

# Jesus' Relationship to Israel as Evidenced in the Matthean Infancy Narratives

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## KEY WORDS

| Christology | Israel | Matthean Theology |  
| Use of OT in the NT | Prophetic Fulfilment | Supersessionism |

## ABSTRACT

Various scholars have proposed that Matthean Christology portrays Jesus as the 'true Israel' or 'new Israel'. This designation leaves one to wonder whether this involves an abrogation of Israel in an ethnic sense. In other words, does Matthew present the reader with a supersessionist Christology? Though this paper will not answer this question, it does seek to explore a major aspect of it. This paper seeks to explore Jesus' relationship to Israel in the Matthean infancy narratives. From Matt. 1:18 – 2:23 the narratives serve to illustrate Jesus' fulfillment of five OT citations. Matt. 1:18-25 concerns the fulfillment of Isa. 7:14. Matt. 2:1-12 concerns Mic. 5:2. Matt. 2:13-15 concerns Hos. 11:1 and allusions to Exodus. Matt. 2:16-18 concerns Jer. 31:15 with possible allusions to the Exodus. Matt. 2:19-23 concerns the fulfillment of some unstated OT reference(s). Matthean Christology, at least of the infancy narratives, concerns Jesus' fulfillment of OT scripture. This paper will analyse each narrative individually, examining both the context of the OT citation and that of the Matthean narrative surrounding the citation. This paper will then piece together the findings into a coherent statement regarding Jesus' relationship to Israel.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of supersessionism generally tends to focus on ecclesiology; namely the Church's relationship to Israel. Perhaps not as central to the debate are other areas of theology. Tracing the flow of theology from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus through to Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, R Kendall Soulen demonstrates how supersessionism has embedded itself into the very structure of Christian Theology's metanarrative. He proposes the re-evaluation of Christian theology along non-supersessionist lines. One such area is Christology, concerning which he states, "The question, then, is whether Christology involves the abrogation of God's promises to Israel" (Soulen 1996, 9). However, if William Kynes' thesis is correct, that the Church's relationship to Israel is mediated through Jesus (Kynes 1991), then the manner in which Jesus relates to Israel would, therefore, indicate how the Church also relates to Israel.

France lists the Matthean phenomena which suggest that Matthew must have had Jewish members, in his audience, who would have appreciated Matthew's writing which,

[W]ithout explanation includes transliterated Aramaic words (ῥακά, 5:22; μαμωνᾶς, 6:24; κορβανᾶς, 27:6) and references to details of Jewish custom (handwashing at meals, 15:2; phylacteries and tassels, 23:5; burial customs, 23:27; sabbath travel problems, 24:20), which displays an almost obsessive interest in and subtlety in the use of the Old Testament, which includes a genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham and focusing around David and the monarchy of Judah, and which introduces 'Son of David' as a title of Jesus on several occasions when the others do not, which restricts the mission of both Jesus and his disciples to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (10:5-6; 15:24; cf. also 10:23; 19:28), and which unlike Luke mentions Samaritans only to exclude them from the mission, which can apparently

countenance the continuing validity of Jewish scribal teaching (23:2-3; 23:23), and finds it necessary to insist on Jesus' respect for the Jewish law (5:17ff), which includes teaching and narrative focusing on such Jewish concerns as fasting, sabbath observance, temple offerings, the payment of temple tax, etc" (France 1989, 97).

This seems to suggest that, even though the audience may have been predominantly Greek speaking, (or else why would Matthew have written in Greek?), there would have been a sizeable Jewish presence. France makes a strong case for the notion that Matthew could have deliberately embedded subtle hints, especially for those in his audience who had an advanced understanding of OT scripture and Jewish hermeneutic practices (France 1981). Though Richard Beaton (2002) cautions against dogmatism in advocating Matthew's knowledge of a Hebrew or even LXX text, it is interesting to note that outside of the formula-quotations, Matthew has a "LXX character" (Stendahl 1991, 205). Krister Stendahl rather sees Matthew as "originator of the formula quotations" in the infancy narratives (Stendahl 1991, viii), signalling his fluency with both Greek and Hebrew. Thus, such hints, that demand a knowledge of Hebrew, would presuppose the existence of some in his audience who were also familiar with that language. Therefore, as Matthew's Gospel is written from a Jewish perspective and to a primarily Jewish audience, one would expect it to yield valuable data concerning Jesus' relationship to Israel as a nation.

Though considerable debate has ensued, concerning the redactional structure of the Matthean infancy narratives (Prabhu 1976), it is still clear that the final literary structure consists of five episodes each of which centres around an OT formula-quotation. Kynes states

that Matthew's "formula quotations are found in their highest concentration" in the infancy narratives (Kynes 1981, 9). Matt. 1:18-25 concerns the fulfillment of Isa. 7:14. Matt. 2:1-12 concerns Mic. 5:2. Matt. 2:13-15 concerns Hos. 11:1 and allusions to Exodus. Matt. 2:16-18 concerns Jer. 31:15 with possible allusions to Exodus. Matt. 2:19-23 concerns the fulfillment of some unstated OT reference(s).

To discern the message that Matthew attempted to communicate through his use of the formula-quotations, it is important to speak of methodology. How did Matthew handle OT scripture? Did he simply proof-text? Did he read the OT text literally and find a direct fulfillment in Jesus' infancy narratives? Did Matthew reinterpret the OT to fit in with the infancy narratives or did the OT texts influence his appreciation and presentation of those infancy narratives? George Soares Prabhu believes that Matthew engaged in a dialectical approach whereby "context and quotation each influences and is influenced by the other" but the guiding principle lay in Matthew's own theology (Prabhu 1976, 160). Though this approach is adept at accounting for the complexities of Matthew's handling of OT scripture, the point of Matthew's fulfillment motif is to prove Jesus' fulfillment of OT scripture. The context of the narrative did not influence the OT text, but rather illuminated Matthew's appreciation of it and vice versa, even if Matthew's theology was the hermeneutical key. Though this may seem an overstated semantic issue, it highlights an important hermeneutical consideration articulated by Walter Kaiser Jr. when he questions the "apologetic value" of handling an OT text in a way that violates the historic context (Kaiser 2001, 14). Even though Apostolic hermeneutics demonstrably exceeded the limitations of western historico-grammatical exegesis (Longenecker 1975)

Kaiser has a point. Surely, if Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus fulfilled OT scripture, he would have arguably failed if he negated the OT context or contradicted it. Matt. 26:56 seems to indicate that Matthew believed Jesus fulfilled the whole of OT scripture and not simply certain proof-texts. Far from “atomistically... prescinding” (Prabhu 1975, 217) the text from its original context, as Prabhu considers is possibly, though not likely, Matt. 2:15’s handling of Hos. 11:1, it rather necessitates the historical meaning of the OT context to explain how Jesus fulfilled Israel’s calling. The necessary methodology of understanding and comparing both the contexts of the OT citation and of the Matthean infancy narratives must lead to a nuanced understanding of how Jesus fulfilled those texts. Therefore, this paper will analyse each narrative individually, examining both the context of the OT citation and that of the Matthean narrative surrounding the citation. It is not the case that each formula-quotation paints a Christology of identification with Israel, but when Matthew’s formula-quotations are evaluated together, the composite Christology which emerges is a nuanced identification Christology. Jesus fulfils Israel’s identity and mission, not only in place of Israel, but also in concert with them in order to guarantee the restoration of the remnant of national Israel to their God and their land.

JESUS IS ONE WITH ISRAEL,  
IDENTIFIED WITH THEM  
AND YET DISTINCT  
(HOS. 11:1 IN MATT. 2:15)

This paper commences with Matthew’s third OT citation, of Hos. 11:1 in Matt. 2:15, because this citation proves that Matthew’s Christology is an identification Christology. The remaining citations nuance the Christological

identification with Israel. As Stendahl notes, the LXX and the Targum renders the Hebrew plurally as ‘sons,’ likely indicating Matthew’s use of the Hebrew text (Stendahl 1991). Hosea makes allusions to Israel’s Exodus in Hos. 11:1 and their exile in Hos. 2:14-15. Matthew highlights the significance of the Exodus, claiming that Jesus fulfilled Hos. 11:1. Yet when Hosea states “Out of Egypt I called my son?” does the son refer to the Messiah or to Israel?

John Sailhamer (2001) argues that Hos. 11:1 is about the Messiah. Matthew understood that the Hosean reference was Messianic and, therefore, the Hosean text is arguably predictive. Dan McCartney and Peter Enns (2001) counter-argue, claiming Sailhamer derives his interpretation of Hos. 11:1 on the basis of NT revelation. Daube notes “the LXX, the Targum and the Rabbinic exegetes” (Daube 1956, 191) all define the referent as the nation and not the Messiah. There is nothing explicitly messianic about the passage. Although we do well to note with Darrell Bock that “there is an eschatological element in the near context” (Bock 2008, 230), Hos. 11:1-4 is retrospective, and not predictive.

In the Hosean context, God declares His judgment on Israel because of their rebellion. Israel continually engaged in Baal worship. Therefore, they will serve Assyria (Hos. 11:5). However, in the Hosean text, God’s chastening of Israel will not result in their termination. He still feels compassion for them and in Hos. 11:11 God promises that afterwards He will restore Israel to their land. God’s son in Hosea, is an unrepentant, disobedient son. Therefore, how did Matthew apply that passage to Jesus?

In the Matthean context Jesus is God’s obedient, perfect son who, despite His innocence, will be exiled but will also be restored back to the land. Arnold Fruchtenbaum

identifies Matthew's hermeneutic as "literal plus typical" (Fruchtenbaum 1992, 843). According to Fruchtenbaum, Matthew does not change Hos. 11:1's meaning and does not deny the historical Exodus. Israel rather acts as a type of Messiah. Therefore, contrary to the wording of Matt. 2:15, Jesus did not fulfil "that which was spoken by the prophet" but is rather the antitype of the Exodus to which Hosea alludes. Yet that is not what Matthew states. Kaiser (2001) argues that the term, "My Son" was a technical one that spoke about Israel collectively and Messiah individually. Therefore, Hosea would have understood its application concerning Messiah. However, even if Hosea understood this, it does not automatically mean that Hosea intended to write about the Messiah. Understanding aviation does not automatically imply that writing about a wing must indicate an aeroplane. Matthew likely saw more meaning in the Hosean passage than Hosea intended to communicate. Matthew claimed that Jesus fulfilled Hos. 11:1, not merely the Exodus typology. However, the Hosean context is instructive concerning Matthew's appreciation of Jesus' own exile. In some way the Hosean passage, in relating to the nation, speaks ultimately about the Messiah.

Mark Elliott describes the Christology of, what is arguably, popular Second-Temple Judaism when he lists four types of messianic figures in the pseudepigrapha. He labels them "progenitors... paradigmatic figures... mystical or revelatory figures" (Elliott 2000, 435) and actual "messianic figures" (Elliott 2000, 436) albeit in a guarded sense. Many of these Messianic figures stood in some form of identification with a remnant of righteous Jews. The paradigmatic individual and the righteous community are so intertwined that it is "quite difficult... to divide between references to

a single personage in history, references to his direct physical ancestors and references to entire communities who carry his name!" (Elliott 2000, 458). Though Elliott does not believe that one is to describe the community in nationalistic terms (i.e. including the whole nation) the remnant's identity resides in a righteous remnant *within* the nation.

It seems likely that Matthew also perceived a symbiotic relationship between Messiah and Israel. The Messianic individual is also representative of the nation as a corporate solidarity, experiencing in microcosm that which the rebellious nation experienced macrocosmically. The fact that Matthew resorted to the Hosean reference and not to one from Exodus surely indicates that Jesus fulfilled the Hosean reference.

Kaiser states that both Hosean and Matthean contexts emphasise "the preserving love of God for his seed, Israel" (Kaiser 2001, 51). Israel's restoration is not incidental to Matthew's purpose. Jesus' return to Israel likely affirms God's preservation and restoration promises to the nation. There is something to be said for Kaiser's point that Jesus' Exodus is not from Egypt, and an Egyptian pharaoh, but from Israel and Herod. Recognising that the Exodus is not Hosea's only motif, but the exile also, indicates that Matthew believed Jesus' flight to Egypt also recapitulated the exile, though He did not deserve it as they did. Nevertheless, the Exodus cannot be absent from Matthew's mind and surely Egypt was significant in light of the Hosean reference. One could say that Matthew understood Jesus' fulfilment of Hos. 11:1 to be multifaceted.

Contra France, who argues that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel in such a way that those who follow Jesus "are to be seen as the true continuation of Israel" (France 1981,

211), Matthew may present Jesus as the 'true Israel' but the 'true Israel' stands in solidarity and identification with the nation, not in substitution of them. It is true that Jesus' obedience fulfils the calling that Israel failed to attain. However, in doing so, He affirms God's restoration promises to Israel. Jesus' designation as the *true Israel*, preferred by France (1990), cannot relegate the nation to the level of *pseudo-Israel*. There must be at least two Israels. Israel is both the Messiah, as the *perfect Israel*, and the nation, as the *imperfect Israel*.

France (1990) believes that Matthew's judgement pronouncement, unlike the judgements alluded to in Matthew's citations, is final. Accordingly, the vineyard parable in Matt. 21, and the turning of the crowds against their Messiah, speaks of the loss of the nations' elect status before God. However, the co-operation between Jew and Gentile in Jesus' execution cautions against such a firm judgement on the Jewish people. Matthew certainly regarded his people as responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, but he surely did not regard Gentile authorities as bearing no responsibility, notwithstanding the protestation of Pilate and the cry of the crowd. Jesus promised the Jewish leaders that they would not see Him *until* they recite the *Great Hallel* of Psa. 118:26, which they had refused to do at the triumphal entry. Though France believes that Jesus held out the hope of Israel's restoration, He "makes no promise that this will ever happen, and Israel's stance both in the period of Jesus' ministry and at the time of Matthew's writing gives no ground for optimism" (France 1981, 238). Nevertheless, if Jesus promised that Israel would not see Him again *until* they accept Him, it would stand to reason that the next time Israel sees Him (signifying His second coming) would be when they, as a nation, accept Him as their

Messiah, otherwise they will *not* see Him. When one considers this promise as part of the equation, it would seem that Jesus' judgement pronouncement was not final. There was still the prospect of the nation's restoration and the other OT citations Matthew has chosen, as will be seen, contain restoration as an integral aspect of their OT context.

### JESUS AS A SIGN OF ISRAEL'S JUDGMENT, DELIVERANCE AND RESTORATION (ISA. 7:14 IN MATT 1:23)

How did Matthew perceive Jesus' fulfillment of Isa. 7:14? Isaiah's context concerns the threat that kings Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel posed to Ahaz of Judah. "Ahaz had an opportunity to trust God for deliverance. Instead, he trusted Assyria", (Oswalt 1986, 194) whereas God wanted Ahaz to believe in Him. Therefore, God would send a sign that He was with them; the birth of a child. As Oswalt notes, several children are employed to emphasise God's presence with His people. These children consist of "Shear-jashub in 7:3; Immanuel in 7:14; 8:8, (10); Maher-shalal-hash-baz in 8:3; Isaiah's children in 8:18; and the royal child in 9:5 (Eng. 6)" (Oswalt 1986, 195). God chooses the weak and lowly to signify His protection against powerful and oppressive forces. However, "because he trusted something less than God, that object of trust now becomes the instrument of the very devastation he dreaded" (Oswalt 1986, 216). Assyria would judge Judah. In Isa. 7:10-16, there are certain aspects of the prophecy Ahaz should recognise. Firstly, a maiden, or virgin, will bear a child. Secondly, she will have a son. Thirdly, she will call his name, Immanuel. Fourthly, he will eat curds and honey by the time he can distinguish

between good and evil. Fifthly, before he gets to that age, Rezin and Pekah's lands will be forsaken.

Matthew portrays Jesus' birth to a virgin who has conceived Him by the Holy Spirit during a time when an ungodly king, Herod, ruled over Israel with an ineffectual priesthood to challenge him. Judah was not under threat of oppression from Syria and Israel. Rather, the whole country was under Roman rule. It is clear from Matt. 23:37-39 that Matthew perceived Rome, like Assyria, would become God's instrument of judgment to leave God's people desolate. So how does Matthew relate Isaiah's prophecy to Jesus if it spoke of a sign for Isaiah's day?

Isaiah predicts that a "virgin" will be with child. Scholars disagree as to whether the Hebrew word, 'עַלְמָה'; refers to a virgin or girl of marriageable age. Regardless of the referents for both 'עַלְמָה' or 'בְּתוּלָה' it is clear that the LXX employed the referent 'παρθενος', meaning virgin. Therefore, Richard Longenecker believes that Matthew applied this prophecy to Jesus as "a literal fulfillment of an explicit messianic prophecy" (Longenecker 1975, 144). Matthew employs Isa. 7:14 to stress the fact that Joseph had no relations with his wife until Jesus' birth. Yet how does verse 14 relate to the rest of the prophecy concerning Isaiah's day? Did Matthew pay little attention to the Isaian context and eisegetically apply verse 14 to Jesus? Soares Prabhu believes that the original meaning of the passage is irrelevant, for Matthew understood it to predict the virgin birth of Messiah (Prabhu 1976). Yet any charge of arbitrariness in Matthew's hermeneutic is unnecessary if one recognizes that the OT context informs Matthew's appreciation of how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy.

The main point of Matthew's passage is not

simply to portray Jesus as born of a virgin, but when the Isaian passage is taken in its own context, and compared with the circumstances surrounding Israel in the Matthean narrative, it illuminates the entire significance of Jesus' birth. Thus, Jesus was also the promised 'Immanuel'. Matthew's use of the LXX is no proof-text. As Maarten Menken (2001) argues, all other formula-quotations in Matthew significantly differ from the LXX. Thus, it is likely that Matthew evaluated the Isaian reference before applying it to Jesus. Fruchtenbaum believes that Isaiah's prophecy is an example of "double reference" (Fruchtenbaum 1998, 33). Not double in the sense that Craig Blomberg (2007) means; as the fulfillment of Scripture both immediately and eschatologically. Fruchtenbaum believes that one point of prophecy can only have one fulfillment. Thus, Isa. 7:14 refers to Jesus and the rest of the prophecy refers to Isaiah's son. Andy Woods concurs, arguing "the switch from the plural you... to the singular... makes it clear that this part of the prophecy is not directed to all the house of Israel... but rather to Ahaz personally" (Woods 2007, 7). The Hebrew word 'לָכֶם' in verse 14 is plural, whereas the other verses address a singular second person. Therefore, the boy in verse 14 is a sign to Israel collectively and the boy of the other verses is a sign to Ahaz. But what was the sign's significance to Israel? The sign concerned the two kings whom Ahaz dreaded, as demonstrated by the preceding verses. Thus, Jesus could not signal the removal of that threat if He were not born in Ahaz's day. The use of the singular "you" in verse 16 clearly relates to Ahaz because Ahaz is responsible for making the alliance with Assyria. It does not mean that the child in that verse has a different referent to verse 14.

As Oswalt (1986) and Blomberg (2007) both suggest, the passage's immediate fulfillment

probably relates to Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, whose birth Isaiah writes of in chapter 8. Isaiah highlights the significance of that birth when he writes the name of the boy down before he is conceived, with two witnesses present. Raymond Brown's objection that Isaiah's wife could not have been the virgin because she was already mother to Shear-jashub (Brown 1977) could only hold weight if Isaiah was monogamous or Shear-jashub's mother was still alive. On the contrary, Oswalt claims that the term in Isa. 8:3 "*drew near* is a euphemism used several times in the OT for the first intercourse between a man and his wife" and claims some scholarly support for the idea that Shear-jashub's mother may have died (Oswalt 1986, 222). Thus, Isaiah enters the virgin prophetic, she conceives from that single encounter and the child turns out to be a boy. One cannot assume the certainty of a conception from a single sexual encounter, much less determine from that encounter the gender of that particular child. Isa. 8:8 relates the name 'Immanuel' to Maher-shalal-hash-baz's birth. It is on the basis of Isa. 8:10 that Richard Beaton believes Matthew to have drawn the interpretation of the name 'Immanuel' (Beaton 2002). Though the LXX translates 'Immanuel' into Greek, instead of transliterating it as formerly in Isa. 7:14, Matthew would have needed a working knowledge of Hebrew to discern that the Greek of Isa. 8:8, 10 was a translation of that Hebrew name.

If Matthew did not disregard the Isaian context, what can be said? Matthew envisioned the fulfillment of Isa. 7:14 as a prophetic pattern first fulfilled by Maher-shalal-hash-baz with special significance for Israel in Isaiah's day. This child pattern continues past Isa. 8 into Isa. 9 promising a child who is more than Isaiah's son could ever be. It may be that the children

whom God had given Isaiah in Isa. 8:18 are not only for signs of judgment and restoration but signs of the ultimate child, Messiah Himself.

The prediction of Immanuel's birth was given when Isaiah stood with Shear-jashub (the remnant will return) and therefore, the birth of the child is a sign of Israel's restoration. Therefore, Jesus' birth is also a sign in which Israel's salvation, judgment and restoration is ultimately bound up with Him. There is a promise for the future, even if there is judgment in the interim (Matt. 23:37-37). Though Matt. 2:15 identifies Jesus as the perfect Israel, Matthew did not mean to dissolve Israel of its national import. Jesus is the 'true Israel' but the term 'Israel' still retains a national dimension in Matthew's theology.

#### MESSIAH IS RELATED TO ISRAEL'S SUFFERINGS, ANTICIPATING ISRAEL'S RESTORATION (MIC. 5:2 IN MATT. 2:6)

The following fulfillment citation, Mic. 5:2, is part of the narrative concerning the visit of the Gentile Magi. It is to be noted that this formula-quotation is not simply an editorial remark but on the lips of the priests. Thus, the text form in this case may possibly be derived from Matthew's source.

Micah's context is the attempted Assyrian invasion of Judah. Micah lamented the destruction and exile of Samaria and the fact that Samaria's sins infected the southern kingdom (Mic. 1:6-9). The restoration of Israel to the land was prophesied in Mic. 2:12-13, which would give way to a brighter future than Israel had heretofore experienced. Though Judah would be preserved despite the Assyrian devastation to her, Micah prophesied her exile

into Babylon (Mic. 4:10-5:1), of which Assyria was a foretaste and a warning. Hence, the king emerging from Bethlehem in Mic. 5:2 is the one who guarantees the restoration of those exiled after the southern kingdom has experienced its judgement. As Leslie Allen states, "In the God-given power of this coming king is grounded the security of his people; once more the solidarity of king and people comes to the fore" (Allen 1976, 342) and Allen ties this promise to Nathan's prophetic oracle to David which promises national Israel a planting in the land, which will not be disturbed.

In the Matthean context, the whole of Jerusalem is stirred with the Magi's arrival. The 'King of the Jews' motif in this narrative emphasises Jesus' role as Son of David. France highlights the allusion to the star in Balaam's prophecy in Num. 24:17. He also takes this to "point forward to the concepts of King David, and... foreshadows the victory of the "son of David"" (France 2007, 62). As the sceptre is not to depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10), Matthew understood Balaam's prophecy to refer to David's son; David was of the tribe of Judah.

David Turner believes that the Magi allude to Gentiles' acceptance of Jesus in contrast to Jewish rejection. For John the Baptist, "repentance, not descent from Abraham, was required to avoid the coming judgment" (Turner 2008, 33). Such Gentile positivism seems overstated in light of certain anti-Gentile statements highlighted by Anthony Saldarini (1994) and David Sim (1998) in Matt. 6:7; Matt. 5:46-47; and Matt. 6:32. Though descent alone was insufficient for salvation, the division between the repentant and the religious hypocrites remained within the sphere of national Israel. However, Sim also overstates his case when he places Matthew's Jewish theology in antithesis to Paul's supposedly *Torah-*

*free* theology, using Matthew's anti-Gentile statements as proof of this antithesis. Yet Paul also makes pejorative statements about Gentiles in 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:15; Eph. 4:17; and 1 Thess. 4:5, but one could hardly call him anti-Pauline. Therefore, it is true there is a hint of Gentile acceptance in Matthew's Gospel.

Thomas Graves (1987) and France (2007) note that the birth narrative is a precursor of the passion narrative. Jewish leadership conspires with a secular ruler against Jesus with Jerusalem at the centre of such persecution. The parallel, however, is not exact. Herod is part Jewish, and secondly, he is the one who actively seeks Jesus' death. The chief priests maintain a passive role but in the passion narrative, they are the instigators with a reluctant Pilate, which should guard against overstating the contrast between Jewish opposition and Gentile acceptance. Gentiles, as well as Jews, reject the Messiah in contrast to Jews that suffer with Him.

France believes that scriptures "such as... Isa. 60:6" (France 1990, 84) probably gave rise to the tradition that the magi were kings. Isa. 60:1-7 speaks of a future restoration of all Israel predicated on the redeemer who will come to Zion and bring Israel to repentance (Isa. 59:20). Kings will bring gold and frankincense to Israel. However, the Magi cannot constitute an ultimate fulfilment of these scriptures. Wise men from the east hardly represent "all those from Sheba" and no flocks of Kedar were brought to Jesus as was predicted in Isa. 60:7. As J. Duncan Derrett (1975) points out, those kings are to bring back the dispersed Jews which he believes the gifts of gold and frankincense, in Matthew's gospel, to represent. The gold and frankincense in Matthew may at least prefigure the future nations' wealth accompanying the dispersed Jews, regathered to their land.

It is possible that the narrative of the

Magi also prefigures a future Gentile worship of Jesus in the Davidic kingdom. On this basis, and in contrast with the Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus, Soares Prabhu believes that Matthew's Church, which he regards of consisting mainly of Gentiles, is presented as the new Israel (Prabhu 1976). However, aside from the aforementioned likelihood that Matthew's audience was predominantly Jewish, if the context of the OT citation must guide our appreciation of Matthew's hermeneutic, note that Mic. 5:2 is ethnocentric in its vision for Israel. He who originates from Bethlehem is the king of Israel who will come to Zion. As "Bethlehem" and "clans of Judah" have literal geographic and ethnic significance, therefore, the term "ruler in Israel" must also have literal and ethnic significance. Matthew emphasises the Jewish Exile as precursor to Messiah's appearance in his genealogy. Graves (1987) certainly has a point in stating that Matthew's emphasis on geography is intentional. Kynes notes that "Matthew uses Scriptural proof with every geographical location mentioned in connection with the life of Jesus" (Kynes 1991, 10). The land of Israel was obviously significant to Matthew. In light of the fact that his OT citations maintain the promise of restoration from Exile in their immediate context, it would seem probable that Matthew regarded Jesus as the one to realise those promises. Even if Jesus' birth did not realise Israel's victory over her enemies, it certainly signalled that Israel's liberty was to be found in Him.

Is the birth of the Bethlehemite child an allusion to the aforementioned scripture in Isa. 7:14? Blomberg rather states "the common prophetic motif of messianic birth pangs is applied to the corporate sufferings of Israel often enough" (Blomberg 2007, 6). The woman in Micah is the nation of Israel. Her sufferings

are necessary for the messianic child to be born. In Matthew, Israel is a nation not only under Roman occupation but also ruled by a cruel Herod and then plagued by poverty, disease, sickness and demons (Matt. 4:23-25), a people who worried about what they would eat, drink and wear (Matt. 6:25-31) and would eventually have their house left desolate to them by the Romans, though this would be due to their rejection of Jesus (Matt. 23:37-39). Therefore, in Matthean theology, Jesus not only suffered *for* Israel, but also suffered *alongside* them. Matthew presents a Messiah who is inseparable from Israel's sufferings. His existence necessitates their existence also. In view of the Micah prophecy, Israel's suffering at the hands of the Romans and Herod anticipate the birth of the Messiah and the Messiah's birth and suffering anticipate Israel's restoration. Though Jesus is identified with Israel, as the *perfect Israel*, His fulfilment of Israel's calling and identity necessitated Israel's existence. Jesus not only participated in Israel's past sufferings but also in their present ones and His fulfilment of Mic. 5:2 signals Israel's future restoration.

#### JESUS AND ISRAEL ARE BOTH YHWH'S SERVANT (JER. 31:15 IN MATT. 2:18)

The theme of exile continues in Matt. 2:18, concerning the slaughter of the innocents. Matthew quotes from Jer. 31:15, which Stendahl (Stendahl 1991) regards as Matthew's own translation of the MT, implying that Matthew knew Hebrew. Matthew relates it to Herod killing the male children under two. Whereas the Hosean reference speaks of the Assyrian exiling of northern Israel, Jer. 31:15, as with Mic. 5:2, speaks of the Babylonian exiling of Judah. Therefore, the theme of exile in Matthew

concerns all twelve tribes. As with Matthew's other citations, the theme of judgement and exile is never far from the promise of the nation's restoration to the land of Israel.

In the context of Jer. 31:15 Ramah is "the place of mourning where the exiles stopped on their way to Babylon" (Lalleman 2013, 231). The following verse promises that the exiles "will return from the land of the enemy." There is a significant difference between Matthew's context and Jeremiah's. In Jeremiah many children are exiled, but in Matthew a few children are executed. If France is correct, there "could hardly be more than twenty, even allowing for "all its district"" (France 2007, 85). Kaiser notes that the mothers' weeping, in Jer. 31:15, is written "in the piel stem" (Kaiser 2001, 55). It signifies continuing action in what he calls "a characteristic perfect" (Kaiser 2001, 55). Jeremiah does not limit Rachel's weeping to the punctiliar timeframe of the Babylonian captivity. It continues for any amount of time. Rachel does not merely weep because of the exile but because she will never see her children again. Yet the whole tenor of Jer. 31 is not to emphasise sorrow but hope. Jesus' return to the land of Israel mirrors the eschatological restoration. Therefore, the point of similarity between the two passages is not limited to the mothers' grief but incorporates the theme of restoration. Turner notes that the wider context of Jer. 29-33 emphasises that future restoration is not only unto God, but also regards "the Davidic dynasty (30:8-9; 33:14-15, 17)" (Turner 2008, 94).

Yet how does one account for the fact that the Bethlehemite children are killed and not exiled? Perhaps the answer lies in France's discussion concerning the relationship between the slaughter of the innocents and the passion narrative. France rejects the suggestion that the

execution of the innocents is a sign of judgment on Israel who rejects her Messiah. He notes that "killer and killed represent the same entity, Israel" (France 1979, 111). The children do not represent the rebellious nation but if the essence of the passion narrative is a recapitulation of the infancy narrative then it is more likely that the innocents' deaths prefigure Messiah's. Matthew believed that death was not the end of the story in the case of Jesus' resurrection. Did Matthew think Jeremiah's promise of eschatological return to the land related to eschatological resurrection? Whatever the case may be, Jesus is not pictured as one who merely suffers *for* his nation, but also one who suffers *alongside* a remnant of Israel. Jesus' relationship to Israel is one that, though distinct from them, enjoys an experiential oneness with them that continues beyond merely analogical categories.

Blomberg also notes the allusion of Jer. 31:15 to Gen. 37:35 where "Jacob refuses to be comforted at the initial loss of Joseph... and when Joseph is described as no longer existing" (Blomberg 2007, 9). Kynes also notes a possible allusion to "The Joseph cycle in Genesis 37-50... with the identical names of the two protagonists (the patriarch and the father of Jesus), the interest in dreams, and the mention of Egypt all providing context" (Kynes 1991, 19). There is a connection between Israel, Jesus and the suffering servant of Isa. 53. Rabbis later came to designate the suffering Messiah, of passages such as Zech. 13:7, as 'Messiah son of Joseph' (Blomberg 2007). Joseph is the archetype of a suffering saviour throughout the OT. Jesus' connection to the suffering servant is certainly present in Matthew. Both Terence Donaldson (2005) and Frank Stagg (1962) highlight the allusion to Isa. 42:1 at Jesus' baptism and Isa. 53:4 is applied to Jesus in Matt. 8:17 However, is YHWH's servant in Isaiah the nation or an

individual? Fruchtenbaum (1998) notes that the Targumic writings of Jonathan Ben Uzziel identify the servant of Isa. 52:13 as the Messiah. Risto Santala (2003) notes that later Jewish tradition favoured the referent as Israel, even in Isa. 53. The solution seems difficult once one engages with the Isaian context.

The servant is called to accomplish 'justice in the earth' in Isa. 42:1-4. But Isaiah later tempers that call with the criticism; 'Who is so blind as he that is at peace with Me, or so blind as the servant of the LORD?' (Isa. 42:19). Oswalt (1998) highlights the servant's calling to 'open the eyes of the blind' in verse 7. However, he argues that YHWH's servant in verse 19 cannot be the same servant, for one cannot expect the blind to lead the blind. However, the blindness of the nation in Isa. 43:22-24, is forgiven and reversed in Isa. 43:25. In Isa. 44:1-5 God tells Israel that He will pour His Spirit on the nation. The result is that Jews and Gentiles will call on the name of Jacob and 'name Israel's name with honor.' Therefore, it is when Israel gains their sight that they fulfil their calling as YHWH's servant.

Isa. 49:3 refers to Israel as YHWH's servant and yet verses 4-7 indicate that this cannot possibly apply to the nation. These verses refer to one whom Israel despise and abhor (Isa. 49:7). Yet He is chosen to bring Jacob back to repentance and raise up Israel's tribes (Isa. 49:5-6). Hence, another servant of YHWH, also called 'Israel', must deliver national Israel from her blindness and attain the calling God has given her as YHWH's servant (Isa. 52:13-53:13).

Beaton (2002), however, notes the paucity of early Christian references relating Isa. 42:1-4 to the suffering servant, hence questioning the idea that the servant songs constitute a composite picture of a single figure known

as *the servant of the Lord*. Yet, if Matthew regarded Jesus as the fulfillment of OT history and prophecy, would Matthew perceive the OT as a series of disparate and disjointed texts bunched together? They were one united whole. Therefore, it also stands to reason that Matthew did not regard the servant songs as disjointed either but as portraying different aspects of Jesus' person and ministry. As Beaton concludes, if God regarded certain Israelites as *My servant*, "there is seemingly no logical reason why a messianic figure could not also be considered 'my servant'... even... servant *par excellence*" (Beaton 2002, 42). Therefore, it is probable that there is not only one servant of YHWH, but two, which matches Matthew's identification Christology. The servant is both Israel and Israel's Messiah, the perfect Israel.

McCartney highlights the relevance of identification Christology in the area of Ecclesiology. He applies the servant songs that relate to Israel, "to the church through the particular Servant, Jesus" (McCartney 2004, 177). He believes that "the believer is by virtue of that work covenantally identified with the Suffering Servant" (McCartney 2004, 188). Jesus is the Perfect Israel, who identifies with the nation, yet is distinct from her and also affirms Israel's national restoration. If the Church is the body of Messiah, what does that say about the Church's relationship to Israel? Kynes (1991) believes that the Church is not directly identified with Israel but this identification is mediated through Jesus alone. The ecclesial dimension of this Christology cannot be investigated here, but it is interesting that McCartney's vision of Christian identification with Messiah concerns the sufferings of the pre-resurrection incarnate Christ (McCartney 2004).

THE NAZARENE  
AS THE ONCE DESPISED  
AND EXALTED RULER  
(GEN. 49:26 IN MATT. 2:23)

Matthew's fifth citation concerns Jesus' designation as 'Nazarene'. This prophecy is generically written by 'the prophets' but there are no OT references that call Israel, or any individual, a Nazarene. Scholars propose three main solutions concerning Matthew's reference, two of which derive from wordplays within the LXX and MT and the third relates to the appellation's contemporary significance.

According to Longenecker "Many are of the opinion that the Evangelist is making a "punning allusion" to the "branch"... of Isa. 11:1" (Longenecker 1975, 145). Though Matthew wrote in Greek, the Hebrew rendering of Nazarene, "נְצֹרִי", is practically similar to the Hebrew for branch, "נֶצֶר", which in Isa. 11:1 relates to David's son who will rule as judge, bring justice to the oppressed, and peace to the land. In Isa. 11:10 Jesse's branch is also called the "root of Jesse". According to Oswalt, "Eventually, like "branch," šōreš became a term for the Messiah (Isa. 53:2...)" (Oswalt 1986, 284. n. 1) connecting the righteous branch to the suffering servant. The branch is connected with Israel's restoration in Isa. 60:21. Nevertheless, even if one were to include the reference to the suffering servant, these allusions are only found in Isaiah and not the prophets generically.

The second allusion regards the relationship of the Greek word "Ναζωραῖος", Nazarene, to the Greek word "ναζιραῖος", nazirite. Only one vowel difference stands between the two Greek words. However, the Hebrew for nazirite is "נָזִיר", "its second consonant represents a different Hebrew consonant" (France 2007, 93). Nevertheless, if Matthew, and some of his audience, knew both Hebrew and Greek,

one should not automatically discredit the pun because it is "totally invisible in the Greek" (France 2007, 93). Otherwise, would his audience not have questioned Matthew's departure from the familiar LXX when he resorted to the MT? In particular, some scholars believe that Matthew is alluding to Samson in Judg. 13:5-7 (Longenecker 1975). Samson's birth is announced in similar fashion to that of Jesus. France, highlights the fact that Jesus and Samson are related in terms of being Holy men and saviours (France 1981). However, the term Nazirite in this context is intimately tied to the Nazirite vow, which makes the application to Jesus problematic if Samson's calling as a Nazirite is the only referent that Matthew had in mind. The careful exegete, discerning Matthew's referent, would immediately be struck by the fact that Jesus was not a Nazirite as was Samson.

Scholars, such as Fruchtenbaum, propose a third solution. "Nazarenes were a people despised and rejected and the term was used to reproach and to shame (John 14:6)" (Fruchtenbaum 1992, 845). The idea of a despised Messiah would link with prophetic passages, such as Isa. 53:3.

The first and third options seem most plausible in light of Matthean Christology. However, one must determine the referent by means of Matthew's citation formula which generically concerns the prophetic literature. However, to define the scope of writings as 'the prophetic literature' may be misleading. Matthew uses an almost identical citation formula in Matt. 26:56 where Jesus speaks of 'the Scriptures of the prophets.' Donald Senior does not limit the referent of 'the prophets' to the prophetic literature but to "the whole span of the Scriptures, which... speak as one prophetic voice pointing to the Messiah" (Senior 1998, 309). Likewise, Gilbert Weaver understands the

Matthean reference as inclusive of “the O.T. as a whole” (Weaver 1965, 24). When the term ‘the Prophets’ is used in conjunction with the phrase ‘the Law’ (Matt. 5:17) its referent is limited to the prophetic literature. When Matthew employs it generically it speaks of the whole OT. Such is the case concerning Acts 3:18, 21-23, where Moses is regarded as the “first and great of Israel’s prophets”, (Bruce 1988, 86) and concerning Rom. 1:2 (Cranfield, 1975; Moo, 1996; Schreiner, 1998).

Soares Prabhu claims that the term ‘נזיר’ is also employed in Lam. 4:7 and its meaning “of ‘prince’ or ‘noble’, is an acceptable designation for Jesus” (Prabhu 1976, 203). But not only is this passage too obscure to discern any messianic significance, as Prabhu argues, but it also lacks any concrete relationship to the Matthean context and theology already elucidated throughout the infancy narratives. One may discern that the first ‘נזיר’ in the MT is not even Samson but Joseph in Gen. 49:26 and Deut. 33:16. In this case the concept of ‘נזיר’ links to the aforementioned notion of ruling, as portrayed in the Isaian Davidic Branch. Jacob’s prophecy about Joseph, in Gen. 49:22-26, begins by likening Joseph to a ‘בן פרת’ (fruitful son) whose ‘בנות’ (daughters) run over a wall. Most Bible versions translate this imagery in horticultural terms. Joseph is the fruitful vine/tree and most Bible translations render ‘בנות’ as branches. In Gen. 49:23 Jacob speaks of the enemies that attacked Joseph. Victor Hamilton believes that the referent is easier to discern if it concerns Joseph as an individual rather than the tribe. In this case, “the reference is to the brother’s harsh treatment of Joseph” (Hamilton 1995, 684). In the end, Joseph becomes the ‘נזיר’. The word in the NKJV, RSV and ESV is translated as ‘separated’ or ‘set apart,’ linking to the theme of the Nazirite. The NASB renders the

word ‘distinguished,’ but the NLT, NIV and the HCSB render it ‘prince.’ The blessings bestowed on Joseph, in verses 25-26, will be on the head of one who was despised by his unbelieving brethren but is afterwards reconciled and rules over them.

According to Elliott, one should not take Joseph as an isolated OT figure but as archetypal of later Israelite history. “In the Testaments Joseph’s brothers, who persecute him wildly, would seem to function as paradigms of the rest of Israel who mistreat the righteous community” (Elliott 2000, 447. n. 30). Joseph is first in a line of suffering servants, including Jeremiah; despised by his Israelite brethren, but then afterwards esteemed. Yet some scholars believe there is no evidence that the Qumran sect believed in a dying Messiah. One possible reference, in ‘4Q285 frag. 5,’ that could speak of such a Messiah is heavily disputed. The notion of a dying Messiah, before the advent of Christianity, “finds little support in contemporary Jewish interpretation of the relevant Old Testament passages, and probably none in the Dead Sea Scrolls” (Bockmuehl 1992, 167). Yet, according to Israel Knohl there is a Hebrew text, written in stone and dated to the late first century BCE, or early first century CE, which speaks of Ephraim in messianic terms, “as the suffering Son of God” (Knohl 2008, 152). He argues that there are two other Second Temple period texts that regard Joseph as a suffering servant. In one of those texts, “we find a connection between Joseph and the figure of the ‘Suffering Servant’” (Knohl 2008, 152). The pseudepigraphal writers seem to regard Joseph as paradigmatic of Isaiah’s suffering servant.

Though the sources this paper has referenced do not consider this interpretation, Matthew may well have alluded to Gen. 49:26 concerning Joseph the ‘נזיר’ as first in a long

line of OT suffering servants. If so then all three aforementioned possible referents concerning 'Nazarene', "presenting Jesus as regal prince or hinting at his roles as suffering servant or Spirit-Anointed holy man" (Blomberg 2007, 11) are essential components in the picture of Joseph. Joseph was also a saviour figure, bringing salvation to Israel and Gentile nations during a time of great famine. One need not choose one interpretation over the others. In the Matthean context the implication is clear. Jesus was rejected, opposed and persecuted by Herod and then later by the Jewish leaders. Joseph's sufferings typify Jesus' own to such an extent that Jesus, like the Jewish contingent of Matthew's community, is estranged from his countrymen as Joseph was to his brothers. The rejection of Jesus by the nation brings the nation under judgement in such a way that it seems that Matthew "presents Israel only as a figure of disobedience, disinherited by God" (France 1989, 239). However, because Jesus is the Nazarene, the fulfilment of the Joseph archetype of the suffering servant, there is again a hint that the unbelieving nation would eventually be restored, reconciled to Him, and He will rule over them as David's Son, the righteous branch.

## CONCLUSION

When Matthew's five OT formula-quotations are evaluated *in toto*, Matthew does not dissolve Israel of their national importance or identity. In the first section it was observed that Matthew portrays an identification Christology with Jesus as the 'perfect Israel'. Jesus experiences both exodus and exile in identification with Israel. His return to the land prefigures Israel's restoration to the land (Hos 11:11). In the second section Jesus fulfilled the Isaian child-motif especially that evidenced by Maher-shalal-hash-baz who

was a sign that God was with His people. He was also a sign of Israel's judgment, deliverance, and restoration. The identity of the messianic child is intimately bound up with God's prophetic purposes for the nation. Because Jesus is a sign of Israel's restoration it must be concluded that He does not dissolve the term Israel of its national significance but rather affirms it. In the third section, Matthew employed Mic. 5:2 to demonstrate that Messiah's birth is significant to the geographical land of Israel. Matthew portrays a Messiah whose existence necessitates Israel's existence also. Israel's sufferings at the hand of the Romans anticipate the birth of the Messiah and the Messiah's birth and sufferings anticipate Israel's restoration (Mic 5:3) which the Magi's gifts also prefigure. This means that Jesus, as the 'perfect Israel' is not merely Israel's antitype but also fulfills OT scripture in concert with the nation, which maintains the continuing validity of Israel's national identity. In the fourth section, Jesus' exile from the land is not only related to Israel's history but the same wrath that Herod directs at Him, he also directs against other Israelite children. Their deaths prefigure Jesus' own death at the passion, which is arguably a recapitulation of the infant massacre. Jer. 31:15 speaks of the weeping of Israelite mothers before the promise of restoration to the land which Jesus' return from Egypt prefigures. Jesus is one with His nation, sharing in their sufferings, and yet distinct. Both Israel and Jesus are YHWH's servant and, therefore, Jesus co-exists with His nation; He does not supersede them. Finally in the last section, Jesus is portrayed as the 'son of Joseph', the ultimate Nazarene, who was despised by His Israelite brethren. Matthew looked forward to a future time when national Israel will be reconciled to the Nazarene (נָזִיר). Then Jesus will rule over them and be esteemed as the

‘נזיר’. Hence, their rejection of the Messiah would not continue perpetually.

When these formula-quotations are evaluated together they form a composite picture of Jesus' identification with Israel's identity and mission, which far from dissolving Israel of their ethnic or national distinctiveness, actually affirms their identity and restoration. Restoration and reconciliation are integral aspects of each of Matthew's OT citations. This indicates the continuing importance the nation of Israel holds in Jesus' fulfillment of OT scripture. Matthew has maintained consistent allusions to promises that Messiah, though initially despised, would accomplish Israel's restoration, both to their land and their God. In this nuanced sense this paper affirms Matthew's Christology as an identification Christology.

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