

THE JEREMIAH MODEL FOR JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

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The Gospel of Matthew is the only NT book that refers to the prophet Jeremiah by name (2:17; 16:14; 27:9). Of particular interest here is the reference in 16:14, for it is the only one which occurs in a passage with parallels in either Mark or Luke. In response to Jesus' question about how the people understand his identity, the disciples reply in Mark 8:28: *Iōannēn ton baptistēn, kai alloi Elian, alloi de hoti heis tōn prophētōn* ("John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets"¹). In Luke 9:19 the disciples respond that some say that he is *Iōannēn ton baptistēn, alloi de Elian, alloi de hoti prophētēs tis tōn archaiōn anestē* ("John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen"). In Matt 16:14, however, the disciples' response is more specific, by inclusion of the name of Jeremiah: *hoi men Iōannēn ton baptistēn, alloi de Elian, heteroi de Ieremian ē hena tōn prophētōn* ("Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets").

Matthew's use of vocabulary in comparing the groups is significant here. While Mark² names John the Baptist and follows with a *kai alloi . . . alloi de* construction (Luke follows with an *alloi de . . . alloi de* construction), Matthew uses a different construction altogether: *hoi men . . . alloi de . . . heteroi de*.³ This construction suggests that there are really only two groups who identify Jesus differently: those who identify him as John the

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are from the RSV.

²Although the majority of interpreters assume Markan priority over Matthew, this has no particular effect on the arguments set forth in this article.

³Matthew uses the *men . . . de* construction 20 times, while Mark uses it only three times and Luke only eight times. Matthew uses *heteros* nine times, Mark only once, and Luke 33 times. Cf. R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1982), pp. 644-645.

Baptist or Elijah, and those who identify him as Jeremiah or one of the prophets. In other passages Matthew clearly designates John the Baptist (3:3, 11) and Elijah (17:10-13) as forerunners of the Messiah; he even identifies John the Baptist as the Elijah to come (11:14; cf. Mark 9:11-13). By using *heteroi* instead of *alloi* in 16:14, Matthew distinguishes between those who identify Jesus as one of these forerunners of the Messiah and those who identify him as belonging in the prophetic tradition.⁴

But this does not answer the question of why Matthew singled out Jeremiah in this passage. During the first century, there were traditions circulating that Jeremiah was alive, while other later traditions asserted or implied that he was dead.⁵ Whether he was dead or alive, the problem remains as to why Matthew would single him out, for Jeremiah was never associated with any messianic expectations in Jewish thought.⁶

Scholars have advanced several imaginative theories as to why Matthew mentioned Jeremiah here. W. Hendriksen wonders whether the people felt that Jesus would return the tent, ark, and altar of incense which 2 Macc 2:4-8 had recorded Jeremiah as having previously hidden in a cave.⁷ J. P. Meier implies that the insertion was made because Jeremiah was the "great suffering servant among

⁴Although it is difficult to differentiate between *allos* and *heteros* in the NT (F. Büchsel, "allos," *TDNT* 1 [1964]: 264), and although *heteros* is a favorite word of Matthew (see n. 3, above), the fact that in Matthew's text there is a separation of "the prophets" from John the Baptist and Elijah and an insertion of Jeremiah (who was not a forerunner of the Messiah) underscores the significance of *heteroi* in this text.

⁵2 Macc 15:12-16 portrays Jeremiah as an intercessor before God during the priesthood of Onias III, and 2 Esdr 2:18 speaks of God as sending the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah at some time in the future. Although 2 Esdr 1-2 is a Christian addition (see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research: With a Supplement* [Chico, Calif., 1981], p. 112), it possibly arose out of a Jewish tradition. Strack-Billerbeck 2:626 reports that there was a rabbinic tradition (ca. A.D. 320) to the effect that Jeremiah was the prophet mentioned in Deut 18:15 who was to come in the future. Several ancient Christian writers, such as Victorinus of Petau (d. A.D. 304), counted Jeremiah as never "tasting death." Certain late Jewish "paradise lists," however, did not list Jeremiah. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1928), 6: 399-400.

⁶See Ginzberg, 5: 95-96, n. 67; Gundry, p. 329.

⁷W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1973), p. 642.

the prophets.”⁸ H. F. D. Sparks suggests that perhaps the reason for the insertion is that Jeremiah was the “representative ‘writing’ prophet” (Elijah did not fit this category, however).⁹ B. T. Dahlberg proposes that Matthew inserted Jeremiah’s name so that his audience could see more clearly a typological relationship between Matt 16:13-23 and Jer 1:4-19.¹⁰

It is not my purpose to argue either for or against any of the theories mentioned thus far, nor to deal with Matt 16:14 and its context in detail. Rather, I intend to investigate a provocative suggestion made by E. Schweizer in relation to the problem of the insertion of Jeremiah’s name in 16:14. Schweizer has commented that perhaps the Matthean community “attached particular importance to him [Jeremiah] because he had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem.”¹¹ Here Schweizer alludes to Jesus’ declaration to the Jewish leaders in Matt 23:38: “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (KJV).

Many of Jeremiah’s prophecies contain warnings about the impending destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Jer 6:6, 8; 19:7-8; 25:18; 32:28-29; 34:2). But Jeremiah also prophesied against the temple itself (chaps. 7 and 26). Is it possible that Matthew was especially interested in Jeremiah because of parallels between that prophet’s anti-temple discourses in the temple and Jesus’ teaching in the temple?

A comparison of Matt 23:29-24:2 with Jer 7 and 26 reveals a series of parallels that collectively are impressive. What I propose is that Matthew compares Jesus with Jeremiah—not for messianic verification—but because Jeremiah spoke against the temple while standing within it. In any case, in Matthew, Jesus is at least a prophet who proclaims judgment on the temple community in a manner similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah.

⁸J. P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York, 1978), p. 108.

⁹H. F. D. Sparks, “St. Matthew’s References to Jeremiah,” *JTS*, n.s., 1 (1950): 155-156.

¹⁰B. T. Dahlberg, “The Typological Use of Jeremiah 1:4-9 in Matthew 16:13-23,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 73-80.

¹¹E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. D. E. Green (Atlanta, 1975), p. 340.

In this study, I will deal with the significance of the people's designation of Jesus as "the prophet" (Matt 21:11) in relation to Jesus' entrance into the temple and subsequent activity and teaching there. Then I will treat three especially important parallels between Matt 23:29-24:2 and Jer 7 and 26: namely, the sending of the prophets, the murder of the prophets, and the prophetic judgment against the temple. Finally, I will draw some conclusions.

1. *Jesus as Prophet*

Jesus' reference to "your house" (23:38) occurs in the context of his teaching and preaching in the temple in Matt 21:12-23:39. It is interesting to note that immediately before Jesus' entrance into the temple (21:12, *hieron*) and during his discourse there, Matthew makes two references to Jesus as being "the prophet" (21:11) or "a prophet" (21:46). In response to a question about Jesus' identity by the city of Jerusalem, the crowds (*hoi ochloi*) respond: *houtos estin ho prophētēs Iēsous ho apo Nazareth tēs Galilaias* ("This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee"). Later, Matthew records of the chief priests and Pharisees that *ephobēthēsan tous ochlous, epei eis prophētēn auton eichon* ("they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet"). Besides the fact that these references are the only ones in Matthew (outside of 16:14) that specifically identify Jesus as "a" or "the" prophet, both texts are uniquely Matthean.

J. D. Kingsbury has attempted to show that these references to Jesus as Prophet are really insignificant.¹² His reasons are basically three: (1) the identification is made by some "men" (16:13b-14) or the "crowds" (21:11, 46), but never by the disciples; (2) these groups are never described as having the attitude of faith, while the disciples realize Jesus' messiahship; and (3) Jesus' identification of John the Baptist as "more than a prophet" (11:7, 9) when the crowds identify John as a prophet (14:5; 21:26) shows that Matthew certainly does not make much of this designation.¹³

But Kingsbury's arguments are not persuasive. For one thing, in Matthew *hoi ochloi* ("the multitudes") are usually considered in

¹²J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia, 1975), pp. 88-92.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

a positive light.¹⁴ They follow Jesus (cf. 4:25; 8:1; 14:13; 19:2; 20:29) and are amazed at his teaching (7:28; 9:33; 12:23; 15:31; 22:22, 33). Of the fifty times that the term *hoi ochloi* occurs in Matthew, in only five instances (20:31; 26:47, 55; 27:20, 24) does it have a distinctly negative connotation.

As for Kingsbury's argument that the term "prophet" in relation to Jesus has only negative value (or, is insignificant), it is apparent from the sparse use of this term in Matthew that it is not a major christological title. It does seem apparent, however, from Matthew's phrasing of the crowd's reply in 21:11 that it is significant for Matthew. In every case except one, Matthew's statements beginning with *houtos estin* contain a definite ring of truthfulness.¹⁵ The statements are either by John the Baptist or Jesus, or are identifications of Jesus. Of particular interest to us here are the statements in the latter category—those identifying Jesus—since 21:11 fits within this category.

Exclusive of 21:11, four of the five statements in Matthew identifying Jesus and beginning with *houtos estin* are true identifications of Jesus: *houtos estin ho huios mou ho agapētos* ("This is my beloved Son," 3:17 and 17:5); *houtos estin ho klēronomos* ("This is the heir," 21:38); and *houtos estin Iēsous ho basileus tōn Ioudaiōn* ("This is Jesus the King of the Jews," 27:37).¹⁶ The one statement that is *not* true (14:2) is different from these four statements, however, because it is not a descriptive identification of Jesus (i.e., *huios*, *klēronomos*, *basileus*), but is Herod's direct identification of Jesus with another person, John the Baptist.

Thus, in Matthew, aside from 21:11, all *descriptive* identifications of Jesus that begin with *houtos estin* are true, and one would

¹⁴For negative critiques of *hoi ochloi*, see F. W. Burnett, *The Testament of Jesus-Sophia: A Redaction-Critical Study of the Eschatological Discourse in Matthew* (Lanham, Md., 1981), pp. 404-411; and J. D. Kingsbury, "The Verb *Akolouthein* ('To Follow') as an Index of Matthew's View of his Community," *JBL* 97 (1978): 56-73.

¹⁵Matt 3:3, 17; 7:12; 11:10; 13:19, 20, 22, 23, 55; 17:5; 18:4; 21:11, 38; 27:37. The one statement where it is false is 14:2, which will be noted later in our discussion. The phrase occurs in questions in 8:27, 12:23, and 21:10, and it occurs in the plural in 13:38.

¹⁶It is interesting to note that in the last-mentioned text Matthew includes the introductory phrase *houtos estin*, whereas Mark does not (cf. Mark 15:26).

therefore expect the same in Matt 21:11. At minimum, it can be said that in Matthew, Jesus is at least "the prophet."¹⁷ To determine whether or not this description is a messianic one is beyond the scope of this article; rather, what is important to us here is that immediately preceding the reference to Jesus' entrance into the temple, there is a clear designation of Jesus as "the prophet"—a description which is positive and favorable in nature.

But who is "the prophet"? The phrasing in 21:11 is significant, for Jesus is not just "a" prophet, but "the" prophet—a specific prophet. This term is somewhat of an enigma. Outside of the gospels (cf. John 1:21, 25; 6:14; and 7:40) there are two references to it in Qumran, 1QS 9:11 and 4QTestim 5-8, the latter of which clearly connects it with Deut 18:15-18.¹⁸ Some commentators see the biblical references to "the prophet" as possible allusions to Deut 18:15-19, where God speaks of raising up a prophet like Moses.¹⁹ Thus, Jesus would be compared to the prophet who was like Moses. The most striking connection between Deut 18:15-19 and Jesus occurs in Acts 3:22-23 (cf. 7:37), where Luke reports Peter's quoting of Deut 18:15, 19 in reference to Jesus as the prophet to come. Besides this passage in Acts, there are no biblical texts that explicitly connect this particular prophet and Jesus.²⁰ There is, nonetheless, a distinct possibility that the biblical and

¹⁷Cf. G. Friedrich, "prophētēs," *TDNT* 6 (1968): 846; Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 411-412; idem, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, *NovTSup* 18 (Leiden, 1967), p. 210; Hendriksen, p. 767; A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (New York, 1915; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1980), p. 297; and Meier, pp. 145-146. For the opposite view, see D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1983), pp. 154-155.

¹⁸J. M. Allegro, "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature," *JBL* 75 (1956): 182-187. Cf. P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, *NICOT* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976), p. 263; G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1978), p. 185; and R. A. Horsley, "'Like One of the Prophets of Old': Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus," *CBQ* 47 (1985): 441-443.

¹⁹See, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 277, 330; and Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, *NICNT* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971), pp. 136, 345, 428. Not all agree that each reference in John is a possible allusion to Deut 18:15-19.

²⁰For early traditions in Jewish Christianity designating Jesus as "the prophet" and linking him with the prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy, see Friedrich, p. 858;

Qumran connections between "the prophet" and Deut 18:15-19 assume a common first-century understanding of the passage in Deuteronomy.

Does Matthew have any interest in Deut 18:15-19? One evidently finds the answer in Matt 17:5, a verse which interestingly contains a statement beginning with *houtos estin*. Matthew here records God's declaration at Jesus' transfiguration, *houtos estin ho huios mou ho agapētos, . . . akouete autou* ("This is my beloved Son, . . . listen to him").²¹ The phrase *akouete autou* is a direct allusion to the LXX of Deut 18:15: *autou akousesthe* ("him you shall heed").²² Matthew's inclusion of the allusion to Deut 18:15 (spoken by none other than God himself) heightens the significance of the declaration of the crowds in 21:11 about Jesus being "the prophet."

But how does this relate to Matthew's use of Jeremiah? On the one hand, we find Jesus compared to the prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy, but on the other hand, we find Matthew also strangely interested in recording that Jesus was compared with Jeremiah by some of the people of his day. Is there any connection between the two?

Various commentators and exegetes have noticed Matthew's penchant for comparing Jesus to Moses.²³ The miraculous escape of Jesus to Egypt, his baptism, his forty days in the wilderness, his ten miracles in chaps. 8-9, and his transfiguration are just some of the parallels that have been identified. In light of Matthew's interest in Jeremiah, however, it is indeed strange that NT scholars have generally failed to see that the close parallels between Jeremiah and Moses may be significant in the Gospel of Matthew.

L. L. Kline, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, SBLDS 14 (Missoula, Mont., 1975), pp. 47-49; and J. L. Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York, 1978), pp. 57-59.

²¹Matthew includes *en hē eudokēsa* whereas Mark does not (cf. Mark 1:11).

²²See Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, pp. 36-37, 148-149. Also cf. W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, 3d ed., ICC (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 185; Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 345; McNeile, p. 250; and Schweizer, p. 349.

²³See, e.g., Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 7, 33-35, 38, 54, 65-66, 69, 78-100, etc.; and Schweizer, pp. 36-37, 42-43, 59. However, for a critique of this view, see Kingsbury, *Matthew*, pp. 89-92.

William Holladay has noted some unusually close parallels between the call of Moses, the call of Jeremiah, and the prophet mentioned in Deut 18.²⁴ For instance, Jer 1:6 (“Then I said, ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, . . .’”) and Exod 4:10 (“Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, . . .”) are strikingly similar in content and structure.²⁵ The pairing of the words “command” and “speak” in Jer 1:7 (“ . . . whatever I command you you shall speak”) occur outside of Jeremiah only in Exod 7:2 (“You shall speak all that I command you”) and Deut 18:18 (“ . . . he shall speak to them all that I command him”). And Jer 1:9 (“ . . . ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth’) parallels Deut 18:18 (“ . . . I will put my words in his mouth, . . .”), not only in content, but also in the rare use of the word *nāṭan* in this context (which occurs elsewhere only in Jer 5:14).²⁶

Thus we see some significant parallels between Moses, the prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy, and Jeremiah. If Jeremiah saw himself in relation to this prophet who was to come, he thus saw himself also in close relation to Moses (who was the model of this particular prophet). Therefore, when combined with the allusion to Deut 18:15 in Matt 17:5 and Matthew’s favorable view of the crowd’s designation of Jesus as “the prophet” in 21:11, Matthew’s reference to Jeremiah in 16:14 appears in somewhat clearer light.

Matthew’s making reference to the people’s declaration about Jesus immediately before Jesus’ entrance into the temple and his cleansing of it (21:12) is intriguing. Jesus’ rationale (21:13) for

²⁴W. Holladay, “The Background of Jeremiah’s Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel, and Psalm 22,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 153-164. See also idem, “Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 17-27; E. Achtemeier, *Deuteronomy, Jeremiah*, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 48-56; and J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1980), pp. 66, 148, 150.

²⁵There are only two other known cases of resistance to God’s call by prophets aside from Moses and Jeremiah: Jonah (1:1-3) and Isaiah (6:5). Jonah did more than protest—he ran away. Neither is the case of Isaiah parallel, since it was one of a deep sense of spiritual unworthiness (instead of lack of ability). Amos’ famous reply that he was “no prophet, nor a prophet’s son” (7:14) does not prove his case to be one of resistance to God’s call.

²⁶Cf. Exod 4:15; Num 22:38; 23:5, 12, 16; Deut 31:19; 2 Sam 14:3, 19; Isa 51:16; 59:21. None of these texts uses the verb *nāṭan*.

cleansing the temple, which immediately follows the account of the cleansing, is a direct quotation from Jer 7:11 (LXX): the temple has become a *spēlaion lēstōn* ("den of robbers")²⁷—a verse in Jeremiah that occurs in his famous Temple Sermon (7:1-15).²⁸

Thus far we have seen that in some uniquely Matthean material (21:11), the crowds proclaim Jesus to be "the prophet" immediately before he enters the temple. Matthew looks favorably upon this designation, although for him it is not a major christological title. This designation alludes to Deut 18:15-19, as does also a clearly positive declaration alluded to in Matt 17:5. But earlier in history, the prophet Jeremiah had apparently applied the terminology in Deuteronomy to *himself*. In Matthew's very next verse (21:12), Jesus enters the temple and cleanses it because it has become a *spēlaion lēstōn* (21:13)—a direct quotation from Jeremiah's Temple Sermon (7:11, LXX). Thus, we have established a link between Jeremiah the prophet and Jesus "the prophet," and that link is the speeches made in the temple complex—in Solomon's Temple for Jeremiah, and in Herod's Temple for Jesus.

2. *Parallels Between Jeremiah 7 and 26 and Matthew 23:29-24:2*

Further links beyond those already mentioned exist between Jeremiah's Temple Sermon and Jesus' Temple Discourse. Jeremiah's Temple Sermon in chaps. 7 and 26 has three significant major motifs that are paralleled in Matt 23:29-24:2: (1) the sending of the prophets; (2) the murder of the prophets; and (3) the prophetic judgment against the temple.

The Sending of the Prophets

The motif of "sending the prophets" is a common one in Jeremiah (7:25; 25:4-7; 26:4-6; 29:18-19; 35:15; 44:4-5). Of special

²⁷Cf. Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:46. See Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament*, pp. 19-20. For the use of Jer 7:11 as a "prophetic anticipation" of what was to come, see Donald Juell, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 31 (Missoula, Mont., 1977), pp. 132-134.

²⁸For the view that the Temple Sermon includes only vss. 1-15, see, e.g., Thompson, pp. 272-273, 283. Whether Matthew considered that section as the entire Temple Sermon is not known.

interest here are 7:25 and 26:4-6. Because of Judah's rebellious attitude, God desired the people to listen to "my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently" (26:5). In a similar passage in 7:25, God tells the people that he has sent "all my servants the prophets" since the days of the Exodus. Yet, the result has been that the people have refused to listen to God and his prophets (7:26). Although they have rejected his prophets, God will send Jeremiah to "speak" and "call" to them; but still, they will continue to refuse to "listen" or "answer" (7:27).

In Matt 23:34, we have a parallel saying of Jesus, who expands it and casts it in the present tense: "Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, . . ." ²⁹ Here Jesus refers to his disciples. In Matt 10:16 (cf. vs. 5) Jesus tells his disciples: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; . . ." Several other parallels between 23:34 and chap. 10 show conclusively that when Jesus refers to the "prophets and wise men and scribes," he is referring to his disciples. ³⁰ Even as early as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus implies that his disciples are prophets; there he refers to "the prophets who were before you" (5:12). ³¹ Thus, as Jeremiah was sent by God to the Judeans (Jer 7:25, 26), even though they were known for refusing to listen to the prophets, so Jesus sends the prophets (and wise men and scribes), even though their hearers are known for murdering the prophets and the righteous (Matt 23:34: cf. vss. 29-33).

The Murder of the Prophets

A second major parallel between Jer 7 and 26 and Matt 23:29-24:2 is that of the murder of the prophets. ³² At the beginning of

²⁹On the parallelism, see Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 469.

³⁰The disciples are sent (10:5, 16), persecuted from city to city (10:23), scourged (10:17), and killed (10:21). These same characteristics are found in 23:34.

³¹Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 74.

³²The general persecution of the prophets is, of course, a much larger theme, and is not treated herein, except where it is closely tied to prophetic martyrdoms. For an excellent discussion of the violent fate of the prophets, see Aune, pp. 157-159; and cf. also D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, SNTSMS 6, gen. ed. Matthew Black (Cambridge, Eng., 1967), pp. 137-139.

Jeremiah's Temple Sermon, God told him to tell the people not to "shed innocent blood in this place" (7:6). The shedding of innocent blood is an important motif both for Jeremiah and for Matthew. In Jeremiah, the expression "shed innocent blood" in 7:6 is paralleled in chap. 26: After delivering the Temple Sermon, Jeremiah defends himself against his impending death decree by saying that the priests, prophets, and people "will bring innocent blood" upon themselves if they kill him (26:15).

Although there is some question as to just what is intended by the term "in this place" in 7:6, it seems that the temple is the object here.³³ First, the temple is the place of the sermon itself. Second, the "place" in 7:12 is where God once dwelt—Shiloh. Third, the place that God chose for his name to dwell was traditionally the tabernacle/temple (cf. Deut 12:11; 14:23; 1 Kgs 8:29, 35).³⁴ If we see "this place" in 7:6 as referring to the temple, we find the people clamoring for Jeremiah's death in the temple—the "house of the LORD" (26:7)—even though he had warned them to stop this hideous practice!

But do we find any explicit OT accounts of the actual murder of prophets? There are only two cases to consider. The first is Zechariah, the son of Jehoida the high priest, who announced that God had forsaken his people because they had forsaken him; they had forsaken "the house of the LORD" (2 Chron 24:18). Zechariah was stoned to death in "the court of the house of the LORD" (vss. 20-21) while crying out for God to avenge his blood (vs. 22). In this case we assume that the Chronicler considered Zechariah to be a prophet (cf. vs. 19). The second case is that of Uriah from Kiriath-jearim, who "prophesied against this city [Jerusalem] and against this land in words like those of Jeremiah" (Jer 26:20). He aroused the wrath of King Jehoiakim and fled to Egypt (vs. 21), but he was brought back to the city and executed (vss. 22-23). These two cases are the *only* explicit cases mentioned in the OT with regard to prophetic figures being murdered.³⁵

³³See Thompson, pp. 276, 279.

³⁴See the arguments by J. Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB 21 (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), p. 55, n. on vs. 3.

³⁵It is *assumed* that Uriah spoke against the temple. It seems improbable that he was killed in the temple, since he escaped to Egypt first. There were prophets who

In Matt 23:29-37, there is a continued emphasis on the murder of the prophets. Jesus describes the Pharisees and scribes as persons who "build the tombs of the prophets" (23:29), deny that they would ever have had intentions of "shedding the blood of the prophets" (vs. 30), and yet prove themselves to be "sons of those who murdered the prophets" (vs. 31). Their evil character is proven by the fact that they will kill and crucify and persecute those Jesus is sending them (vs. 34). The murder of the prophets is such an outrage that Jesus refers to Jerusalem in an epithet as "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!" (vs. 37). Jerusalem's reputation in Jesus' time as a place where prophets were murdered is somewhat obscure, however, mainly because of the paucity of OT information in this regard.³⁶ As we have just seen, the only two OT prophetic figures (mentioned by name, at least) who were murdered in Jerusalem were Zechariah and Uriah; and of these two, only one was stoned to death—Zechariah (2 Chron 24:21).

Nevertheless, the text in Matthew does seem to imply that there was more than one prophet who met death by stoning.³⁷ It is possible that the lament over Jerusalem consisted in part of a generally accepted truism or proverb disassociated from actual cases (cf. Acts 7:52; Heb 11:32-38). However, the problem of Jerusalem as being the center of the murder of the prophets and messengers of God becomes less perplexing when one realizes two things: First, Jesus is here referring to the prophets (and wise men and scribes) that he is already sending out (Matt 23:34).³⁸ These are his own disciples, who are sent forth on their mission to the

were killed in other places (i.e., outside of Jerusalem) for other reasons. See 1 Kgs 18:4, 13; 19:10, 14; Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30; and cf. Friedrich, p. 834. As for Jewish traditions about the murder of prophetic figures, see D. E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, *NovTSup* 52 (Leiden, 1979), pp. 179-181; and Ginzberg, 6:371, n. 96, and 6:374-375, n. 103. Heb 11:37 is apparently acquainted with the tradition about Isaiah being sawn in two, although the OT is silent on this topic. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964), pp. 340-341.

³⁶See T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, Eng., 1949), pp. 126-127.

³⁷This *may* include reference to Jeremiah himself, who, according to some traditions, was stoned to death. See J. Jeremias, "Jeremias," *TDNT* 3 (1965): 219-220; Ginzberg, 6:399-400, n. 42; and Bruce, p. 340.

³⁸Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 472-473.

Israelites (cf. chap. 10). Second, Matthew has in mind the death of Jesus himself, who is the exemplar of his disciples (10:24-25). The *haima dikaion ekchynnomenon* ("righteous blood shed") in 23:35 finds its counterpart in 26:28: *to haima mou tēs diathēkēs to peri pollōn ekchynnomenon eis aphesin hamartiōn* ("[this is] my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins").³⁹ In 23:34-35, Matthew is preparing his readers for the death of Jesus. Thus, Jerusalem's reputation rests not only on the past, but also on the present as well.⁴⁰

Matthew's use of *haima dikaion* in 23:35 is not an obvious rendering of the Hebrew in Jeremiah's reference to "innocent blood" in 7:6 and 26(33):15. In the LXX, the phrase is instead *haima athōn*,⁴¹ a phrase which occurs only once in the NT—Matt 27:4, where Judas cries out, *hēmarton paradous haima athōn* ("I have sinned in betraying innocent blood"). This verse alludes to Jer 19:4 (LXX), which gives part of the reason for the change of the name of the place called "Topheth" to the "valley of Slaughter" (19:6; cf. Matt 27:8: *agros haimatos*, "Field of Blood"). That reason is that the people have shed the *haima athōn*. In Matt 27:24, Pilate claims, "I am innocent of this man's blood" (*athōs eimi apo tou haimatos toutou*), and the Jews subsequently (vs. 25) admit responsibility by shouting out, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (*to haima autou eph hēmas kai epi ta tekna hēmōn*). Thus, there is in Matt 27 a significant motif of the shedding of innocent blood, which motif becomes meaningful in the light of 23:35, even though the phrasing is different. Some interpreters think that perhaps 23:35 also contains the idea of innocence.⁴²

³⁹Garland, pp. 177-178. Matt 26:28 (cf. Mark 14:24) alludes to Jer 31(38):33, 34. Also, Matt 23:35 has a parallel in Jer 7:6: *haima athōn mē ekcheēte en tō topō toutō*.

⁴⁰Cf. Garland, p. 203.

⁴¹See also Deut 27:25; 1 Sam 19:5; 25:26, 31; 1 Kgs 2:5; 2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; 2 Chron 36:5 (LXX only); Pss 94(93):21; 106(105):38; Jer 2:34; 7:6; 19:4; 22:3, 17; 26(33):15. For an example of the viewpoint that Jer 7:6 is an allusion to the curse of Deut 27:25, see Francis Kenro Kumacki, "The Temple Sermon: Jeremiah's Polemic Against the Deuteronomists (Dtr [1])" (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary in New York, 1980), p. 230.

⁴²D. P. Senior, *The Passion Narrative According to Matthew: A Redactional Study* (Leuven, 1975), p. 257; G. Schrenk, "dikaios," *TDNT* 2 (1964): 189; Garland,

Upon closer investigation of Matt 23:35, one finds another striking parallel to Jer 26(33):15 (LXX). Jesus states that the scribes and Pharisees will persecute and kill the prophets and wise men and scribes (23:34), with the result that “upon you [*eph hymas*] may come all the righteous blood shed [*haima dikaion ekchynnomenon*] on earth” (23:35)—from Abel to Zechariah.⁴³ The coupling of “innocent” or “righteous blood” with “upon you” occurs only in Jer 26(33):15 and Matt 23:35 (cf. Jonah 1:14, LXX).⁴⁴ Thus, with regard to the shedding of innocent blood, we can see several parallels between Matt 23:35, on the one hand, and Jer 7:6 and 26:15, on the other hand. (This is so, even though Matt 23:35 parallels Lam 4:13 [LXX] more closely by using *dikaion* instead of *athōon*⁴⁵).

The Prophetic Judgment Against the Temple

The third major parallel between Jer 7 and 26 and Matt 23:29-24:2 that requires attention here is the prophetic judgment against the temple. In Jer 7, the narrative reveals that the people have been trusting in deceptive words, in proclaiming, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD” (vs. 4). They have committed all kinds of evil (vs. 9), and yet they have felt that they would be protected because of the presence of the temple itself (vs. 10). But God declares that he is not bound to any particular locality, especially the temple in Jerusalem. He jolts the memories of the Israelites by saying, “Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel” (vs. 12)—and by adding, still further, that he would “do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh” (vs. 14). In 26:6, God declares in a similar fashion that he will “make this house like

p. 184, n. 71. Garland is less enthusiastic about this interpretation than are the others.

⁴³As to the identity of Zechariah, which here appears confusing when compared with the OT, the Zechariah in 2 Chron 24 seems to fit the best. See the discussion in Garland, pp. 181-184, and Gundry, *Matthew*, pp. 471-472.

⁴⁴Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 470.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 470-471.

Shiloh, and . . . make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.”

The response to Jeremiah's message about the temple and the city was immediate: “. . . the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, ‘You shall die!’” (26:8). Because he had prophesied that the temple would become like Shiloh and that the city would become desolate, the crowds demanded the sentence of death (vss. 9, 11). But because some of the elders remembered that although the prophet Micah had prophesied the same message, King Hezekiah had not murdered him, Jeremiah was set free (vss. 16-19, 24).

To what does the reference to “Shiloh” allude? Shiloh had been the center of worship during the days of Eli (1 Sam 1-4), for the “house of the LORD” was there (1 Sam 1:24). Shiloh ceased to be the site of the tabernacle after the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 4:11). Archaeologists have discovered that Shiloh was completely destroyed about the same time (ca. 1050 B.C.).⁴⁶

The OT does not inform us as to what happened to Shiloh, except for the mention made in Ps 78:60-61. Here the psalmist states that God “forsook his dwelling at Shiloh” and delivered “his glory to the hand of the foe.” Whether Jeremiah's reference is to the abandonment of the sanctuary or to its resulting destruction seems hard to determine, since he simply compares Shiloh and the Jerusalem temple. However, the idea was prominent that the two aspects—abandonment by God and subsequent destruction (or disaster)—were closely related in a cause-and-effect relationship.⁴⁷ For example, Zechariah's prophecy that God would forsake (or, abandon) the people (2 Chron 24:20) was fulfilled when the Syrians plundered Jerusalem and murdered its officials and when King Joash himself was murdered (vss. 23-25). Thus in Jeremiah, it is

⁴⁶For the view that Jeremiah referred to a recent destruction of Shiloh in his era, see R. A. Pearce, “Shiloh and Jer. VII 12, 14, & 15,” *VT* 23 (1973): 105-108. Cf. also Kumacki, pp. 243-251. For the opposite viewpoint, see J. Day, “The Destruction of the Shiloh Sanctuary and Jeremiah vii 12, 14,” in *Studies in the Historical Books of the Old Testament*, ed. J. A. Emerton, *VTSup* 30 (Leiden, 1979), pp. 87-94.

⁴⁷Cf. the discussion of rejection in T. M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia, 1977), pp. 60-67.

true that the people are portrayed as deceiving themselves by trusting in the temple, for when God abandons the temple, calamity will certainly follow.

In Matt 23:38 we find specifically the statement that *idou aphietai hymin ho oikos hymōn erēmos* ("Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," KJV). The word *erēmos* refers to the idea of "abandonment" rather than "devastation" or "destruction."⁴⁸ Several interpreters have seen this verse as an allusion to *some* verse in Jeremiah, usually 12:7 or 22:5, or to a conflation of both.⁴⁹ But a more vexing concern seems to be that of determining to precisely what the *oikos* ("house") in Matt 23:38 refers.⁵⁰ Scholarly opinion has been divided among three major options: the temple, Jerusalem, and/or Israel itself.

It is not within the scope of this article to evaluate the arguments for and against each of these options. Suffice it to say that I concur with the interpretation that the *oikos* refers to the *temple*. Some of my reasons for this are, briefly, these: (1) Inasmuch as Matthew quotes Jesus as referring to *ho oikos mou* ("my house") immediately after Jesus has entered the temple (21:12-13) and quotes him again as referring to *ho oikos hymin* ("your house") immediately before leaving the temple for the last time (23:38-24:1), it would seem that the *oikos* in chaps. 21-23 is the same in both cases; (2) Jesus' reason for the judgment against the *oikos* (23:38), as given in 23:39 (*gar . . . ou mē me idēte . . .* ["For . . . you will not see me . . ."]) would make the best sense if the desolation is viewed as a reference to Jesus' leaving the temple (in Matthew, Jesus never returns to the temple, even though he is still in the city of Jerusalem);⁵¹ (3) Matthew's omission of the story of the Widow's Mite (cf. Mark 12:41-44) shows his concern to connect Jesus' leaving the temple in 24:1 with the saying in 23:38;⁵² and

⁴⁸See G. Kittel, "*erēmos*," *TDNT* 2 (1964), pp. 657-660; Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 473; Meier, p. 166; and Schweizer, p. 445.

⁴⁹Cf. Allen, pp. 251-252; Garland, p. 198, n. 116; Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 473; and McNeile, p. 342. Burnett, pp. 70-72, apparently sees no connection with either of these verses.

⁵⁰See the excellent discussion in Garland, pp. 198-199.

⁵¹Cf. Burnett, pp. 72-74.

⁵²Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 474; and Burnett, pp. 112-129.

(4) when Jesus said, "You see all these, do you not?" (*ou blepete tauta panta*) in 24:2, he was referring, not to the physical temple which his disciples were admiring (cf. Mark 13:2), but to the content of what he had been discussing earlier, namely, in 23:38.⁵³

To identify the temple as the *oikos* does not exclude the idea of the city or the country. All three were tightly bound together, as indicated in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 7:7-8; 12:7-13; 26:6, 9, 11, 18). Yet it was the abandonment of the *temple* that caused the destruction/desolation of the other two.⁵⁴ In fact, this broader conceptualization was probably part, at least, of the reason for the frenzied attack on Jeremiah, for to speak against the temple was to spell instant doom.

As Jesus began his Temple Discourse with a ringing condemnation of the temple because it had become a "den of robbers" (Matt 23:13; cf. Jer 7:11 [LXX]), so he drew that condemnation also to its natural conclusion: The temple would become abandoned and desolate, just like Shiloh (Matt 23:38; cf. Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6). The shedding of the "righteous" or "innocent" blood (Matt 23:29-35, 37; cf. Jer 7:6)—symbolizing the violent death of God's messengers—was a major reason why God abandoned his house.⁵⁵ And yet, in Matthew, the God who abandons his house is none other than Jesus himself; for after his judgment on the temple, Jesus goes out of it (*ekselthōn*) and goes (*eporeueto*) away—never to return (24:1).⁵⁶

Conclusion

In this article, we have first seen that Matthew had an interest in Jesus "the prophet"—especially in reference to his teaching in the temple in chaps. 21-23. In the prediction about the prophet

⁵³See Gundry, *Matthew*, p. 475; and Burnett, pp. 156-160. For a similar use of *tauta panta*, see Matt 13:51. See also 19:20 and 23:36.

⁵⁴Cf. Garland, p. 199.

⁵⁵See *ibid.*, pp. 201-202, n. 121. The "abominations" listed in Matt 23:13-26 and Jer 7:5-10 are also a cause of the abandonment. The same idea occurs in Ezek 8:6; 11:5-8, 22, 23.

⁵⁶On *ekserchomai* in Matt 24:1, see Burnett, pp. 116-119 and 428-434. Comparable to Jer 7:4, in Matt 24:1 the disciples were trusting in the temple's presence; they could not believe that destruction would come upon it.

mentioned in Deut 18:15-19, we have found a link also between Jesus “the prophet” and Jeremiah the prophet. And we have discovered that both Jesus and Jeremiah preached in the temple, with the climax of their speeches being the alarming message that the temple would be abandoned by God.

The drawing of parallels is, of course, a risky enterprise—especially when carried to extremes. Nonetheless, it can be fruitful and genuinely informative when undertaken with due caution and adequate controls. Moreover, the occurrence of multiple parallels carries weight that random and isolated parallels do not have, inasmuch as such a clustering of parallels tends to rule out the possibility of mere coincidence.

In this study, my purpose has been to seek to understand Matthew’s interest in Jeremiah; and the question may logically be asked, Do not the multiple parallels of the sort I have noted above underscore and illuminate Matthew’s reference to Jer 16:14? Matthew’s interest in Jeremiah, I have argued, was not because he wished to identify Jesus with Jeremiah *per se*, nor because he saw Jeremiah as a messianic figure, but rather because Jesus’ judgment on the temple while in the temple complex paralleled Jeremiah’s judgment on the temple while that prophet was in the temple complex.