

Malcolm's Monday Musings : 22 April 2024

Greetings.

I am setting out below the main 'Musings' for this week. This consists of a 'Revised Version' of two articles which were published in the Precious Seed magazine in 1986 (Volume 37, Issues 4 and 5), under the heading, **'He shall be called a Nazarene'**. Apart from improving the presentation, clarifying several sentences and correcting typos, I have added extensive endnotes.

Separately, for those who find the main 'Musings' to be 'an arrow beyond' them (for the allusion, see 1 Sam. 20. 36-37), here are four freestanding 'Musings':

'Him ... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up' (Acts 2. 23-24).

'They opened the door of death, pushed Him out through it, and slammed the door behind Him. But God raised him up. He did not so much bring him back through the door: in the case of Jesus, He abolished the door itself ... They held that death ends everything. God, therefore, deliberately allowed the Sadducees to use their final weapon; but it broke in their hands ...

'Christ Jesus', as Paul was later to say (2 Tim. 1. 10), had 'destroyed death and . . . brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'; not life and then survival after death, but life and deathlessness. God had made known to Him the paths of life and filled Him with joy in His presence (Acts 2. 28).

'The resurrection of Christ has altered the face of the universe. Not only is death not an irreversible process: it is not even a permanent institution'.

(David Gooding, 'True to the Faith', pages 59-60.)

'The God of glory thunders ... the voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire' (Psalm 29. 3-7).

'Just as the eighth psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright, as the nineteenth psalm needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this psalm can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk which heralds the war of elements.

'The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of His presence'.

(C. H. Spurgeon, 'The Treasury of David', Volume II, 1882, page 32.)

'Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1 Pet. 5. 8).

Satan is alive and well on planet earth, and will not be off the playing field until Christ returns [in glory].

(Ben Witherington III, 'A Reflection on Divine Sovereignty and Its Biblical Meaning' ...

accessed at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture/2024/04/19/a-reflection-on-divine-sovereignty-and-its-biblical-meaning/>.)

'Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations' (1 Pet. 1. 6).

'There may be this heaviness through trial ... the pressure, whether of sorrow or of that which might tend to make our feet slip, may produce heaviness of spirit.

'But after all it is only "for a season" and "if need be". Do not make yourselves uneasy: the One who holds the reins of the "need-be" is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting. If there is the need for it, we go through the trial, but it is only for a moment'.

(J. N. Darby, 'The Faith and Character of the Christian', Collected Writings, Volume 16, page 187.)

Happy reading.

Yours in our Lord Jesus,

Malcolm

'He Shall Be Called a Nazarene'.

SCRIPTURE

When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the young child's life.

And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled¹ which was spoken by the prophets, that² He shall be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 2. 19-23 (*The Revised Version*)

EXPOSITION

Two interesting issues arise from the quotation, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'.³ The first concerns the Old Testament source of the quotation and the second concerns the way in which it received its fulfilment.

1. The Source of the Quotation.

'A Branch shall grow out of his roots' (Isa. 11. 1).

Views differ as to the precise origin of the quotation but, as I see it, the most likely source is found in Isaiah 11. 1. There we read, '**And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots**'.⁴ The word translated "Branch" (נֶטֶר, 'nêt-ser') means a fresh green shoot or sprout of a tree.⁵

Isaiah envisages a time when the kingly line of David would apparently have ceased. Yet, by means of a vivid picture, he foretells a future glory for one of David's descendants. He likens David's dynasty to the stump of a tree which has been hewn down. From the seemingly dead stump would spring a fresh shoot, which would become a great tree.⁶

In one of his speeches, Job describes how this comes about in the natural realm: '**There is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again** and that its shoots will not cease. Though its root grow old in the earth and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant'.⁷

*The prophet Isaiah foresees that, at a time when David's family would have sunk into obscurity, the Messiah would arise from his line.*⁸ The very mention of Jesse, rather than David, confirms the idea of obscurity, because it directs us back to the condition of David's family before David rose to prominence and power.⁹

The context.

In the context, the illustration gains point from the contrast made with the fate of Assyria, the dominant world power of the day, in the preceding chapter:

Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger ... When the Lord has finished all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes ... The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the Lord will destroy ... The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down ... Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe.¹⁰

The great Gentile power would be humbled at a time when it was most exalted; the house of David would be exalted at a time when it was most humbled.

The theme developed.

This graphic picture of the revived tree was developed by later prophets. Although they employ a different Hebrew word (*'tsemach'*¹¹), its meaning is more or less identical with that used by Isaiah. See, for example:

(i) the words of Jeremiah: 'Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (*'tsemach*), and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely',¹² and

(ii) the words of Zechariah: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch (*'tsemach*)',... He shall build the temple of the Lord'.¹³

Nazareth and Isaiah 11. 1.

Isaiah 11. 1 not only provides an indication of Messiah's lowliness but also supplies a specific title for Messiah (the 'Branch', the *'nêt-ser'*) which forms the basis of the name of the place where He grew up. Dean Alford writes, 'There may be an allusion to a Branch, by which name our Lord is called in Isaiah 11. 1, and from which word (*'nêt-ser'*) it appears that the name Nazareth is probably derived'.¹⁴

Most likely the town of Nazareth received its name on account of its relative smallness and insignificance compared to the other towns around. It was but a 'shoot' among the stately trees. Consistent with this understanding, we remember the disparaging question posed by guileless Nathanael, who came from the neighbouring town of Cana,¹⁵ 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'¹⁶

It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that the Messiah, one of whose titles—the 'Branch', the 'nêt-ser'— emphasises His humble and lowly derivation according to the flesh, should come from 'the place of the nêt-ser'— which indicates its humble and lowly status.

As I understand it, Matthew views the connection between Messiah's title and the name of the town from which He comes as a clear case of prophecy and fulfilment. So that, if I am right, every time men referred to Him as 'Jesus of Nazareth', they bore witness unwittingly to the fulfilment of the scripture which bestowed on Him the title of the *'nêt-ser'*.¹⁷

'Spoken by the prophets'.

Given that the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the *'nêt-ser'* by only one prophet (Isaiah), we may well wonder how it is that Matthew is able to refer to 'the prophets' in the plural.¹⁸ It is possible that the explanation lies, in part at least, in the Rabbinical rule of interpretation (*Al-tiqri*) which allows one word to be replaced by another of the same meaning.

According to this rule, Matthew would be entitled to claim that, as a result of Joseph's settling in Nazareth (the place of the *'nêt-ser'*), the prophecies of the Old Testament which speak of Messiah, not only as the *'nêt-ser'* but also as the *'tsemach'* are fulfilled.¹⁹

2. The Fulfilment of the Prophecy.

Bethlehem.

It seems clear that, when Joseph returns from Egypt, his natural preference is to go back to Judaea.²⁰ It appears that, after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had settled down happily at Bethlehem in Judaea. Certainly, it is to Bethlehem (and not to Nazareth) that they initially return after their visit to Jerusalem for the purification of Mary and the presentation of the child²¹ and it is in a house at Bethlehem that the wise men from the east subsequently find them.²²

Although Joseph's preferred option may have been to return to Judaea, two considerations influence him not to go there; namely, (i) his fear of Archelaus and (ii) a divine warning.²³

I will focus on the first of these.

Joseph's fear of Archelaus.

We are indebted to Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, for giving us details of the relevant background to the roles played by Herod the Great (so-called), Archelaus and Caesar Augustus and, thereby, helping us to appreciate a little of the sovereign providence of God which brought about the fulfilment of that 'which was spoken by the prophets, that He shall be called a Nazarene'.²⁴

Archelaus had been given jurisdiction over Judaea, Samaria and Idumea. Josephus makes it clear that he was barbarous and tyrannical: 'he sent out the whole army upon them, and sent the horsemen to prevent those that had their tents without the temple from assisting those that were within the temple, and to kill such as ran away from the footmen when they thought themselves out of danger; which horsemen slew three thousand men'.²⁵

Archelaus was by far the worst of the three surviving sons of Herod. It is said, rightly, that 'his short reign was marked by scandal, by brutality, by tyranny'.²⁶

Clearly, even though murderous Herod himself was now dead, it was unsafe for Joseph to return to Judaea with 'the child'²⁷ while the savage and unpredictable Archelaus 'reigned'²⁸ there.²⁹

So to Galilee—and Nazareth.

'Being warned of God in a dream', Joseph heads for Galilee, which came under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, a *relatively* better ruler. And, if Galilee is his destination, to where is it more likely that he would return than to his former hometown of Nazareth?³⁰

And this, humanly speaking, is what led to the fulfilment of that 'which was spoken by the prophets, that He shall be called a Nazarene'.

A very close call!

Ah, but, as we note below, things had nearly turned out very differently..

(i) The many wills of Herod the Great.

Herod the Great had ten wives in all³¹ and at least fifteen children by them.³²

Caesar Augustus had given Herod the right to choose his successor(s), although Augustus reserved to himself the power to confirm (or otherwise) Herod's will. For a variety of reasons, Herod changes his mind several times about who should succeed him.

At different times during his reign, Herod nominated the following sons as his heirs:

- (i) Alexander and Aristobulus, sons of Mariamne I, descended from the Hasmonaean family (the Maccabees);
- (ii) Antipater, son of Doris, Herod's first wife;
- (iii) Antipater, Alexander and Aristobulus as joint kings;
- (iv) Antipater alone (Alexander and Aristobulus having been strangled on Herod's instructions³³);
- (v) Herod Antipas, his youngest son, son of Malthace;³⁴ and
- (vi) Archelaus, son of Malchase, as king, with Herod Antipas and Philip, son of Cleoptara of Jerusalem, as subordinate "tetrarchs", thereby dividing the kingdom between his three remaining sons.³⁵

(ii) The last two wills of Herod the Great.

For our present purpose, we need to focus attention on just the last two of Herod's testaments.

About a year before he died, Herod discovers that his son, Antipater (his then intended successor), had been plotting against him. Antipater was cast into prison and the matter reported to Augustus.

Herod made a new will, appointing his youngest son, Antipas, as sole heir, passing over his older sons, Archelaus and Philip, because Antipater had earlier succeeded in poisoning his mind against them.

Following Antipater's trial and with Augustus' permission, Herod had Antipater executed—just five days before his own death.

It is during these last five days that Herod alters his will yet again. He decides to divide his kingdom between his three surviving sons. I guess that Herod may have felt that Augustus would be unwilling to instal the young Antipas as sole ruler. I neither know nor care. What matters is that, in his closing days, Herod chooses to bequeath Judaea to Archelaus and Galilee to Antipas.

When asked to confirm Herod's will, Augustus makes only one change; he appoints Archelaus as 'ethnarch' rather than, as Herod requested, as 'king'.³⁶ The important thing was that Caesar confirmed the territorial division proposed by Herod.

(iii) 'God moves in a mysterious way'.

We can be sure that God overruled the details and the timing of Herod's last will and its ratification by Augustus.

In His own mysterious way, God worked behind the scenes and used the wicked old king's last testament (made within days of his death) (i) to dissuade Joseph from returning to Judaea and (ii) to induce him to head for Galilee and, hence, to Nazareth—where our Lord is 'brought up'.³⁷

And so, the One who was *born in an insignificant village* ('you, Bethlehem Ephratah, being least among the thousands of Judah'³⁸), *grows up in a despised village* ('Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'³⁹).

And, in consequence of which, it was 'fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene'!

A PRACTICAL NOTE

We can take it for granted that Herod, Archelaus and Augustus were no less oblivious to the way in which God used them to fulfil His word and purpose than had been the Assyrian of Isaiah's day, of whom God had said, '**Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so**'.⁴⁰

TAKE HEART, MY BROTHER AND MY SISTER, YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT,
IN OUR DAY ALSO, NO EVENTS (WHETHER NATIONAL OR PERSONAL)
EVER FALL OUTSIDE THE RANGE OF OUR GOD'S
PERMISSION AND OVERRULING!

Notes

¹ 'These words refer to the divine purpose in the event, not to that of Joseph in bringing it about'.

H. Alford, '*The Greek New Testament*', Volume 1, page 18.

² By, correctly, translating this 'that' in verse 23, 'The Revised Version expresses the fact that the quotation is not of words, but of substance'.

(A. L. Williams, '*Matthew*', *The Pulpit Commentary*: Volume 15, page 37.)

³ Matt. 2. 23.

⁴ Note the following six supportive and explanatory quotations:

1. 'Many have found the key to Matt. 2. 23 in Isa. 11. 1: "A shoot will come forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*'nêt-ser'*) will grow out of his roots". An allusion to this verse is favoured by several considerations:

(i) First, Isa. 11. 1 has to do with the Davidic line, a leading theme of Matthew chapters 1 and 2.

(ii) Secondly, in Matt. 1. 23, Isa. 7. 14 is quoted, and the evangelist could readily have identified the "Branch" of Isa. 11. 1 with the "Immanuel" of Isa. 7. 14.

(iii) Thirdly, Isa. 11. 1–10 appears to have been a source of early Christian testimonia (Rom 15. 12; 1 Pet. 4. 14; Rev. 5. 5; cf. C. H. Dodd, *'According to the Scriptures'*, page 83); and Isa. 11. 10 is quoted—albeit in Greek—in Matt. 12. 21; further, Matthew may have recalled Isa. 11. 2 ("the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him") when he wrote of Jesus' baptism. Later Christian writers also interpreted Isa. 11. 1ff. of Jesus (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus)—and the Targum refers it to the Messiah.

(iv) Fourthly, *šemah*, a synonym for *'nêt-ser'*, appears in several OT messianic prophecies: Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12. By way of this second word, Matthew could have thought of the 'Branch' as belonging to several prophetic disclosures, whence the plural 'prophets' of Matt. 2. 23.

(v) Fifthly, *'nêt-ser'* was used of the Messiah in Judaism'.

(W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison Jr, *'A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew'*, Volume 1, page 194.)

2. 'The most likely play on words in Matthew's mind is in the similarity between the Hebrew word for "Branch" (*'nêt-ser'*) and Nazareth. This view traces Matthew's "quotation" back to Isa. 11. 1: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch [*'nêt-ser'*; LXX *'ἄνθος'*] shall grow out of his roots".

'The distinct advantage of this view is the messianic content of the Isaiah passage, which in turn should be related to the quotation of Isa. 7. 14 in Matt. 1. 23. The messianic figure of Isa. 11. 1 is the Emmanuel of Isa. 7. 14.

'Phonetically, the Hebrew of Naṣrat (Nazareth) and *'nêt-ser'* have the same middle consonant; that consonant is reflected in the ζ of the two words in our verse. The word *'nêt-ser'*, although only occurring in Isa. 11. 1, became an important designation of the Messiah in the rabbinic literature and targums, and was also interpreted messianically by the Qumran community (1QH 6. 15; 7. 6, 8, 10, 19; 8. 6, 8, 10).

'Other prophets also spoke similarly of a messianic "Branch" or "shoot", although using different words (cf. Jer 23. 5; 33. 15; Zech. 3. 8; 6. 12). These words form a unified concept in looking to the fulfillment of the promises, and the mention of one doubtless brought the others to mind automatically. This may well be the explanation of the plural "prophets" in Matthew's introductory formula'.

(D. A. Hagner, *'Matthew: Word Biblical Commentary'*, comments on Matt. 2. 23.)

3. 'In Jewish writings, both "Nazareth" and "Nazarene" are from *'nts'*. Thus the reference to the prophets requires that they speak of Messiah by some term belonging to this root. This may be gathered from the Babylonian Talmud ('Sanh.,' 43a), where, after enumerating five disciples of "Jesus the Nazarene", among them Netzer, a summary is given of their trial and condemnation. Of Netzer it is said, "They brought Netzer up for trial. He said to the judges, Shall Netzer be slain? It is written, 'A Branch (*'nêt-ser'*) out of his roots shall bear fruit' (Isa. 11. 1). 'They answered him, Yea, Netzer shall be slain. For it is written, 'But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable Branch' (*'nêt-ser'*, Isa. 14. 19)". It does not now concern us to inquire which, if any, of the twelve disciples is here spoken of by the name of Netzer. But it is evident that the Jews: (1) connected this name closely with Jesus the Nazarene just before mentioned, and (2) saw a connexion between it and "the Branch" of Isa. 11. 1'.

(A. L. Williams, *ibid.*, pages 37-38.)

4. 'Matthew links the settling of the family in Nazareth with the prophecy of Isaiah 11. 1. There, the word "nêt-ser" means "Branch". A Branch, says Isaiah, shall grow out of the root of Jesse; in other words, a new beginning will be made for the royal house of David'.

(N. T. Wright, *'Matthew for Everyone'*, Part One, page 15.

5. 'It has long been recognized that Isa. 11. 1 received a Messianic interpretation in the Targum and rabbinical literature. In the latter, "Branch" passages are interpreted as meaning the Messiah will come out of obscurity and a low estate. The matter stands in even clearer light since the discovery of the Qumran scrolls'.

(R. H. Gundry, *'The Use of the Old Testament in St Matthew's Gospel'*, page 104.

⁵ Compare its use in Isa. 60. 21 and Dan. 11. 7.

(i) 'The word is found four times (Isa. 11. 1; 14. 19; 60. 21; Dan. 11. 7) and is probably related to the same root that gives us the place name Nazareth ... 'nét-ser' implies mature growth ... The term is used to denote a sprout springing from a root. ... The term was understood as Messiah by the ancient Targum'.

(L. Walker, 'New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis', Volume 3, pages 148-149, number 5916.)

(ii) The Targum on Isa. 11. 1: 'A king shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah shall be exalted'.

(B. D. Chilton, 'The Isaiah Targum', page 28.)

⁶ Note the following:

(i) 'Great and lofty was the forest of Assyria, but it would be cut down by a mighty One.

[See Isa. 10. 15-19, 33-34.]

'What, however, had become of David's house? That now was but a tree, and at that a tree which had been felled. It was only a stump or rootstock. To emphasize its mean condition, Isaiah looks to its lowly origin, not even referring to it as the house of David, but merely as the rootstock of Jesse. Jesse had lived in Bethlehem, and Bethlehem was least among the thousands of Judah.

'What possible contrast, however, could there be between that mighty Assyrian forest and the lowly stump of Jesse? Just this: Assyria would perish and come to a complete end, but in the root-stock of Jesse there was yet life. From that stump a twig was to come forth, and from the roots which furnish the stump with life a branch would grow, and would derive its life from the roots so that it might be fruitful'.

(E. J. Young, 'The Book of Isaiah', Volume 1, page 378.)

(ii) 'The imagery used here is of the remaining "stump" of a tree, from which lowly source there bursts a green, living "shoot", and from the roots of which comes growth that develops into a fruit-bearing "branch". The original meaning behind such a cryptic message was to assure Israel that, in spite of all appearance to the contrary, their promised Messiah would come to them, even from the discredited line of Jesse'.

(I. Steeds, 'Christ Foreshadowed', Precious Seed Publications, page 267.)

⁷ Job. 14. 7-9.

⁸ Isa. 2. 1-10.

⁹ 'The mention of Jesse, and not David, implies ... a time when the royalty of David's house would have passed away, as Jesse was only a private person. ... In moral contrast to the sudden fall of the mighty Assyrian forest, this lowly Branch was to grow up from the root of Jesse, when the noble tree of David's house had been cut down to the ground'.

(T. R. Birks, 'Commentary on the Book of Isaiah', pages 69-70.)

¹⁰ Isa. 10. 5, 12, 18-19, 33-34.

'The cedar of Lebanon, the symbol of the Assyrian power, was to be cut down, and being of the pine genus, which sends forth no suckers, its fall was irretrievable. But the oak, the symbol of Israel, and of the monarchy of the house of David (Isa. 6. 13), had a life remaining in it after it had been cut down, and the rod or sucker that was to spring from its roots should flourish once again in greater glory than before. In the Branch (Heb. 'nét-ser') we have the word which suggested St. Matthew's generalisation of the prophecies of this type in the words, "He shall be called a Nazarene".

(E. H. Plumptre, 'An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers: edited by C. J. Ellicott', Volume 4, page 452.)

¹¹ צמח.

¹² Jer. 23. 5. Cf. 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land', Jer. 33. 15.

¹³ Zech. 6. 12. Cf. 'Behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch', Zech. 3. 8.

¹⁴ H. Alford, 'ibid.', page 18.

¹⁵ John 21. 2.

¹⁶ John 1. 46.

¹⁷ See, for example, Matt. 26. 71.

¹⁸ Note the following four quotations concerning Matthew's expression, 'the prophets':

1. 'By writing of "the prophets" (cf. Matt. 26. 56; John 6. 45; Acts 3. 18, 21, 24; Rom. 1. 2), Matthew alerts us to expect something other than the verbatim quotation of one particular Scripture: he is not just reproducing an Old Testament text'.

(W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison Jr, *ibid.*, page 193.)

2. 'By the prophets. Not "in the prophets" (Acts 13. 40), which might have referred only to the book containing their writings, and then would not in itself have implied more than one passage there. The present phrase (*διὰ τῶν προφητῶν*) suggests personality rather than writing, and implies either that two or more prophets were the agents by whom the words were spoken'.

(A. L. Williams, *ibid.*, page 37.)

3. 'The plural of "the prophets" in the introductory formula suggests, therefore, a quotation of substance (as in Ezra 9. 10-12 and rabbinic literature) instead of exact words. This agrees with the absence of "spoken by" (*λέγοντος*), which occurs in the other introductions to direct quotations preceded by a formula of fulfilment. "*ὅτι*" needs, then, to be understood as introducing an indirect quotation and accordingly translated "that". 'Confirmation comes (i) from the absence of "*ὅτι*" in all other introductory formulas to Matthew's fulfilment-quotations, all of which are direct, and (ii) in the indirect use of *on* concerning the fulfilment of the Scriptures in Matt. 26. 54, which only Matthew has ... since Nazareth does not appear in the Old Testament, we must look for a subtle connection between the New Testament place-name and an Old Testament messianic title.

'Isaiah's prediction of a "Branch, Shoot" from the roots of Jesse, David's father, provides a start (Isa. 11. 1). From both Isaiah and other prophets come additional passages that use the synonym "*tsemach*" (*צמח*) for the Davidic Messiah (Isa. 4. 2; and Jer. 23. 5; 33. 15) ... See Matt. 26. 56, where in the story of Jesus' arrest Matthew inserts the plural "the prophets" expressly as a reference back to the prophets who according to Matt. 2. 23 predicted the rejection of Jesus the "nêl-ser".

(R. H. Gundry, '*Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art*', page 39.)

4. 'The fulfilment formula Matthew uses is unique. He uses the plural "prophets" and replaces "saying" (*λέγοντος*) with "that" (*ὅτι*), thereby making the actual quote an indirect one. ... The reason is that the statement ("He shall be called a Nazarene") appears nowhere in the Old Testament and must be a composite quote, i.e., a summary of several prophetic texts rather than a quotation from a particular passage'.

(G. R. Osborne, '*Matthew: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary*', comment on Matt. 2. 23.)

¹⁹ 'Strack-Billerbeck (volume I, page 92ff) offers the following solution according to the Rabbinic rule of interpretation *Al-tigri*, which allows a word to be replaced by an equivalent: "Joseph settled in Nazareth in order that there should be fulfilled what was said by the prophet (in the words *ונצר* and *צמח*): he shall be called *ונצר*, a Nazarene".

(H. H. Schaefer, '*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*', volume IV, page 878.)

²⁰ Matt. 2. 22.

²¹ Luke 2. 39.

²² Matt. 2. 1-11.

²³ Matt. 2. 22.

The situation is similar to that recorded in the previous chapter:

(i) Joseph learns a disquieting fact—in the one case that his wife is pregnant, Matt. 1. 18-19, in the other that Archelaus is king, Matt. 2. 22a;

(ii) Divine revelation intervenes to make plain the right course of action in both cases, Matt. 1. 20-21; Matt. 2. 22b.

²⁴ The detailed account of these events is given by Flavius Josephus in Books XVI and XVII of his '*Antiquities of the Jews*' and in the section which extends from Book I, Chapter 22 to Book II, Chapter 6 of his '*Wars of the Jews*'.

²⁵ Flavius Josephus, '*Antiquities of the Jews*', Book 17, Chapter 9, Paragraph 3.

²⁶ Note the following:

(i) 'When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., his kingdom was divided among Philip, Antipas, and Archelaus, his three sons.

'Archelaus, who is mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament, gained charge of Judea proper, Samaria, and Idumea. He was reputed to be the worst of the three brothers. His short reign was marked by scandal, by brutality, by tyranny. Matters got so bad that complaints lodged against him in Rome by a deputation of Jews and Samaritans succeeded in having him deposed and sent into exile in Gaul in A.D. 6'.

(W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison Jr, *ibid.*, page 192.)

(ii) 'Archelaus was a bad king, and he was not to last long upon the throne. In point of fact, he had begun his reign with an attempt to out-Herod Herod, for he had opened his rule with the deliberate slaughter of three thousand of the most influential people in the country'.

(William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The Daily Study Bible*, page 39.)

²⁷ Matt. 2. 13-14, 20-21.

²⁸ 'Archelaus was reigning over Judaea', Matt. 2. 22.

²⁹ 'Joseph's fear of Archelaus quite corresponds to the character given of him by the Jewish ambassadors before Augustus. He seemed to be afraid lest he should not be deemed Herod's own son; and so, without any delay, he immediately let the nation understand his meaning by the slaughter of the three thousand malcontents'.

(A. L. Williams, *ibid.*, page 37.)

³⁰ 'They returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth', Luke 2. 39; cf. Luke 1. 26; 2. 4. Nazareth was an agricultural village about fifteen miles straight west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, in the writings of Josephus, or in the Jewish Talmuds and Midrashim.

³¹ Including Doris, Mariamme 1, Mariamme 2, Malthace, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, Pallas, Phaedra and Elpis.

³² This chart (created by Luke Farr in 2018) summarises well the key descendants of Herod the Great.

³³ Although Herod was an Idumean by race, he lived as a Jew and so avoided eating pork. This led to a (probably apocryphal) report that Augustus once quipped about Herod, "*I'd rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son*", Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, '*The Saturnalia*', Book 2, Chapter 4, Paragraph 11.

³⁴ Josephus, '*Antiquities of the Jews*', Book 17, Chapter 6, Paragraph 1; Josephus, '*Wars of the Jews*', Book 1, Chapter 33. Paragraphs 1-4.

³⁵ Josephus, '*Antiquities of the Jews*', Book 17, Chapter 8, Paragraph 1; Josephus, '*Wars of the Jews*', Book 1, Chapter 33. Paragraphs 7-8.

³⁶ Note the following:

(i) 'When Caesar had heard these pleadings, he dissolved the assembly; but a few days afterwards he appointed Archelaus, not indeed to be king of the whole country, but ethnarch of the one half of that which had been subject to Herod, and promised to give him the royal dignity hereafter, if he governed his part virtuously. But as for the other half, he divided it into two parts, and gave it to two other of Herod's sons, to Philip and to Antipas'.

(Josephus, '*Antiquities of the Jews*', Book 17, Chapter 11, Paragraph 4.)

(ii) 'The kingship was only a prospect for him, contingent upon his proving himself worthy in the eyes of the emperor ... even after Herod's death, the succession was far from certain until the consent of Augustus had been obtained, and this, in fact, was jeopardized by Archelaus's massacre of three thousand of those who, on his accession, called for justice on the agents of the barbarities of the late reign. Eventually, however, Herod's last arrangement was practically confirmed by Augustus, save that he expressly gave Archelaus, who had hastened to Rome, but half of his father's dominion, and appointed him only ethnarch, promising to make him king "if he governed his part virtuously"'.
(A. L. Williams, *ibid.*, page 36.)

³⁷ 'He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up', Luke 4. 16.

³⁸ Micah 5. 2.

³⁹ John 1. 46.

⁴⁰ Isa. 10. 7 KJV.