

## **Two Sermons: A Presentation of the Thematic Relationship Between the Temple Sermon of Jeremiah 7 and the Baptism Pericope of Matthew 3:7-10**

### **Abstract**

The “Temple Sermon” of Jeremiah 7 rebukes the Lord’s people for their trust in the “temple of *Yahweh*” as an escape from the coming judgment that is due to their sin. Likewise, John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7-10 rebukes the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ trust in Abrahamic lineage as an apparent escape from judgment due to their not producing “fruit in keeping with repentance” (NIV). There seems to be an echo of Judah’s trust in the “Temple of *Yahweh*” found in John the Baptist’s rebuke in the baptism pericope of the Gospel of Matthew. This would serve as a precursor to the ministry of Jesus in Matthew, where he is presented as a prophet like Jeremiah who, despite the scorn of the Jewish leaders, consistently taught inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God (Matt. 8; 28), and who uses the same phraseology of John the Baptist (e.g., “brood of vipers”) in different places of Matthew (Matt. 13; 12:34; 23:33) in regards to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Thus, this paper contends that there is a thematic echo between both passages.

### **Keywords**

Jeremiah, Matthew, John the Baptist, Baptism Pericope, Echoes .

### **Introduction**

The baptism pericope in Matthew 3 is one of the earliest texts in Matthew that demonstrates the start of the conflict between the ministry of Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries. Specifically, this conflict begins in the ministry of John the Baptist. This paper will demonstrate how John the Baptist’s rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees in the baptism pericope is a thematic echo of the Temple Sermon of Jeremiah 7. This echo further validates the perspective that the Jeremiah prophetic tradition influenced Matthew. This will be demonstrated through a presentation of the following: (1) the theme of judgment in the Baptism pericope, (2) the judgment theme in the Temple Sermon, and (3) the thematic relationship between both passages.

### **Methodology**

This paper understands a thematic echo according to Richard Hays’s method of “discovering figural fusions between the story of Jesus and the older and longer story of Israel’s journey with God.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 14.

## The Theme of Judgment in the Baptism Pericope

John the Baptist is presented as a figure who calls the people of Israel to repentance and a demonstration of that repentance. It is also clear in the judgment speech that he challenged the Jewish leaders' trust in Abrahamic lineage as a means of escaping the impending judgment. Indeed, Margaret Barker proposes that the early church shared similarities with the Qumran community in its rejection of the current temple of the Jews. Barker also touches on the church's belief that the restoration of true temple worship was inaugurated with Jesus.<sup>2</sup> This message of judgment by John would ultimately lead to his rejection and execution.

### Matthew 3:7-10

7 Ἴδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς• γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας 9 καὶ μὴ δόξητε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 10 ἤδη δὲ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.

This passage singles out a particular group of Jewish leaders who came to survey what was taking place at the Jordan River.<sup>3</sup> R. T. France notes that the explanation that the Pharisees and Sadducees were ἐρχομένους (coming) to where John was baptizing, rather than coming to be ἐβαπτίζοντο (baptized) like the rest of the people in verse 6 indicates that they were curious as to the nature of this movement.<sup>4</sup>

### The Reason for the Rebuke

ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ is probably a wordplay in Aramaic or Hebrew according to Craig Evans; for, the word for “stone” in Hebrew is *eben*, and the word for “son” is *be*.<sup>5</sup> R. T. France concurs with this assessment when he states that, “The choice of “stones” to represent Abraham’s true children is no doubt prompted by the obvious Hebrew or Aramaic pun.”<sup>6</sup> What is evident is that the reference in the text is portrayed as a symbol. Evans notes that the possible image is referenced in Isaiah 51:1-2 where it says, “Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; 2 look to Abraham, your father” (NIV).<sup>7</sup> Abraham was the first

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (Great Britain: SPCK Publishing, 2004), 1-11.

<sup>3</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 110.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Evans, *Matthew* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 72.

<sup>6</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 111.

<sup>7</sup> Evans, 71.

person to be called a Hebrew in the Bible (Gen. 14:13). Marvin Wilson comments, "All Jews trace their ancestry to Abraham as father of the Hebrew nation."<sup>8</sup>

John the Baptist is clearly rebuking the Jewish leaders over their trust in Abrahamic lineage as a means of escaping the coming judgment. E. P. Sanders explained that "The doctrine of the election is the theological expression of the feeling of community that bound together the Jews of the ancient world."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, texts like the *Psalms of Solomon* confirms this apparent trust when it says, "For thou didst choose the seed of Abraham before all the nations, and didst set thy name upon us, O Lord."<sup>10</sup> In addition, rabbinic Judaism held the stance that Abraham embodied the standard of righteousness *par excellence*. This is demonstrated in the rabbinic writing, *Genesis Rabbah*, where it states,

Perhaps in the proper order of things Abraham should have been the first man created, not Adam. God, however, foresaw the fall of the first man, and if Abraham had been the first man and had fallen, there would have been no one after him to restore righteousness to the world; whereas after Adam's fall came Abraham, who established in the world the knowledge of God. As a builder puts the strongest beam in the center of the building, so as to support the structure at both ends, so Abraham was the strong beam carrying the burden of the generations that existed before him and that came after him.<sup>11</sup>

Other texts like the apocryphal *Prayer of Manasseh* demonstrate the Jewish view that Abraham and the other patriarchs were without sin. The text states, "Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against thee" (RSV).<sup>12</sup> So not only was Abraham the father of the Jewish faith, but he was their symbol of righteousness.

Thus, this trust in their election as a people as a means of escaping judgment is what calls for repentance in the message of John. Naturally, it transitions into the baptism narrative beginning with the baptism of Jesus.

---

<sup>8</sup> Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 4.

<sup>9</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 262.

<sup>10</sup> *Psalms of Solomon* 9 in *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, Rutherford H. Platt, Jr. (1926), accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe185.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> *Genesis Rabbah*, in the *Midrash*, Sacred Texts, 51, accessed May 2, 2017, [www. Sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm](http://www.Sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm).

<sup>12</sup> *Pr Man* 1:8, Wesley Center Online, accessed May 12, 2018, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/r/rsv/rsv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=4216956>.

## The Warning of Judgment

John's phrase in verse 10 that ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται or the "ax is applied to the foot of the trees," is reminiscent of Jesus' warning against false prophets in Matthew 7:19 that, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (NIV). The phrase has the connotations that judgment is nigh for those who reject truth or who adhere to falsehood.

This leads to a discussion of the phrase εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. Being cast into the fire is the result of the trees that do not bear good fruit according to John. Once again, this same phrase is used by Jesus in Matthew 7:19 to describe the fate of the false prophets. D. A. Carson believes that the use of the phrase in both passages demonstrates that it may have been a "proverbial"<sup>13</sup> saying in the context; thus, the phrase was not placed there by Matthew, but it was an actual saying of Jesus. Whatever the case may be, the language is a warning of impending judgment for fruitless prophets. Craig Keener notes how this idea of "fruitless trees" is used in other Matthean passages (Matt. 12:33; 21:19; 23:3) as a description for the Jewish religious leaders.<sup>14</sup>

Also of note is the term ψευδοπροφητῶν (false prophets). The root term is ψευδής, meaning "false" in the general sense.<sup>15</sup> This term has a connection with Jeremiah's warnings against the people of Judah, especially in the LXX. This will be shown a little later in the paper.

In the case of the baptism pericope, even though John is rebuking the Jewish leaders' trust in Abrahamic lineage as an escape from judgment, it is not the lineage that demonstrates their unrighteousness, but it is their lack of righteous fruit.<sup>16</sup>

## The Rejection of John the Baptist

Even though it is not immediately obvious in the baptism pericope, John the Baptist would indeed be rejected. Jesus explained that his contemporaries accused John the Baptist of having "a demon" in Matthew 11:18. John's arrest by Herod Antipas (20-39 BCE) and subsequent death recorded in Matthew 14 indicates that he also faced unpopularity with some of the aristocracies. Even though John rebuked Herod over his adulterous marriage, Matthew 14:5 records that the people "considered John a prophet" (NIV). Likewise, Josephus (CE 37-100) wrote that John the Baptist "was a good man" in

---

<sup>13</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 8*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 191.

<sup>14</sup> Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 251, <http://www.questia.com/read/119906880/a-commentary-on-the-gospel-of-matthew>.

<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. & ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 594.

<sup>16</sup> France, 112.

the eyes of the people, and they looked down on Herod's execution of John.<sup>17</sup> Josephus does not mention that John had enemies with the religious establishment, but Matthew 11:18 implies that there was a conflict with leaders and probably other contemporaries. This is especially since Jesus makes the comparison between his persecution with John's. The conflict with the Jewish leaders in the very next chapter (Matt. 12) over traditions and Sabbath laws gives credence to the idea that John was having a conflict with Jewish leaders. This conflict in John's ministry has led David L. Turner to describe John the Baptist as the "Penultimate Rejected Prophet."<sup>18</sup> Turner elaborates, "Matthew's understanding of John the Baptist as the penultimate rejected prophet can be understood from the way he presents John's early ministry, his rejection and imprisonment, his martyrdom, his relation to Elijah and Jesus, and the source of both his and Jesus' authority."<sup>19</sup> Turner also explains that John's ministry is a precursor to the ministry of Jesus, who was the ultimate rejected prophet in the Gospel of Matthew.

In addition, other portions of Matthew present the Pharisees and Sadducees as antagonists. It is important to note that Matthew specifies John's audience as the "Pharisees and Sadducees." In Luke's account, the crowds are the ones that are rebuked by John (Lk. 3:7). Mary Marshall points out that, "In this the Pharisees (and Sadducees) show the pattern of the chief priests and elders rather than the ordinary people who regarded John as a prophet (21:25-6, 32)."<sup>20</sup> This will be discussed again later in this paper in regards to temple leadership. Jesus also indicts this same group of religious leaders in Matthew 23:29-39. Here, Jesus identified the activities of the Pharisees and scribes with the ones who killed the prophets before him.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Jesus predicted that "Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town" (Matt. 23:34). Therefore, the group that John the Baptist had a conflict with were the Jewish leaders in addition to those who sided with the establishment.

John's title for the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7, γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, is also used by Jesus as a label for the Pharisees and teachers of the law in later passages (Matt. 12:34; 23:33). Possibly using Q, Matthew records these sayings of John and Jesus as a means of identifying both ministries together. However, the latter character is greater than the former in the story. This will play a key role in perceiving the rebuke of the temple and its leadership by John and Jesus.

---

<sup>17</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 540.

<sup>18</sup> David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 129.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Marshall, *The Portrayals of the Pharisees in the Gospels and Acts* (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 108.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 109.

## Summary

In summary, a number of conclusions can be made that will shape the flow of this paper. First, John the Baptist was viewed as a prophet by the people, and some respected him. Second, John brought a message that called for repentance of evil works, and he warned against trust in Abrahamic lineage as a guarantee of escape from impending judgment. Finally, the ministry of John the Baptist resulted in his subsequent rejection and eventual execution. Though the people regarded him as a prophet, he still had enemies among some of the establishment and the Jewish leaders.

## **The Theme of Judgment in the Temple Sermon**

Related to the ministry of John the Baptist, especially the baptism pericope, is the Temple Sermon of Jeremiah 7. The sermon shares close affinities with the prediction of judgment scene in the baptism pericope. In addition, Jeremiah also experienced rejection as a result of his message of judgment against the people and religious leaders.

### The Rebuke in the Temple Sermon

Jeremiah 7:1-8 states,

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: “Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. 3 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. 4 Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” 5 If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, 6 if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, 7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors forever and ever. 8 But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless (NIV).

As in the baptism pericope, here the people of Judah are rebuked for their trust in a building as a means of escaping impending judgment for their deeds. Indeed, “they considered the temple to be so important in God’s eyes that perforce they must be secure.”<sup>22</sup> The triple repetition of the warning against trusting in the “temple of the Lord” may have been a superstitious chant.<sup>23</sup> This influence possibly came from outside the

---

<sup>22</sup> Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 26-52*, Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 26 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1991), 121.

<sup>23</sup> J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 277.

Jewish context. Judah is commanded to not trust in *קרהשק*, or as Thompson translates, “The Lie.”<sup>24</sup> The Targum on this passage summarizes verse 4 as, “Do not trust in the words of the prophets of falsehood.”<sup>25</sup> One can see that Jeremiah is targeting a specific group of leaders who are leading a group of people astray with their falsehood. The term used in the text for “falsehood,” *שקר*, is frequently used in Jeremiah in reference to those who would speak falsehood, and it is also used in connection with the falsehood of idol worship.<sup>26</sup> In the LXX the *שקר* translates to *ψευδέσιον*. In the rest of the Hebrew Bible, *שקר* has the connotation of “false witness.”<sup>27</sup> One can see the developing connection between the falsehood of the prophets in Jeremiah and the falsehood of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew.

The falsehood in chapter 7 is grounded on the idea that one can sin and trust in rituals or places as a means of escaping the judgment. The people are essentially the “fruitless trees” of Matthew 3. F. B. Huey, Jr. explains, “They believed that observing the temple rituals freed them to return to their ‘detestable things’ (a word that often bears sexual overtones) without fear of punishment.”<sup>28</sup> The rest of chapter 7 follows the same theme of Judah’s indictment as a result of the people’s sin.

#### The Judgment in Jeremiah 22

In the context of the wicked king of Judah, Jeremiah 22:7 contains phrases that are used in Matthew in connection to judgment. Prophesying about the destruction of the palace in Jerusalem, Jeremiah said, “they will cut up your fine cedar beams and throw them into the fire” (NIV). The phrase is *ἐμβαλοῦσιν εἰς τὸ πῦρ* in the LXX, and one can immediately see the connection between this phrase and the ones used by John the Baptist and Jesus in Matthew in reference to judgment (Matt. 3:10; 7:19).<sup>29</sup> The difference is that Matthew used the present passive *βάλλεται*, while the translators of the LXX chose to use the future active *ἐμβαλοῦσιν*. The Matthean term gives the reader the sense that judgment is already in process. The presence of this particular phrase demonstrates a shared judgment phraseology between Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Thus, the message of judgment on those who have not repented of their ways permeates the lives of Jeremiah, John, and Jesus.

#### The Rejection in Jeremiah 26

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Hayward, trans., *The Targum of Jeremiah* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 70.

<sup>26</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament: Volume 2* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2462.

<sup>27</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 598.

<sup>28</sup> F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The New American Commentary: Volume 16 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 106.

<sup>29</sup> Evans, 72.

The text that provides the narrative for the Temple Sermon is Jeremiah 26. It is here that one can see the response of the audience to Jeremiah's sermon of judgment. It is also here that Jeremiah is faced with threats by the religious elders and the people as a result of the sermon of judgment (Jer. 26:11). As in Matthew, Jeremiah is also threatened by the religious leaders. Indeed, the civic leaders are the ones who come to his defense (Jer. 26:16).<sup>30</sup> Walter Brueggemann elaborates, "The conflict that arises from the dangerous decree of God places the messenger in jeopardy because his construal of the city is a most unwelcome one."<sup>31</sup> Yet, it seems that in contrast to John, Jeremiah experienced rejection from more of the population than just the religious leaders (Jer. 26:8). However, this does not diminish the connection, for both ministers experienced support from some groups despite the rejection from religious leadership. Thus, Jeremiah experienced rejection by the religious leaders of the people and others, but he did have some support from the civic leaders.

### Summary

In summary of this section, it is important to note the similarities that the Temple Sermon shares with the baptism pericope of Matthew. The Temple Sermon contains a message of judgment against the people of Judah spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. The rebuke in the sermon of judgment is against the people's trust in the temple as a symbol that they will escape the impending judgment due to their unrighteous actions. As in the baptism pericope, one may witness a misguided trust in a symbol rather than a committed heart in *Yahweh*. This sermon also contains language that is used and echoed in the baptism pericope of Matthew.

Furthermore, in a similar fashion to John the Baptist, Jeremiah also experienced rejection of his sermon by the elders of the people in Jeremiah 26. However, the civic leaders supported Jeremiah, much like the people who recognized that John was a prophet (Matt. 11:5). All of these themes point to a relationship between the prophet Jeremiah and the forerunner John the Baptist.

### **Thematic Echo of the Temple Sermon in Matthew 3:7-10**

Matthew has long been known to be a Gospel that is thematically driven, and his use of the Old Testament bears witness to this idea. Richard Longenecker states,

In seeking to understand Matthew's use of the Old Testament, it is well to remind ourselves of a phenomenon in the First Gospel that has been frequently noted and variously explained: that many parallels between the life of Jesus and the experiences of the nation Israel seems to lie inherent

---

<sup>30</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 236, <http://www.questia.com/read/125875667/a-commentary-on-jeremiah-exile-and-homecoming>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.



within the narrative of Matthew's Gospel...The First Evangelist seems to be following a thematic arrangement of material in the structuring of his Gospel.<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, when explaining the use of typology by Jesus to assert his greatness compared to David and Solomon (Matt. 12), France concurs with Longenecker's observation when he states that in general,

Matthew's typological framework is less explicitly exposed than in these two passages (Matt. 12:3-6; 12:22-42), and the reader is left to ponder on the significance of the hints and allusions to a wide range of Old Testament people, events and institutions which are worked into the narrative as occasion offers. As he does so, he will increasingly come to realize that for Matthew the range of the concept of 'fulfilment' is far broader than a mere study of the Old Testament's explicit predictions of God's eschatological purpose would reveal.<sup>33</sup>

France made these comments in the context of discussing the theme of fulfillment in Matthew. France is correct in his explanation that there is a much richer way to read the Gospel of Matthew in light of the Old Testament. In regards to his attribution of typology to the Gospel of Matthew, this paper will not follow a typological definition but will instead follow the definition of echoes by Richard Hays mentioned earlier.

Studies that have been done by Michael Knowles in his work, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*, has demonstrated that the rejected prophet motif plays a prominent role in understanding the Gospel of Matthew. This paper takes this idea a step further and shows how the baptism pericope is a thematic echo of the Temple Sermon, and it also shows how John the Baptist can be understood as one who operates his ministry according to the Jeremiah tradition.

#### Michael Knowles and the Rejected Prophet Motif

In his work, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction*, Michael Knowles argues that Matthew understands the figures of Jesus and John the Baptist in light of the ministry of Jeremiah.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, Jesus is the one who is prominently understood as the prophet of doom that experienced rejection by his

---

<sup>32</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 125.

<sup>33</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Paternoster Press, 1997), 190-191.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 307.

people.<sup>35</sup> Knowles finds both direct allusions to Jeremiah in Matthew and also typological parallels. In addition, both John the Baptist and Jesus share parallels in their ministry.

First, Matthew more clearly than Mark or Luke draws a parallel between Jesus and John.<sup>36</sup> Knowles states, “Herod wants to kill John, but fears the crowd, who hold him to be a prophet (14:5), much as the chief priest and the Pharisees want to arrest Jesus and put him to death, but fear the multitudes who likewise consider Jesus a prophet (21:45-46; cf. 26:3-5; 27:1).”<sup>37</sup>

Second, Matthew also spends more time identifying the suffering of John with Elijah and Jesus.<sup>38</sup> This is demonstrated in the transfiguration pericope where Jesus explained to his disciples in Matthew 17:11-12 that, “I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ 13 Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist” (NIV). It is significant to point out that Mark left out the note identifying John with Elijah. Likewise, Luke’s account leaves out any mention of John. No doubt Elijah suffered rejection at the hands of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel (1 Kgs. 17-21), but one of the most persuasive arguments that Knowles makes for a typological connection between Jesus and Jeremiah is in Matthew chapter 16.

The pericope in Matthew 16 presents the confession of Peter regarding the messiahship of Christ. Jesus asked the disciples whom people said that he was and they responded in verse 14, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (NIV). The inclusion of Jeremiah by Matthew here and the exclusion of his name by the other Synoptics indicates a redaction according to Knowles.<sup>39</sup> The reason for the inclusion of Jeremiah is explained by Knowles when he states, “According to Matthew, Jesus was perceived by his contemporaries as a prophet of misfortune and suffered their opprobrium as a result: the one fact explains the other.”<sup>40</sup> The emphasis on Jeremiah is hard to miss, and Knowles is correct in his understanding of Matthew’s intentionality. Mark F. Whitters explains the significance of Matthew 16:14 when he states, “There are two other direct references to the Book of Jeremiah in the Gospel, one at the beginning of Jesus’ life, the other at the end. Taken together, these three references lie at strategic points in the narrative, and they hint at

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 94.

some thread that binds the life of Jesus to the memory of Jeremiah.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, these three passages of Matthew indicate that the author intends to draw attention to a narrative structure that identifies at least the figure of Jesus with the prophet Jeremiah.

### The Temple Cleansing Pericope

Another section in Matthew where an allusion is made to Jeremiah is in the temple cleansing pericope (Matt. 21:12-17). Jesus rebuked the temple worshippers for “making it a den of robbers” (NIV). Craig L. Blomberg renders the translation as “cave of terrorists;” this is because *ληιστῶν* is better understood as “insurrectionist” and *σπήλαιον* as “cave.”<sup>42</sup> The phrase also alludes to Jeremiah 7:11 where the phrase there in the Hebrew *המרת פרצים* in similar fashion translates as “a cave of violent people.”<sup>43</sup> Once again, the allusion here seems to point towards a message of judgment by Jesus against the Jewish religious leaders. France elaborates, “Jesus, who has already been compared with Jeremiah (16:14) and who will soon, like Jeremiah, predict the destruction of the temple, joins the prophet in delivering his own brief ‘temple sermon.’”<sup>44</sup> One must not also lose sight of the eschatological implications of this prophetic indictment since the former part of Jesus’ Old Testament quotation is “My house will be called a house of prayer” (Matt. 21:13). The reference is to Isaiah 56:7 where the context deals with the restoration of Israel, and it also implies that all nations attend the house of *Yahweh* for worship.<sup>45</sup> Mark retains the more extended “house of prayer for all nations.” Carson argues that Matthew omitted “for all nations” because the evangelist is writing after CE 70 when the temple fell; thus, the temple was not the rallying point for all nations, but the future “house of prayer” is.<sup>46</sup> However, the fact that Matthew does not confirm the physical destruction of the temple in chapter 24 gives credence to the idea that this event is before A.D. 70. One reasonable explanation is made by Keener who explains that Matthew may have just desired to emphasize the latter portion of Jesus’ quotation.<sup>47</sup> This event of the temple cleansing most certainly shares a background with a temple cleansing in the age of the coming Elijah according to Malachi 3:1-3. In addition, Qumran texts like the *Habbakuk Peshar* portray a negative attitude towards the priestly establishment.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the pseudepigraphical, *Psalms of Solomon*

---

<sup>41</sup> Mark F. Whitters, “Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, No. 2 (April 2006): 230. Accessed November 18, 2018.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>42</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, ed., D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 68.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 787.

<sup>45</sup> Blomberg., 67.

<sup>46</sup> Carson, 442.

<sup>47</sup> Keener, 500-501.

<sup>48</sup> One text from the *Habbakuk Peshar* (1qpHab IX) concerning Habbukuk 2:8 reads, “Its interpretation concerns the last priests of Jerusalem, who will accumulate riches and loot from plundering peoples. However, in the last

presents a negative picture of those in council leadership. It states in *Pss. Sol.* 4:1, “Wherefore sittest thou, o profane (man), in the council of the pious, seeing that thy heart is far removed from the Lord, provoking with transgressions the God of Israel.”<sup>49</sup> The implications are that there was a negative stigma surrounding the temple establishment by some sects during the time of Jesus. Thus, this places the temple cleansing pericope in the center of a judgment theme, that Matthew identifies with Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon.

---

days their riches and their loot will fall into the hands of the army of the Kittim.” See Florentino García Martínez trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 201. The “Kittim” may have been the Romans according to Martínez, and the description of the conflict seems to point towards the Hasmonean priesthood. See also Martínez, iv.

<sup>49</sup> *Pss. Sol.* 4:1 in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, trans., G. Buchanan Gray, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), The Wesley Center Online, accessed November 18, 2018. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-psalms-of-solomon/>.

## John the Baptist and the Temple

Not only did Jesus indict the temple and its leadership, but so did John the Baptist. Indeed, while no explicit texts are recording John prophesying against the temple, Nicholas Perrin points out that his relationship with the religious leaders “was at best, a chilly one.”<sup>50</sup> In addition, Matthew’s specificity of John’s judgment audience as the Pharisees and Sadducees in the baptism pericope (Matt. 3:7-10) emphasizes representation of temple leadership. This is since the temple was such a focal point for both parties, especially for the Sadducees who enjoyed aristocratic power.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the Sadducees enjoyed high priestly power during the Herodian and Roman eras,<sup>52</sup> and they were also predisposed to opposing those who would challenge any leadership that was associated with them as a party or with the high priests.<sup>53</sup> The point is that John’s rebuke of these parties could be interpreted as an attack on the temple leadership, although he did not make claims about the physical destruction of the building as Jesus had. Regardless, John’s rebuke still falls in line with Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry. Both ministers challenged the elders of the people and spoke words of judgment against the religious institutions of their day.

One of the other indications that John challenged temple leadership is presented by Perrin. He believes that the Lord’s Prayer of Luke 11 indicates that John understood the times to be indicative of coming persecution as a result of a messianic tribulation.<sup>54</sup> He arrives at this conclusion because of the disciples’ request to Jesus to teach them how to pray in verse 1 “as John taught his disciples” (NIV).<sup>55</sup> Also, the Qumran covenanters understood the age of tribulation as indicative of *Yahweh’s* judgment against the wicked, and it also presupposed a restoration of God’s favor.<sup>56</sup> While it can be confirmed that Qumran held to these views, Perrin may be stretching the background of Luke 11; his idea is thought-provoking nonetheless. What can be established is that John was critical of the temple by proxy since he was critical of the temple leadership.

---

<sup>50</sup> Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 42.

<sup>51</sup> Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 102; 126-127.

<sup>52</sup> John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, ed., Wayne A. Meeks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 98.

<sup>53</sup> Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 BC to AD 100*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 156, <http://www.questia.com/read/120653178/the-new-testament-era-the-world-of-the-bible-from>.

<sup>54</sup> Perrin, 43.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

## Summary

In summary, there is an evident preoccupation with the rejected prophet motif in the Gospel of Matthew. Not including the direct fulfillment quotations (Matt. 2:17-18; 27:9-10), Matthew is filled with allusions and echoes to the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. Matthew's emphasis on Jeremiah is seen in the pericope concerning Peter's confession, and it is also seen in Jesus' use of Scripture in the cleansing of the temple (Matt. 21:12-17). Also, Matthew is interwoven with a theme that identifies Jesus with the rejected prophet.

The temple cleansing scene also demonstrates the reality that Jesus was understood as a prophet of judgment against the religious leaders. Likewise, John the Baptist may also be viewed as an opponent of the temple and its leadership because he rebukes them in the baptism pericope. His rebuke of the leadership included that of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both of these groups were a part of the ruling class of the Jews and temple leaders. Therefore, not only is Jesus a Jeremiah type figure in Matthew but so is John the Baptist.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the baptism pericope can be read as a thematic echo of Jeremiah's sermon of judgment against sinful Israel (Jer. 7). Whether Matthew intended the pericope to be specifically read that way remains a question, but based on the research of this paper, reading the narrative of Matthew with the ministry of Jeremiah as an undergirding framework implies that John the Baptist may be understood as a prophet in the lineage of many other persecuted prophets before him, namely Jeremiah. Moreover, the research demonstrates the following points.

First, the baptism pericope in Matthew 3 contains a message of judgment by John the Baptist, specifically Matthew 3:7-10. This message of judgment was against the Jewish religious leaders who put their trust in Abrahamic lineage as a means of escaping the impending judgment. This judgment for John was already being realized based on the syntax of the Greek. As a result of this message of judgment, John would experience rejection by at least the religious leaders, and he would eventually experience martyrdom at the hands of Herod Antipas. John's life and ministry fit into the mold of a rejected-prophet motif.

Second, similar to John the Baptist's sermon to the Pharisees and Sadducees is the Temple Sermon of Jeremiah 7. In this sermon, Jeremiah preaches a similar message to the Jews who were putting their trust in the temple as assurance that they would escape the impending judgment due to their actions. In addition, Jeremiah 22:7 contains phrases that illustrate judgment language that is on the lips of John in the baptism pericope sermon. This message of judgment characterized Jeremiah's ministry. Indeed, the message of doom would affect his own life. The narrative portion of the Temple

Sermon is recorded in Jeremiah 26. This text records the rejection of Jeremiah's message by the religious leaders and the people. This rejection leads to threats of capital punishment. However, Jeremiah did receive support from the civic leaders, but his ministry would be characterized by much persecution and rejection. These themes and similar judgment phrases in Matthew and the LXX indicate a literary relationship.

Third, there is a discernible thematic echo between the baptism pericope and the Temple Sermon of Jeremiah. Not only does the language in Matthew and the LXX indicate a relationship between the judgment texts but so does the overall theme of the rejected-prophet in Matthew. Michael Knowles in his *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* and Mark F. Whitters in his "Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah" both demonstrate that Matthew presents Jesus as a rejected prophet in the tradition of Jeremiah. In addition, Jesus follows the tradition of Jeremiah in his sermon against the religious leadership in the temple cleansing pericope (Matt. 21:12-17). France calls this speech Jesus' own "temple sermon."<sup>57</sup> Well, if the temple cleansing pericope recorded Jesus' "temple sermon," then the baptism pericope of Matthew 3:7-10 was John the Baptist's "temple sermon." Moreover, Nicholas Perrin in his *Jesus the Temple* argues that John also held a negative view of the temple establishment because of his friction with the religious leaders who represented the temple by proxy. This is further shown by Matthew's specificity in his organization of Pharisees and Sadducees as opponents of John and Jesus, and also in the organization of his Gospel. It is clear that Matthew intended his readers to understand who the antagonists were in the story, and he even references these opponents as being associated with those who persecuted *Yahweh's* prophets in the past (Matt. 23:29-39). The result of the relationship between Jesus' and John's ministries indicates solidarity in attitude towards the Jewish leaders that is reminiscent of the ministry of Jeremiah.

Due to the length and scope of this paper other questions remain to be researched. For example, in light of this connection between Jeremiah and John, how does his apparent questioning of Jesus' mission in Matthew 11:1-19 relate to the psychological struggles of Jeremiah during his ministry challenges (Jer. 20:7-18)? Is there another echo between both passages? In addition, can a connection be made between Jesus' warning of false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:15-20) and the "lying prophets" of Jeremiah 23:9-40. What is clear is that one can find a strong relationship between the works of Matthew and Jeremiah. Hays reminds one of the value in reading the New Testament backward when he says, "By seeing Israel's Scripture through the eyes of the Gospel writers, may we be encouraged to read backwards-and empowered to carry forward the story of Jesus with new freedom and faithfulness."<sup>58</sup> When one is reading the New Testament with the Old Testament as a reference, he or she has the opportunity to experience the reason for the Gospel narrative's being. Yet, there is much work to be

---

<sup>57</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 787.

<sup>58</sup> Hays, 366.

done in the area of the relationship between the Gospels and the Old Testament, and there is an endless amount of unexplored material.

## Sources

- Barker, Margaret. *Temple Theology: An Introduction*. Great Britain: SPCK Publishing, 2004.
- Blomberg, Craig L. "Matthew." In *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. Edited by D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998. <http://www.questia.com/read/125875667/a-commentary-on-jeremiah-exile-and-homecoming>.
- Carson, D. A. "Matthew" In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 8*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- Cohen, Shaye J. D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.
- Craigie, Peter C., Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr. *Jeremiah 26-52*. Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 26. Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1991.
- Evans, Craig. *Matthew*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- France, R. T. *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*. Paternoster Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
- Friedrich, Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated and Edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974.
- Genesis Rabbah*. In the *Midrash, Sacred Texts*, 51, accessed May 2, 2017, [www.Sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm](http://www.Sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm).
- Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament: Volume 2*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
- Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016.
- Hayward, Robert, trans. *The Targum of Jeremiah*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987.
- Huey, Jr., F. B. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. The New American Commentary: Volume 16. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The Works of Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1957.
- Keener, Craig S. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999. <http://www.questia.com/read/119906880/a-commentary-on-the-gospel-of-matthew>.
- Knowles, Michael. *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.



- Longenecker, Richard N. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Marshall, Mary. *The Portrayals of the Pharisees in the Gospels and Acts*. Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.
- Martínez, Florentino García, trans. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.
- Perrin, Nicholas. *Jesus the Temple*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Psalms of Solomon*. In *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, Rutherford H. Platt, Jr., 1926. Accessed November 1, 2017, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe185.htm>.
- Psalms of Solomon*. In *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*. Translated by G. Buchanan Gray. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913. The Wesley Center Online. Accessed November 18, 2018. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha/the-psalms-of-solomon/>.
- Reicke, Bo. *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 BC to AD 100*. Translated by David E. Green. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.
- Sanders, E. P. *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992.
- Stambaugh, John E. and David L. Balch. *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*. Edited by Wayne A. Meeks. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986.
- Thompson, J. A. *The Book of Jeremiah*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.
- Turner, David L. *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Whitters, Mark F. "Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68, No. 2 (April 2006): 229-247. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43725700?readnow=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Ab92c9e61f503f0e34c0f4d89d916c0e8&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents).
- Wilson, Marvin R. *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.