

Methods of Predictive Prophecy Interpretation Applied to Matthew 2:15

Method	Definition	Perspective on prophecy ¹
<i>Pesher</i>	<p>The term <i>pesher</i> means, "to explain." In fact, however, <i>pesher</i> is an application of OT scripture with little to no concern for the context of the passage applied. <i>Pesher</i> may refer either to commentaries on the OT found amongst the Dead Sea scrolls or to the interpretive technique typical of these commentaries. <i>Pesher</i> interpreters assume that OT authors were speaking to the contemporary audience. This form of interpretation is tied to a word, text or OT allusion, which is then related to a present person, place or thing. The interpretations are generally aloof from the source context and appear to lack any coherent methodology.</p> <p><i>Pesher</i> is part of what could be called midrash but is being distinguished here because it could be considered an independent tool of interpretation. On one hand, <i>pesher</i> may be regarded as a <i>school</i> of interpretation because it is used for many different kinds of scriptures. On the other hand, <i>pesher</i> may be held to be a <i>tool</i> of interpretation used by interpreters from various hermeneutical schools for a limited subset of scriptures</p> <p><i>Out of Egypt I have called my son, was about Christ's flight to and return from Egypt. There is no attempt to justify or correlate this use of Hosea with the context of the rest of Hosea's prophecy.</i></p>	Retrospective; subjective
Single Intent	<p>Concerning predictive prophecy, some proponents argue that God & the prophet's meaning are one and the same, thus the later meaning proposed by a Bible author is the same as the original meaning. Proponents are rightly concerned with the pitfalls of eisegetical approaches to scripture that arise when it is granted that a text may have more than one meaning.</p> <p>When Matthew suggests that, <i>Out of Egypt I have called my son, was fulfilled by Christ's flight to and return from Egypt he gives us God's meaning. Hosea meant for this passage to be predictive of the messiah.</i></p>	Projective & retrospective; objective, but not if pressed too far.
<i>Sensus Plenior</i>	<p>This approach proposes that successive interpreters, perhaps with divine authorization, derive novel meaning from the original author's text. That is, God had a double meaning in mind but only revealed the other sense to a later author. Thus, God guided Isaiah to say certain things with meaning in his own time but that God also intended Christ to fulfill.ⁱⁱ This approach was developed in response to NT uses of the OT that seem to treat apparently non-predictive or 'single meaning' OT material as predictive prophecy.</p> <p>When Matthew suggests that, <i>Out of Egypt I have called my son, was fulfilled by Christ's flight to and return from Egypt he means something quite different than Hosea meant. God had Hosea chose this words because Christ was going to fulfill them one day. No one could have anticipated this without Matthew's prophetic insight.</i></p>	Retrospective but only through revelation; subjective
Typological	<p>This perspective is defined in various ways. Generally speaking, typological interpretation involves identification of people, places, events or objects with significance that exceeds their immediate meaning. Once identified a type can be used to expose deeper meanings from typological reiterations or recurrences.</p> <p>This method may be difficult to distinguish from <i>sensus plenior</i> or straightforward application in some cases. For example, was the brass serpent a type of Christ or was it simply an illustration application of the principle of substitution? Did God reveal to Moses that this event foreshadowed a more complete propitiation or did Christ expose a second meaning unknown to Moses?</p> <p>When Matthew suggests that, <i>Out of Egypt I have called my son, was</i></p>	Retrospective; potentially subjective.

	fulfilled by Christ's flight to and return from Egypt he means Jesus was a type of Israel - ideal Israel.	
Analogical correspondence	<p>This approach suggests that the NT authors are simply noting material from the OT that is analogous to their own situation. Proponents advocate that the term 'fulfillment' is probably used by NT authors in its broader sense of "completed" or "filled to overflowing," rather than "prediction/outcome". Proponents also hold that a citation may really serve as a pointer to an entire genre of OT scripture, thereby amplifying the analogical correspondence.</p> <p>When Matthew suggests that, <i>Out of Egypt I have called my son</i>, was fulfilled by Christ's flight to and return from Egypt he means that Jesus recapitulated the history of Israel. Although, unlike Israel, Christ returned as an obedient servant.</p>	Retrospective; objective
Motif fulfillment	<p>This approach is consonant with analogical correspondence at many points. For instance, proponents would agree the term 'fulfillment' is used more broadly in many cases and that a simple citation may, in fact, refer to an entire block of relevant text rather than the few words used. This position would argue, however, that when an author's material touches on well developed motifs he is cognizant of a deeper meaning carried in his words beyond the immediate context. This deeper meaning explains earlier expressions of the motif and also anticipates subsequent reiterations of the same motif.</p> <p>When Hosea records, <i>Out of Egypt I have called my son</i>, he is tapping into an exodus motif that was expressed in the original event; reiterated and extended to "the king" of Israel by Balaam (Nu.24:8); reiterated when Joshua entered Palestine; reiterated when the principle of redemption was applied repeatedly in OT didactic material; that would be reiterated later when Israel was restored after her impending discipline (Hos 6:1-3; 8:1-10:5) and again when God would permanently redeem his people. Matthew was simply noting something implicit in Hosea, namely, Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of God's promised redemption of Israel (Hos.11:1-14:5). Hosea certainly understood that his recollection of the Exodus was anchored in God's past redemptive history as well as his future promise of final redemption. And, this is exactly what Matthew did by simply pointing out its manifestation in Christ. Christ returned to Israel from Egypt, as an obedient son and also as God coming again to dwell in the tents of Shem. The resonance with the exodus motif is so remarkable that Matthew could say Christ 'filled up to overflowing' the entire theme. If we were contemporaries of Matthew we too could have anticipated a final redemption of Israel and rejoiced when we saw its penultimate fulfillment in the first advent of Christ and hoped in its ultimate fulfillment in his second advent.</p>	Projective & retrospective; objective.

ⁱ An interpretive method is **prospective** if it attempts to show that a prophecy has meaning for the future. An interpretive method is **retrospective** if it attempts to show that a prophecy fits a subsequent event but can only do so *post hoc* (i.e. something unexpected before the fact but undeniable afterward). An interpretive method that tries to show a prophecy is a prediction from within its own context but also tries to show a prophecy is a prediction from the context of the putative fulfilled prediction is both prospective and retrospective.

The qualifiers 'objective' and 'subjective' indicate whether the interpretations derived by a method could be produced by a neutral party using the rules of that method.

Ideally a method should be objective and able to justify arguments that a prophecy is predictive from the context of the prophecy and also from the context of the event that is thought to have been predicted by the prophecy.

ⁱⁱ Some hermeneutical schools might deny divine authorization for this use of antecedent scripture but still agree new meaning is made from the earlier text that the original author did not intend.