at it, his wife being then with child, and he knew not what to do. 211 Hereupon he betook himself to prayer to God, ... 212 Accordingly God had mercy on him, He stood by him in his sleep, and exhorted him not to despair ... [God said,] 215 "... That child, out of dread of whose nativity the Egyptians have doomed the Israelite children to destruction, shall be this child of yours, and shall be concealed from those who watch to kill him: 216 and when he is brought up ..., he shall deliver the Hebrew nation from the distress they are under from the Egyptians. ...

Amram, like Joseph, is worried about the impending birth of a child to his wife, and God reassures him in a dream.

Matthew is not making a statement one way or the other about the historicity of these Jewish traditions. He is using them to continue the parallel with Egypt that Isaiah has already begun. He also wants his readers to recognize our Lord as very much like Moses (Table 4).

Moses had promised:

Deu 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy

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brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Matthew shows that the Lord Jesus is indeed “like unto” Moses, even in the details of his birth, and reinforces the lesson that God keeps his promises.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod:--

Again, we see the Lord using the obedient actions of his humble people to accomplish his great purposes.

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.--The reference is to Hos 11:1,

Hos 11:1 When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

	Exodus	Matthew
Jealous king	Pharaoh	Herod
The rival	Moses	Baby
Source of information about rival	Dream (Targum)	Wise men
Interpretation of the information	Magicians (Jannes and Jambres) (Targum)	Chief Priests and Scribes
King's response	Kill all the male children	Kill all the children
Notification of (adoptive) father in a dream	Amram (Targum)	Joseph
Deliverance of the rival	Adoption by Pharaoh's daughter	Adoption & protection by son of David

Table 4: Parallels between Pharaoh and Herod

At first glance, the citation is puzzling. Hosea is clearly speaking of the (past) Exodus of the young nation Israel, not of the (future) visit of our Lord to Egypt. But in the broader context of OT prophecy, and particularly Isaiah, Hosea's contemporary, we can understand what Hosea is saying. Consider two themes that we have seen repeatedly in Isaiah.

First, he uses the exodus from Egypt as a prototype of the deliverance from Babylon, which in turn is a prototype of the great final regathering of his people to restored Zion, another instance of manifold fulfillment (Figure 4). In light of the parallels we have already seen between our Lord and Moses, Matthew's use of Hosea becomes clearer. Our Lord is the new Moses, bringing his people out of bondage into freedom. How appropriate that his life should include a physical “return from Egypt,” highlighting his role. God keeps his promises.

The second theme from Isaiah is

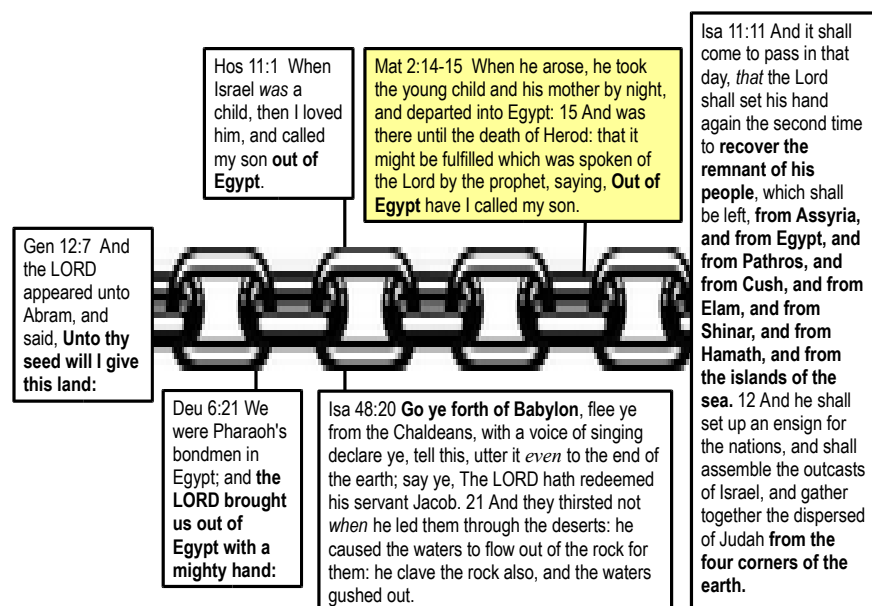


Figure 4: Manifold fulfillment in the return from Egypt

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the image of the Servant (Figure 5). Recall that this title begins as a description of the nation, but then focuses down to the single individual, the Messiah, who will redeem the nation. In applying Hosea's recollection about the nation to the Messiah, Matthew is bearing witness to this powerful vision.

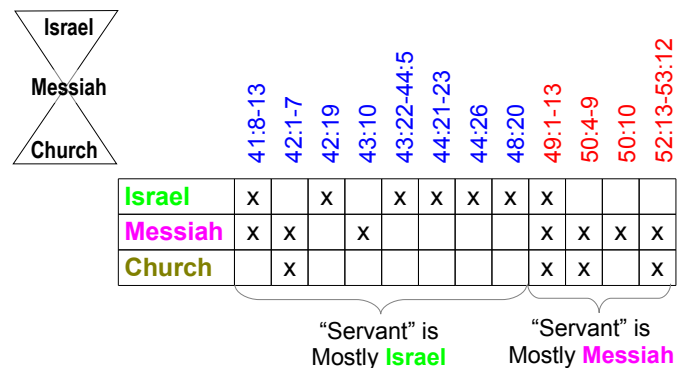


Figure 5: Isaiah's image of the Servant of the Lord

16-18, The Slaughter of the Innocents

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.--This event is completely consistent with what we know of Herod. A man whose paranoia could lead him to kill three of his own sons, and even his favorite wife, would have no compunctions about such a mass murder.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.--The reference is 31:15. Matthew apparently translates directly from the Hebrew, which he follows more closely than does the LXX. To understand the reference, we must first consider the original meaning of Jeremiah's words, then probe their allusion to Genesis, and finally compare the broader context of both Jeremiah and Genesis. Once again, we have links in a chain of manifold fulfillment.

What was Jeremiah talking about?

Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem from 627 to 560 BC, that is, from about 20 years before the first of Nebuchadnezzar's three invasions to about 25 years after the third. His mission is to interpret the Babylonian captivity to the nation. The established institutions of Jerusalem, palace and temple, sought to deny the coming disaster. Jeremiah urges them to recognize what is happening, accept the Lord's judgment, repent, and look forward to his promised restoration.

The two proper names in the verse that Matthew cites are critical to

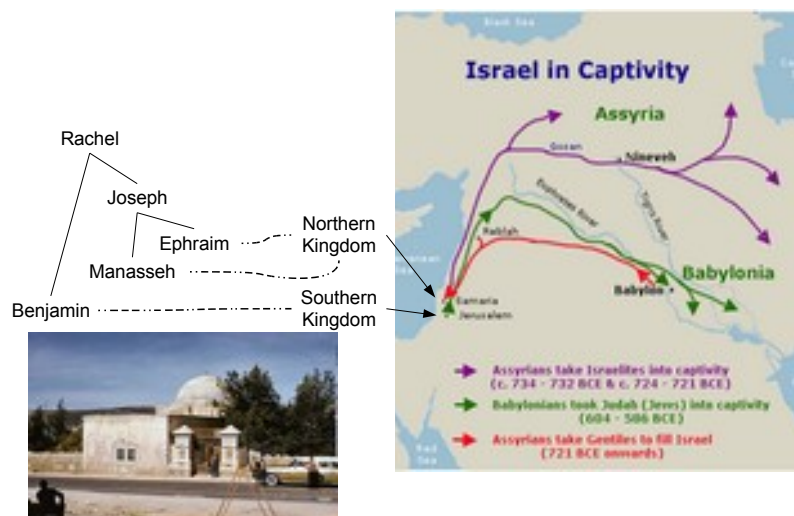


Figure 6: Background of Jer 31:15 Map:

<http://zoroastrian.angelfire.com/assyriancaptivity.jpg>. Photo of Rachel's Tomb: http://www.lifeintheholyland.com/images/Bethlehem_Rachel%27s_Tomb_cf12-26.jpg.

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understanding the point of the original verse.

“Rachel” is the mother of two of Jacob’s sons, Benjamin and Joseph (Error: Reference source not found).

- Jacob adopted Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own, elevating them to the level of Joseph’s brothers and thus giving Joseph a double portion (Gen 48). These sons became the core of the northern kingdom. The capital, Samaria, lay within the tribal boundaries of Ephraim, and the entire kingdom is often referred to simply as “Ephraim.”
- Much of Benjamin was closely associated with Judah in the southern kingdom; 1 Kings 12:21 indicates that they sided with Rehoboam in his last attempt to force the north to submit.

Thus “Rachel,” Jacob’s beloved wife, symbolizes the entire nation.

At the time Jeremiah writes, the northern kingdom has already gone into captivity to Assyria. Ramah, a city in Benjamin, was the staging area where Nebuchadnezzar assembled the captives of the southern kingdom in preparation for their march to Babylon (Jer 40:1).

So in Jeremiah, the verse pictures Rachel mourning over the loss of her children. Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) has already been taken captive, and now Benjamin is being led away.

Jeremiah and Genesis

Jeremiah in turn is drawing his language from the Joseph story in Genesis (Table 5).

Like Rachel, Jacob “refuses to be comforted” for Joseph “his son,” and “weeps.”

Gen 37:34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he **refused to be**

comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto **my son** mourning. Thus his father **wept** for him.

Just as Rachel’s children “are not,” so Jacob concludes that his sons Joseph and Simeon “are not,” using the same Hebrew word.

Gen 42:36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved *of my children*: Joseph **is not**, and Simeon **is not**, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me.

When Benjamin goes to Egypt, both of Rachel’s sons are there. Jacob’s move to Egypt placed the family under the dominion of a pagan kingdom, and led to captivity. Jeremiah sees this as an image for what is happening to the nation in the captivities, and links the two by using key phrases from Genesis. Now Matthew picks up the thread, reminding his readers that though Israel is back in the land, they are still under pagan oppression from Herod.

Genesis	Jer 31:15	Matt 2:6
37:35 [Jacob] refused to be comforted ; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 42:36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not , and Simeon is not , and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.	Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, <i>and</i> bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children [sons] refused to be comforted for her children [sons] , because they were not .	18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rahel weeping for her children , and would not be comforted , because they are not .

Table 5: From Genesis through Jeremiah to Matthew

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The Broader Context

Jeremiah's account does not end with Rachel's weeping (Table 6). In 31:16, the Lord commands her to end her weeping. This oppression will lead to Ephraim's repentance (vv. 18-19) and forgiveness (v. 20) and the restoration of the land (vv. 21-25). Ultimately, this is a happy vision, not a sad one (v. 26).

This, too, follows the story in Genesis. Things were not as bad as Jacob anticipated. God did restore his sons to him, and ultimately restored

Theme	Jeremiah	Jacob
Rachel's Mourning	15 Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, <i>and</i> bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they <i>were</i> not.	Jacob mourns loss of Joseph and Benjamin
Promise of Restoration	16 Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping , and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. 17 And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.	Jacob reunited with his sons
Repentance of the Sinful	18 I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself ... 19 Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; ...	Gen 42:21 Repentance of the brothers
Forgiveness	20 <i>Is</i> Ephraim my dear son? <i>is he</i> a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.	Gen 50:21 Joseph forgives
Restoration	21 Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, <i>even</i> the way <i>which</i> thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. ... 24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they <i>that</i> go forth with flocks. 25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.	Gen 46:4 Return to the Land
	26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.	

Table 6: Jeremiah's broader context

Matthew's Use of the Verse

What attracts Matthew to this verse?

Initially, he may be drawn by the tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem (Gen 35:19; 48:7), which is shown to this day. As Herod's goons march through the town slaughtering the children, he imagines Rachel watching in horror, and recalls this verse from Jeremiah.

But we have seen that Jeremiah's verse goes beyond disaster to hope. In keeping with the pattern of manifold fulfillment, Matthew sees the slaughter in Bethlehem, along with the cruelty of Pharaoh and of Nebuchadnezzar, as links in a prophetic chain (Figure 7). Just as the gifts of the kings are links in the chain that starts in Gen 12:3 with "I will bless them that bless thee," so Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Herod are links in the chain that starts with

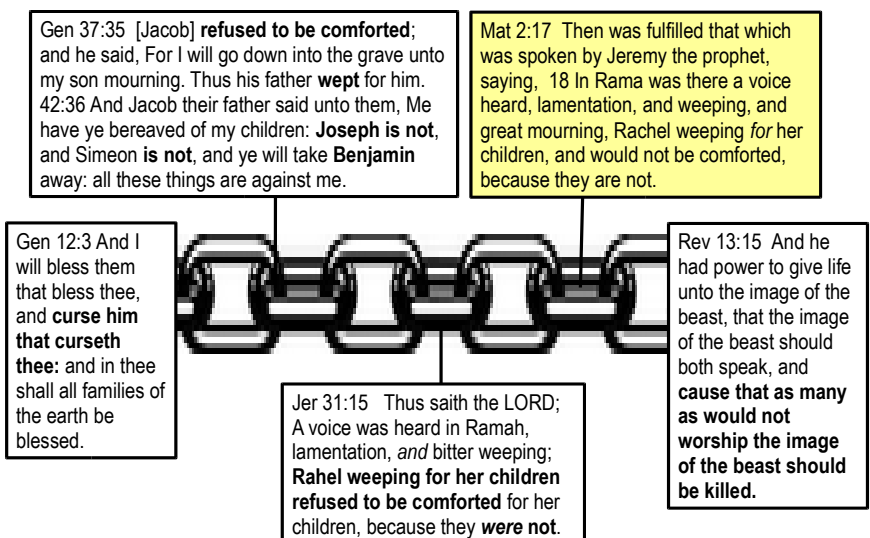


Figure 7: Manifold fulfillment in Jeremiah's prophecy

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“I will curse him that curseth thee.” Unbelievers will curse God’s people. The attacks of Gentile kings against God’s people are not new, and will culminate in the devastations of the Antichrist. But they also are not final, for God promises (and has demonstrated in the past) that they will lead his people to repentance and restoration. His hope is that as the Jews of our Lord’s day fall under the judgment that parallels that of earlier generations, so they will turn in repentance to receive the Lord’s future blessing. Once more, God keeps his promises.

19-23, The Return to Nazareth

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel γη ἰσραηλ: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.--The plural is an allusion to Exod 4:19, LXX, “for all that sought thy life are dead.”

The phrase “the land of Israel” appears only here and in the next verse in the entire NT. It does appear 18 times in the OT, and presents our Lord’s return, even as an infant, as something that must be considered from the perspective of the OT. The “king of the Jews” is now entering his own land.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:--Archelaus inherited the vicious instincts of his father. At the first passover after he ascended the throne in 4 BC, he put down civil unrest by killing 3000 people and canceling the rest of the feast. Joseph has good reason to avoid him.

notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: 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.--The final citation in this chapter has long been perplexing. There is no citation anywhere near these words. Two linkages have been suggested.

Some suggest that the title recalls the Nazarite vow of dedication of Num 6, and represents the Lord Jesus as the ultimate Nazarite, perhaps echoing the prediction about Samson in Jud 13:5, “the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb.” But our Lord didn’t keep the Nazarite conditions of avoiding contact with dead bodies and the fruit of the vine.⁶

Another suggestion notes that the Messiah in Isa 11:1 is called a “branch” נֹצֵר from Jesse’s stump. But Matthew requires multiple prophetic references.⁷

The citation formula here differs from what we have seen before, in two ways.

1. It doesn’t refer to “the prophet,” but to “the prophets.” The reference here is not to any single prophecy, but to something that multiple prophets are understood to have said.
2. The formula lacks the term “saying” that introduces the other quotations.

⁶ There are also phonetic differences between the terms. In the rare cases where the LXX transliterates the term (Judg 13:5; Alexandrinus of 13:7; 16:17), the second vowel is ι (echoing the Hebrew *hireq*), where Matthew has ω.

⁷ Gundry notes that other prophets (Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8) also describe the Messiah as a shoot, but using a different Hebrew word (צֶמַח, also used by Isaiah in 4:2). A “shoot” or “sucker” is an insignificant growth, and Isa 11:1 might be among the prophecies of a despised Messiah in Matthew’s mind.

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On reflection, Matthew is probably referring to a general theme found throughout the OT, rather than to any specific prophecy. We know from the NT that Galilee in general, and Nazareth in particular, was the subject of disdain.

Joh 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Joh 7:52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for **out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.**

Act 24:5 For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of **the sect of the Nazarenes**:

Galilee was a backwater, unsophisticated at best, and at worst naïve and polluted with frequent contact with the Gentiles. To call someone a Nazarene is to belittle and despise them.

No prophet ever uses the *word* “Nazarene” to describe our Lord. But the prophets agree that the Messiah would be despised by his people. We saw this clearly in Isaiah:

Isa 49:7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man **despiseth**, to him whom the nation **abhorreth**, to a **servant** of rulers,

Isa 50:6 I gave my back to the **smilers**, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Isa 53:3 He is **despised** and **rejected** of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was **despised**, and we esteemed him not.

David, whose experiences so often anticipate the life of his greater son, had already attested to this treatment of the righteous one:

Psa 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a **reproach** of men, and **despised** of the people.

Psa 69:19 Thou hast known my **reproach**, and my shame, and my **dishonour**: mine adversaries are all before thee. 20 **Reproach** hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

And other prophets take up the theme:

Mic 5:1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall **smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.**

Zec 11:4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; ... 8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and **their soul also abhorred me.**

Truly, the prophets taught that “he shall be called a Nazarene.”

When the Jews accused Paul before the Roman governor Felix in Acts 24, they accused him of being “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” To this day, when a Jew, Syrian, or Arab wants to say “Christian,” the word they use is a derivative of “Nazarene.” In Hebrew, to say “I am a Christian,” you say, *ani notsri* אֲנִי נוצרי, “I am a Nazarene.” To them, we are all Nazarenes. And it is important that we

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recognize that with us, as with our Savior, this is not so much a title as a description of the treatment we can expect. Our Lord taught,

Joh 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

In fact, if people do not treat us this way, there's something wrong with our testimony.

Luk 6:26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

But the Lord assures us that enduring this abuse brings blessing:

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Application: Are you truly a Nazarene? Is your testimony so compelling that those around you either bow before your Lord, or reject you as an unloving fanatic?

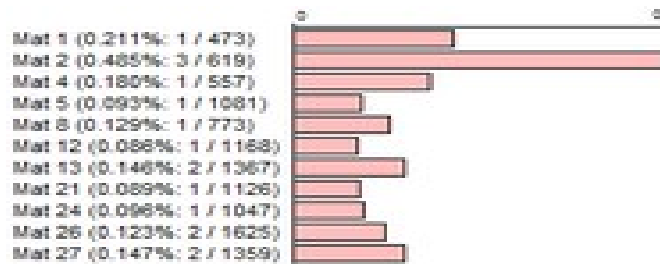
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Notes

Distribution of OT citations in Matthew

Note prominence of references to OT fulfillment in this chapter:

- 3x explicit fulfillment citations (vv. 15, 17, 23)
- Report of the chief priests and scribes about Bethlehem (v. 6)
- The most in any other chapter is 2 (ch. 13, 26, 27)



Genitives with conjoined nouns

Matt 2:4 reports that Herod gathered “the chief priests and the scribes of the people” τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ. Does τοῦ λαοῦ modify only “the scribes” (thus emphasizing that both clergy and laity were represented, thus Gill and Bengal), or the entire group (thus contrasting them with Herod, who was not “of the people”)? The basis for Gill and Bengal is the occurrence of expressions such as “elders of the people” or “scribes of the people” elsewhere.

To investigate this question, consider instances where conjoined definite nouns take a single definite genitive. There are two cases: when only the first noun has the article (as here), and when both do. It is tempting to suggest that if both nouns are governed by a single article, then they are bound into a unit to which the genitive applies as a unit (against Gill and Bengal).

Based on the word order, it appears that Matthew’s point is to contrast the priests and scribes as a group as being “of the people,” against Herod, the usurper. It may be true (based on the other passages cited by Gill and Bengal) that the scribes were indeed uniquely “of the people,” but that is not what the construction here indicates.

Only one article

This construction occurs 3 times in the LXX and 14 in the NT.

Unified nouns

Here are cases where the two nouns are clearly treated as one.

Dates

Hag 1:15 τῇ τετράδι καὶ εἰκάδι τοῦ μηνὸς

Jer 52:31 ἐν τῇ τετράδι καὶ εἰκάδι τοῦ μηνὸς

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Other

Pss 14:5 ὅτι ἡ μερίς καὶ κληρονομία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν Ἰσραὴλ
Luk 1:6 πορευόμενοι ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐντολαῖς καὶ δικαιώμασιν τοῦ κυρίου ἄμεμπτοι.
Rom 15:6 τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου = 2 Cor 1:3, 11:31; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3
2Co 10:1 τῆς πραΰτητος καὶ ἐπιεικείας τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
Phi 1:7 τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ καὶ βεβαιώσει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
Phi 2:17 τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν
Col 2:22 τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων,
Heb 3:1 τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν
1Pe 2:25 τὸν ποιμένα καὶ ἐπίσκοπον τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν.

Options for Gill's Construction

Mat 2:4 τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ

Some might put Rom 15:6 and parallels here to distinguish God from the Father of Christ, but that seems unwarranted in light of John 20:17; Eph 1:17; Rev 1:6.

Other Cases

Consider pronominal cases where the genitive has no article:

Neh 5:1 καὶ ἦν κραυγὴ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ γυναικῶν αὐτῶν μεγάλη These seem to be distinct
1Ma 3:29 χάριν τῆς διχοστασίας καὶ πληγῆς ἧς κατεσκεύασεν ἐν τῇ γῇ The same
1Ma 13:6 τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τέκνων ὑμῶν The same
Gal 1:4 κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν = 1 Thes 1:3; 3:

Two Nouns, Two Articles

These are much more common, 30x in NT (I haven't counted OT). This appears to be the unmarked construction; genitives can be either shared or not.

Shared genitive

This is particularly common in Revelation, but not unknown elsewhere.

Rev 21:26 καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν.
Luk 20:20 ὥστε παραδοῦναι αὐτὸν τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος.
Rom 11:29 ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ.
1Co 11:27 ἔνοχος ἐστὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ κυρίου.
2Co 8:4 τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους,
Heb 3:6 ἐάν[περ] τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος κατὰσχωμεν.
Rev 16:4 τοὺς ποταμοὺς καὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων,
Rev 17:5 Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.
Rev 18:3 τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς
Rev 19:1 ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν,

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Genitive goes only with last

Mat 8:12 ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. =13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk 13:28

Luk 8:24 ἐπετίμησεν τῷ ἀνέμῳ καὶ τῷ κλύδωνι τοῦ ὕδατος.

Luk 11:42 παρέρχεσθε τὴν κρίσιν καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ

Act 4:1 οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ οἱ Σαδδουκαῖοι,

Act 6:4 ἡμεῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ λόγου προσκαρτερήσομεν.

Act 11:6 εἶδον τὰ τετράποδα τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ ἑρπετὰ καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

Act 20:32 παρατίθεμαι ὑμᾶς τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

Rom 5:17 τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης

Eph 4:13 τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ,

Col 2:13 καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας [ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, I prefer the Geneva rendering her, “dead in sins and” “The flesh” is clearly focused on the metaphor inherent in “uncircumcision,” and it is most natural to associate ὑμων with the nearer antecedent “flesh.”

Heb 9:2 τε λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων

Heb 11:28 τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὴν πρόσχυσιν τοῦ αἵματος

Rev 12:10 ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ,

Rev 19:19 Καὶ εἶδον τὸ θηρίον καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς

Errors in case matching in Bibleworks

Matt 21:12

Lk 12:8

Several in the single article case as well.