

Session 21 – The Kingdom of God in the New Testament – The Gospel of Matthew Part I

I. THE KINGDOM IN MATTHEW 1:1-17

- A. The introduction to Matthew's Gospel begins with the words *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*. The Greek reads, ***biblos genesis Iesous Christos***. Just as we see John 1 introduce Jesus as the *Word* in the beginning here Matthew also draws the reader's attention to the beginning in the use of Genesis in relation to the context of Jesus the Messiah.
- B. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson note it can be rendered "origins" and refer to all of Matt. 1–2 (cf., Gen. 5:1a as the introduction to 5:1–9:29). That Jesus is the Christ identifies him as the Jewish Messiah, the longed-for Savior of Israel. Even the name "Jesus" is a Grecized form of the Hebrew "Joshua," recalling the successor of Moses and liberator of God's people. As a descendant of David, Jesus comes as an Israelite king (see esp. 2 Sam. 7:11b–16; Pss. Sol. 17:21–18:7); as a descendant of Abraham, he will bless all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:1–3).¹
- C. From the start then Matthew is bridging several Old Testament (or *First Testament*) truths that all pointed to the Kingdom of God and its King. Given the beginning of Genesis 5 reads: ***biblios genesis anthropos***,² or the book of the generation of humankind; In Jesus we see *He* is the *new Man*, the *new Adam* where Matthew replaces *anthropos* with *Iesous Christos*. Immediately following, Matthew declares Him to be the Son of David. Written in Hebrew it would read, Yeshua HaMashiach ben David, or Jesus, Messiah son of David. The Kingdom truth here concerns 2 Samuel 7 and the Davidic Covenant and the promise of a *Seed* that would be a physical descendent of David, and to Him would Yahweh *establish His kingdom*. This Messiah Son of David would *build a house* for the Name of Yahweh and for the second time He would *establish this Davidic King forever*. There would also be a Father-Son relationship. This King would be a King for the whole world. Finally, the Son of Abraham would be the *Seed* through whom all the earth would be blessed. This also harkens back to the full reversal and defeat of the Serpent-Satan by the *Seed of the Woman* who would crush the devil's head.
- D. Matthew 1:2 brings into Jesus' genealogy Jacob and Judah and as such the prophecy of Jacob to Judah in Genesis 49 that the *scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to Him; and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples*. Matthew again, makes clear that Jesus the Messiah, is the *one* Jacob prophesied concerning the King with the scepter, who receives worldwide tribute and obedience. The Lion of Judah.
- E. Included in this list are four women in Jesus' line. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Three of these were involved in some scandalous relationship and can be seen as a redemptive point that aims to reverse the sexually immoral acts of the Watchers in Genesis 6. Those actions of the Watchers are juxtaposed to the supernatural birth of Jesus. Amy Richter notes His birth was "through the union of a woman and a celestial being, but in contrast to the watchers' story, no sexual relations are involved. Further, in Matthew's narrative, the first humans outside of Jesus' immediate family to interact with the child Jesus

¹ Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1298-1302). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

² LXX Genesis 5:1

are the magi who are practitioners of the illicit arts taught by the watchers and use astrological knowledge to find Jesus. In the Enochic template, the watchers bring idolatry into the world; in Matthew, the magi worship the appropriate object of worship— Jesus.”³ Thus even in the intro to Matthew, God’s Kingdom is at work crushing the serpent’s head.

- F. Also of note is the Exile. Matthew 1:11-12 reminds the reader that Babylon is the image of the world’s system (the age of this world) and was the power that led to the exile of Judah. Yet despite its best efforts to eliminate the tribe of Judah, and within it the Davidic Seed, it continued and returned to the land after 70 years at the Decree of Cyrus. The end of Exile would happen *now* in the Incarnation of Jesus.

“And from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah fourteen generations.” (Matt. 1:17) The clear progression of life before, during, and the end of the exile ends on a last set of Sabbaths ($14 = 2 \times 7$). In other words, in Jesus we see the *beginning* of the end of Exile and the *beginning* of that Sabbath Rest, the Final Jubilee. How do we get there? We have $14 + 14 + 14 = 42$. Or 7×2 3 times. Or 7×6 . The breakdown of that is the beginning of Jesus earthly Incarnation and ministry is the *sixth* Sabbath that ends with the 7th Sabbath at His Second coming and the fulness of Jubilee and the End of Exile forever. That has already started.⁴ Here again we have an already-but-not-yet written into Jesus’ genealogy.

Excursus: The Genealogy of Jesus

Of note concerning whether it is 13 or 14 generations we should consider the following:

Craig Keener makes the following argument which I believe hits the point head on. The genealogy here is a theological point made by Matthew, in the similar way the author of Hebrews uses a lack of genealogy for Melchizedek to say he had no mother or father.

While scholars may debate how thoroughly Matthew has adapted available sources, exclusive attention to that discussion risks missing Matthew’s real point. Even had Matthew taken his list unchanged from a complete and precise genealogy scroll, Jesus’ spiritual ancestry is more critical for Matthew than his genetic ancestry (cf. Meier 1980: 3; Johnson 1988: 209-10). The names in Matthew’s genealogy — like Judah, Ruth, David, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah — would immediately evoke for Matthew’s readers a whole range of stories they had learned about their heritage from the time of their childhood. Genealogies provided family honor, defining also in-groups and inheritance rights (Hanson and Oakman, 1998: 28-29, who argue that the apical ancestors Abraham and David provide honor in this genealogy — 52-55). By evoking great heroes of the past like David and Josiah, Matthew points his readers to the ultimate hero to whom all those other stories pointed. For Matthew and his circle of Jewish Christians, Jesus was not an afterthought to Judaism, a distinct and unexpected addition to God’s plan in the Old Testament. Jesus was the goal to which Israel’s lovingly remembered history pointed... Matthew’s point here is profound: so much is Jesus the focal point of history that his ancestors depend on him for their meaning. In other

³ Heiser, Michael S.. Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers, and the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ (pp. 140-141). UNKNOWN. Kindle Edition.

⁴ <https://www.thebibleisart.com/blog/matthews-14-generations>

words, God sovereignly directed the history of Israel and preserved the Davidic line because of his plan to send Jesus (Gundry 1982: 10, 13; Patte 1987: 18).⁵

N. T. Wright makes a similar observation saying

But that's what Matthew does, on Jesus' behalf. And, as though to emphasize that Jesus isn't just one member in an ongoing family, but actually the goal of the whole list, he arranges the genealogy into three groups of 14 names - or, perhaps we should say, into six groups of seven names. The number seven was and is one of the most powerful symbolic numbers, and to be born at the beginning of the seventh seven in the sequence is clearly to be the climax of the whole list. This birth, Matthew is saying, is what Israel has been waiting for for two thousand years.

The particular markers along the way also tell their story. Abraham is the founding father, to whom God made great promises. He would be given the land of Canaan, and the nations would be blessed through his family. David was the great king, to whom, again, God made promises of future lordship over the whole world. The Babylonian exile was the time when it seemed that all these promises were lost for ever, drowned in the sea of Israel's sins and God's judgment. But the prophets of the exile promised that God would again restore Abraham's people and David's royal line. The long years that followed, during which some of the Jews had come back from Babylon but were still living under foreign, pagan oppression, were seen by many as a continuing 'exile', still waiting for God to deliver Israel from sin and the judgment it brought. Now is the moment, Matthew is saying, for all this to happen. The child who comes at the end of this line is God's anointed, the long-awaited Messiah, to fulfil all the layers and levels of the prophecies of old.

But Matthew also knows that the way it has happened is very strange. He is about to tell how Mary, Jesus' mother, had become pregnant not through her fiancé, Joseph, but through the [H]oly [S]pirit. So Matthew adds to his list reminders of the strange ways God worked in the royal family itself: Judah treating his daughter-in-law Tamar as a prostitute, Boaz being the son of the Jericho prostitute Rahab, and David committing adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite. If God can work through these bizarre ways, he seems to be saying, watch what he's going to do now.⁶

So, let's count them:

Set 1: $7 \times 2 = 14$ Generations from Abraham to David

1) Abraham, 2) Isaac, 3) Jacob, 4) Judah, 5) Perez, 6) Hezron, 7) Ram, 8) Amminadab, 9) Nahshon, 10) Salmon, 11) Boaz, 12) Obed, 13) Jesse, 14) David

Set 2: $7 \times 2 = 14$ Generations from David to Babylon

1) Solomon, 2) Rehoboam, 3) Abijah, 4) Asaph, 5) Jehoshaphat, 6) Joram, 7) Uzziah, 8) Jotham, 9) Ahaz, 10) Hezekiah, 11) Manasseh, 12) Amos, 13) Josiah, (did anyone see where Jehoiakim went?) 14) Jechoniah

⁵ Craig S. Keener. A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Kindle Locations 2656-2673). Eerdmans Publishing Co - A. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Wright, T. (2002). Matthew for everyone: Pt. 1. SPCK Publishing. pp 3-4

Set 3: 7x2 = 14

1) Shealtiel, 2) Zerubbabel, 3) Abiud, 3) Eliakim, 4) Azor, 5) Zadok, 6) Achim, 7) Eliud, 8) Eleazar, 9) Matthan, 10) Jacob, 12) Joseph, 13) Jesus the Messiah, 14) ???

Luke starts with Jesus and works back to Adam the son of God. 1) Jesus, 2) Joseph 3) Heli, 4) Matthat, 5) Levi, 6) Melchi, 7) Jannai, 8) Joseph, 9) Mattathias, 10) Amos, 11) Nahum, 12) Esli, 13) Naggai, 14) Maath, 15) Semein, 16) Josech, 17) Joda, 18) Joanan, 19) Rhesa, 20) Zerubbabel, 21) Shealtiel

What we see then is there are others within Jesus' genealogy that Matthew does not mention. Why? He is making a theological point with the number 14. There is one king missing from the second set, Jehoiakim the son of Josiah and the father of Jechoniah (Eliakim). Why was he missing? It could be he was an installed puppet king arranged by the Egyptian Pharaoh of the day. (1 Chr. 3:15-16)

There appears to be a more simple and textual answer however: **David is the key**. With his numerical value of 14, he is listed twice in Matthew's summary. Abraham to **David** is 14, **and David** to Babylon is 14 (*not Solomon to Babylon*), and Babylon to Jesus is 14 (Matthew 1:17). I believe the point can be made here within the text itself: Matthew uses David twice to explain his theological point, even though the second set of 14 begins with Solomon. Did he not know how many people he included? Of course he did! He just spent the previous verses starting in 12 penning all of the names. He could obviously count, which again tells us, he is more interested in drawing our attention to something other than the total numbers. As Keener and Wright note above, it is to draw our attention to the truth that Jesus ends the Exile, and all of these people before Him only find their full meaning in Him. Without Jesus, their story is incomplete!

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE INCARNATION IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

- A. A review of previous sessions sets in place one of the most exiting events in human history, when Yahweh became human and was born *the Seed* of the woman that would crush the Serpent's head. Looking ahead to Paul who says to have the same manner of thinking as Jesus when considering His position and existence as the manifested Person of Yahweh. "You should think the way Christ Jesus did" or "how Jesus Christ thought about things is the way you should think about them."⁷

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 ESV)

- B. Jesus was *in the form of God* and was *equal* to Him prior to His birth. The Person we *know* by the Name Jesus, was at one point *non-human*, but the One through Whom God the Father created all things and through Whom now upholds all things by His powerful Word. The writer of Hebrews says He is "the

⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 324.

radiance of the Father's glory and the representation of the Father's essence, sustaining and upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3)". Just as we experience the light of the sun by the radiance of its outshining light, so we experience the knowledge of God through His outshining Light, the Lord Jesus Christ. His *life* (zoe) is the *light of men* (John 1:4). God's life, His light, His love, all of His eternal attributes are *only* seen and experienced through His Son, Jesus the Messiah. (*See also Colossians 1:14-20)

Paul ends the passage in Philippians 2 with "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him *the name* that is above every *name*." The Father has again made *equal* the Name Yeshua with Yahweh. The confession of every tongue will be "Yeshua Ha Mashiach (Jesus *the* Messiah) is Yahweh, to the glory of God the Father." (*See also John 17:6 – Jesus is the *manifestation or revelation or expression of the Name*)

- C. We saw Him revealed in the First Testament (Old Testament) as the Angel of Yahweh (or the Messenger of Yahweh). He was the *visible* manifestation of God. He appeared to Abraham in his tent with the two angels that went to Sodom to rescue Lot. He also appeared to Abraham at the cutting of the Covenant and in the staying of his hand in the sacrifice of Isaac. (See Genesis 12-22, specifically 12, 15, and 22) He wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32. He was the Angel in the Fire that was in the flame of fire that appeared to Moses in Exodus 3. This *Angel of Yahweh* told Moses *His Name was I AM*. He led His people Israel out of Egypt in the Great Passover through the Red Sea (Jude 5 specifically names Jesus as the *one who saved a people out of the land of Egypt*). Afterward He walked by Moses on Mount Sinai, the Presence and Glory of Yahweh Who passed before him. (Exodus 33) He appeared to Joshua as the Prince (Commander) of Yahweh's army in Joshua 5. He has always been showing up within human history to reveal the Father. That He continued this into the New Testament *should* be expected. He is the *same Person*.
- D. Matthew 1:18 tells us *how* the birth of Jesus happened. The manifested Name of Yahweh was to be born of a woman being *that* Seed (Genesis 3:15). His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph. Notice *his mother Mary*, and not *his father Joseph*. She was *found* to be with child from the Holy Spirit. What was at work here is no less the creative power of God than what we see in Genesis 1-2. *Now the genesis of Iesous Christos* took place this way! There was here in Mary the Holy Spirit *hovering over the face of the waters* just as in the beginning. I suspect He was waiting for the Father to speak through His Son again.

Luke 1:38 shows Mary's reception to the word spoken by Gabriel, "Behold I am the servant of Yahweh; let it be to me according to your word." God's Spirit moved upon that Word just as He did in the beginning forming in Mary's womb what was in His heart to perform. The mystery of God at work yet again to reveal Himself to man.

- E. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."...
²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (Matt. 1:21, 23)

We see here two names being equivalent. Jesus and Salvation being given the place of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, Immanuel. Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, then *is* God with Us. The *name* Jesus means "Yahweh is Salvation" a shortened version of Joshua.

- F. Matthew's perspective of the birth of Jesus is from Joseph's viewpoint. It is Joseph the son of Jacob to whom was born the Messiah. And this is a point that cannot be overlooked and is no coincidence. In the Old Testament (First Testament) we see Jacob (the sone of Isaac) had a son Joseph who became a picture of the Suffering Messiah, Mashiach ben Yosef, Messiah son of Joseph. It is not to be lost on the reader to see that while Joseph was *not* Jesus' father, he was his earthly father figure. In this lens, we see then an introduction into the genealogy of Jesus: 1) the Seed of Abraham, the Jewish and Gentile Redeemer, 2) Messiah the Son of David, the Conquering King, 3) Messiah the Son of Joseph, the Suffering Servant.
- G. From Joseph's viewpoint we see *an angel* or messenger from Yahweh appear to him in a dream. Again, we should expect Joseph to have a prophetic experience in a dream and point us back to Joseph's dreams in the book of Genesis. Joseph's dreams were concerning the salvation of his family and conclude in Revelation 12 as the ultimate fulfillment of one of those dreams. The angel appeared and told him to take Mary as his wife and to not break off the marriage. The reason he was given:

²⁰... "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt. 1:22-25)

- H. Matthew looks at what the angel said and makes a direct attribution to Isaiah 7:14 and consequently Isaiah 9:6-7 as part of the larger context and in the middle Isaiah 8:8-10. *Who* was this child in Isaiah? Recall the *already-but-not-yet* as a means to seeing the pattern God uses to point us to the ultimate fulfillment at the end of the age. If the *already* happened or is happening, then it is a faith pointer that the *not-yet* is certain.
- I. The Lord is speaking to King Ahaz of Judah, challenging him to ask for a sign to confirm God's promise that he would destroy the two kings from the lands to the north that were currently threatening Judah (Isa. 7:10-11), Rezin in Aram and Pekah in Israel (see 7:1). Ahaz protests that he will not test the Lord (7:12), but Isaiah, speaking for God, berates Ahaz for trying God's patience with his reply, probably recognizing his insincerity (7:13). Then comes the famous prophecy of the imminent birth of a child to a young woman of marriageable age (Heb. 'almâ). It is widely agreed that the Hebrew word, in and of itself, need carry no more than this meaning (see, e.g., Walton 1997; cf. NRSV), a child who will be God's sign (7:14). Before the child is old enough to know the difference between right and wrong, the lands of the

dreaded kings will be laid waste (7:15–16). But before that can be interpreted as very good news, the prophet adds that they will be replaced by an even worse invader: Assyria (7:17).⁸

the most probable interpretation is that Isaiah's prophecy refers to his own son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (e.g., Oswalt 1986–1998: 1:213). Isaiah 8:3, introducing this son, echoes the language of 7:14 as Isaiah goes to his wife, and she conceives and then gives birth to the child with this symbolic name ("quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil" [NIV mg.]). The next verse repeats the sense of 7:15, describing how the wealth of Damascus (in Aram) and Samaria (in Israel) will be plundered before the child can say "My father" or "My mother" (8:4). This same son is called "Immanuel" in 8:8, which is explained in 8:10 as "God with us," accounting for Matthew's linking the two portions of Isaiah together. In 8:18 Isaiah describes his two sons, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and Shear-Jashub (cf. 7:3), as "signs and symbols in Israel," which description ties back in with the sign God promised in 7:11, 14. But in 9:1–7 the more distant future is in view, as exiles are once again restored to Galilee. Here, in 9:6, another description of the birth of a wonderful child appears, one who can be called "Almighty God," "Eternal Father," and "Prince of Peace," who will rule from David's throne and establish universal justice forever—prophecies that scarcely could have been fulfilled in a mere earthly king.⁹

Matthew recognized that Isaiah's son fulfilled the dimension of the prophecy that required a child to be born in the immediate future. But the larger, eschatological context, especially of Isa. 9:1–7, depicted a son, never clearly distinguished from Isaiah's, who would be a divine, messianic king. That dimension was fulfilled in Jesus (similarly, Schibler 1995: 103–4), who was unequivocally born to a young woman of marriageable age, but to a woman who also was a virgin at the time of the conception. Whether or not Matthew was aware of any previous interpretation of Isa. 7:14 as referring to a sexually chaste woman, the "coincidence" of Jesus being born of a virgin was too striking not to be divinely intended. Matthew could indeed speak of Isaiah's prophecy as fulfilled in Christ. The canonical form of Isaiah was already pointing in this twofold direction (Williamson 1998)... Matthew's primary doctrinal intent is, of course, christological. Conceived of a virgin, Jesus is a messianic king but also the embodiment of divine presence among his people. Both themes are important for Matthew's Gospel, the first especially in these infancy stories and the passion narratives (see Nolan 1979), and the second as an inclusio around Matthew's entire narrative (cf. Matt. 28:18–20; see Kupp 1996). Soteriology lies close at hand too, with the promise of salvation from sin.¹⁰

- J. The point: we are given a great already-but-not-yet prophecy here. On the front end Matthew looks back and uses the LXX to point to the virgin as the one who would give birth to a child named Immanuel, God with us. This would be significant because Isaiah's own son would be viewed from that same vantage point, not that Yahweh would be *in* his son, but that his son would be a sign or a marker of a greater prophecy. When Immanuel came, then as we have seen, when He comes, i.e., the Day of the LORD, then the posture of the hearts of those at His coming would determine judgment or blessing (enemies vs His remnant). The Assyrian captivity then was a sign that Immanuel did in fact come and fulfill Amos' prophecy in Amos 5. *Why do you desire the Day of the LORD? You cannot escape from His judgment.* (Amos 5:18-27 ending in the exile)

⁸ Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1336-1343). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

⁹ Ibid. Kindle Locations 1347-1356

¹⁰ Ibid. Kindle Locations 1374-1384

- K. As sure then as the Day of the LORD, Immanuel's coming, and the Assyrian captivity, then also is the prophecy concerning the Divine Son who would be born in Isaiah 9:6-7. As Beal and Carson note, these prophecies have not been fulfilled. At least not in fullness. With Matthew and Joseph then, Jesus = Immanuel and with that we have a Day of the LORD in which He came to earth as a Son who was born a human to a virgin. He is both Savior and King and Almighty God, Prince of Peace, Eternal Father. God with us – points to the human side (Son of David), the Isa 9:6-9 points to the Godward side.

III. THE KINGDOM OF GOD DECLARED BY BABYLONIAN MAGI

- A. *Now after Jesus (Salvation, God with Us), was born in Beit Lechem (Bethlehem, the House of Bread), of Judah in the days of Herod the king, behold wise men (magoi/magos) from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matt. 2:1-2)*
- B. Building on Matthew's introduction of Jesus, His identification as the new Adam, the Seed of Abraham, the Suffering Servant Messiah Ben Yosef, and the Conquering King, the Son of David, (as well as *My Servant Israel*), we now see another declaration from outside of the land of Israel concerning Jesus' Kingship. The Magi come to confirm what Matthew has declared and unsurprisingly they use *star* language.
- C. These *magi* could have been of two groups: 1) Babylonians who had participated in some manner of relationship and interaction with captive Judeans that began in 586 BC and had knowledge of the Torah and some of the Prophets (Ezekiel and Daniel both were exiled into Babylon); 2) they could have in fact been remnant Judeans who, like Daniel, had remained in Babylon after Cyrus' decree. Not everyone in exile returned after 70 years. Either of these cases will work. It is not clear on exactly *who* they were. What is clear is *what* they knew and said. They *knew* a prophecy concerning a *star* that would arise that would herald the birth of a Jewish King.
- D. Numbers 24:17 specifically would appear to be the reference point for the Magi. Here we have both *star* language (a star shall come out of Jacob) and *kingly* language (a scepter shall rise out of Israel). The LXX translates the Hebrew as "a star (astron) will rise up out of Jacob, and a man (anthropos) will be established out of Israel, and *he* will shatter the rulers of Moab and will plunder all the descendants of Seth. And Edom will be an inheritance, and Esau, his enemy, will be an inheritance; and Israel does mightily." The *star* then in the LXX is a *man*. And this *star man* will take Edom as an inheritance. Where would one find this language? Amos 9:11-12. When David's House is rebuilt, He will possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations called by His Name. This *Man* is then a descendant Son of David.
- E. *I see him, but not now.* The verb "to see" is used here to indicate a different kind of seeing... This is a spiritual seeing that Balaam perceives with his inner or spiritual "eye" opened. In this spiritually elevated...state Balaam makes out a figure (*him*), but his vision is *now now*, i.e., it is removed in time...*not nearby*. The identity of this him is purposely ambiguous. It may be the one(s) called the star and staff (or scepter) in the next lines, or it may be Israel as a people. 23 Whether the figure is individual

or corporate, it must represent Israel in order to fulfill what Balaam claimed as the purpose of his oracle in v. 14b.¹¹

What we will continue to see from Matthew's Gospel is that Jesus is in fact *the* representative of Israel and succeeds where Israel failed. He is Yahweh's Servant Israel, in whom He will be glorified, whom Yahweh formed Him in the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to him and that Israel might be gathered to Him. (Isa. 49:3, 5). Israel the Servant will bring back Israel the nation.

- F. The backdrop to the *star* (astral) language concerning the birth of Jesus is given to us some 40-50 years later in John's Revelation of Jesus.

¹And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. (Revelation 12:1-6)

1. At the time of the birth of Jesus, *faithful* Israel (remnant Israel) is pictured as giving birth to the Messiah in the fullness of time. The clearly identifiable astral language has been seen in Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9, where Jacob identified the principles: *Shall I and your mother and brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?* Jacob obviously is Israel, the mother of Joseph (Rachel), and all of his brothers represent the nation of Israel; at least Jacob appeared to understand exactly who or what the *stars* in the heavens represented on the earth.
2. Concurrently *a great red dragon* is also present with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns. The language here is of a certain order: there is first a dragon, second there is a beast empire. Isaiah 51:9 identifies the dragon as Rahab (Rahav) which was pierced and cut into pieces at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea. Daniel 7:7-8, 19-27 shows the Fourth Beast Empire as having ten horns with the little horn (the Man of Sin). This little horn grows exceedingly great, even to the host of heaven and some of the host and some of the stars it threw to the ground and trampled on them. (Dan. 8:9-10)
3. The dragon then is a manifestation of Satan (Rev. 20:1), as was the Serpent, and is *the* Devil. As we have seen in reference to the domain of darkness, he is chief of the wicked spirits and demons, as well as the head of the world empires and their wicked kings. Satan used a wicked king at the time of the birth of Messiah to try to kill him.

¹³ Now when the [Magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (Matthew 2:13)

The motivating power behind this earthly king was the dragon, Satan. His efforts were unsuccessful, as the Messiah was born, the "one who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron." (see Psalm 2)

¹¹ Ashley, T. R. (1959). *The Numbers*. William B Eerdmans Publishing. p. 370

G. King Herod was triggered by the chief priests and scribes when they informed him of the prophecy of *where* the Messiah would be born: Bethlehem, quoting from Micah 5:2. Notice the Magi say they have come to worship the King of the Jews and Herod inquires where the *Messiah* (the Christ) is to be born, giving us a clear idea from the start that the expectation of the Messiah was in fact an expectation of Israel's King. Matthew then makes an equivalent definition of the King of the Jews and the word Messiah, which is a title of the King.

H. Micah 5:2 ESV

²But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall **come forth for me** one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose **coming forth is from of old**, from ancient days.

Micah consciously predicted that the tiny city of Bethlehem would produce an Israelite king “whose goings out are from aforetime, from ancient times [or, ‘from days of eternity’].” Though not as clear as Isa. 9:6, this final clause suggests a king who is more than a mere human.¹²

We can also see that this *ruler shall come forth for Me...whose coming forth is of old*. The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible renders *from ancient days* as “from everlasting.” This Messiah, this Ruler, has *come forth* from everlasting. So at the time of His birth, He had already been and had come forth from Yahweh, and came forth for Him. The Messiah then would be able to say the following:

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” (John 8:58)\

Micah 5:4-5 drive this truth home:

⁴And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the Name of Yahweh His God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵And he shall be their peace.

The larger context of this prophecy can be summed up from Micah 4:6-7, the theme of which is, the End of Exile (Micah 4:1-5).

⁶In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; ⁷and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. (Micah 4:6-7 ESV)

I. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus then leave Israel and go down to Egypt to flee from the attempt of Herod to kill all of the male children two years old and under and thus we see Matthew using the Moses narrative to explain Jesus' ministry of deliverance from exile in Egypt.

¹² . Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1406-1408). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matt. 2:3-15)

¹ When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hosea 11:1 ESV)

^{1b} “Because Israel was an infant, and I loved him, and out of Egypt I called back his children. (Hosea 11:1b LXX)

- J. Matthew makes a direct prophetic comparison between Israel and Jesus. “*Rise, take the child and his mother*”; “*When Israel was a child*”; “*Because Israel was an infant.*” Hosea was looking back to the Exodus and the wilderness wandering and identified the nation of Israel as Yahweh’s Son. This harkens even to Exodus 4:22-23

²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.”

Hosea recognized Moses’ identity of Israel as Yahweh’s *firstborn son*. This was a place of status, not actual birth. It would later become a description of enthronement as Yahweh’s king. Hosea 11:1 then is a direct *already-but-not-yet* prophecy.

1. The nation of Israel came out of Egypt.
2. Jesus, Yahweh’s Servant Israel came out of Egypt
3. Believers in Jesus, leave Egypt (a picture of the world, and the domain of darkness)
4. Jesus will lead Israel again out of Egypt in the Great Passover at the End of the Age

Jesus then, according to Matthew, is *the* Representative of Israel. It stands then to the narrative that He would go to Egypt and then begin His journey out. The last time He was in Egypt, He was the Destroying Angel and led infant Israel out through the Red Sea. (Jude 5).

- K. We see also the same undertone of Exile and the End of Exile we saw in Matthew 1. Hosea 11:1 is a reference to the exodus, pure and simple. Hosea 10 has already described the earlier glory days of Israel that have been supplanted by the wickedness of the current nation. Hosea 11 repeats this pattern. Hosea 11:1 reflects synonymous parallelism: “When Israel was a youth, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son.” Israel is the son; God’s love is demonstrated by rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt. But 11:2–7 goes on to lament how Israel has wandered increasingly further astray from the Lord and to predict their future return to enslavement—that is, exile—in Egypt (11:5). As consistently happens in the prophets, though, God’s final word is one of restoration. Verses 8–11 poignantly describe how God can never fully give his people up and will one day bring them back from exile.¹³
- L. That Israel had been delivered from Egypt, that Israel would again be exiled there but again restored, and that the child believed to be the Messiah also had to return to Israel from Egypt formed too striking a set

¹³ . Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1461-1466). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

of parallels for Matthew to attribute them to chance. God clearly was at work orchestrating the entire series of events.¹⁴

- M. Along with the *already-but-not-yet* approach to the Kingdom of God, we can also use the Jewish literary device known as “ma’aseh avot, siman labbanim” (“the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the sons”).¹⁵ In other words, we’ve seen this story before and we should be tuned to how it will play out. We should see the key patterns and events as telling us how the narrative is going to move. As expected, once Herod realized he had been tricked by the wise men (laughable – because one would expect the Magi to be deft at deception and trickery), he decreed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or younger. Just as Pharaoh had the male Hebrew children killed and thrown into the Nile, so now we see this repeated with the New Exodus/New Moses event.
- N. Matthew cites Jeremiah 31:15, a verse that Jeremiah used to describe exile to Babylon. As he would do, he looked back to the Torah for insight into his present circumstances regarding the Babylonian captivity. What he found to compare the captives being taken away was Rachel’s birth of Benjamin, whom she named Benoni, Son of My Sorrow, but Jacob renamed Benjamin, the son of my right hand. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is Bethlehem).

This verse is sandwiched in a chapter devoted to the end of exile and the restoration of Israel and Judah! Notice the themes Matthew is showing us. Beale and Carson note:

Almost all of Jer. 31 describes the future days of God’s new covenant with his people, when he will restore them to their land, forgive their sins, and bless them with peace and prosperity. Verses 1–14 and 16–20 enunciate all of these themes. Verses 21–22 call Israel to return to their land and faith on the basis of God’s promises that Jeremiah has just announced. Verses 23–30 again employ the form of future predictions, leading to the passage that explicitly anticipates a “new covenant” (31:31–35), a passage quoted at length in Heb. 8:8–12 as having been fulfilled in Jesus (cf. also Heb. 10:16–17). Jesus himself alluded to this new covenant in his words about the bread and cup at his final supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), as did Paul in contrasting the periods of time before and after the coming of Christ (2 Cor. 3:6).

Tucked into these wonderful promises is Jer. 31:15, the lone verse in this chapter that reflects the current grief surrounding the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Jewish mothers have watched their sons go off to battle, some to die and others to be carried away captive to distant lands. Still more were forcibly evicted from Israel to ensure that the nation would not pose a military threat in the future. Ramah was six miles north of Jerusalem; departing captives from Judah’s capital had to go through it on the road to the lands of the northern invaders (Jer. 40:1). Ramah was thus about the same distance north of Jerusalem as Bethlehem was south, along the same road. Rachel is said to have been buried on the way to Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19–20), and more explicitly near the border of Benjamin (1 Sam. 10:2), which would have been very close to Ramah. Thus it was natural to personify the grieving mothers in Israel as “Rachel weeping for her children.” Keown, Scalise, and Smothers (1995: 119) note how Rachel was uniquely qualified to be personified in this fashion: she died “on the way” to the promised land (Gen. 35:19), her last words

¹⁴ . Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1487-1489). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Gospels (p. 173). Hendrickson Publishers. Kindle Edition. Author Seth Postell.

expressed her sorrow (Gen. 35:18), death in childbirth proved the extent of her motherly love, and as mother of Israel, she does not forget her children (Isa. 49:15). That Rachel's children, along with the other sons of Jacob, also had to leave the promised land (Gen. 42–50) adds to the appropriateness of this personification, although Rachel herself had died by that time.¹⁶

Recall John's use of the dragon seeking to kill the Messiah in Revelation 12. There was a direct assault on the domain of darkness by the birth of Jesus and provoked a terrible response from Satan and the powers of darkness. They used Herod as a means to seek to wipe out this newly born Messiah who was going to ultimately end Adam's spiritual and physical exile from Eden, pictured in Israel's spiritual and physical exile from the Temple and Jerusalem. We would expect then to see something of this nature happen as a reaction to the birth of Messiah. We saw it in Moses' day, and in the day of the Exile. But that all points to the other part: Exile is going to End in Jesus and He will bring Restoration.

- O. The King returns to Israel (the children of Israel/Judah) after Herod dies, in a similar way the Moses returns to the children of Israel after the Pharaoh died that sought to kill him.

A nearly verbatim allusion to the account of Moses' return to Egypt suggests that Matthew seeks to present Jesus as the redeemer like Moses. The translation of the LXX below is my own (Seth Postel).

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So, Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. (Matt 2:19–21)

Now after many days, the king of Egypt died. And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, depart to Egypt. For all those who sought your life are dead." So, taking his wife and his children, he mounted them upon the donkeys and returned to Egypt. (LXX Exod 4:19–20a)

The comparison between Jesus and Moses portrays Jesus as a redeemer like Moses who has returned to Israel to save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21).¹⁷

- P. This returning King did not go back to Bethlehem, rather He went to Nazareth in order to fulfill a prophecy saying that *he* (the Messiah) would be called a Nazarene. Matthew up to now has done a masterful job interweaving Old Testament Scripture into his narrative. Yet here there is an obvious textual element missing – no prophecy is cited. Who said anything about a Messiah called a Nazarene?
- Q. The fact that this is the only place in the entire Gospel where Matthew makes reference to "prophets" in the plural (rather than a singular "prophet") as the source of an OT reference suggests that he knows that he is not quoting one text directly but rather is summing up a theme found in several prophetic texts.¹⁸
- R. This being the case, we should view this as it is, an allusion to a Messianic motif seen in the most notable Nazarenes: Samuel and Samson as well as the closely related word *neser* ("branch"). We see this used in

¹⁶ Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1507-1524). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

¹⁷ A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Gospels (pp. 178-179). Hendrickson Publishers. Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Kindle Locations 1591-1593). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Isaiah 11:1 – There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*neser*) from his roots shall bear fruit. Then we see this Shoot and Branch (*neser*) will be anointed by the Spirit of Yahweh.

Samuel was a Judge, Priest, and Prophet. A clear Messianic motif can be seen in his life and ministry as he remained faithful to Yahweh to do His will. He was dedicated as a child by his mother how had a miraculous birth since she had previously been barren.

The same can be said for the Judge Samson. His mother was also barren and the Angel of Yahweh appeared to her and said he would be called a Nazarite and “he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:5) We know ultimately Samson destroyed the Philistines inside of their Temple of Dagon in Gaza when they bound him to the pillars and said “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand. (Judg. 16:23-31)” You can see in the ultimate arch of the narrative Jesus will be on the receiving end of this level of taunt from His enemies. Yet, like Samson, in His death and Resurrection he defeated the gods of this present evil age and Satan himself. Disarming them and rendering them powerless.

Matthew is pointing our attention again to a theological point, not a specific prophecy. That Jesus is a Nazarite is to aim us at the prophetic motif seen in Samson and Samuel. He will succeed Samuel in the same way He succeeded Moses, He would be Prophet, Priest, and King. He would succeed Samson, in that He would bring down the temple of this present evil age and destroy the works of darkness.