

How Does Matthew Use the Old Testament? A Case Study in Matthew 27:9 – 10

(from a letter to me)

There are other instances of Matthew carelessly fulfilling messianic prophecies, further damaging his credibility as a gospel writer (and subsequently Jesus' claim as messiah). For example:

-In Matthew 27:9-10, he writes, "Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me.'" Nowhere in Jeremiah do the words "thirty" and "coins" appear together, though they do in Zechariah 11:12-13! Matthew misquotes the alleged prophecy. Furthermore, the earliest (Syriac) copies of the Zechariah text have the word "treasury" rather than "potter". The word "treasury" appears in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). The conclusion: Matthew took a mistranslated passage from the XII, misquoted it, and faked a fulfillment of a prophecy that wasn't even there.

-In Zechariah 9:9, we have, "See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Clearly, we only have one animal. Mark, Luke, and John all have Jesus entering on one donkey. The LXX, on the other hand, has a translational error. It reads, "...riding on a donkey, and a colt...". Two animals. Matthew 21:1-11 has Jesus riding on both a donkey and a colt. The conclusion: Matthew took a mistranslated passage from the LXX, and faked a fulfillment.

Dear *****,

I am also aware of many arguments against the way Matthew uses Scripture and against Matthew's veracity. I think there are also good responses to most of that, and adequate responses to one or two points that are more difficult. So in summary form, here is what has helped me, and, to the best of my current understanding, what I think and hope will help you:

1. (Historical) Understand Jesus' historical context as 'Israel in Exile awaiting deliverance'
 - a. Second Temple Israel understood that they were in a plight, that the Exile had lasted a long time, and that God had promised to deliver them. It was therefore hotly political, divided, intensely interested in Scripture, and had high drama and high volatility. This is as opposed to understanding Jesus' historical context as somehow neutral or unrelated to existing OT narration and categories.
 - b. This meant that the Old Testament texts discussing Israel's return from Exile, like Isaiah 40 – 66, Jeremiah 31 – 34, Zechariah 9 – 14, etc., had yet to be fulfilled/inaugurated, and were being intensely scrutinized. They were live texts, not dead. Anyone claiming to be a Messiah would have to make a compelling case for himself along the lines of these texts, or else he would simply be ignored.
 - c. Anyone claiming that Jesus did not fulfill/inaugurate these texts must also give a compelling answer as to how they were or are supposed to be fulfilled. In other words, one simply cannot say, 'Jesus did not fulfill the OT,' because that begs the questions of who else could and why it was important to do so in the first place. Failure to do so results in a schizophrenic treatment of the OT that pays lip service to the significance of the OT to Second Temple Jews: on the one hand, the divine significance and the demonstrably deep socio-historical significance of the Prophets that, on the other hand, denies that the Prophets had any significance to the Jewish community afterwards and denies any sense of God's power to bring about real events in history the Prophets claimed to foresee.
2. (Historical) Allow Jesus to have the same theological brilliance and, dare I say, craftiness that is commonly attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
 - a. Before we ask, 'What was Matthew's motivation and agenda in writing?' we have to ask the prior question, 'Is it likely that the historical Jesus did such-and-such, especially if it was to intentionally fulfill Scripture?' This shifts the burden away from hasty

- reconciliations of the supposedly crafty-and-political Gospel writers to a full blown quest for the historical Jesus.
- b. Once we see how Jesus fully and intelligently engaged the Hebrew Scriptures and his historical context, then we find a fully compelling, believable, and credible Jesus, who drew all of the great themes of the story of Israel onto himself.
3. (Literary) Work with books of Scripture in their entirety.
 - a. As in linear regression, the most accurate way to deal with a book of Scripture is to take into account all of its data in the units in which they are presented.
 - b. It's easier to understand why Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John include or exclude particular episodes or details once we see the whole. If we have allowed Jesus to be the really brilliant one, then their literary reporting of history will be seen for what I think it is: brilliant but in a subordinate sense, and less 'crafty' in and of themselves.
 4. (Literary) Perceive the more robust nature of intertextuality in Scripture.
 - a. When one book of Scripture quotes another, there is far more resonance and intention there than is commonly understood. Each author of Scripture respects the others. They never lift quotations out of context without regard for where that quote comes from.

Let's take Mt.27:9 – 10. I agree that Matthew's use of these Septuagint (LXX) texts raises a host of serious questions, but I think there are satisfying explanations. Although I don't completely agree with this particular Christian website I found, it offers the following explanations: (1) It could be a translation or copyist error for 'Zechariah' as John Calvin thought. Though Calvin would not have known this in his time, some Greek manuscripts apparently do say Zechariah instead of Jeremiah (they don't list which ones, though I wonder if they mean Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus), and in some the name of the prophet is unspecified (Bohairic Coptic). Manuscripts Vaticanus, Byzantine Lectionary, and Chrysostom say 'Jeremiah.' Or, (2) it could be a translation error if/when Matthew's Gospel was translated from Hebrew to Greek (Papias, a disciple of John the Apostle, records that Matthew originally wrote his gospel in Hebrew). Or, (3) it could be a 'testimonia chain' – a string or conflation of quotations. If I were forced to accept those explanations, I guess I could for options 1 and 2, but I'm a little uneasy with them as well. I think another dynamic is at work that should make us look beneath the surface of that, especially inquiring more deeply into option 3 and the dynamics of a 'testimonia chain' – a term I don't really like because it implies that you can just slap Scriptures together.

Also, I disagree that this is a 'prophecy' in the strict sense in which we are prone to think about it: an isolated verse from one precise Old Testament location predicting some tiny aspect of Jesus' life. Rather, it first demonstrates the principle of intertextual 'echo' between two or more texts. This happens whenever the NT quotes the OT. And when Matthew says that a Scripture was 'fulfilled,' he does not narrowly mean that there was some little prediction that was realized in a Nostradamus-like fashion. Rather, he means that the Scripture was 'filled full.' Scripture charted out a course, and Jesus filled it to its fullness. This is a different meaning, and I'll illustrate that below. Second, this is an example of a conflation of texts summarized as a quote from Jeremiah. Mark does the same thing in Mark 1:2 when he says, 'as is written in Isaiah the prophet' and then leads off with a quote from Malachi 3:1 and immediately following that, Isaiah 40. Matthew does not take a direct quote from Zechariah 11:12 – 13. Instead, he quotes from Jeremiah 32, Zechariah 11, and, I would argue, implicitly even Genesis 37 – 50.

The awareness of intertextuality that is being brought forward by scholars like Robert Alter and Meir Sternberg from the Jewish non-Christian literary side focusing on the Old Testament and N.T. Wright, Richard Hays, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Richard Tannehill on the Christian historico-literary side focusing on the New Testament is refreshing and powerfully explanatory. It means that when the New Testament quotes the Old Testament, there is a deep resonance and respect for the OT text and its original context. At times, there is a clear prophecy of the Messiah in the OT that the NT claims. But when the NT quotes a prophetic text, it is really only one subset of the larger phenomenon of intertextuality.

Similarities abound in history and daily life that we understand. To highlight a famous one: During an early battle of World War II, Winston Churchill referred to the battle of Thermopylae because of the historic similarity and dissimilarity. In the battle of Thermopylae, Xerxes of Persia was campaigning against Greece. He had a massive army and navy, and the Greek city-states were not yet organized

together. Thermopylae was the path into Greece, and 300 Spartan warriors took a heroic last stand and lost. But that battle needed to happen for the Greek city-states to rally together at the battle of Salamis and repel Persia. Churchill's reference to Thermopylae evoked heroism and courage in British soldiers because every British school boy had been educated in Greek history and made the parallel. Britain was the 'small city-state' and the British were the 'Spartans' taking a heroic last stand against a massive empire. But regardless if they won or lost, they would be the heroic rallying point around which the remainder of their kin would gather. Churchill was most certainly not saying that Thermopylae was an 'allegory' of the battle of Britain, nor was he saying that Thermopylae was a 'prophecy' of it, nor was he saying that he was sure Britain would lose. He was not collapsing the distance between the two events, but kept the two as separate discrete events, achieving a resonance by comparing similarities and dissimilarities. This is what made Churchill, like Paul, a great orator.

To belabor the point (the significance of this will be apparent below): When the west coast rapper Notorious B.I.G. was killed, his friend, producer, and fellow rapper Puff Daddy wrote a song called *I'll Be Missing You*. He took an older song by The Police called *Every Breath You Take* and put his own layer on it. Puff Daddy's song was not about a stalker stalking his target; obviously that's how the two songs were different. But by keeping the beat and melody of the earlier song, he captured the emotional connotations already associated with *Every Breath You Take*, which were twofold: (1) 'I'm always thinking about you,' and (2) 'We will meet one day.' Puff Daddy reworked that theme so that his song communicated a new message: (1) I'm always thinking about my slain friend; (2) we will meet again one day. The biblical narrators used similar methods of echo, although they saw the two events or two texts as already fundamentally related because they occurred within the relational context between a God who works in patterns and His predictable people Israel in an ongoing covenant.

Thus, the NT can quote as prophetic an OT text that is not in the slightest degree predictive of a detail (e.g. Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1, 'Out of Egypt I called my son' and applies it to Jesus). The NT authors can do this (a) because God works in patterns and themes, and (b) because the Hebrews understood the literary art of intertextuality much better than we do and they worked within it. Thus, within the Scriptures, there is a larger symphonic buildup occurring through Israel's story *as a whole* that also finds harmonic similarity and amplification in her Messiah Jesus, and through Israel's major institutions from its patriarchal period to its Mosaic period to its Messianic period.

This gives us new insight into why the life of Jesus bears a non-coincidental resemblance to the history of the nation Israel as a whole, and why the OT quotations occur in the NT to support that. 'Out of Egypt I called My Son' from Hosea 11:1 is not in the slightest degree a 'predictive' text. In Hosea, it is Hosea's recounting of Israel's history. Yet Matthew says that when Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt to hide from Herod the Great, and returned, that it was to 'fulfill' this text from Hosea (Mt.2:15). One could say that this is just another example of Matthew's apparently sloppy OT exegesis. And, if we question the historicity of that episode, then that takes us down other avenues. But as we look more broadly at the story of Israel, the nature of the OT texts, and the wider purpose and context of Jesus' life, we find an intriguing pattern. Jesus intentionally relived Israel's history because Israel had a vocation from God of being God's adopted 'son' (Ex.4:22, Rom.9:4), the chosen people, a blessing to the nations, etc. Thus, Jesus, in gathering these roles onto himself, re-enacted Israel's experience and identity to communicate his significance to others. He went into the wilderness for 40 days, perhaps for a multitude of reasons, but not least to intentionally echo Israel's experience of the wilderness for 40 years. He was surely reflecting on Deuteronomy since he responded to Satan with 3 quotations from Deuteronomy – but this was only appropriate given that Israel must have been reflecting on Deuteronomy as they neared the Promised Land at the end of their wilderness wandering. When Jesus crossed back over the Jordan, he was re-enacting Israel's history and claiming a new inheritance and a new victory. This is also why Matthew starts his story of Jesus with Abraham, recalls Jesus' infancy in Egypt, records a massacre of Hebrew boys as Israel experienced in Egypt, records Jesus' anointing by the Spirit as akin to Israel's reception of God's shekinah glory, has Jesus in the wilderness reflecting on Deuteronomy, gives blessings (Mt.5) and curses (Mt.23) like Deuteronomy does, etc.

Then, at the cross, Jesus fully took onto himself Israel's Exile (Israel was in an ongoing Exile at the time, stemming from the Babylonian captivity), in order to emerge on the other side of that Exile into a new

victory. This was almost certainly Jesus' self-understanding and, with the disciplines of history, we can examine that with a satisfying degree of certainty (see N.T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*). In broad brush strokes, Jesus experienced Exile in the same way Israel did: taken captive by a foreign power, accused of insurrection, and punished for such a crime by death. But even the details of Jesus' trial and crucifixion evoke known aspects of Israel's story: the thorns on his brow represent God's curse on the ground from Gen.3:17-19; the scarlet tunic/robe placed on Jesus is the color of Israel's sin according to Isaiah 1:18, the fact that he was hung on a tree made him accursed according to Dt.21:22-23. Jesus has therefore accumulated the emblems of human sin onto himself. When there are precise moments when particular OT passages can be quoted for these purposes, the NT tends to do so. But even when there are no specific OT passages, we are nevertheless meant to see the larger pattern. This is important, because when you feel that Matthew is faking a fulfillment by quoting or misquoting something, you need to see the bigger thing Matthew is doing. More often than not, he is not just 'proof-texting' using a small verse here and another there. Instead, he is referring to the larger context (or portion of Israel's story) from which that quote comes. Hence, sometimes the precise quotation from the Syriac version of the OT, or the Septuagint version, or another version, is not of ultimate importance, because it is the larger textual context from which that quote comes that Jesus/Matthew is calling our attention to. Matthew (and the NT writers) quote the OT to make conceptual links, not just semantic ones.

In that light, we can discuss Matthew 27:9-10. I think that text is actually a conflation of Genesis 37, Jeremiah 32, and Zechariah 11. In Genesis 37 – 50, the focus is on Joseph and Judah. Joseph is sold by his brothers for 20 pieces of silver, but eventually turns out to be their savior, and the savior of the Gentile world (Egypt and its neighbors). This has resonance with Jesus being sold by his 'brothers' (i.e. Judas and his countrymen) for 30 pieces of silver, but eventually becoming their savior, and of course, savior of the Gentile world, too. There are similarities (not least since Jesus also fed bread to multitudes) and dissimilarities, since the Joseph/Judah story and the Jesus story are two different stories. Joseph is not a fictional parable that is merely collapsible to Jesus, and obviously the difference of 20 and 30 silver coins is there to remind us of that.

Even though Genesis 37 is not explicitly quoted by Matthew, it is helpful to treat Genesis 37 – 50 first because (a) it is not a far stretch at all to hear echoes of that story and (b) I think that is what Zechariah himself is evoking in Zech.9 – 14. In Zech.9:9, the Messianic deliverer appears accompanied with the motif of the donkey (I will discuss the LXX translation issue and Matthew's appropriation of it below). This comes from Genesis 49, the near-finale of the Joseph/Judah story, where Jacob blesses Judah as the firstborn, thus making his line the line from which Israel's king will come, eventually to result in a king who rides on a donkey. Furthermore, Zechariah explicitly invokes both Joseph and Judah in Zech.10:6, 'I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back...' Thus, for Zechariah, as with many Israelites, the main concerns are, 'When will Israel's Exile be at an end? And what will be the effects of that?' And the Joseph/Judah story would naturally come to mind as a historical parallel. First century Israel's Exile (i.e. under the Romans, not experiencing the fullness of the blessing of God in their own Promised Land) may somehow have a result similar to the earliest exile in the family of Israel: a prominent Messianic figure, rule over the Gentiles, and worldwide blessing, peace, and provision (especially in Zech.9:10). The dissimilarities with the Joseph/Judah story are also present, of course: There will surely be some Gentiles who do not yield to the Messiah, as Zechariah understands, and they will first be dealt with (e.g. Zech.9:1 – 9). This element was not present in the Joseph/Judah story, but this is not a requirement, for we are not talking about or looking for one to one correspondences in all things.

An even more intriguing possibility exists if we consider whether Zechariah himself was drawing upon Jeremiah. The cluster of motifs – rejection, silver, the potter – is very much like Jeremiah. My conclusions are not dependent on this possibility, but I will consider this, below.

Matthew's quote of Zechariah 11:12 – 13 evokes the context of Zechariah anticipating Israel's Exile (10:8 – 9) and return from Exile (10:10). Then, Zechariah describes the overall impact of Israel's Exile and return: Egypt and Assyria will be confronted by God (10:11 – 12), and Lebanon will experience a judgment (11:1 – 3). Zechariah 11:4 – 17 is probably best understood as a further judgment on Israel (even in the midst of Exile? – I will explore this below) that will result in a deepened sense of abandonment,

probably lack of protection, as was born out by the Romans destroying Jerusalem. Zech.11 is then followed by a prediction of the role of the Davidic king (12:1 – 13:9), denoting the outpouring of the Spirit on David's house/descendant (12:10) and a 'fountain' to 'cleanse [Israel] from sin and impurity' (13:1). Jesus quotes Zech.13:7 ('strike the shepherd') to predict his own death in Mt.26:31, immediately after the last supper, so he does seem to have the overall context of Zechariah in mind. Throughout this entire section (Zech.9 – 14), Zechariah has in view the restoration from Exile. Matthew appears to take this quotation to invoke all of Zechariah's poetic discussion, and he applies it to Jesus. There are no real surprises here in terms of the clustering of themes, but I point this out to substantiate that what is important to Matthew is a large swath of OT material, not fragmented verses here and there.

That Matthew has Jeremiah 32 in mind is likely because Matthew is not quoting Zechariah straightaway, regardless of whether we translate that word 'potter' (Hebrew Masoretic) or 'treasury' (Syriac) or 'furnace' (LXX).

Mt.27:9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose prices had been set by the sons of Israel;¹⁰ and they gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me.'

Zech.11:12 I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.¹³ Then the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Jer.32:6 And Jeremiah said, 'The word of the LORD came to me, saying,⁷ 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, 'Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.''⁸ Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD and said to me, 'Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.⁹ I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver.

Matthew seems to invoke Jeremiah because of Jeremiah's focus on the new covenant, the renewal of God's covenant after Exile. Jeremiah had a few interactions with potters and pottery, and appropriately so. For him, the image of the potter re-working a piece of clay into another pot was an appropriate image for God re-working Israel through the new covenant He would make with her (Jer.18). Also, he broke one clay jar (Jer.19:1, 10) to symbolize what God will do with Jerusalem when He sends the nation into Exile. But he used another clay jar (Jer.32:6-9) to buy a field and store the receipt; this act of purchasing land represented Jeremiah's hope in the new covenant (Jer.31 – 34) that God would be faithful to His covenant with Israel, and that Israel would lay claim to that land once again even after the Babylonians crushed them. This has ironic resonance with Judas selling Jesus for silver before the Roman invaders came to crush Jerusalem. But the irony of this act is that the chief priests bought a field from a potter with the silver. They made it a burial place for strangers (Mt.27:7). They had completely different intentions than Jeremiah's, yet they managed anyway to evoke Jeremiah's act of hope in the new covenant. They bought a field for the burial of dead people, and 'strangers' at that – is this related to the new covenant promise of resurrection, resurrection extended even to the 'stranger'? Incidentally, ironic fulfillment is also attributed to Caiaphas in John 11:49-52.

But that is only one part of the overall symphonic resonance Matthew as a whole establishes with Jeremiah as a whole.

1. The overarching structure of Matthew is that of a covenant document like the Pentateuch, since Matthew is casting Jesus' ministry in light of a 'new covenant' explicitly named as such and predicted by Jeremiah in Jer.31:31 – 34.
2. At the start, Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15 in Mt.2:17 – 18, 'Rachel weeping for her children,' a phrase that describes not only the deportation to Babylon (contra e.g. Kenneth Humphreys, who restricts it to this), but all of the Exilic experience until that point in time of Jesus' birth. Since the

- new covenant had clearly not arrived with the physical return of some Israelite deportees to the land of Canaan, it followed that Jeremiah 31 – 34 had yet to be fulfilled. This quote invokes Jeremiah 31 – 34 right from the start and sets our expectation that Jesus would inaugurate the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah.
3. The Sermon on the Mount seems to be the internal ‘law of the heart’ predicted by Jeremiah 31:33. Jesus’ focus on ‘the heart’ throughout the Sermon is notable.
 4. Moreover, Jesus apparently aims to solve the vexing problem of the sinful human heart, as shown by Mt.15:19, 18:35, and 19:8, via the issues of purity, forgiveness, and true marriage, respectively. This problem of the heart decidedly haunted Jeremiah, since he, more than any other prophet, focused on the ‘heart’ as well (the need and inability to circumcise/change the heart in Jer.4:4, 5:23-24 and 9:14, 9:24; Israel’s inability to do good in 13:23, the extended analysis of the heart in 17:1-10; the need for God to give a new heart in 24:7; and the promise of the new heart in the new covenant in 31:31-34).

Furthermore, the density of motifs from Jeremiah in Mt.26 – 28 is significant.

1. Most significantly, Jesus speaks in Mt.26:28 of the ‘blood of the new covenant’ (although some manuscripts of Matthew simply say ‘blood of the covenant’) in his last supper, echoing Jeremiah (and Luke says ‘new covenant’ in Lk.22:20 although Mark simply says ‘covenant’). Historically, second Temple Judaism uniformly looked to a Messianic deliverance from Exile that was already described in the language of a new Exodus (e.g. Isa.43, see also N.T. Wright’s NTPG & JVG). Hence a ‘new Passover lamb’ inaugurating a ‘new’ or ‘renewed’ covenant with ‘blood’ is quite appropriate. Matthew may have said ‘new covenant’ stressing the connection to prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the new focus on the heart, or he may have said ‘covenant’ stressing the continuity of God’s faithfulness to the covenant with Abraham, now re-centering around Jesus and welcoming in the Gentiles. In this case, while the manuscript variation is ultimately theologically insignificant, I do think that the internal evidence is stronger that we prefer the Matthean manuscripts saying ‘new covenant.’
2. Notably, also in Mt.26:28, Jesus says that this blood is ‘for the forgiveness of sins,’ the phrase that in Jeremiah 31:34 describes the effect of the new covenant: ‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’ No other prophet, including Isaiah in Isa.53 and Ezekiel in Ezk.36, uses language as close to that to describe the new covenant, though of course conceptually they get to it. Jesus therefore probably had Jeremiah 31 in mind at his last supper. The quotation from Zechariah 13:7 is also proximate in Mt.26:31, but this does not detract from the significance of Jeremiah, since Jesus reminds his disciples (and us) twice immediately following that all the Scriptures, not just one or the other prophet, were being fulfilled. During his arrest in Mt.26:54, Jesus says that ‘the Scriptures’ would ‘be fulfilled’ and in Mt.26:56 that ‘the writings of [all] the prophets’ would ‘be fulfilled.’
3. Jesus’ ministry of speaking doom upon the Temple in Jerusalem mirrors Jeremiah’s earlier such ministry almost exactly. Jeremiah had this burden more than any other figure in the OT (short of Ezekiel, who was also called ‘son of man’ like Jesus). Shortly before Matthew calls our attention to Jeremiah in 27:9, Jesus is accused of speaking against the Temple in Mt.26:61, immediately after his arrest. Whereas Jeremiah foresaw the Babylonians destroying the Temple in his day, Jesus foresaw the Romans in his (e.g. Mt.24:1 – 2, see also Lk.13:1 – 5). Also Jesus’ speaking doom upon Jerusalem as a city mirrors Jeremiah’s earlier such ministry. Jesus had just said, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you’ in Mt.23:37. Jeremiah, though not killed per se, suffered a great deal. Perhaps only Isaiah suffered more, since tradition holds that he was sawn in two by King Manasseh. Micah was not slain or stoned. Zechariah, being post-Babylon, promoted the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and did not experience this.
4. Jesus’ trial in Mt.26:57 – 67 mirrors Jeremiah’s abuse at the hands of various officials, trial and placement in a pit (e.g. Jer.20). Zechariah had the ministry of encouraging Israelite leadership at the time, and so did not experience this.

Thus, I don’t think it would be unnatural for Matthew to call his readers’ attention to Jeremiah in Mt.27:9, near the end of his Gospel. In fact, I think it is altogether appropriate. Jesus and Matthew seem to invoke the book of Jeremiah in its entirety, not just in some piecemeal fashion. The same is true for other large pieces of Scripture, for instance Zechariah 9 – 14 and, by extension at least, Genesis 37 – 50. But they do

not just serve as 'frosting' or 'seasoning' to proof-text an idiosyncratic agenda arising out of nothing and built on tenuous ground. Rather, they serve as the very backbone, providing basic structure and archetype. Jesus' life and ministry were built around motifs and patterns set down by these texts. God managed some details of Jesus' life that were outside of Jesus' direct control (all circumstances of his birth, some of his life, many of his death). But Jesus also intentionally fulfilled the texts he was aware of. Why would he not? And would we think less of him if he did? After all, we should not deny to Jesus himself what we so quickly attribute to Matthew: quick theological acuity based on a deep acquaintance with Israel's sacred texts. In other words, if Jesus himself was the great theologian, architecting his life, teaching, and praxis to be continuous with the Hebrew Scriptures and bringing all the great themes of that literature to a climax, filling it full, then it would be relatively easy for his followers to pick a few themes at a time to highlight them. Jesus made their job easy.

You are hitting the limits of the idea of Scriptural 'fulfillment' in evangelical circles, which tends to be quite shallow. This shallowness hurts us in two directions. First, as you mentioned, it makes us think that the case for Jesus is really based on the probabilities of certain minute detailed passages of Scripture being strictly completed. Now there are some brilliantly clear passages of Scripture like that (e.g. Isa.53, etc.) But the whole probabilities game ranges from mildly interesting to ridiculous. It is not a serious methodology in my view, because it ignores intentional fulfillment (not only on Jesus' part, but of other Jewish Messianic claimants that we know about). And it encourages us to look for isolated little verses rather than analyze the larger story of Scripture being evoked. The strength of the case for Jesus should be based on the whole of Scripture being 'filled full,' especially Jesus' resurrection as the vindication of his claims to fill the Scriptures. Israel expected resurrection as part of the nation's return from Exile (explicitly in e.g. Ezk.36:26 – 36, Daniel 12:1 – 3, Isaiah 25:8 and implicitly in a lot of other passages). Jesus uniquely delivered it in himself and through himself (hence we are resurrected with Christ, etc.). That is, he 'filled full' Israel's hope for resurrection, but concentrated and located it in himself.

Second, it limits our definition of 'fulfillment' strictly to 'what is completely done.' But the Prophets saw the eschatological vision of the return from Exile as a process, not an instantaneous thing. Take for instance the OT expectation that the Messiah would rule over Israel and the whole Gentile world. That was 'inaugurated' but not completely 'done' by Jesus. Jesus was only 'seated on his throne' in the Daniel 7:13 sense after his resurrection (in Acts he is taken up on a cloud like Daniel 7:13 says). Then he sent his disciples out to invite the Gentile world to receive him as Lord. His word went forth from Zion, as Isaiah (Isa.2 and 42) and Micah (Mic.4) said it would, to gather in the Diaspora Jews and the Gentiles, and bring justice to the coastlands. It would be a movement of peace and reconciliation (swords into plowshares), etc. etc. This was inaugurated by Jesus at his resurrection/ascension and makes fresh sense of Christian mission, not least Matthew's Great Commission: We participate in his word going forth from Zion, for we bear his word. So those passages about the Gentiles being ruled by the Messiah - those Scriptures are 'inaugurated' by Jesus. They are certainly not completely 'done,' but neither are they truncated off from the 'return from Exile' passages, nor are they just set aside for some far future time when Jesus comes back, nor are they annulled and left to dry. God has affirmed his promises and is now bringing about the return from Exile, not only of Israel, but that of the world - the Exile brought about by Adam and Eve. Thus, the Jesus movement is called a 'new creation' for it engages the fall of the 'old creation.'

Thus, I think the tendency to look for isolated verses that Jesus 'completed' is misleading. Ultimately, it makes us look at passages to break them apart, saying things like, 'Jesus strictly completed Isaiah 9:1 – 6 but not 9:7, so maybe he's not the Messiah after all.' Whereas the thrust of 'inaugurated eschatology' is that 9:7, the vision of the Messiah ruling over his people, will be culminated by Jesus at his return, yes, but has been activated and is in process now. Thus, Isaiah's vision of 'My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth' is unfolding in and through Jesus and his church. Jeremiah's vision of the new covenant transforming human hearts is unfolding in and through Jesus and his church. Ezekiel's vision of corporate resurrection and the Spirit being put into God's new humanity is unfolding in and through Jesus and his church. Etc. This is why at times I prefer to use the term 'inaugurated' as opposed to 'fulfilled': Jesus 'inaugurated' the era these texts foresaw.

Coming back to Matthew's literary style: Matthew's Gospel is clearly informed by these textual antecedents, and he makes that explicit frequently by calling our attention to key phrases from within those

large texts that evoke deep and abiding echoes, echoes that linger and fill the air. Using this literary framework of intertextuality, the whole edifice of our understanding stands fairly firmly, regardless of whether a few details remain uncertain. You have a concern that the defenses you've seen are so long-winded and illogical as to strain all credibility, but I think that is because evangelical scholarship has focused on piecemeal exegesis. Perhaps there are things I am not considering, but so far, I find the solution here to be satisfying. What is important to me, as I know it is with you, is the elegance of the solution. If we broaden out our understanding of how biblical Hebrew intertextuality truly operates, we can actually take in *more* textual data, see the data more broadly and in categories that were surely native and natural to a Hebrew mindset, and gain even more explanatory power on the details.

Now, returning to some of the questions you have:

Zechariah 11:12 – 13

In Zechariah 11:13, should the word 'potter' (Hebrew Masoretic text) really be 'treasury' (RSV and NRSV following the Syriac)? The Greek Septuagint (LXX) text offers 'furnace' for reasons I don't completely understand. Whether we should accept 'potter' or 'treasury' is unclear on grounds of the historical evidence and the physical manuscript evidence. I do think the internal literary evidence leans us in one direction, though. Regarding the historical evidence: the Temple treasury stored tithes and all manner of precious things dedicated to the Lord (Ezr.2:69; Neh.7:70), functioned as a bank for the private individual (2 Macc.3:10ff.), and required guilds of craftsmen and animal traders, probably including potters. Jeremiah was able to point to a potter at work while he preached (18:6) and to purchase an earthenware pot close to the Temple (19:1). So both words are possible and feasible from an historical standpoint.

Regarding the physical manuscript evidence, it's hard to tell which manuscript should be preferred. In the only OT commentary I own on Zechariah, Joyce G. Baldwin, following M. Delcor (1953) believes the Syriac variant to be the result of a scribe's attempt to adjust the meaning. Thus, apparently, scholars can take the Syriac variant as a scribal mistake, the Hebrew Masoretic to be accurate, and the LXX to take the word *yoser* ('potter' or 'shaper') as being far too broad ('shaper of metals' becomes 'furnace?').

Regarding the internal literary evidence: *osar* ('treasury') and *yoser* ('potter,' and also more broadly, 'shaper' of both pottery and metal) have similar sounds, perhaps explaining how a scribal error could occur through dictation. If Zechariah was aware of Jeremiah, which he should have been, he might have noted Jeremiah's use of the 'potter' and may be echoing Jeremiah (motifs of rejection, silver, and potters connect), so I think that taking Zechariah and Jeremiah alone, the rendering 'potter' is actually stronger. At the very least, the terms 'potter' and 'treasury' feature in Matthew 27:1-10 in such a way that I think makes the issue a curiosity but ultimately insignificant for the purpose of studying Matthew.

In fact, if you grant me the intertextual relationships I've offered, perhaps we can press one step further. It seems to me that Zechariah drew on Genesis. Could Zechariah have drawn on Jeremiah as well? This would mean that there was a cumulative effect, and that by the time Matthew quotes Zechariah, he is effectively setting off echoes of multiple texts, touching multiple threads in the skein of God's tapestry. Zechariah 11:4 – 17 is difficult to understand, but some elements do stand out. And if we compare that passage to Jeremiah 18 – 23 in particular, several things appear to be similar. Because of these things, I suspect that Zechariah is echoing Jeremiah's description of the Babylonian invasion to describe yet another invasion yet future, relative to him. Here are some key elements:

<p>Jeremiah called Israel 'rejected silver' (6:30) and prophesied against the Temple, the 'house of the Lord' (7:1-34).</p> <p>Jeremiah sees the work of the potter (Jer.18) as akin to God's work of the new covenant. Then he breaks a pot to symbolize God's breaking Jerusalem (Jer.19).</p>	<p>Zech.11:4 Thus says the LORD my God, 'Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter.⁵ Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and each of those who sell them says, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!' And their own shepherds have no pity on them.⁶ For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land,' declares the LORD; 'but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver them from their power.'⁷ So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took</p>
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<p>He foretold Israel's fall into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. The policy of political and diplomatic reliance on Babylon was disobedience to God; therefore God let Israel fall into the hands of 'their king.' Jeremiah announced that God was withdrawing His protection ('favor') from Jerusalem, allowing it to be destroyed (Jer.20).</p> <p>Then he speaks against the line of David for their corruption, culminating in a curse on Jeconiah (Jer.21-22). He employs the common image of 'shepherds' for Judah's kings. Jeremiah effectively dethroned ('annihilated'?) three kings of Judah: Zedekiah (21:3), Jehoiakim (22:18), and Jeconiah (22:24). But he prophesies a true Davidic shepherd-king to come (Jer.23) as part of Israel's restoration from Exile.</p> <p>Later, Jeremiah demonstrates his hope in the new covenant using a pot for seventeen pieces of silver (Jer.32).</p>	<p>for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.</p> <p>⁸ Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. ⁹ Then I said, 'I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh.'</p> <p>¹⁰ I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. ¹¹ So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD.</p> <p>¹² I said to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. ¹³ Then the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. ¹⁴ Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. ¹⁵ The LORD said to me, 'Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs.</p>
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The semantic and conceptual connections are tantalizing. Is it possible that Zechariah used silver because of its connotations with rejection, in Genesis 37 and also in Jeremiah? Did he toss the silver into the Temple (the house of the Lord) because he foresaw its doom? That certainly seems implied on account of the unjust leadership described in Zech.11:15 – 17 and the siege surrounding Jerusalem in 12:1 – 3. Did Zechariah employ the motif of the potter because Jeremiah uniquely did so as an image of God destroying and then reshaping Israel, specifically Jerusalem? Did Zechariah refer to the 'three shepherds' 'annihilated' by Jeremiah because he saw another coming displacement of kings in favor of the true heir of David? Did this have to do with Zechariah's overall insight in Zech.9 – 14 into how the coming Davidic king would ride into Jerusalem and bring about a turn of events that would be surprising but continuous with the way God had worked before, especially through Jeremiah? More analysis would need to be done than time and space permit here, but obviously I think that is the case. I believe God had Zechariah echo Jeremiah on all these counts and for these reasons. Again, at this point, my conclusions above do not hang on what biblical scholars eventually decide about the intertextual relation between Zechariah and Jeremiah. But I point this out because I think Matthew's case is actually strengthened, not weakened, by quoting both Zechariah and Jeremiah in Mt.27:9 – 10.

Zechariah 9:9

In Zechariah 9:9, do we have one donkey or two? And in the actual historical event of Jesus riding into Jerusalem, did he ride on one donkey (Mark, Luke, and John) or two (Matthew)? Was the LXX in error when it translated 'riding on a donkey, *and* a colt'? (There is a larger significance to the LXX that is interesting, but doesn't need to be a part of this discussion.) Was Matthew in error in quoting the LXX? Did Matthew only have the LXX in mind, and fake a fulfillment?

On the technical level, the word 'and' could be implied between two parallel verses of biblical poetry. You are right in suggesting that more commonly than not, the second verse qualifies or gives more detail about the first verse, making the 'and' unnecessary or even misleading. However, that is not exhaustively the

case. I could give examples, but since it feels to me like nitpicking, I'll dispense with that and say at the outset that my defense of Matthew does not depend on that either.

On the face of it, there is no reason to not trace the 'problem' beyond Matthew to Jesus himself. Jesus was surely aware of the LXX. Therefore, we need to ask whether Jesus himself would manufacture a fulfillment of that verse on his own. In my opinion, he surely would. And he would have met all possible criteria to make an unmistakable showing of it. That is, since the LXX was well known in the Israel of his day, Jesus probably would have gotten two donkeys, one mature and one foal. Again, this does not damage Jesus' credibility since Jesus certainly knew how to act in a way that invoked symbol and meaning from a larger context. He was not merely 'prooftexting' his own actions, but invoking massive amounts of Scripture, the bulk of which was outside of his 'control.'

That alone is sufficient, but there is another reason why Jesus may have actually preferred the LXX 'two donkey' reading of Zechariah 9:9. The motif of the donkey is associated with the King of Israel in the tribe of Judah (Gen.49:11). Donkeys continue to be associated with Israel's kings. They were associated early on with Saul (1 Sam.9:3) and David (1 Sam.16:20). Most significantly, however, King David was given *two* donkeys when he fled from Absalom and from Jerusalem (2 Sam.16:1). Given David's use of two donkeys as the true king abdicating Jerusalem to a false one, it seems somewhat logical for Jesus to use two donkeys when he came to Jerusalem as the true king coming to reclaim the throne from the false one. For this additional reason, it seems likely to me that Jesus, aware of these texts and traditions and most certainly aware of his claim to be the heir of David, would have 'staged' the 'two donkey' fulfillment himself.

If this was the case historically, then the question becomes a literary one: Why did Matthew alone report the two donkeys? While don't Mark, Luke, and John also report two? A few educated guesses are in order. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that John, and especially Mark and Luke, wrote for mixed audiences (Jews and Gentiles) and thus streamlined their storytelling? Gentiles would be less appreciative of the donkey symbolism; significantly, notice that Mark and Luke, who wrote for predominantly Gentile audiences, both do not explicitly quote Zechariah? So that explanation seems quite reasonable to me. Conversely, did Matthew, having primarily Jews in his audience, feel the need to be more exhaustive in his storytelling, to make sure his audience got as clear a picture of Jesus' intention to fulfill Zechariah? That also seems very reasonable to me.

At this point, what enters in is a conviction of mine that I've stated before, a conviction that is based on and tested against reasoning and evidence that is historical and literary: I do not believe that any of the Gospel writers invented anything. They may omit details here and there, but this is to be expected, and almost always serves a discernable literary purpose. Any historian needs to record history selectively. S/he picks and chooses what material to use. If that is the case, and if the story of Israel functions in the way I've suggested, and if Jesus was intelligent enough to discern that and let that guide his life, then Jesus was the one making all the historical and literary connections. Matthew, then, does not discredit Jesus at all by narrating the story in the way he does. He is merely narrating the story in a way that narrates a few of those themes Jesus himself engaged with. It was left to Mark, Luke, and John merely to share the narration of the other themes.

So, to summarize my overall approach,

1. (Historical) Understand Jesus' historical context as 'Israel in Exile awaiting deliverance'
2. (Historical) Allow Jesus to have the same theological brilliance and craftiness that is commonly attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
3. (Literary) Work with books of Scripture in their entirety.
4. (Literary) Perceive the more robust nature of intertextuality in Scripture.

Again, to understand this – I don't know if you've read these before – I'd recommend N.T. Wright's series, so far three of six volumes: first *The New Testament and the People of God*, second *Jesus and the Victory of God*, and third *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. I've appreciated them, and there is much there to greet a searching mind. Wright handily deals with the likes of A.N. Wilson, Bishop Spong, Dominic Crossan and the Jesus Seminar, and others.

Well, there is my lengthy reply to your questions. Not that your questions were simple! You are quite a complex thinker in your own right. I hope that what I wrote is intelligible and helpful. If not, perhaps we can come at it from another angle. But if so, then I look forward to talking about these things in more depth.

Blessings,
Mako