

Fulfillment Style Adopted by New Testament Writers

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Donald Hagner, Robert Gundry, E. P. Sanders, Jacop Neusner, and others have explored the role *Midrash* plays in NT hermeneutics, notably in Matthew's unique use of the word *fulfilled* at length.

"In the NT era, midrash designated the exposition of Scripture and had nothing to do with the assimilation of historical and nonhistorical elements."¹

As noted above, *Midrash* is a style of interpreting Scripture, of demonstrating some form of prophetic fulfillment, not defining the historical nature of the text.

Four types of fulfillment systems surface in the study of how New Testament writers use Old Testament texts to support their claims regarding Jesus' legitimacy.

In the NT era, *Midrash* designated the exposition and application of OT prophetic pronouncements of Scripture, and had little to do with the assimilation of historical and nonhistorical elements. *Midrash* is more concerned with theological meaning than historical dating.

Models or approaches to understanding the fulfillment of prophetic texts

Predictive prophecies

Typological prophecies

Analogical prophecies

Midrashic prophecies

Unique prophetic texts identified by Gundry and others in Matthew's Gospel.

Gundry and others have identified ten "prophetic" texts in Matthew's Gospel that are covered by Matthew's fulfillment process, most likely in a *Midrashic* model of finding new emphases in Old Testament texts that refer to Jesus.

1. Matthew 1:22-23 - The virgin birth of Jesus fulfills Isaiah 7:14.
2. Matthew 2:15 - Jesus' return from Egypt fulfills Hosea 11:1.
3. Matthew 2:17-18 - The massacre of the infants fulfills Jeremiah 31:15.
4. Matthew 2:23 - Jesus being called a Nazarene fulfills the prophets' words.
5. Matthew 4:14-16 - Jesus' ministry in Galilee fulfills Isaiah 9:1-2.
6. Matthew 8:17 - Jesus healing the sick fulfills Isaiah 53:4.
7. Matthew 12:17-21 - Jesus' gentle and humble nature fulfills Isaiah 42:1-4.
8. Matthew 13:35 - Jesus speaking in parables fulfills Psalm 78:2.
9. Matthew 21:4-5 - Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfills Zechariah 9:9.
10. Matthew 27:9-10 - The thirty pieces of silver used to betray Jesus fulfills Zechariah 11:12-13

Other quotations employing the word *γέγραπται*, "it is written," in the introductory formula can also stress fulfillment, as in 2:5; 11:10; and 26:31. Also to be noted is the general fulfillment formula without any actual quotation in 26:56 (cf. 26:54) with reference to the events of the passion narrative: ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν, "in order that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled."

¹ Quarles, Charles, JETS 39/3, September 1996, 457-464

Types of Prophetic Utterances

Predictive prophecies

Certain OT texts *predict* that certain events relating to Jesus would occur.

Micah 5:2/Matt 2, predicted that the new king, Jesus, would be born in Bethlehem. Jesus' birth fulfilled this prophecies.

Isa 7:13, 14, a young woman, *alma, virgin, parthenos* (Septuagint) will give birth to a child.

Isaiah wrote that this took place in Ahaz's day, Isa 7:15-17.

However, Matthew also saw a *Typological* or *Midrashic* fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and proclaimed that Jesus would be born of a virgin, Matt 1:23!

Typological prophecies

Jesus on the cross was a type of Mosaic serpent in the wilderness, Num 21:4-9. Jesus referred to this typologically at John 3:14-15.

Analogical prophecies

Christian baptism is analogous to Israel passing through the Red Sea and being saved by the power of God, Exod 14, 1 Cor 10:2.

Christian baptism is analogous to Noah and his family being saved by water, 1 Pet 3:20.

Midrashic prophecies

Midrash was a valuable typological prophetic process adopted by most writers in the New Testament who had great faith in the scheme of redemption and saw Jesus and the church Midrashically fulfilling God's scheme of redemption.

Refer to the topic *Midrash Fulfillment* in the web offerings **BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES, New Testament Studies, Midrashic Fulfillment.**