

‘HE SHALL BE CALLED A NAZARENE’

THE NON-CITATION OF MATTHEW 2:23

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Summary

Numerous scholars have sought to identify the OT quotation to which Matthew 2:23 alludes. However, when the grammatical details of each of Matthew’s fourteen formula-citations are considered, it is apparent that Matthew did not intend to allude to any specific OT passage in 2:23. On the contrary, Matthew simply sought to develop the general OT expectation that the Messiah would come from humble origins, a reality consistent with Jesus’ upbringing in Nazareth. This thesis is demonstrated through an analysis and comparison of the fourteen formula-citations in Matthew’s Gospel. It is concluded that the formula-citations can be divided into two groups: (1) those which cite an OT passage (1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9) and (2) those which develop an OT theme or expectation (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56).

1. Introduction

The formula-citations of Matthew’s Gospel have sparked much debate.¹ Fourteen times in his Gospel, Matthew uses the verb πληρώω

¹ For an introduction to the topic of Matthew’s formula-citations, see Wilhelm Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums; eine biblisch-theologische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1969); George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1–2* (*Analecta Biblica* 63; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976); R. T. France, ‘Formula-Quotations’ in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); John J. O’Rourke, ‘The Fulfillment Texts in Matthew’, *CBQ* 21 (1959): 394–403; F. P. Viljoen, ‘Fulfilment in Matthew’, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 28 (2007): 301–24; Maarten J. J. Menken, ‘Messianic Interpretation of Greek Old Testament Passages in

(ἀναπληρώω in 13:14) along with the citation of an OT passage or theme (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9).² Of these passages, perhaps the one which has received the most discussion is 2:23: ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’ (Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται). An examination of the OT reveals that this alleged citation is not to be found anywhere. Yet since Matthew claims that Jesus’ dwelling in Nazareth occurred ‘so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled’ (ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν), most scholars are quick to seek potential connections to that which this passage may refer. Some of the more common passages mentioned include those such as Isaiah 4:3; 11:1 and Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17.

However, once the grammatical details of this passage are examined closely, it is evident that Matthew did not, in fact, intend to allude to any specific OT passage whatsoever. On the contrary, he sought simply to demonstrate that the geographical location in which Jesus spent his childhood is consistent with the OT expectation of a Messiah from humble origins. Although this view has been argued previously (especially by France),³ this study provides the exegetical and grammatical reason why this conclusion should be accepted. This study draws a sharp distinction between ten of Matthew’s formula-citations which cite a specific OT passage and four which allude to a general OT theme. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that in ten of the formula-citations (1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9) Matthew uses (1) the verb πληρώω, (2) a singular noun, (3) the participle λέγοντος, and (4) cites an OT verse. However, in four of the formula-citations (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56) Matthew uses (1) the verb πληρώω, (2) a plural noun, (3) no participle, and (4) does not cite an

Matthew’s Fulfillment Quotations’ in *The Septuagint and Messianism*, ed. M. A. Knibb (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006); and Joel Kennedy, *The Recapitulation of Israel (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)*; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

² Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), provides background as to the terminology of these passages. Kaiser writes ‘The German term, *Reflexionszitate*, appearing as early as the 1889 commentary on the synoptic by H. J. Holtzmann, emphasized that these quotations had been added to the Gospels as a “personal reflection”. A more felicitous and descriptive term has now replaced it, *Erfüllungszitate*, that is, “fulfillment-citations”, or, as we are calling them, formula-citations’ (43-44). Although there are numerous terms often employed for these passages (fulfillment-statements, formula-statements, fulfillment-citations, etc.), for this study, Kaiser’s term ‘formula-citations’ is employed.

³ France, ‘Formula-Citations’, 131.

OT verse. Since 2:23 aligns point for point with the second category, it should be assumed that Matthew does not intend to allude to or cite any specific OT passage.

2. Contemporary Proposals

Numerous scholars have proposed various OT passages to which Matthew may have alluded.⁴ Perhaps the most frequently proposed passages are Isaiah 4:3 and 11:1. In 4:3, the MT reads ‘he shall be called holy’ (קִדּוֹשׁ יֵאָמֵר לוֹ), and the OT Greek reads ἅγιοι κληθήσονται. The syntactical construction of Matthew 2:23 matches Isaiah 4:3 quite closely: ‘he shall be called a Nazarene’ (Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται). It has been proposed that Matthew alludes to Isaiah 4:3 and 11:1, substituting the Hebrew *netzer* (נֶצֶץ) from 11:1 in place of *holy* (קִדּוֹשׁ or ἅγιοι) in 4:3. If this is the case, then Matthew evidently sought to allude to both of these passages by utilising a rather non-contextual approach. That is, Matthew would have argued that the city of Nazareth was predicted by the OT as the childhood home of the Messiah despite the fact that in their OT context these verses made no reference to the city of Nazareth. Although this exegetical approach may appear tenuous and perhaps forced, advocates argue that it is in line with the exegetical practices of the Second Temple era.⁵

Individuals who argue in favour of an allusion to Isaiah 4:3 and 11:1 include Davies and Allison, who conclude ‘The primary dependence is upon Isaiah 4:3, with the substitution of “Nazareth” for “holy”. There is perhaps also a secondary allusion to Isaiah 11:1.’⁶ O’Rourke agrees with this primary reference to Isaiah. He states that the ‘philology’ or the ‘play on words based on assonance would lead one to think of the

⁴ Numerous commentators have offered surveys of historical approaches to this passage. For example, see Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 201-7; T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (3rd ed.; Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 1; Leipzig: Deichert, 1910); and Maarten J. J. Menken, ‘The Sources of the Old Testament Quotation in Matthew 2:23’, *JBL* 120, no. 3 (2001): 451-68, 467-68.

⁵ About this assumed non-contextual approach, Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, notes ‘It is not the “original” sense of the OT passages which interests Matthew, but their “Christological” sense; that is, the meaning they acquire when read in light of this Christian tradition.’ For a survey of Second Temple exegetical methods, see Jared M. August, ‘Second Temple Exegetical Methods: The Possibility of Contextual Midrash’, *JMAT* 21:2 (Fall 2017).

⁶ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; vol. 1; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988): 280.

name of the city [Nazareth]; for this reason Is 11, 1 which contains *nasir* is seemingly included in the reference.’⁷ Carson tentatively lean towards Isaiah 11:1. He states: ‘It is possible that ... there is a discreet allusion to the *nešer* (‘branch’) of Isaiah 11:1.’⁸ Brown agrees with this assessment about an allusion to Isaiah, yet goes further and connects the passage to Judges as well. He states that Matthew ‘is citing known Scripture and has two definite prophetic passages in mind. The passages are Isaiah 4:3 ... and Judges 16:16.’⁹ Subsequently, Brown acknowledges the complexity of the issue and devotes several pages to the ‘complicated ... way Matthew dealt with the Hebrew’ and concludes by simply stating ‘This style of exegesis is complicated.’¹⁰ That is, although Matthew’s exegetical method may be appreciated, it should not be reproduced.¹¹

Another proposal which is often made is that Matthew alludes to Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17. In each of these three verses, Samson is referred to as a *Nazirite to God* (נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים). The OT Greek translates this Hebrew phrase as *Nazirite to God* (ναζιρ θεοῦ) in 13:5, but as *holy to God* (ἅγιος θεοῦ) in 13:7 and 16:17. As such, the interplay between *holy* (ἅγιος) and *Nazirite* (ναζιρ) could emphasise Matthew’s focus on Jesus as one who has been set apart for the Lord. This view is often also connected to the specific Nazirite vow described in Numbers 6:1-21 (especially 6:2, 13, 18).

In regard to the possible allusion to the book of Judges, perhaps Menken has done the most substantive work. Menken argues that ‘the

⁷ O’Rourke, ‘Fulfillment Texts’, 397. O’Rourke also notes that there may be an allusion to Jer. 23:5 and to Zech. 3:8; 6:12. He does acknowledge, however, that ‘the reference is to no single passage nor to any single author of the OT since the evangelist clearly states *dia tōn prophētōn*’ (396).

⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 97.

⁹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1993): 223-24.

¹⁰ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 224-25.

¹¹ In regard to the assertion that Matthew approached the OT non-contextually in his formula-citations, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Longenecker claims, ‘The First Gospel should be coupled a *peshet* handling of the biblical text and application of its meaning’ (126). He continues, ‘The eleven Matthean editorial quotations, I would suggest, should be understood as *peshet* treatments of the Old Testament’ (126-27). This is a rather bold statement, as a *peshet* handling (technically a *rāz-peshet* handling) of the OT necessitates a complete reinterpretation of the text of Scripture. Also by Longenecker, see ‘Can We Reproduce the Exegesis of the New Testament?’, *TynBul* 21 (1970): 3-38.

primary source of the quotation is Judges 13:5, 7'.¹² He argues this in large part because he views the phrase 'the prophets' (τῶν προφητῶν) as an allusion to the corpus of the former prophets.¹³ Furthermore, Menken argues that Matthew would have seen connections and parallels between Samson (as a *Nazirite*) and Jesus (from *Nazareth*). Longenecker agrees that Matthew is 'alluding to Samson in Judges, and not to "the branch" of Isaiah'.¹⁴ Likewise, Prabhu states 'Mt 2, 23 alludes, we believe, to ... Jdg 13, 5'.¹⁵ However, Carson rejects that this passage could refer to Judges and states 'We may exclude those [options] that see some word-play connection with an OT Hebrew word but have no obvious connection with Nazareth. This eliminates the popular interpretation that makes Jesus a Nazirite or second Samson.'¹⁶ Perhaps the primary difficulty with this view is that Jesus did not meet the requirements to be considered a *Nazirite*. For example, Jesus drank wine (Luke 7:33-34; John 2:10-11; cf. Num. 6:3; Judg. 13:7) and approached a dead body (Matt. 9:24-25; John 11:38-44; cf. Num. 6:6); both of these actions would have disqualified him from the prescribed Nazirite vow of Numbers 6:1-21. As such, this view seems unlikely. Other various views on this passage are numerous.¹⁷

¹² Menken, 'Matthew 2:23', 467-68.

¹³ Menken, 'Matthew 2:23', 466-67, 468.

¹⁴ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 129.

¹⁵ Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 205.

¹⁶ Carson, *Matthew*, 97.

¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), argues that Matthew desired his readers to recall both Isaiah 11:1 and Judges 13:5. That is, Schreiner asserts that Jesus should be viewed 'like Samson as one dedicated to God from his birth and as the one who will save his people (cf. Matt. 1:21). Just as David, as the son of Jesse, was an unlikely candidate for king over Israel (see 1 Sam. 16:6-13), so also Jesus hails from an unexpected place as the Messiah of his people' (76). Among those who do not take a firm stance, see Blomberg, *Matthew*, who suggests that it could allude to 11:1, but concludes that Matthew 'may be indicating that he is not quoting one specific text but summarizing a broader scriptural theme' (70). Robert Mounce, *Matthew* (NIBC; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), agrees: 'The best approach is that since Matthew speaks of prophets (plural) he is providing a summary in indirect speech rather than quoting a specific utterance' (19). Surprisingly, John MacArthur Jr, *Matthew 1-7* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) concludes, 'Matthew's original readers were largely Jewish, and it was probably common knowledge among them who the specific prophets were that had made the prediction. For later readers, the Holy Spirit obviously felt it was enough that we simply know that the prediction was made and that it was fulfilled as Matthew explains' (47).

2.1 *Proposal for a Non-Citation*

In contrast to the numerous proposals concerning this formula-citation and possible OT allusion, France takes quite a different perspective. He rejects the usual suggestions and proposes a potentially more viable option.¹⁸ About the suggested reference to Isaiah 11:1, France states, ‘The נָצַח of Isaiah 11:1 suffers from the rather serious disability that there is no way a Greek-speaking reader of Matthew could spot the reference, nor does it offer any explanation of κληθήσεται.’¹⁹ France is correct, as the OT Greek translates נָצַח with the noun ῥίζα. No Greek-speaking Christian would have been able to identify this connection without proper knowledge of the Hebrew original.²⁰ As such, the Isaiah 11:1 suggestion appears tenuous at best. Furthermore, France discusses the unlikelihood of 2:23 referring to Judges 13:5, 7. He states: ‘Judges 13:5, 7, the other main contender, does offer the Greek term ναζιραῖος in the A text of the Septuagint, but it is odd that Matthew should have substituted κληθήσεται for the no less suitable ἔσται of the Septuagint, thus reducing the allusion to a single word.’²¹ His point is that if Matthew were in fact citing from Judges 13:5, 7 the entire connection would inadequately rest upon a *single word*. As with the Isaiah proposal, the Judges proposal appears tenuous at best. Therefore, France advances the thesis that Matthew intended to refer to no single OT passage at all.

France builds the argument that Matthew intended to refer to a general OT theme. Since Matthew refers to the ‘prophets’ (plural), and no OT passages can definitively be cited, France states ‘The most promising approach paradoxically takes its cue from the very nonexistence of Nazareth in the OT – it is a scriptural nonentity.’²² His point is that Matthew’s statement ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’ is a summary statement concerning the numerous OT prophecies of a Messiah from humble origins. France concludes:

¹⁸ France is not alone in this thesis. For example, see Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 116-20.

¹⁹ France, ‘Formula-Quotations’, 131.

²⁰ Additionally, Matthew makes substantial use of the OT Greek throughout his Gospel. Had he intended to draw the connection to Isaiah 11:1, he would likely have used the OT Greek citation.

²¹ France, ‘Formula-Quotations’, 131.

²² France, *Matthew*, 94.

In the application of this opprobrious term [Ναζωραῖος] to Jesus (hence κληθήσεται) Matthew sees, it is suggested, the fulfillment of prophecies of a humble and unrecognized Messiah, 'despised and rejected by men'. To put it a little whimsically, it is Nazareth's very absence from the Old Testament which makes it a fitting fulfillment of this Old Testament theme.²³

Again, while at first this proposal may appear unique, it is worth carefully considering its merits. In this view, Matthew's intention in this verse is to demonstrate that Jesus' hometown of Nazareth is consistent with the OT hope of a Messiah who comes from an unexpected region as an unassuming individual. France states:

There is ... significant expectation of a Messiah who would be unrecognized and who would not be taken seriously by his people. The series of messianic portraits which appear in Zech. 9-14 begin (9:9-10) with a royal figure who is also unexpectedly humble and is described as 'vindicated and saved,' but then go on to speak of the shepherd whose authority is not accepted by his sheep (11:4-14) and of one who is pierced by the people of Jerusalem (12:10) and struck down by the sword of God (13:7).²⁴

France proceeds to develop this concept also in relation to the 'righteous sufferer' in Psalm 22 and 69 as well as the concept of the 'suffering servant' in Isaiah 52 and 53.²⁵ Ultimately, France argues that the interpreter should not approach Matthew 2:23 as an OT quote. On the contrary, it should be viewed as a summary of the anticipatory expectation of the prophets.

3. Exegetical Evidence for Matthew 2:23 as a Non-Citation

Although France's proposal logically fits the context and message of Matthew, little has been written concerning the exegetical merits of his view. However, as the passage is exegetically considered, it becomes evident that there is substantial evidence in favour of the view that Matthew intended to cite no specific OT passage. Perhaps the strongest grammatical factor which makes this proposal attractive is the

²³ France, 'Formula-Quotations', 130-31.

²⁴ France, *Matthew*, 94.

²⁵ France, *Matthew*, 94-95.

similarity in the construction of 2:23, 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56.²⁶ In each of these cases, Matthew uses the plural noun (in the case of 2:23 ‘prophets’ – τῶν προφητῶν)²⁷ rather than his standard singular noun (usually ‘prophet’ – τοῦ προφήτου) in conjunction with the verb πληρόω.²⁸ That is, in none of the formula-citations where Matthew explicitly cites a specific OT passage does he use the plural ‘prophets’ (1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9).²⁹ In fact, even when Matthew develops multiple passages together (as in 27:9-10, with Zech. 11:13 and Jer. 19:1-11), he still maintains his formula and refers to the singular ‘prophet’ rather than the plural ‘prophets’. Although one would expect in a case such as 27:9-10 that Matthew would refer to the plural τῶν προφητῶν, he intentionally does not. This demonstrates Matthew’s consistency in his employment of his formula-citations and serves as a marker for when to expect Matthew to cite a specific passage and when to expect him to allude to a general OT theme.

Another clear difference between Matthew’s formula-citations is the use of the participle λέγοντος. In ten of the fourteen formula-citations (1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9), Matthew employs this specific verb. However, in four of the formula-citations (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56), Matthew omits this participle altogether. This matches point for point with the above discussion about Matthew’s use of the singular or plural ‘prophets’, as each time he uses the singular ‘prophet’ he also employs the verb λέγοντος. The reverse is also true: each time Matthew uses the plural ‘prophets’, he omits the participle λέγοντος. Not surprisingly, there are no exceptions to this rule; it is consistent every time. Ultimately, this seems to serve as an indicator for when to expect Matthew to cite an OT passage. Since the participle λέγοντος denotes the action of communication, it logically follows that

²⁶ While France briefly mentions a potential similarity between 2:23 and 26:56 (*Matthew*, 91), to my knowledge, he does not draw the connection between 2:23 and 5:17.

²⁷ Each case is slightly different, though each retains the use of the plural: τῶν προφητῶν (2:23); τοὺς προφῆτας (5:17); αἱ γραφαί (26:54); and αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν (26:56).

²⁸ Worth noting is that in 13:14 Matthew uses ἡ προφητεία rather than his typical τοῦ προφήτου. Nevertheless, he still employs a singular rather than a plural noun.

²⁹ Each of Matthew’s ten formula-citations with a singular noun (except for the nominative 13:14) is in the genitive case. Of Matthew’s four formula-citations which use the plural noun, 2:23 is genitive, 5:17 is accusative, 26:54 is nominative, and 26:56 includes both the nominative and genitive.

when Matthew includes this introductory marker a quotation should follow. As such, the reverse stands true as well – when Matthew omits this introductory marker, no quotation will follow.

That 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56 do not cite any OT passage is often taken for granted. It is widely accepted that in each of these passages Matthew alludes to a general OT theme or expectation. As such, since 2:23 matches the formula of each of these passages verbatim, it should be considered in the same category of formula-citation. Each of these four passages (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56) has the following characteristics: (1) it employs the term πληρώω; (2) includes a plural noun; (3) omits the participle λέγοντος; and (4) does not cite an OT passage. Since 2:23 matches precisely in regard to the first three characteristics, it seems best to conclude that it exemplifies the fourth characteristic as well.

Ultimately, this syntactical evidence draws a strong distinction between when Matthew desired his reader to expect an OT citation and when he desired his reader to expect an OT thematic connection. Each of these four generally anticipatory passages (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56) evidently refer to the thematic development of a specific messianic expectation and not to a direct citation of any passage: 2:23 – πληρώω of humble and unassuming messianic expectation; 5:17 – πληρώω by messiah of the Law and Prophets; 26:54, 56 – πληρώω of expected messianic suffering. The chart below offers an illustrative presentation of the above discussion.

Matt.	Introduction with πληρώω	Singular or Plural	Participle	OT Verse
1:22	ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Isa. 7:14
2:15	ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Hos. 11:1
2:17	τότε ἐπληρώθη τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἰερεμίου ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Jer. 31:15
2:23	πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ ...	plural τῶν προφητῶν		
4:14	ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Isa. 9:1-2
5:17	πληρῶσαι ...	plural τοὺς προφήτας		

Matt.	Introduction with πληρόω	Singular or Plural	Participle	OT Verse
8:17	ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Isa. 53:4
12:17	ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Isa. 42:1-3
13:14	καὶ ἀναπληροῦται αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἡσαΐου ...	singular ἡ προφητεία	λέγουσα	Isa. 6:9-10
13:35	ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Ps. 78:2
21:4	ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Zech. 9:9
26:54	πῶς οὖν πληρωθῶσιν ...	plural αἱ γραφαί		
26:56	ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν ...	plural αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν		
27:9	τότε ἐπληρώθη τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἰερεμίου ...	singular τοῦ προφήτου	λέγοντος	Zech. 11:13 Jer. 19:1-11

As developed above, on an exegetical level, it appears that when Matthew employs the singular ‘prophet’ and the participle λέγοντος he does so to intentionally draw his readers’ attention to a direct OT citation. However, when Matthew employs the plural ‘prophets’ and omits the participle λέγοντος he does so to intentionally draw his readers’ attention to an OT thematic development. All in all, this precludes the possibility that Matthew intended the statement ‘he shall be called a Nazarene’ in 2:23 to refer to any specific OT passage.

4. Implications and Conclusion

Ultimately, it seems that most scholars have missed the point.³⁰ If their best alternate proposal maintains a citation built upon a single

³⁰ Specifically, Menken, ‘Matthew 2:23’. Menken, who has done substantial work on Matthew’s formula-citations, overlooks the similarity between 2:23 and 5:17; 26:54, 56. Although Menken recognises a distinction between διὰ τῶν προφητῶν (‘by the prophets’) of 2:23 and διὰ τοῦ προφήτου (‘by the prophet’) of the other formula

controversial word, Ναζωραῖος, then perhaps a better explanation is warranted. In their haste to discover which OT passage Matthew intended to refer to in 2:23, scholars have ironically overlooked the possibility that he referred to no single OT passage at all. This intentionality on the part of Matthew stands in direct contrast to the critical view often assumed of Matthew – namely that he was unable to identify a specific passage and that he distorted the OT to fit his newly formed Christological framework.³¹ Furthermore, this intentionality reveals a distinction between two types of Matthew's formula-citations which has not been previously developed. As has been demonstrated above, Matthew evidently sought to divide his formula-citations into two primary groups: (1) those which cite an OT passage (1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9), and (2) those which develop an OT theme or expectation (2:23; 5:17; 26:54, 56).

Related to Matthew 2:23, the implications of this division between types of formula-citations are quite evident. Given the similarity of 2:23 to 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56, it appears that Matthew's focus in 2:23 is to demonstrate that Jesus' humble origins in the city of Nazareth are completely consistent with the OT expectation of an unassuming Messiah.³² Although it may not be possible to identify the specific passages from which Matthew developed this expectation, this expectation is certainly a prominent focus of the OT. All in all, this study reveals that Jesus' role as Messiah was not just in fulfillment of

citations, he surprisingly ends his discussion there (451). That is, he seems to assume 2:23 is the *only* formula-citation with these two characteristics. However, in so doing he neglects to consider the possibility that 2:23 might be considered alongside 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56, where the plural 'by the prophets' is *expected*. Menken even recognises that 'in all other instances, the word "prophet" is followed by the participle λέγοντος, 'when he said' (451). Yet again, he neglects to consider 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56, where this participle is never used. All in all, despite the frequent recognition that 2:23 is different than the other formula-citations, it is simply overlooked that 2:23 actually fits with the syntactical framework established in 5:17, 26:54, and 26:56.

³¹ For example, Viljoen, 'Fulfillment in Matthew' states 'It is difficult to identify the passage Matthew refers to. The plural δια τῶν προφητῶν (through the prophets) (Matt. 2:23) indicates that Matthew probably was not able to identify the quotation which he received' (303, n. 8). Viljoen simply assumes that Matthew was 'not able to identify' the quotation he desired to cite, and therefore did not cite it accurately. On the contrary, it seems far more likely – and exegetically defensible – that Matthew used the plural τῶν προφητῶν with strong intentionality.

³² In simple terms, Matthew's proclamation of 2:23 could be summarised 'Remember all the prophecies about how the Messiah would come from a humble background? These are all realised in Jesus, who came from the humble background of Nazareth.'

specific predictive prophecies, but that it was also in fulfillment of the entire anticipatory hope of the OT.