

FULFILLMENT IN MATTHEW AS ESCHATOLOGICAL REVERSAL

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One of the most fascinating aspects of the Gospel of Matthew, and one that has led to much lively discussion, is the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as the consummate fulfillment of the OT Scriptures. This is seen most clearly in Matthew's fulfillment formula citations, though Matthew certainly has an understanding of fulfillment that goes beyond these ten (or so) formulaic texts.¹ In this article I would like to suggest a nuance to Matthew's understanding of fulfillment as it is found both in his fulfillment formula citations and more broadly throughout his Gospel, namely, that fulfillment involves a reversal of the negative aspects of Israel's history in Jesus as derived from the OT prophets. This reversal is related to Jesus as the recapitulation and τέλος (end, goal, purpose) of Israel's history, which is understood by Matthew diachronically.² In sum, I am arguing that for Matthew, the fulfillment of the

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¹ I will explain the criteria for these ten citations below. These citations have particularly been the focus of sustained discussion through the years. Some notable works include Wilhelm Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (BWA[N]T 8; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969); R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," *NTS* 27 (1981/1982): 233-51; George M. Soares-Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Inquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1-2* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); A. Baumstark, "Die Zitate des Mt-Evangeliums aus dem Zwölfprophetenbuch," *Bib* 37 (1956): 296-313; Jean Miler, *Les citations d'accomplissement dans l'Évangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu se rend présent en toute humanité* (AnBib 140; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1999); Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-Assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as 'Test Case,'" in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; BETL 131; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 89-115; J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Conceptualising Fulfillment in Matthew," *TynBul* 59 (2008): 77-98.

² Joel Kennedy (*The Recapitulation of Israel: Use of Israel's History in Matthew 1:1-4:11* [WUNT 2/257; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 23) lists four elements of recapitulation: repetition, summing up, representation, embodiment. I am aware that there may be some parallels in what I intend to say with Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. F. Wilson; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), including Israel's framework of a linear understanding of time and the importance of representation in salvation (see, e.g., pp. 53-54). Nevertheless, I am not basing the present argument on Cullmann's work. I do not agree with all his formulations, nor am I unaware of the critiques of his supposed over-reliance on word-level distinctions. See James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (SBT 1/33; London: SCM, 1969), 50-85.

Scriptures has in large part to do with the overcoming of Israel's disobedient history in the wide-ranging obedience of Jesus. Indeed, we see in Matthew that every aspect of Jesus' life conforms to Scripture. To my knowledge, this perspective of fulfillment-by-reversal as a thoroughgoing element of Matthean fulfillment—particularly in reference to the formula citations—has not heretofore been suggested. To be clear, I am not arguing that this reversal is *all* that Matthew intends by fulfillment. Instead, I am simply proposing that this is one important aspect of how the Scriptures are consummately realized in Jesus.

This study will begin by considering the contours of Matthew's fulfillment formula citations. After explaining the range of these citations, I will provide an exegesis of Matt 2 to illustrate the approach I am suggesting. Here I will particularly focus on the three fulfillment citations in Matt 2, and I will argue that these exhibit a pattern in which prophetic texts underscoring the covenantal infidelity of Israel find their resolution in the life of Christ. Next, I will briefly survey the rest of Matthew's fulfillment citations, along with other relevant Matthean texts, to test whether this pattern can be pressed further. Finally, I will suggest some implications pertaining to the proposed schema.

I should add a couple of caveats here. First, the following study is quite limited in scope. Although one could ask a number of important questions of each of the following passages, this study will focus primarily on how *reversal* may be a shared thematic element among the passages discussed. Second, I will focus in this study on texts that feature *fulfill* language, though I readily admit that Matthew's understanding of fulfillment transcends the presence of this terminology.³

At this point it will be helpful to define Matthew's fulfillment citations since they are an important part of the proposed hermeneutic of reversal. I consider Matthew's fulfillment formula citations to be those passages that contain: (1) a scriptural introductory formula pertaining to a prophet(s); (2) the use of a verbal form of *πληρώω* (fulfill), (3) as part of the narrator's commentary indicating how the scriptural passage is fulfilled in or by Jesus.⁴ These criteria yield the following list: 1:22-23 (Isa 7:14); 2:15 (Hos 11:1); 2:17-18 (Jer 31:15); 2:23 (various); 4:14-16 (Isa 9:1-2); 8:17 (Isa 53:4); 12:17-21 (Isa 42:1-4); 13:35 (Ps 78:2); 21:4-5 (Zech 9:9 and Isa 62:11?); 27:9-10 (Zech 11:12, and others?). Thus, I do not consider the citations of Mic 5:1 in Matt 2:5-6 (which includes neither a use of *πληρώω* nor a comment from the narrator) or Isa 6:9-10 in Matt 13:14-15 (which, though it employs *ἀναπληρώω*, is not part of the narrator's

³ For fulfillment as the theme of Matthew, see R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989), 166-205. See also Graham N. Stanton, "Matthew," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture; Essays in Honor of Barnabas Lindars* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 205-19, who notes that fulfillment is woven into the warp and woof of Matthew's Gospel.

⁴ See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (trans. W. C. Linss; Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 157 n. 4; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 99 n. 66.

assessment, nor does it indicate something fulfilled *in Jesus*) to be formula citations. Nor do I consider Matt 26:54-56, which relates in more general terms the fulfillment of the prophets in the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, to be a formula citation. However, the selection of what I consider to be the formula citations does not delimit the current study, since all these and other relevant texts will be considered in due course.

I. *Fulfillment and Reversal in Matthew 2*

This study thus begins in Matt 2, a chapter that contains three fulfillment citations early in Matthew's Gospel. These citations are linked not only by our modern-day chapter divisions, but they all, in some way, describe Jesus' conformity as a child to God's scriptural paradigms. As such, Matt 2 provides a helpful starting place for the present investigation. One of the first things to note about these citations, and something that will be true for the entirety of the fulfillment citations in Matthew, is that they all derive from the OT prophets.⁵

(1) The first fulfillment text in Matt 2 is the citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15. Hosea 11:1 recounts the fatherly love of the Lord for Israel: "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."⁶ To get the full effect of Matthew's communicative intent, it is instructive to look at the entire literary context from the OT, which I will argue Matthew is invoking in his formula citations.⁷ As we expand our purview to the larger passage, Hosea notes how the Lord taught Israel to walk, took them in his arms, and healed them; he bent down and fed them (vv. 3-4). Yet Hosea's main lament in ch. 11 is the waywardness of Israel in response to the divine love poured out on the nation. Israel continually turned to other gods and would be led back into captivity.⁸ The response of Israel that Hosea is describing is not primarily a positive one, but one of covenantal infidelity.⁹

⁵ Although it is a bit opaque where the citation in 2:23 comes from, Matthew clearly identifies its source as *the prophets*. Similarly, the citation of Ps 78:2 in Matt 13:35 is also described as prophetic.

⁶ Matthew, agreeing with the MT, reads *uλός*; the LXX reads *τέκνα*. All biblical translations are mine.

⁷ See similarly Miler, *Les citations*, 9: "Je montrerai également que, dans bien des cas, l'énoncé cité et son attribution invitent le lecteur à prendre en compte le contexte dont l'énoncé cité est extrait et, éventuellement, à effectuer un parcours dans une série d'autres textes 'prophétiques.' Autrement dit, je montrerai comment le récit Mt fait écho, par la médiation de la citation, au contexte plus large de l'énoncé d'origine."

⁸ Hos 11:5 is difficult to interpret. Is it a rhetorical question indicating they will be led back into Egypt? Or is it stating they will not go back to Egypt, but they will go to Assyria instead?

⁹ The covenantal language in Hos 11 is quite impressive. See Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freeman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 576; James Luther Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1969), 151-53; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 178; Duane Andre Smith, "Kinship and Covenant in Hosea 11:1-4," *HBT* 16 (1994): 41-53.

In spite of this, however, Hosea already posits a future hope when Israel will return from Egypt and Assyria (vv. 10-11).¹⁰ Matthew indicates that this return from Egypt is ultimately fulfilled in the return of Jesus from Egypt. Here we must give heed to the reason Jesus has found himself in Egypt: the intrigue of King Herod to search out this newborn king who poses a threat to his own kingdom. At this point we see one way Jesus enacts the story of Israel in himself—he embarks on an exodus of sorts. However, instead of fleeing *from* Egypt and Pharaoh, Jesus flees *to* Egypt to escape the wicked king of Jerusalem. Jesus is reliving the experience of Israel, but the roles have been reversed.¹¹

Thus, the resolution to Israel's predicament in Hos 11 is eschatologically found in the life of Jesus according to Matt 2:15. Hosea 11:11 expresses the need for Israel to return from Egypt, where they are because of covenantal unfaithfulness. Matthew portrays Jesus in the role of covenantally obedient Israel who comes out of Egypt in accord with God's design. What we find in Matt 2 is that Jesus is in Egypt because his life conforms to God's will (note the command to Joseph in 2:13-14) and to Scripture in every way (thus the prefatory comment in 2:15: ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου). Thus, even here, where Jesus himself does not appear to be (humanly speaking) volitionally involved, it is clear that his life is in full accord with the scriptural blueprint for God's eschatological salvation.¹² Moreover, the pervasive scriptural conformity in the life of Jesus in Matt 2 (already seen in his birth in Bethlehem [cf. Mic 5:1]) anticipates Jesus' full-fledged obedience to his Father throughout his life. To relate this back to Hos 11:1, as the true Israel Jesus identifies with the failures of Israel reflected in Hosea, and overcomes them in keeping with the divine call (11:10-11). Jesus' flight to and return from Egypt is thus the eschatological realization of Hosea's hope—an enacted reversal of the recalcitrance of Israel.

(2) The second fulfillment citation to consider is Jer 31:15 in Matt 2:18.¹³ It is helpful again to look at the literary context from which this citation comes

¹⁰ For a fuller discussion of the exegetical details of Hos 11 in relation to Matt 2, see G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," *JETS* 55 (2012): 697-715. Elsewhere Beale helpfully labels this "typological prophecy" (see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 57-66).

¹¹ See also Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 109 n.107.

¹² This may be complementary to R. S. McConnell's view that the formula quotations give an outline of Jesus' whole life and ministry; in all these ways Jesus is fully obedient. See *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel: The Authority and Use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of St. Matthew* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1969), 134.

¹³ This citation is often viewed as having a negative connotation. Indeed, Rothfuchs (*Erfüllungszitate*, 131) and Miller (*Les citations*, 331-32) see in the scriptural fulfillment recounted in 2:18 and 27:9 the role of violence (in association with Israel). Perhaps violence is one element that Matthew sees the need to reverse, but it is not only these two texts that have negative connotations. Furthermore, the negative connotations I am suggesting do not denote altogether a *rejection* or *refusal* of Israel. In other words, by focusing on the negative connotations in all of Matthew's fulfillment citations, it seems to me that the intensity and uniqueness of what some see in these two citations is rendered less remarkable.

and consider Jer 31 on its own terms. Jeremiah 31 is a very positive chapter overall, with its promise of a return from exile and a new covenant. However, in the midst of this section appears one negative reflection, which is the verse that Matthew cites.¹⁴ Here the reader is reminded of Rachel weeping for her children, which represents the nation weeping over the destruction that came at the hands of foreign invaders. The reason for this destruction is that the Israelites forsook their covenant obligations (Jer 31:32; cf. Deut 26–28), thus the need for a *new* covenant.

It is this verse that Matthew includes to recount the horrors of Herod's slaughter of the young children. By invoking the image of Rachel weeping for her children in view of the somber realities of the exile, Matthew relates the dire situation of Israel's past with the dire situation at the time of Jesus, who himself undergoes an exile due to the tyrannical rule of King Herod. Although Jesus remains in exile in Egypt, there is a reversal here. Rachel's weeping will be overcome through Jesus, who was spared Herod's slaughter.¹⁵ In contrast to the squatter King Herod (2:1, 3), Jesus will prove himself to be the true Davidic king (2:2) who will lead his people to freedom from tyrannical rulers (of Israel in this case!), thus overcoming the sorrow of the exile as he saves his people from their sins (1:21). Indeed, this overcoming of the exile is already implied in the structure of Israel's history in Matthew's genealogy that highlights the deportation to Babylon as a low point (1:11), in contrast to the upward trajectory that comes with the birth of Jesus (1:16–17).¹⁶

(3) The third fulfillment text comes in Matt 2:23, though the specific source for this citation is notoriously difficult to identify. Nevertheless, Matthew identifies the citation as coming from *the prophets*: "he will be called a Nazarean." What is the source of this text? In my view the most likely answer is that Matthew is not quoting one text, but is combining prophetic motifs, namely, the branch/shoot idea (Hebrew נֹצֵר), along with the pejorative manner by which he *was* called a Nazarean—an identification that goes hand-in-hand with the notion of a *rejected Messiah*.¹⁷ This terminology for branch/shoot can be found in Isa 11:1 (note that צֶמַח is used for *branch* in such passages as Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15;

¹⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 1:267–68; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 87. Matthew's use of τότε instead of ἔνα or ὅπως in 2:17 and 27:9, if Matthew intends a distinction in these two citations, does not affect my overall argument.

¹⁵ Miler (*Les citations*, 64): "Le narrateur montre que Jésus revient vers un peuple qui a 'besoin' de la consolation et du salut."

¹⁶ Miler (*ibid.*, 61) makes some similar observations. See also Richard B. Hays, "The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah," *HvTSt* 61 (2005): 165–90.

¹⁷ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (ed. F. A. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 97; France, *Matthew*, 91–95. Judg 13:5–7 is another possibility, but it has little connection to *Nazareth*, which seems to be Matthew's point (so Carson).

Zech 3:8; 6:12), and the rejected Messiah motif can be seen in Isa 52–53; Pss 22; 69; Zech 9–14 (cf. 11:4–11; 12:10; 13:7).¹⁸

If a combination like this is correct, the reversal—or perhaps in this case something like ironic fulfillment—is not too difficult to see. Jesus, though born in Bethlehem in conjunction with the recognized prophecy of Mic 5:1, was actually reared in Nazareth, and not in or near the religious center of Jerusalem. The notion of a rejected Messiah may similarly not have been expected by most, and was even cause for disdain, yet there is sufficient scriptural warrant for it for Matthew simply to refer to the message of the *prophets* (plural). In this sense Jesus is reversing expectations, which may be a sort of rebuke against the glorious expectations of the masses. Jesus as Messiah was not what they had envisioned him to be; instead, as a rejected and suffering Messiah he would be a visual representation of the waywardness of Israel since they themselves contributed, in one way or another, to his suffering.¹⁹

A few words of summary are in order for Matt 2. First, Matthew highlights prophetic texts that underscore the waywardness of Israel, the negative consequences that accrue to the nation, or the closely related idea of a rejected Messiah. Though we have only looked at these themes briefly, it appears that Matthew understands these OT texts well and his points reveal a careful knowledge of their original contexts. In the three examples from Matt 2, the underlying point is the same: the people's covenantal infidelity is an obstacle that must be overcome for the blessed hope of the prophets to be experienced. Second, Jesus as Messiah is related to Israel as a representative figure who recapitulates the nation's history. Third, Jesus is portrayed positively, in conformity with Scripture (even in his disparagement), in contrast to the various rebukes of the prophets directed toward wayward Israel.²⁰

II. *Reversal in the Fulfillment Formula Citations*

Having suggested the way that the fulfillment texts from Matt 2 involve a reversal of Israel's history, we turn now to a very brief survey of the remainder of Matthew's fulfillment citations. I will argue that, of the seven remaining citations, at least five fit the proposed pattern quite well. I begin with what I consider to be the clearest texts.

¹⁸ See John 1:46; 7:42, 52; Acts 24:5.

¹⁹ This could be related to a sub-theme in Matthew of Jesus as a rejected prophet, much like Jeremiah (Matt 16:14).

²⁰ Of course, there is more to what Matthew is doing here. Miller (*Les citations*, 35), following Raymond E. Brown (*The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke* [rev. ed.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 177–83), takes Stendahl's suggestion that these show the *quis* (who) and *unde* (whence) of Jesus, and includes *quomodo* (how) and the *ubi* (where) of Jesus' messiahship. See also Krister Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1–2," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias* (ed. W. Eltester; BZNW 26; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960), 94–105.

1. *Likely Reversal Texts*

(1) The quotation in Matt 27:9 most likely comes from Zech 11:12 mixed with portions of Jer 19 (and possibly Jer 32).²¹ Zechariah 11 is a passage in which Zechariah himself enacts the role of shepherd, but is rejected. Part of the offense is the wage paid him: thirty pieces of silver. There is some ambiguity as to whether the thirty pieces of silver represents a sizeable sum (cf. Neh 5:15),²² or if we should read this wage as a *mere* thirty pieces of silver.²³ If one opts for the latter, then the rejection is clear from the price itself. Moreover, if one reads Zech 11:12 in light of Exod 21:32, it may betray the view that the shepherd is being discharged for the price of a slave.²⁴ An additional aspect of this text that may be appropriate to note is why a wage was even paid at all. In other words, this transaction may reveal the misguided desire of the people to purchase the prophetic word for their own benefit.²⁵ Ironically, then, in Zech 11 we may have "a true prophet being paid for a message of doom."²⁶ Regardless of how one reads these details, the rejection of this wage in 11:13 is enough to demonstrate Zechariah's disgust with the people's behavior. In Zech 11, then, God's people have rejected their godly shepherd to their own detriment, which would result in a worthless shepherd arising in his place.

The probable correspondences to Jer 19 in Matt 27:9 further strengthen Matthew's allusion to God's displeasure with his people that is seen in the climactic nadir of Jesus' betrayal. Jeremiah 19 concerns Israel's forsaking the LORD, the enactment of this by Jeremiah by means of a broken flask, the coming disaster that will make the ears of everyone tingle, and additional words of horror and foreboding. Indeed, the disaster anticipated by Jeremiah is quite severe, such that the concepts of (innocent) blood and death (Jer 19:4, 6, 11) appear to be shared elements with Matt 27 (cf. 27:4, 26-50).²⁷

Nevertheless, as horrible as the actions of Judas were, the end result according to Matthew was not the crucifixion, but the victorious resurrection that

²¹ See the discussions in Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:568-69; Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 69-81.

²² So Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Leicester: InterVarsity, 1972), 184.

²³ See David L. Peterson, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 96-97.

²⁴ Although thirty pieces of silver may have been a price for a slave, it may also reflect the high value of human life in the Torah (so Baldwin, *Zechariah*, 184). Nevertheless, there may be negative connotations intended by this connection to a slave price.

²⁵ Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25c; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 273-74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

²⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:569. If portions from Jer 32:9-10 also lurk in the background, then we have an allusion to a text in which judgment by the Babylonians (32:3-5) will not be the last word, but a day is coming when fields and vineyards will again be bought in that land (32:15).

benefits God's people. The betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus were the necessary steps that had to be taken in order to reverse the sinful trajectories evident in texts such as Zech 11 and Jer 19. Thus again, we see in Matthew that the negativity of the prophetic rebukes are overcome by their fulfillment in Jesus.

(2) Psalm 78, which is largely a recounting of the rebellious history of Israel, is one of the clearest examples we have for Matthew's utilization of texts that focus on the failures of Israel's history. For example, we read in Ps 78:6-8 the warning that future generations must not be like previous generations who were stubborn and rebellious. For the remainder of the psalm's seventy-two verses we read of failure after failure of the Israelites to be faithful to their covenant LORD, despite the wonders he did on their behalf. It is the instruction described in this psalm (78:2) that is fulfilled in Jesus' parabolic teaching in Matt 13:35. It is noteworthy that Matthew explicitly identifies this statement from a psalm of Asaph as *prophetic* in nature,²⁸ which correlates with the way Jesus' parabolic teaching is presented in prophetic terms.²⁹ Psalm 78, and its underlying message warning against recalcitrance set against the backdrop of the perennial rebelliousness of Israel, was a fitting text for Matthew to use to describe the parabolic ministry of Jesus. D. A. Carson makes a similar observation regarding this psalm:

The point is that though the history of the Jews, which Asaph relates, is well known, the psalmist selects the historical events he treats and brings them together in such a way as to bring out things that have been riddles and enigmas "from of old." The pattern of history is not self-evident, but the psalmist will show what it is really all about. He enlarges on God's might at the time of the Exodus and at other major turning points, a might exercised on behalf of his people. With these events the

²⁸ Many have noted that Matthew's genealogy in 1:7-8 contains Asaph (Ἀσάφ) where one might expect Asa (Ἀσά). Might this be Matthew's way of linking the kingly and the prophetic offices, given Asaph's role as the author of Ps 78? Davies and Allison (*Matthew*, 1:175 and n. 51; 2:425) suggest texts that may indicate Asaph was considered to be a prophet, including 1 Chr 25:2; 2 Chr 29:30. Additionally, the prophetic word is an important theme in 1-2 Chron. See Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *1-2 Chronicles* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 1998), 34-36. The case could also be made that this is a way for Matthew to show that Jesus is the heir not only of the kingly line, but also the priestly line. This latter possibility is suggested by Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Inerrancy and the Gospels: A God-Centered Approach to the Challenges of Harmonization* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 70-71.

²⁹ There is a text critical issue here. Several manuscripts (ℵ* Θ f^{1,13} 33 Hier^{ms}) ascribe this quotation to Isaiah. However, it is likely that this is due to a copyist error. It is quite feasible that a copyist would have been inclined to attribute this quotation to Isaiah (whether intentionally or unintentionally) due to (1) the lack of a specific prophetic source in the introductory formula in 13:35, which is found in close proximity to other Isaianic citations (12:17-21; 13:14-15), and/or (2) the comparatively rare appellation of *prophet* for a psalm (of Asaph). Therefore, I think it is unnecessary to opt for the reading that includes Ησαίου based on the proposed rationale that Matthew has combined Ps 78 with an Isaianic text (e.g., Isa 29), as is argued by Maarten J. J. Menken, "The Psalms in Matthew's Gospel," in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 66-69.

psalmist juxtaposes the people's persistent rebellion, the result being a vivid portrayal of God's justice and mercy and the people's obtuseness, need, and privilege.³⁰

It is this—shall we say disappointing?—narrative background from Ps 78 that Matthew employs to demonstrate the significance of Jesus' parabolic ministry.

It should be noted, however, that Jesus' parabolic ministry was not only negative; instead, it produced both positive and negative responses. This provides opportunity to clarify what is meant by fulfillment as *eschatological reversal*. I am not intending to argue that Matthew *only* views fulfillment through a negative lens. Fulfillment for Matthew clearly has a positive, christological function that must not be missed.³¹ What is being emphasized in the present article, however, is that one aspect of this overall positive schema is the overcoming of the failures of Israel (such as one finds in Ps 78). As it relates to the point of Jesus' parables, this positive/negative combination can be seen in the citation of Isa 6:9-10 in Matt 13:14-15. Here is another text that complements Matt 13:35 well by indicating what the actual responses were to Jesus' ministry. That is, Jesus' parables not only functioned to reveal truth (13:11-12, 16-17), but they also veiled the kingdom to those "outside" and revealed the hardness of heart of much of Israel in Jesus' own day, which is reminiscent of many of the OT prophets (13:14-15).³² Nevertheless, the focus in 13:35 seems to be on the greatness of the mystery of the Kingdom—that which was formerly hidden (κεκρυμμένα)—now revealed (cf. 13:16-17, 52).³³ Indeed, if one understands that what was formerly hidden refers not to completely new readings of OT texts that find previously inaccessible meanings (indeed, Matthew indicates they were there all along), but primarily to the details of how the various messianic hopes found in the OT all converge and coalesce perfectly in the person and work of Christ, then we may also find in Matt 13 an allusion to the work of Christ that stands in contrast to and reverses the description of Israel in Ps 78.³⁴

(3) Many trees have been felled discussing the use of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:22-23. My focus for the present argument, however, is quite narrow. What is the significance of the biblical context of Isa 7-8 as it relates to Matthew's other fulfillment citations? There appears to be ample reason to take the encounter between Isaiah and Ahaz to involve a prophetic rebuke against Israel's disobedience.

³⁰ Carson, "Matthew," 321.

³¹ Roland Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (ed. D. B. Gurtner and J. Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 53-84, here 74.

³² For more on the prophetic nature of Jesus' parables and Isa 6, see Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (trans. H. de Jongste; ed. R. Zorn; Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962), 121-29; and N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 236.

³³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:426.

³⁴ See the discussion in Carson, "Matthew," 321-23.

Isaiah instructed Ahaz—the king and thus the representative for the people³⁵—to ask for a sign of God's provision. Instead, Ahaz refused, which would lead to the devastation of the Assyrian invasion (7:17-25). Additionally, it appears that even the prophetic names of the children in Isa 7-8 point to the dangers of covenantal disloyalty.

Shear Jashub: though a remnant will return, yet *only* a remnant will be left.

Maher-Shalah-Hash-Baz: the spoil of Damascus and Samaria will be taken away by Assyria, whom Ahaz would think is their deliverer. He would soon discover, however, that Assyria was the real oppressor.

Immanuel: God is with "us" to protect us, yet those who stand against him will come to naught (Isa 8:9-10).

Thus we see in the children's names in Isa 7-8 an element of rebuke against covenantal unfaithfulness. Immanuel, in other words, was not an entirely positive image because the one to whom he served as a sign (Ahaz) was resisting God; for Ahaz the Immanuel sign was a curse. Here again the fulfillment of Isa 7:14 is clearly positive (how wonderful is the promise of Jesus-as-Immanuel for his people!), but also involves a decidedly negative element, particularly (though not only) in the way that Jesus proves to be the antidote to the situation facing Israel under Ahaz. We may further relate Ahaz to Matthew's Gospel not only by noting his role in the genealogy (1:9) in a segment that leads to the exile (1:11), but also the reality that the kingship that was once so grand under David and Solomon led, after Ahaz, to a kingship that was influenced more by foreign powers.³⁶ Perhaps these details are part of the robust context being evoked in Matt 1 that identifies Jesus as the royal Immanuel.

(4) Isaiah 9:1-2 (cited in Matt 4:15-16) follows immediately after the negative assessment of Ahaz and the Assyrian invasion in Isa 7-8. It is no stretch to conclude that Matthew read Isa 9 in light of Isa 7-8, since all three of these chapters are cited in Matt 1-4.³⁷ Indeed, the presupposition for the citation in Matt 4 is that the people, particularly in the northern regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, are beginning to move from a great darkness (the time of the Assyrian devastation) to a great light (the dawning of the ministry of Jesus). This negative situation described in Isa 9 is thus reversed with the ministry of Jesus, who is the fulfillment of the messianic hopes of Isaiah (cf. Isa 9:6-7).

(5) A third Isaianic passage comes from Isa 53:4, which is cited in Matt 8:17. Much could be said about Isaiah's Servant figure(s), but what I want to note is

³⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 64-65; Joachim Bieneck, *Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker* (ATANT 21; Zürich: Zwingli, 1951), 22, 26.

³⁶ See J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1993), 87.

³⁷ Additionally, C. H. Dodd argued that these chapters were well-known in the early church (*According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Thought* [London: Nisbet, 1952], 79-80).

that Matthew again references an OT text that describes a negative situation facing Israel because of transgressions (e.g., Isa 53:5-6) and shows how the ultimate answer to this dilemma is in Jesus, who takes and bears our infirmities that we might be healed (Matt 8:17; Isa 53:4).³⁸

2. Possible Reversal Texts

Of course, not every example fits neatly into the schema that appears to explain eight of the fulfillment citations quite well. Two fulfillment citations in particular are not as clear, but they may correspond to what we see in the reference to the *prophets* in Matt 2:23. These two texts are Isa 42:1-4 (Matt 12:17-21) and Zech 9:9 (Matt 21:5).³⁹ In both these texts we find challenges to the expectations of the people. The Servant figure in Isa 42 cuts against the grain by describing a leader who will not even raise his voice or cry out in the face of conflict,⁴⁰ and the application of this text to describe Jesus is set in stark contrast to the Pharisees who seek to kill him and even attribute his miraculous activity to the prince of demons (12:14, 24). Moreover, since it is best to read the Servant figure of Isa 42 in light of Isa 53 (see Matt 8:17),⁴¹ the negative situation that must be overcome in Isa 53 is probably also in view in the citation of Isa 42 in Matt 12.

Beyond the Servant figure, the messianic king in Zech 9 is just as striking for his meekness and lack of pretension. Perhaps we have in these texts the prophets confronting the expectations of the people, challenging what they thought should be in light of popular paradigms. If something like this is correct, then even in these two—shall we say subversive?—texts we can see something like a rebuke of the people, even as the hope of something new (and quite different from what the masses expected) is proffered.

III. Additional Matthean Fulfillment Texts

Thus far I have focused primarily on Matthew's fulfillment citations in support of the thesis that fulfillment for Matthew involves eschatological reversal. There are, however, other texts that also conform to this proposed pattern.

³⁸ See similarly Keener, *Matthew*, 273.

³⁹ Matt 27:9 may also contain traces of Isa 62:11, but the main focus is clearly Zech 9:9. If Isa 62 is in view, it seems to add only the direct address *ἐλπίζετε*. See Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 63-64.

⁴⁰ Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel* (SNTSMS 123; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 146-47.

⁴¹ E.g., the Servant of Isa 53 (along with Isa 50:6-11 and possibly Isa 49:1-13) seems to provide more sustained focus on a representative individual than one finds by reading only Isa 42. See Motyer, *Isaiah*, 399-400; Childs, *Isaiah*, 384-85, 394. Thanks to Chris Fantuzzo for stimulating my thinking on the prophets, particularly Isaiah.

(1) First, as noted above, Matt 13:14-15 indicates the fulfillment of Scripture in the negative responses to Jesus' parabolic ministry.⁴²

(2) Second, we noted in passing that Matt 26:54-56 indicates the need for the Scriptures to be fulfilled in the betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus. From one perspective, these are clearly negative events. Yet even these are reversed in the victorious resurrection of Jesus, as the end of Matthew's Gospel makes clear (28:1-20).

(3) A third text that should be noted is Matt 3:15, where Jesus indicates he must fulfill all righteousness. Although this is not the place to discuss this text in detail, a few points should be mentioned.⁴³ These are the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel, and as such they are programmatic for the rest of the Gospel. In this text, we see in the baptism of Jesus that he is meeting the demands of Israel at that time, but this is only one aspect of his thoroughgoing fulfillment of righteousness (WCF 8.4; WLC 39). Thus, righteousness should be viewed as God's demand on his people that, until that time, had yet to be truly realized. Jesus' life, in other words, is conforming again to the biblical pattern in a way that is unique in Israel's history, and as such is part and parcel of God's eschatological salvation.

(4) A fourth text, and one that is quite intriguing for the present argument, is Matt 23:32. Indeed, this text may reveal something significant about the negative connotations of fulfillment for Matthew. Here Jesus instructs the Pharisees to *fill up* the measure of the sins of their fathers. What is particularly interesting is the way Jesus relates this sinful filling up to the killing of the *prophets*. Thus, we find here another connection between the prophets and fulfillment. Further, much as we have seen in texts like 26:54-56, the rebellion of Israel is fulfilled in the sense of the *filling up of the sins* at the time of Jesus. Just as their fathers murdered the prophets, the religious leaders *fill up* the greatest sin of all—the murder of Jesus. In sum, all these events were steps in the fulfillment of Israel's history, which led to their climactic reversal in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In light of these factors, I believe we have sufficient warrant to posit a consistent pattern in Matthew's understanding of fulfillment. Matthew often links fulfillment to prophetic texts that focus on the failure or rebuke of

⁴² Another text that focuses on fulfillment is Matt 5:17, where Jesus states that he has come to fulfill the law and prophets. Although space does not permit a thorough interaction with this text, fulfillment in this context likely has to do (at least in part) with how Jesus' teaching is the consummate realization and goal of the OT law as part of a new redemptive-historical era. However, we also must be careful not to drive a wedge between Jesus' life and teachings since they are ultimately united in his messianic ministry (Deines, "Not the Law," 75-77). For more on Jesus' teaching as part of a new era of redemptive history, see Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 198; and Vern S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1991), 256-69.

⁴³ See further Brandon D. Crowe, *The Obedient Son: Deuteronomy and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew* (BZNW 188; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 183-86.

Israel in order to provide an opportunity to demonstrate how these failures are overcome in Christ. We should add here, to be clear, that Matthew's understanding of fulfillment must not be limited to his fulfillment formula citations, or even to occurrences of *πληρῶ* and related terms. This study is, however, using these significant citations and Matthew's usage of "fulfill" terminology to provide a helpful lens through which to view his broader schema of fulfillment in Christ.

IV. *Conclusions and Implications*

In light of the preceding discussion, I suggest five implications that may sharpen our understanding of fulfillment.

(1) First, let us consider in a bit more detail *how* these texts are fulfilled in Christ. The answer to this comes by the way Matthew identifies Jesus with Israel. Jesus is, for Matthew, the true Israel. He is the one who embodies and enacts the nation in himself—one might refer to this as recapitulation. In addition to the fulfillment citations, key texts here include the temptation narrative and the genealogy, in which Matthew seems to be alerting the reader that Jesus must be understood in terms of Israel's history.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Matthew understands Israel as a people with a dynamic history, living in relationship with their covenant Lord, with the possibility of blessing or cursing depending on whether they are faithful to their covenant obligations. This relational history also entails a *τέλος* that is most clearly anticipated in the prophets. The exile would not last forever (Isa 40:1-11; 43:1-21); a new covenant would be made (Jer 31:31-34); the people (and the nations) would be united under one king (Ezek 37:15-28); this kingdom would not end (Isa 9:6-7; Dan 2:44). Nevertheless, we see in Matthew that these prophetic expectations were not an eschatological reality apart from the coming of Jesus, the Messiah; the unfulfilled hopes of the prophets reigned instead of the messianic king.

Thus, it is clear for Matthew that Jesus must be the Davidic king in order to lead his people to the lasting kingdom that was anticipated. Further, this king must deal with the downward spiral that so often characterized Israel as a stiff-necked people. Part of Matthew's answer to this is the way Jesus fulfills—or consummately reverses—the all-too-often tragic history of Israel by taking the story of Israel on himself, reliving it, and perfecting it.⁴⁵ Jesus, as the *τέλος* of Israel, leads the nation toward and fulfills the prophetic hopes.⁴⁶ This explains the prominence of Jesus' *obedience* in Matthew, particularly as illustrated by the

⁴⁴ See Jean-Louis Leuba, "Note exégétique sur Matthieu 1,1a," *RHPR* 22 (1942): 56-61, who suggests the superscription and the genealogy that follows demonstrate that Matthew is describing the fulfillment of the history of Israel in Jesus.

⁴⁵ See also Kirk, "Conceptualising," 77; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 162.

⁴⁶ So also Davies and Allison (Matthew, 3:577): "Their fulfillment [i.e., of biblical texts] in Jesus . . . shows that Matthew's religion is not a repudiation of the past but instead the goal of a long history."

fulfillment formulae: Jesus is the true, obedient Israel who fulfills Scripture and reverses past failures.⁴⁷

(2) In light of the discussion set forth above, I offer the following gloss for Matthean fulfillment that, while not exhaustive, does underscore the reversal aspect I am highlighting: *reversing the sinful trajectories of Israel's history by the obedience of the messianic king, which was necessary for the eschatological blessings to accrue to the messianic community.*⁴⁸

The messianic king is Jesus who takes Israel's story to himself, and the fulfillment formulae indicate most clearly that he is the τέλος of Israel's history. The beatific expectations of the prophets include a victorious king who would rule over a new people, and this is realized in the messianic community of the church (Matt 16; 18), whose king undergoes the penalty of death⁴⁹ and is resurrected with full authority over all things (Matt 28:18-20).⁵⁰

(3) As noted above, Matthew is clearly interested in both the law and the prophets (cf. Matt 5:17-20). Why, then, does Matthew prefer only the prophets for his fulfillment citations? I would tentatively suggest a couple of possibilities. First, it is in the prophets that the progressively disappointing history of Israel is most readily apparent and rebuked (Isa 1:2-31; 58:1-14; Jer 3:1-24; Hos 1:2-9; 6:4-10; Amos 6:1-14; etc.). But, second, the future blessings for Israel receive greater articulation in the prophets (Isa 2:1-5; 25:6-12; 60:1-22; 65:17-25; Hos 1:10-11; Joel 3:1-21; etc.). These are the blessings that are beginning to be realized with the fulfillment of Scripture in Jesus the Messiah, whose coming is foretold by the prophets.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Further highlighting the connection of Jesus to Israel is the way Matthew often relates Jesus' obedience to his sonship, and the correlating way that Matthew invokes OT texts from contexts that speak of Israel's sonship (e.g., Hos 11; Jer 31; Deut 8). For more on the interrelation of these themes, see Crowe, *Obedient Son*.

⁴⁸ One might recall here the condition of perfect and personal obedience originally given to Adam with the attendant promise of life (WCF 7.2; cf. WCF 19.1), and view the obedience of Christ in light of this requirement and promise (WCF 8.4-5). It should also be noted that the virtue, efficacy, and benefits of Christ's redemption also apply to OT believers because these were communicated unto God's elect in all ages from the beginning of the world (WCF 8.6; 11.6).

⁴⁹ In other words, it is significant that Jesus ultimately pays for the disobedience of Israel with his own life. As the head and representative of his people, it is incumbent upon him to take this drastic step fully and finally to reverse the covenant curses (Gal 3:10-13).

⁵⁰ Miller (*Les citations*, 65) suggests that the victory for the Messiah's people is seen in the deliverance from death of the saints who walked around Jerusalem in 27:52-53. Similarly, Cullmann (*Time*, 84-85) notes the general NT perspective that the decisive "battle" that ensures victory is the resurrection of Christ. François Vouga (*Une théologie du Nouveau Testament* [MdB 43; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001], 228) even suggests that the main theme of Matthew is "la victoire apocalyptique de la vie sur la mort et la justification du prophète souffrant devenu le Seigneur du monde." Thanks to Josh Leim for bringing this reference to my attention, and for his comments on an earlier draft of this article.

⁵¹ The fulfillment citations are thus messianic in character, as they draw upon the overarching messianic hope of the prophets; the nuance I am suggesting is just one way they are messianic in character. See Rothfuchs, *Erfüllungszitate*, 128.

(4) The prophetic texts Matthew utilizes in his fulfillment formula citations, in particular, seem to be cited not only because of what they anticipate, but also because of their connection to the history of Israel.⁵² That is, it would indicate that part of Matthew's intentions involved his appeal to the story of Israel—not just a few isolated “proof texts”—because the fulfillment of Scripture is seen precisely as the embodiment and reversal of this history. Jesus steps squarely into the stream of Israel's history that is too often moving in the wrong direction (cf. Ps 78). Jesus must thus reverse the course of the stream by being fully faithful where Israel had been unfaithful, thereby ushering in the blessings of the messianic age.

(5) Finally, a broader point beyond the parameters of Matthew's Gospel should be noted. Based on the way biblical authors interpreted and applied scriptural texts to Jesus, it appears that the pattern I am suggesting is not limited to the first Gospel. Indeed, this perspective may reveal a larger redemptive-historical pattern relating to the person and work of Christ. That is, there are passages of Scripture that reveal the iniquity of humanity that must be fulfilled in association with Jesus' task as the Suffering Messiah. In addition to Matthew's fulfillment citations, we could include here many of Luke's δεῖ (“it is necessary”) statements that express a sense of divine will or compulsion in accordance with the Scriptures.⁵³ One of the most significant δεῖ statements is Jesus' declaration in Luke 24:44-47 that, among other things, the Christ must suffer (and rise again) in order that the Scriptures might be *fulfilled* (πληρώω). Luke, in other words, seems to use δεῖ in a way that resembles Matthew's usage of πληρώω, and even combines these motifs in Luke 24:44 (much as we see in Matt 26:54). Additionally, in Acts 1:16 we have an account of Peter combining δεῖ and πληρώω in his explanation of the treachery of Judas in connection with the work of Christ.

This leads us to a broader observation. A survey of the use of (ἀνα/ἐκ)πληρώω in early Christian texts suggests that Matthew may not have been the only one to understand there to be negative connotations involved with the specific notion of *filling up*. In fact, early Christian authors consistently use the terminology of *fulfill* to indicate the negative elements that must come to pass in association with the messianic task of Jesus. We see this perhaps primarily in relation to the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus in a range of writings (cf. Matt 26:54-56; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44; John 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:32; 19:24; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 13:27; cf. Pss 41; 69). Other texts speak of filling up in reference to various instances of sinfulness, blasphemy, or suffering. A selection includes Satan's filling Ananias (Acts 5:3), the deceit of Elymas the magician (Acts 13:10), and

⁵² Some of what I am suggesting may have parallels with Dodd's “plot lines.” See *According to the Scriptures*, 102, for a summary of many of them. Rothfuchs (*Erfüllungszitate*, 90-91) sees a connection with the history of Israel most clearly in 2:15, 18; 13:35; 27:9-10, but he tends to downplay the importance of the OT contexts.

⁵³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 129.

those whose hearts are hardened (Rom 1:29).⁵⁴ Similarly, the full measure of the sins of those who "killed the Lord Jesus and *the prophets*" is noted in 1 Thess 2:15-16. Additionally, Acts 13:33 employs ἐκπληρώω to indicate the fulfillment of the Scriptures in the resurrection of Jesus, which reversed the sentence of condemnation that Jesus received. However, it is perhaps even more relevant that in this context Jesus' death was explicitly said to be a fulfillment (πληρώω) of the prophets (13:27). We could also note the Jewish leaders' view that the Apostles were filling Jerusalem with what the leaders considered to be blasphemous teaching (Acts 5:28), along with Paul's filling up of the sufferings of Christ in his body for the sake of the church (Col 1:24). Beyond this, the difficulties of the interadventual period can also feature *fulfill* language (Matt 24:12; Luke 21:22-24).

Two other significant texts, which might fit very well indeed with Matthew's view of fulfillment, are Mark 1:15 and Gal 4:4. In Mark 1:15 we find that the first words Jesus speaks in Mark are that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, therefore it is necessary to repent and believe in the gospel. Notice here that the climactic era of *fulfillment* in Christ is related to the appropriate *time* in redemptive history. Since Jesus' kingdom work involves the defeat of sin, it makes sense that we find Jesus emphasizing the need for repentance in association with the time of fulfillment (cf. Mark 1:14-15; 1:4-5). Similarly, Paul indicates that Christ came in the fullness of time (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου), which must refer to the appropriate moment in salvation history when Christ broke through to redeem his people from the clutches of sin in this present evil age (Gal 1:4).

Moving beyond the canon of the NT, one finds similar usages of πληρώω in Clement of Rome, who notes how the enemies of Israel were full of all wickedness (1 Clem. 45:7), and Pseudo-Barnabas speaks of the human heart apart from God as full of idolatry (Barn. 16:7). Perhaps even more relevant is the *Epistle to Diognetus* (9:2), which speaks of Christ's coming to ransom us when our unrighteousness was fulfilled (ἐπεὶ δὲ πεπλήρωτο μὲν ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀδικία).

At this point one might ask if the OT itself provides a precedent for these negative connotations associated with fulfillment. Whether we look at forms of πληρώω in the LXX (including ἀναπληρώω, ἐκπληρώω, ἐπιπληρώω), or the common term for filling up in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (מָלַא), we find a fecundity of texts in which *filling up* is used in association with iniquity and violence (e.g., Gen 6:11, 13; 15:16; Isa 1:15; 2:6-8; Isa 28:8; 65:11; Jer 13:12-13; 19:3; 44:25; Ezek 7:23; 8:17; 9:9; Joel 3:13; Mic 6:12; Eccl 9:3) or in association with the fullness of judgment (Isa 8:8; 13:3; Jer 6:11; Mic 3:8; cf. Ps 110:6), though other texts anticipate a day in which the fullness of iniquity will be overcome in conjunction with the Word of God (Isa 40:2; possibly 1 Kgs 2:27;

⁵⁴ Other negative examples include Acts 5:17; 13:45; 19:29. Positive fillings in Acts also abound (2:2, 4; 3:10; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52).

Jer 25:12; 29:10; Dan 8:23).⁵⁵ This latter category of texts may be particularly relevant as a precedent for the nuances of fulfillment in Matthew.

In light of these examples, it is quite plausible that this negative nuance of fulfillment and need for reversal would have been recognizable to a first-century audience. Indeed, in one way or another, this sort of understanding seems to be standard fare for NT and early Christian authors as they explain the scriptural design for the Messiah coming to suffer for his people that he might bring about lasting reversal from the curse of sin. Of course, many other texts speak of fulfillment in a more positive way; fulfillment need not be only negative. There does, however, seem to be a recognizable pattern in which the terminology for fulfill is used to describe accounts of sinfulness, violence, and judgment.

In Matthew, then, we should see the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Jesus to indicate not only the τέλος of Israel's history, but also a *reversal* that entails the beginning of a new era in redemptive history in which the Messiah reigns, having overcome sin and death in his wide-ranging obedience. As the one who must save his people from their sins (1:21) and fulfill all righteousness (3:15), Jesus is presented by Matthew as the one who eschatologically fulfills the Scriptures and reverses the sinfulness of his people's history. Put differently, it is through this messianic fulfillment-by-reversal that we see both the need for Jesus to save his people from their sins, and the glorious reality that he has done it—*fully*.

⁵⁵ Noteworthy passages from non-canonical texts include 2 Macc 9:7; 10:30; 12:16; 13:16; 3 Macc. 5:30; 6:19; Wis 18:16; Jdt 2:8; 6:4. For a more extensive list of fulfillment texts, see C. F. D. Moule, "Fulfillment-Words in the New Testament: Use and Abuse," *NTS* 14 (1967/1968): 293-320.

The Westminster Theological Journal
Est. 1938

(ISSN: 0043-4388)

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Published by Westminster Theological Seminary

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