I’ve begun a short thread dealing with how Matthew understood and interpreted and used Scripture. Here is a fuller exposition, the first part of which comes straight from my textbook on the NT and the second part straight from my noggin to the keyboard.

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What is perhaps most striking about Matthew’s account is that it all happens according to divine plan. The Holy Spirit is responsible for Mary’s pregnancy and an angel from heaven allays Joseph’s fears. All this happens to fulfill a prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures (1:23). Indeed, so does everything else in the narrative: Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem (2:6), the family’s flight to Egypt (2:14) Herod’s slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem (2:18) and the family’s decision to relocate in Nazareth (2:23). These are stories that occur only in Matthew, and they are all said to be fulfillments of prophecy.

Matthew’s emphasis that Jesus fulfills the Scripture does not occur only in his birth narrative. It pervades the entire book. On eleven separate occasions (including those I have just mentioned), Matthew uses a phrase that scholars have sometimes labeled a “fulfillment citation.” The formulae of these citations vary somewhat, but they typically run something like this: “this occurred in order to fulfill what was spoken of by the prophet.” In each instance, Matthew then cites the passage of Scripture that he has in mind, showing that Jesus is the long expected messiah of the Jews. These fulfillment citations are not drawn from Mark; among all four Gospels, they occur only in Matthew. Even more than his predecessor, then, Matthew explicitly and emphatically stresses that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures.

But *how* does Jesus fulfill the Scripture for Matthew? He appears to do so in two different ways, the first of which is relatively easy to grasp. The Hebrew prophets occasionally made predictions about the future messiah. According to Matthew, Jesus fulfills these predictions. For example, Jesus is born in Bethlehem, because this is what was predicted by the prophet Micah (2:6); and his mother is a virgin, because this is what was predicted by the prophet Isaiah (1:23).

This way of fulfilling Scripture for Matthew can make sense of two of the rather more peculiar “fulfillments” that he cites, one at the beginning of his Gospel and the other at the end....

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Matthew’s “Filling Full” of Scripture  
Matthew’s Ancient Approach to Scripture