

**AN INTER-TEXTUAL READING OF
MATTHEW 2:1-12 AND NUMBERS 24:14-19
FROM A '*TOKELAUAN FAREWELL
EXPERIENCE*'**

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Theology

by

Iafeta I Vaopuka

July, 2021

Consent Form for the Retention and use of the Thesis

I, Iafeta Iese Vaopuka

agree that the thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Malua College Librarian for the care, loan and reproduction of the thesis.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration of Authorship of Thesis

I, Iafeta Iese Vaopuka

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

Mavaega faka-Tokelau (Tokelauan farewell occasions) is a very important life moment in the lives of our Tokelauan people. It is where we show that we care for each other by praying for each other – those who are leaving and those staying behind. The journey to another part of the world seeking educational and employment opportunities is for the purpose of sending the money back to help develop our families, churches, and our communities. We leave with the expectation of being a *Fetū Taki* (a guiding star) – someone who has the heart and the soul of being a Tokelauan to be a good person exploring a foreign place as a *Fetū Taki* to fulfil his/her roles as a good Tokelauan. It is the experience that I was very fortunate to be taught with by my mother before she passed away this year. From this experience and understanding of *Mavaega faka-Tokelau* evoked for me the desire to seek in the Bible farewell moments relative to guiding stars to broaden my Tokelauan understanding. It is the task of this paper to explore from the Tokelauan perspective of *Fetū Taki* the star seen by the magi in Matthew 2:1-12 in relation to the star of Jacob mentioned in Numbers 24: 14-19 using the intertextual reading method.

Declaration

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my dear grandparents *Tu'umuli Alomouanaki Iafeta* and *Laine Lekuo Iafeta* and *Vaopuka Tofuola Iese* and my grandmother who is still with us *Tefuega Iese* who has taught me to always put God first in everything I do in life, and whose inspires to keep me going in difficult times.

This work is also dedicated to my dear parent, my dearest mother the late *Fa'afofoga Tileha Iese* and my father *Iese Iese* for their unconditional love and support and prayers

For always encouraging me while Im here in Malua, and always to do good in life, never forget my sister the late *Solonaima Hepuli Vaopuka*

“Fakafetai lahi oku matua mo te koulua tauhiga, auā hoku lumanaki lelei”

Last but not least, I also dedicated this work to my people, the whole of Tokelau.

“Tokelau mo te Alikī”

Table of Contents

Consent Form for the Retention and use of the Thesis	ii
Declaration of Authorship of Thesis	iii
Abstract	iv
Declaration	v
Dedication	vi
Table of Contents	1
Acknowledgments	3
List of Abbreviations	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1 Intertextuality and Mavaega Faka-Tokelau as method, and Literature review of Matthew 2:1-12	10
1. Introduction	10
1.1 Intertextuality and <i>Mavaega faka-Tokelau</i>	10
1.1.1 Intertextuality	10
1.1.2 Mavaega faka-Tokelau – Fetū Taki	12
1.2 A Brief Literature Review of scholarly interpretations of the star in Matthew 2:1-12	14
1.2.1 Star as a Natural Star	14
1.2.2 Star as a Supernatural Star	16
1.3 Emphasis of the Study	17
1.4 Conclusion	17
Chapter 2 Background of Matthew and Placement of Matthew 2:1-12	19
2. Introduction	19
2.1 Historical and Literary Background of Matthew	19
2.2 Placement of Matt 2:1-12 in the Matthean Presentation of Jesus Christ	22
Chapter 3 Intertextual Exegesis and Analysis using Mavaega Faka-Tokelau	24
3. Introduction	24
3.1 Intertextual Reading	24
3.1.1 Numbers 24:14-19	24
3.1.2 How the farewell covenant is fulfilled in Matthew	28
3.1.3 The progression of Jesus as Shepherd – the one shown by the star witnessed by Magi	29

3.2 Analysis of the Intertextual Reading with my Farewell Experience of <i>Fetū Taki</i>	31
3.3 Conclusion	32
Chapter 4 Conclusion and Theological discussion	33
Glossary	36
Bibliography	37

Acknowledgments

“Those who trusts in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever” (Psalm 125:1). To God be the glory now and forevermore.

First and foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor *Reverend Dr Vaitusi Nofoaiga* for his patience, guidance, motivations and immense knowledge which encourage me to complete this work *‘fakamanuia te Atua’*, not forgetting the staff of the Faculty of New Testament, *Rev Apela Ah Him* and the late *Rev Dr, Seumaninoa Puaina* for motivating me throughout this journey of writing this paper.

To the Staff members of Malua Theological College, thank you so much for all the words of wisdom and encouragements, and to my spiritual parent here in Malua and *auāiga, Rev Apela and Foketi Ah Him* for their love and support throughout this journey here in Malua, my fellow Single brothers, thank you so much for the love shown and your support boys.

To our *Rev Elder John Kalolo* and *Right Reverend Fakaofa Kaio* and also *Rev Iutana Pu’e* for their assistance in translation and proofreading of this paper *‘fakafetai te agalelei’* the love and endless prayers. My parent, my dearest mother the late *Fa’afofoga Tileha Iese* and my father *Iese Iese ‘fakafetai te faitama, e he galo te alofa fakamātua’*, all my families and relatives, and my beloved *Parish EFKT Fakaofa*, thank you so much for your love and prayers, support in many ways. The Government and the people of Tokelau *“Fakafetai lahi lele te titi faitama ma te alofa fakaalia”*. Also my fiancé *Silalovi Tepora Tauapa’i* for the support and motivating me throughout this journey God bless you all, *Fakafetai lahi ma fakamanuia te Atua*

List of Abbreviations

<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>EZZ</i>	Economic Zone
<i>EFKT</i>	Ekalehia Fakalapotopotoga Kelihiano Tokelau

Introduction

The recent passing away of my mother, has reminded me of the importance of tradition, values and culture specifically *Faka tokelau*, where I had been born and bred. I reflect in particular to traditions of parting and how we farewell each other called *Mavaega Faka-Tokelau*, as this has allowed me not to be in a sense of longing or sadness for my mother, but rather a feeling of being at peace as if she is still with me.

Over the years through experience, I have been able to witness *Mavaega Faka tokelau* on our island Fakaofo, which is one of the three atolls which make up the Tokelau Islands. Tokelau is very much dependent on the sea, today it provides Tokelau's main revenue from its EEZ (Economic Zone), and hence the sea is Tokelau's livelihood, where fishing and gathering of marine resources is a daily routine. Therefore, fishing and sailing in open sea has been very much engraved in Tokelau culture and way of living. As there are three atolls in the Tokelau Islands, it was common for them to inter travel between the islands and even other's sailing to neighbouring islands, as we know not only through oral history but also in many written documentation, moreover through the many myths and legends showing Polynesian voyaging.

Today being part of the global community, we continue to move and travel from place to place, from one destination to other. There were many families which moved from Tokelau to New Zealand in the 1960's as part of a resettlement scheme, not only due to its land mass in relation to increase in population but moreover the effects of sea level rise through climate change.

This initial emigration of Tokelauans to New Zealand especially with Tokelau status quo being a New Zealand Territory, allowed for more people to travel abroad.

Through the vision of seeing a better education for their children, moreover opportunities for employment, where they were now able to earn money to provide for their families back in Tokelau. In particular also, was the realisation of a better health care system, and through the many years to date, this would be a first option for many back in Tokelau, where it was not so common that people would opt to travel directly to Samoa or New Zealand for treatment privately if they weren't in the priority list for those who were able to travel under the Tokelau Public Health Referral Scheme.

My mother's case was classed 'priority' and needed immediate attention, however, the complexities of her situation would be realised when she would arrive for her appointment in Wellington. Upon arrival to Auckland Airport, the medical staff after reviewing her case realised that she could not go through quarantine process of two weeks in Auckland, therefore, a helicopter was organised where they flew her directly to Wellington whereby she can go through quarantine process there but moreover to see what exactly her medical condition was. The matter of the fact is, the reality had just struck me, in 2020 during the outbreak of Covid 19, when my mother sought for medical assistance abroad and I awaiting clearance from the Samoa Foreign Affairs for passageway into Apia as my third year of study in Malua Theological College would commence sometime soon. When I got to the Apia I was fortunate to have been able to get a flight early to New Zealand, however, was unfortunate as three days left in my two week quarantine, my mother passed away. I travelled through many miles of open sea by boat from Fakaofu to Apia and from Apia to Auckland, to a reality check, that our farewell goodbyes , *Mavaega Faka Tokelau* in our home in Fakaofu, would be the last time I would hear my mother's voice, last time I will see her alive.

For example, the Tokelauan social and cultural ways of saying farewell called *Mavaega faka-Tokelau*¹. This was also the circumstances for my mother seeking for medical assistance abroad in the year 2020, during the initial stages in the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic. It was the last time I saw her alive. The last word's she said to me, encompass a teaching and learning process, one that emphasises morals and values and the virtues not only between a mother and a son relationship, but one that reflects on tradition and culture, *Mavaega Faka Tokelau*. Whereby, it becomes a teaching and learning process, where we learn in order to teach, we teach in order to learn, for the sole process that we are to pass these values and virtues through time and through generation. She said: "Son remember what we always say to you, may you be a *Fetū Taki*,² for our family and our people in spreading the word of God." In our traditional beliefs in travelling and fishing, *Fetū Taki* is a guiding star that guides our people when they navigate from one island to another and when they go fishing. I have often heard our elders in their farewell speeches mention this star and sometimes with the star in the birth of Jesus. So the farewell words of our people are to express the feelings and emotions of farewell and to be *akoakoga* (*Teachings*). *Fetū Taki* as *akoakoga* reminds us who are leaving our people and islands, one of our roles as members of our community which is to be shining stars wherever we go for we are bearers of our cultures and our values. *Fetū Taki* as a shining star is one of the names we give to our leaders. A leader as a *Fetū Taki* is someone whose role is to look after and to lead our family and our people in shining ways of love and care in any type of situation. Thus, not only is this a process of leading and guiding, but more importantly, those following the "*fetū taki e amanaki*" *those following the guiding star have faith and hope*.

¹ Simply the Tokelauan way of living

² "Fetutaki Simply a Guiding Star to Direct Navigation." Tokelauan perspective

Those following are hopeful and have faith that you will not only help them but also guide them in reaching their destinations in life.

Another important aspect associating with having hoped and a putting one faith in the *Fetū taki* is the life of prayer. This is important to note as voyaging not only acknowledges the means in which one is competent in a particular guiding star and its destination, but rather our forefathers also believed in God, to show them which the particular guiding star they will follow. In other words, there are many guiding stars but through God's guidance those following will know which star to follow in their journey in the open ocean. Therefore, becoming a *Fetū Taki*, is not only a leading role, but likewise is led by God, where they allow God to teach them and shape them, into becoming that particular guiding star for people to follow. In my journey in Malua, '*mavaega faka Tokelau*' is not merely a concept of parting, but rather a deeper understanding of a mother's love. In other words, she was also a *Fetū Taki* in which I was fortunate to follow through the many years. This is also the desire and passion in which I want explore the historical

I remember other words of my mother when I left to come to Malua "*Taku tama koe ke fakamakeke tatalo, ke manuia to olaga* (My child be diligently in prayer for a prosperous future). These words are words for me to become a *Fetū Taki*. It is an advice for me to have alertness when dealing with challenges in life. Those words remind me the importance of coming to Malua, to be an offering of our people and family to God's Ministry. The experience of my mother as a loving and caring mother and her farewell words before she left for New Zealand gave me the desire to explore the historical and theological meanings and significances of *fetū* or star in the Bible as in Matthew 2:1-12. The exploration became more interesting when I found out that the star in Matthew 2:1-12 has connections to the star of Jacob mentioned in Numbers 4:14-19 as part of a

farewell speech. This study offers an inter-textual reading of the heralding of the king of Jews in Matthew 2:1-12 in relation to Numbers 24:14-19, from my understanding and experience of farewell³ as a Tokelauan and only child.

The thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter One will show the method of interpretation as ‘Intertextuality’ and a brief literature of the scholarly interpretations of Matthew 2:1-12. Part of the description of the method is how *Mavaega faka-Tokelau* in relation to *Fetū Taki* will be used to analyse the inter-textual reading of Matthew 2:1-12 and Numbers 24:14-19. It is an attempt to broaden the meaning of *Fetū Taki* in my Tokelauan world with a biblical dimension. Before doing the inter-textual reading of Matthew 2:1-12 and Numbers 24:14-19, the literary significances of Matthew 2:1-12 in Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ ministry will be firstly explored. That exploration is the task of Chapter Two which will be considered the backdrop to the inter-textual reading of Matthew 2:1-12 and Number 24:14-19. Chapter Three is the Inter-textual reading followed by the conclusion to the thesis in Chapter Four.

³ Farewell moment in words or actions in our culture are very important. They are considered highlights of certain events such as disagreements as they reflect peace.

Chapter 1

Intertextuality and Mavaega Faka-Tokelau as method, and Literature review of Matthew 2:1-12

1. Introduction

This Chapter will be divided into two sections. Section One describes ‘Intertextuality’ with *Mavaega faka-Tokelau*¹ as the methodology to explore Matthew 2:1-12. It is followed by a literature review of Matthew’s scholars’ interpretations of Matt 2:1-12. The review will lead to an explanation of why the inter-textual reading made in this study is important to the study of the birth of Jesus the Messiah the King and also to the study of the significant function of farewell in people’s lives.

1.1 Intertextuality and *Mavaega faka-Tokelau*

1.1.1 Intertextuality

Julia Kristeva looks at all kinds of relationship between texts as ‘Intertextuality.’² It was Kristeva’s interpretation of Bahktin’s theory of dialogism. According to Kristeva, every text relates to other texts. Texts are not just written literatures. What Kristeva meant was that actions are also texts. From this perspective, I see our culture, our values and our life situations in our worlds as other texts. Thus, I could say that *Mavaega faka-Tokelau* that I bring into my reading approach to explore Matt 2:1-12 is itself a text. In this way, the interaction I will make from my Tokelauan perspective of farewell with the selected text from the Gospel of Matthew is a different

¹ Faka-tokelau simply the way of living and belief, identity if a person and society

² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art* (trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. Leon. S. Ropudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). 20-21

level of intertextuality – it is an interaction between the reader now as a text and the biblical text.

The New Testament text as an example of a literary text in itself as Kristeva said is an intertext for it relates to other texts – such as texts in the time of the author like the Masoretic texts and Mishnah. Thus, intertextuality is simply a study of two texts that are considered to have a connection in areas such as literary, historical, social, and cultural. Intertextuality is one of the reading methods widely used in other disciplines such as in the study of languages. The basis of an intertextual reading as manifestly shown in the above description is exploring connections between the selected text or the main text studied and other texts. This shows that there are texts which their meanings are shaped by other texts.

In biblical studies, intertextuality as a method of interpreting a text or texts is usually used in studying texts in New Testaments that are connected to the Old Testament or vice-versa. For this thesis, I will use Robbins' use of intertextuality³ in his sociorhetorical approach as a method to explore the bible which he calls exploring the 'intertexture' of the text. Robbins' uses of intertextuality sees a text as having a literary world that contains phenomena from outside such as recitations from the Old Testament. Robbins' exploring of an intertexture of a text is carried out by considering a use of a prophecy as an example of a phenomenon from outside the selected text, as recitation, recontextualization, and reconfiguration. The intertextual reading therefore of

³ For an example of the use of intertextuality see Vaitusi Nofoaiga's intertextual reading of Matthew and the prophet Isaiah. Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 70-75. Other example: See Leuelu Setu's intertextual reading of Judah's betrayal of Jesus and the book of Zechariah and Genesis in the Old Testament (Leuelu Setu –Revisiting Judah's Betrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew [26:14-16; 47 – 56, 27: 3-10]"40 (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2018); and Perenise Malota's intertextual reading of divorce in Matthew 19:1-12 and Genesis 1:27 and 2:24; and Deutonomy 24:1 (Perenise Malota –What Jesus said about divorce: A Samoan Christian biblical interpretation of Matthew 19:1-21 (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2010). 34

Matt 2:1-12 will explore the recontextualisation and reconfiguration of the star called the star of Jacob in Numbers 24:14-19 in Matt 2:1-12. Part of the intertextual reading is to firstly explore the literary function of Matt 2:1-12 in the Matthean presentation of Jesus' birth and ministry. It is the task of Chapter Two to explore the literary function of the selected text.

1.1.2 Mavaega faka-Tokelau – Fetū Taki

The Tokelau way of life, *faka-Tokelau*,⁴ has a very important culture of farewell for its people and guests. In the *Faka tokelau* or Tokelau way of life, *Mavaega Faka Tokelau*, is a notable part of its culture and traditions. As Tokelau is very much remote and isolated from the rest of the world even in regards to its neighbouring Pacific Islands, which has Samoa at about 300 km South, this may contribute to why farewells and parting becomes not only important but also become more of a ceremonial occasion.

It may include dancing and gift giving; it will include the invitation of others from the community, the *Faifeau* for the devotion, traditional speeches. The point made here is, when one parts from the island everyone will know, and most will want to say their parting wishes to those travelling. Hence, even to where the wharf is located, where a small barge will enter into the reef opening, it is not uncommon to witness a community gathering there, however, only a few of them will be picked up, preparing for travel by the barge to take to the ship which drifts in open ocean.

It is always a challenge for a Tokelauan leaving his/her people – the family and the community staying behind. A Tokelauan community in our islands is a loving, sharing, and caring community. It is why some of our people see farewell occasions in

⁴ Fakatokelau simply the way of living, identity of a person and society

our Tokelauan islands, as moments of leaving as if there is no return. Our islands to other people in the world are isolated islands. So leaving our islands and our people is going away from our people for a very long time. It is why saying good bye is a very important moment for any Tokelauan leaving. It is a moment where all the words of encouragement from our families and people are said for the person or a group leaving to stay strong during the journey but also in dealing with life where ever he/she will live abroad. Farewells are moments of tears and mixed emotions for our people, when we leave to go look for a prosperous future for us and them.

As mentioned, one of the words we often hear in those moments is *Fetū taki*. *Fetū Taki* not only directly relates to a guiding star for voyaging but also correlates with the seasons and the fish life, hence, the *tautai* the master fisherman will know what guiding star will provide abundant fish moreover the fish species and time of year they will be caught.

In this note, *Fetū taki* has also been used to correlate with the word blessings, in whatever context a person may use it in. Every Tokelau is born into the fishing life of our Tokelauan communities. From the fishing experiences of our people, we hear the *tautai*, the master fisherman talking about his knowledge and understanding of our community's fishing expeditions. He is to lead the fishing activity with a good knowledge of reading the tide in relation to stars, the sun, the moon, the rain, and the weather of the day. It is an experience and knowledge handed down from generation to generation. According to the *tautai* in our islands now, during times of navigation in the past, our ancestors have experienced travelling across the Pacific Ocean with the knowledge of using the stars to guide their journeys to a destination. The main star of those stars is *Fetū Taki*. According to our traditional beliefs of fishing, only a *tautai* knows where in the sea under the *Fetū Taki* is to find plenty of fish. I have often heard

the *tautai*, the elders, the church ministers, and our parents use the word *Fetū Taki* in their speeches for *Fetū Taki* as a shining star not only leads a journey but also to a direction of many blessings. I am the only child of my parents and I can understand why my mother always encouraged me to be a *Fetū Taki*.

Farewell moments in words or actions as explained exchanged between the two parties (those leaving and those staying behind) in our Tokelauan world usually present expression of hope and opportunity. They are moments of encouragements to both parties to carry on living life despite the sadness of being apart. It is continuing living life in a way that would help all survive emotionally, spiritually, and physically. From my analysis of the farewell moments in our Tokelauan context, they are moments expressed in words and actions and are to be understood in these three parts. One, a farewell occurs because of an event that happens between two or more parties. Two, the farewell itself – its meaning and purpose – is a promise or a prediction. Three, farewell words are to be fulfilled. These parts will be the lenses to explore the connection between the star in Matt 2:1-21 and the star of Jacob in Numbers 24:14-19.

1.2 A Brief Literature Review of scholarly interpretations of the star in Matthew 2:1-12

The identity of the star has been extensively debated and can be looked as a debate of two sides. On the one hand are those that look for a natural astronomical explanation and on the other hand are those that look to a miraculous event – supernatural star.

1.2.1 Star as a Natural Star

John Gill begins his interpretation of the star in Matt 2:1-12 by seeing the star as the light or glory of the Lord shone from a distance to show the birth of Christ to the

wise men.⁵ Gill then considers the star a comet portending the birth of Christ. Gill elaborates this interpretation by referring to the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:17. For Gill, the wise men would not have known the star they witnessed as a sign of the advent of the Messiah if it was not the prophecy by Balaam. Gill adds that the wise men regard the star as another title for Jesus the Messiah. Aaron Adair also sees the star a natural star by interpreting the star in Matt 2:1-12 in light of astronomy.⁶ In his conclusion, Adair says there had been many attempts by biblical scholars and theologians to make a connection of the star in Matt 12:1-12 to the science of astronomy. Despite many interpretations, there is still conflict because the overall interaction between the sciences and religious claims is complex. Adair therefore concludes that the star in Matt 2:1-12 as “the subject matter is still popular, there will, almost certainly, continue to be efforts to find the Star as a real object in the heavens above rather than a literary symbol in the pages below.”⁷ Margaret Davies likewise considers the star in Matt 2:1-1 a natural star. According to Davies, passages from the Old Testament Scripture seem to influence the form of the story of the coming of Jesus as in the Gospel of Matthew such as the star in Matthew 2:1-12. But it may not be the case for the star in Matt 2:1-12 which is seen as an allusion to Balaam’s prophecy in Numbers 24:17. For Davies, the use of this reference to Balaam’s prophecy has some doubts because the “Matthean narrative does not identify Jesus as the star.”⁸ Davies’ argument considers important the magi’s astrological understanding of stars.

⁵ John Gill *Exposition of the Bible* on the website <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-2-9.html> accessed on 2 January 2021

⁶ Aaron Adair, “The Star of Christ in the Light of Astronomy” *Journal of Religion and Science* vol 47 no. 1 (2012): 7-29.

⁷ Adair, “The Star of Christ in the Light of Astronomy,” 24-25.

⁸ Margaret Davies, *Matthew (A New Biblical Commentary)*, Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2009), 33-34.

1.2.2 Star as a Supernatural Star

Craig A. Evans interprets the appearance of the star as a sign of the birth of Jesus as having a connection to Num. 24:17.⁹ Evans writes that there were beliefs in the time of the Romans Empire on the significances of the appearance of stars. For example, a birth or a death of a great man is augured by the appearance of a star. Another example, the stars were looked at as living creatures. Evans adds that despite attempts by astronomers to interpret the appearance of the star seen by the magi, their astronomical interpretations cannot explain it because it is a supernatural star. John F. Walvoord is another scholar who interprets the star as the unusual star. He writes: “The most probable explanation is that the star in the East as well as the star that guided them to Bethlehem was supernatural rather than natural phenomena. No star in the distant heavens could provide such accurate guidance.”¹⁰ Stuart K. Weber likewise speaks of the star in Matt 2:1-12 a supernatural star. For Weber, the text shows that the star is a supernatural star. Weber adds the magi follow that star like a sailor follows the stars to their destination.¹¹ Weber’s interpretation is interesting, for he considers in his interpretation the important function of a star – to lead and guide a journey. Stephen Westerholm from accentuating worship perspective also sees the star as a miraculous star with connection to the star of Jacob Numbers 24:17¹² but does not elaborate on the relationship of the two texts. John Nolland likewise considers the supernatural image of

⁹ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52-53.

¹⁰ John F. Walvoord, *Matthew - Thy Kingdom Come: A Commentary on the First Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1974), 23.

¹¹ Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, New Testament Holman Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 20.

¹² Stephen Westerholm, *Matthew in New Interpreter’s Bible: One Volume Commentary edited by Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David Petersen* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 925-964.

the star in Matt 2:1-12 by emphasizing see that star as a miraculous star from the background of Num 24:17.¹³

1.3 Emphasis of the Study

For this study, it is not its task to seek an understanding of whether the star is either natural or supernatural because that is not important. Instead, it considers important the function of the star, as a shining star guiding and leading directions to a destination of blessings. As Douglas R. A. Hare says that the star plays a major role in the story but does not elaborate on it.¹⁴ Many attempts to interpret the presence of the star are pointless because the star witnessed by the magi is intended to remind the readers the Balaam's prophecy in Num 14:17, as a messianic prophecy. In other words, the focus on studying the star in Matt 2:1-21 should be on its function as fulfilment of the advent of Jesus Christ the Messiah. There is not much study done on the connection between the two texts Matt 2:1-12 and Num 24:17 to broaden the appearance of the star in the birth of Jesus. It is the task of this study to explore that connection from the intertextuality approach.

1.4 Conclusion

The task of this Chapter was to describe the reading approach used in this study and to give a brief literature review of the scholars' interpretations of the star in Matt 2:1-12. The reading approach as described is the intertextual approach with my experience and perspective of farewell in our Tokelauan context. The brief literature review shows two main emphases of the interpretation of the star in Matt 2:1-12 which

¹³ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 110-111.

¹⁴ Douglas A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 14.

are the star as a natural star and the star as a supernatural or miraculous. This study emphasizes the function of the star as a shining star whether it is natural or supernatural.

Chapter 2

Background of Matthew and Placement of Matthew 2:1-12

2. Introduction

This Chapter will give a historical and literary background of the Gospel of Matthew upon which the intertextual reading will be based upon. It is followed by an interpretation of the placement of Matt 2:1-21 in Matthew's presentation of Jesus ministry. Chapter 2:1-12 is about the birth of Jesus Christ. All proposed structures of Matthew's Gospel considers this text as part of identifying who Jesus is that begins in chapter one of Matthew.¹ Thus, the interpretation of the placement of Matt 2:1-12 will be based on that general consideration of that text in the First Gospel's presentaion of who Jesus is.

2.1 Historical and Literary Background of Matthew

Although the Gospel of Matthew does not identify its author, early church tradition attributes it to Matthew, the apostle and former tax collector. Not much information is known about Matthew. According to church tradition, Matthew preached the Gospel in Palestine and led missionary works in other nations for 15 years following the Resurrection of Jesus.

The use of Matthew's Gospel in the church is recorded in Christian literature of the first century showing the early existence and use of Matthew. Matthew as the first Gospel to be written was the belief among the Church leaders of the second and third

¹ Other structures as examples see: David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 21-56, and M. Eugene Boring, "The Convergence of Source Analysis, Social History, and Literary Structure in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Seminar Papers: Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994), 587-611.

centuries (Ante-Nicene Fathers)² – mentioned in their writings a date between AD 50 and 65. However, many modern scholars agree that both Matthew and Luke relied heavily on Mark in writing their Gospels. Thus, Matthew's Gospel date was later as reflected in the on-going tension between Jew and Gentile in the Gospel which suggests a period when Judaism and Christianity still overlapped.

Matthew's aim is to present Jesus, not only as the Messiah (the King), but as the Son of David, and to elaborate this truth in such a way that it would aid the Christians in their controversies with the Jews.³ He shows how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and how the Law is filled with the new meaning and supplemented in the Person, words, and work of Christ. Matthew also points out how Israel's rejection of Christ is in accordance with prophecy, and how that rejection caused the transference of the divine privileges of the chosen people from the Jewish to the Christian community.

The purpose of Matthew is evident in the structure of his book, which groups the teachings and deeds of Jesus into five divisions. The fivefold structure, common in Judaism, may reveal Matthew's purpose of showing Jesus as the fulfilment of the Law. Each division concludes with the formula, "And when Jesus had ended these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). In the prologue (1:1-2:23), Matthew shows that Jesus is the Messiah by linking Him with promises made to Abraham and David. The birth of Jesus highlights the fulfilment theme, portrays Jesus' royalty, and underscores the significance of Jesus for the Gentiles. The first division (ch. 3-7) contains the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus describes how people should live under God's reign. The second division (8:1-11:1) features the instructions of Jesus to his disciples when he sent them out on their missionary journey. The third division (11:2-13:52) records

² Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 3-8.

³ Hare, *Matthew*, 5-26.

several controversies in which Jesus was involved and seven parables describing some aspects of the kingdom of heaven, coupled with the necessary human response. The major discourse in the fourth division (13:53-18:35) concerns the conduct of believers within the Christian fellowship (ch. 18). Matthew's fifth division (19:1-25:46) narrates the final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and reveals His climactic conflict with Judaism. Chapters 24 and 25 contain the teaching of Jesus relating to the last things. The remainder of the book (26:1-28:20) details events and teachings pertaining to the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Lord's commission to the church. Except at the beginning and at the end of the Gospel, Matthew's arrangement is not chronological and not strictly biographical, but is designed to show that in Jesus Judaism finds the fulfilment of its hope.

Matthew's emphasis on Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy (forty-one Old Testament quotes) shows that Jesus' life and ministry were part of the single plan of God throughout the history of Israel, and not an act of desperation. The entire Gospel stresses that Jesus is Immanuel – God-With-Us. Jesus' teachings in Matthew's gospel call for obedience and continue to expose sham and hypocrisy in personal and corporate life. The book also gives to the church a clarion call to mission, the proclamation of the Good News to all peoples. Christian disciples must learn to live within the tension of two ages, the present age of fulfilment in the Person of Jesus (in His words and works through His church by the Spirit's power) and the age to come, that is, the consummation of all things. In the interim, Christians are called to be humble, patient, genuine, faithful, watchful, and responsible – assured of the risen Jesus' presence as they are expectant of His return when faith will give way to sight.

2.2 Placement of Matt 2:1-12 in the Matthean Presentation of Jesus

Christ

Matthew's structure in Ch 2 in the presentation of Jesus Christ has a vivid image that has display in the New Testament, accordingly to (NRSV) new version, this displayration has started from journey of the Magi from the east to witness the revelation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah

1. Wise men from the east (chp: 2:1-2)
2. King Herod Disturbed
3. Magi presented gold and gifts

The Magi, who were likely from Persia, were scholars of astrology who had been observing celestial activity in the heavens and noticed a new and significant star. Believing this star to be the sign of the birth of an important king, the Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh as gifts and began their journey following the star.

According to W. F Albright, was another consideration and that was a prophetic oracle of Balaam (Num 14:17). This promise is that of a "star coming from Jacob" not only oracle will be known but in interpretation of the contemporary scene that could not in the nature of the case that have been without fulfilment. It might be said that the absence of the Matthean clause "that it might be fulfilled". The whole background of the story in Mt 2:1-12 is not an usual Jewish event. J.A. Emerton mentioned that it is remain true that the text also has a special background in the OT, for Matthew, themselves fulfil the Old Testament promises "Those from Sheba who will come, and will bring to Jerusalem the wealth of nations, gold and silver, which it has a comparison and connection between these two text, therefore Matthew probably thought of Magi as

a 'Balaam successors'⁴. The inclusion placement of the Text in Matt 2, has simply clearly mentioned in the beginning that the Magi witness the shining star and they track down accordingly to prophecies statement in the Old Testament.

⁴ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, jr, eds, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Edinburgh: Martin's of Berwick, 1988) 87-102.

Chapter 3

Intertextual Exegesis and Analysis using Mavaega Faka-Tokelau

3. Introduction

This Chapter is the intertextual reading of the Matthew 2:1-12 and Numbers 24:14-19 followed by an analysis of this reading with the farewell characteristics mentioned in the first chapter.

3.1 Intertextual Reading

3.1.1 Numbers 24:14-19

Numbers 24:14-19¹ is the last oracle of Balaam to Balak. Verse 14 speaks of Balaam's farewell of Balak: *"So now, I am going to my people; let me advise you what this people will do to your people in days to come."* Balaam is saying to Balak that he is leaving to go back to his people, but before he goes he wants to say what the people of Israel will do to the people of Moab in the future. The significance of verse 14 is revealing Balaam and Balak departing each other with a prediction or prophecy of what will happen to Balak's people – Moabites. The prophecy is considered a farewell covenant. Balaam and Balak get to this moment because of what happens in their first encountering of each other in the beginning of the story. It is Balak's sending his men to ask Balaam to help him and his people by cursing Israel. Israel is on its way to defeat the people of Moab. Moab is one of the nation's hindering Israel's ways to Canaan. The farewell is told from verse 15 to verse 25.

¹ Baruch A. Levine, "Numbers 21-36: A New Testament with Introduction and Commentary," (2000). 45

Verse 25 ends the passage by saying '*Then Balaam got up and went back to his place, and Balak also went his way.*' They finally went their own ways or departed each other.

The exegesis focuses on the above verses. Balaam who speaks the farewell prophecy is a man of God. Thus, the farewell words are true words of God. Balaam says that he sees the vision of God. The farewell words Balaam is uttering are a vision about the future – a vision of what is going to happen to the people of Moab. According to Balaam, in the vision he sees the Almighty but He is not coming now or near. The Almighty is identified with a star that shall come out of Jacob (Israel), and with a scepter that shall rise from Israel. This star and scepter shall crush or destroy the borderlands of Moab and the areas of Shethites. What Balaam is saying here is what Balak wanted to hear in the beginning. That is, Moab in this moment is safe, because the star Balaam is talking about, is not here now or near but will be in the future.

The interpretation of this prophecy (by Balaam) especially the point of God's involvement in siding with his so-called chosen people to kill other people is an ongoing debate. How could we explain 'God for all' in these violent histories of unequal treatment of many people? These issues sometimes raise more questions about Christianity and its emphases. These events have been utilized by other people as theological descriptions behind their occupation of other people's land.

For this thesis, I would like to engage this passage in dialogue with Walter Brueggemann's consideration of Land as Gift and Promise in the Bible². According to Brueggemann, the Book of Numbers was put together in the time of the Persian Empire – it was the time when the people of Israel mainly Judah was in exile. It was also the time they were allowed to return to their land mainly Israel. I will not dwell on issues of

² Walter Brueggemann, "The Land: Places as Gift, Promises, and Challenges in Biblical Faith," (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002). 76-88

the return between those who were in exile and those who remained behind in Jerusalem. The point I want to emphasize from this claim is that the story told in Numbers was to remind the people of Judah returning home their right and entitlement to the land of their ancestors. It is not reminding them the violence they did on their way to the promised-land. Rather, it is making them remember that within that journey the love of God existed not just for them but anyone – such as the non-Israelites. In addition to this view, is the influence of the debate of the priestly, holiness, and Deuteronomistic codes behind the putting together of the Book of Numbers. Many scholars consider Numbers 25-36 as a priestly source. ‘Priestly’ emphases seem to concentrate on the particularism of the people of Israel, as the chosen ones, and ‘Holiness’ traditions emphasize universalism. This paper sees the Book of Numbers from a Holiness perspective.

In this way, I will interpret Balaam’s prophecy of the star of Jacob and scepter in the context of the Persian period, as the time the Book of Numbers was put together. This will function intertextually with the star in the Gospel of Matthew. The Book of Numbers is about Israel’s wandering in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years. And it is the final part of that forty year period that is told in Balaam’s and Balak’s interaction. Balak’s people, the Moabites, and their land, is the last place the people of Israel needs to go through before entering Canaan – the promised land.

As the story unfolds, when Balak knows that Israel is near to his people, he immediately looks for help. The help he seeks is Balaam. He asks Balaam to curse the people of Israel. Balaam’s response is not what Balak is hoping for. Balaam instead sides with God. Despite Balak’s persuasion of Balaam, Balaam refuses to curse Israel. Instead Balaam says these words considered in this paper as a farewell covenant before he leaves Balak and returns to his home.

The words of the farewell and its interpretation

15. So he uttered his oracle, saying: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,

16. the oracle of the one who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered:

17. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near – a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the borderlands of Moab, and the territory of the Shethites....³

The first three verses speak of Balaam's authority as a prophet of God to utter what will happen to the people of Moab. They show Balaam a person who hears God and knows what God wants. These words of Balaam talk about the sovereignty of God – the Most High and the Almighty. And then Balaam says the important part of his farewell words – the words from God: *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near – a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the borderlands of Moab, and the territory of the Shethites...*

From the view of 'particularism' (Priestly) behind the priestly source⁴, Moab will be crushed not now but later because Moab is hindering Israel's way to Canaan. In this way, the people of Moab have to be in this situation because Israel is the chosen one. For those returning to Jerusalem, this is the proof or evidence of their entitlement to the land they left behind. As Brueggemann said, this is the problem with land entitlement in accordance with Israel becoming God's chosen nation. They are allowed to do anything they want, such as taking out anyone on their way to receiving what they are entitled to.

³ Shethites are the children of Sheth or Shet the son of Adama and Eve. Thus, the children of Sheth could be looked at the children of the world. The meaning of the name Sheth is tumult which is 'state of confusion'. The Shethites therefore could be interpreted as the confused people.

⁴ See Israel Knohl, "The Sanctuary of Silence," in *The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). 56

However, looking at it from ‘universalism’ perspective (that some say is the emphasis of Holiness view)⁵, Moab as the crushed nation or people is looked upon as God’s way of bringing them into salvation. How? From this view, the crushing of the borderlands of Moab is not crushing its people, but crushing the borders or barriers that stop the people of Moab from entering the promised-land or salvation with the returnees from exile. In this way, Israel therefore is all people, all of whom are entitled to the promised-land – the land of milk and honey. This is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, as the Shepherd points out by a star as told and shown in Matthew’s Gospel.

3.1.2 How the farewell covenant is fulfilled in Matthew

The interpretation of the star of Jacob and the scepter coming from Israel (that will crush the borderlands of Moab) as someone who will crush barriers that stop the so-called other/s from entering salvation or promised-land, can inform the reading of the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew can be structured in accordance with the consideration of Jesus the Messiah as a person with a scepter or a shepherd as pointed out by a star seen by the Magi. The consideration of Jesus as Shepherd is looked upon as one image of Jesus in Matthew alongside other images of Jesus as Son of David and King of the Jews⁶. This structure is divided into three parts:

Part I – Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah (1:1-25)

Part II – Jesus the Messiah as Shepherd and his ministry (2:1-25:46)

Part III – Jesus the Messiah as Shepherd is struck and his sheep scattered (26:1-28:20)

⁵ See Jan Joosten, "People and Land in the Holiness Code," in *An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996). Saul M. Olyan, "Rites and Ranks," in *Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (New Jersey, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Jacob Milgrom, "Leviticus 1-16," in *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991). 115-116

⁶ Francis Martin, "The Image of Shepherd in the Gospel of Saint Mathew," ed. no. 3 ScEs 27 (1975). 57

The first part shows who Jesus is in the genealogy —the Son of David who is the Shepherd here with us. It is followed by Part II, which begins with the witnessing of the star showing where the Son of David, the Messiah, is born and also the consideration of this Messiah as Shepherd (2:6). This part ends with chapter 25 which finishes with Jesus' words on how the Son of Man will separate people, one from another, as shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Part three of the structure is the final part and begins with chapter 26 where the event of priest's encounter with Jesus shows. It is in this part that Jesus says that the time he now enters is to fulfill the prophecy (26:31): *I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered*. I will elaborate on how this structure shows a progression of the theme Jesus with scepter or as Shepherd and his crushing of the borderlands or barriers that stop the non-Israelites from the promised-salvation.

3.1.3 The progression of Jesus as Shepherd – the one shown by the star witnessed by Magi

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy of the family line Jesus came from. The genealogy is the genealogy of the person revealed by a star – beginning from Abraham to Jacob and then to David. In the genealogy, the Jewish people are not the only people mentioned in there. There is also the woman from Moab named Ruth who is King David's grandmother. This could imply that the coming Messiah revealed by a star is to save not just the Jews but others such as the people of Moab. This star is shown in chapter 2 witnessed by the Magi. It shows the Magi where the Messiah is born. And the person revealed by the star is described as a shepherd in 2:5-6 – a shepherd, a person with a scepter.

5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'

This Shepherd considered as Son of David, is the Messiah and is the King of the Jews.

Bethlehem the home of David's father where David as shepherd was called by his father and was told he was the king. The progression of the Shepherd Theme is seen in the following passages spread throughout the Gospel from beginning to end.⁷

- i. Mt 9:36 and 10:6 (motive for sending out disciples)
- ii. Mt 12:9-14 (healing the sick on Sabbath – the sheep)
- iii. Mat 15:21-28 (I was sent only to the sheep of Israel)
- iv. Mt 18:12-14 (the sheep gone astray)
- v. Mt 25:32 (shepherd separates sheep)
- vi. Mt 26:31 (56) – "I will strike the shepherd

Thus, emphasizing holiness in Jesus' ministry in relation to mercy can be the other major theme in this fulfillment – as Jesus Son of David, the Star and Shepherd interprets the law in this way – unlike the Jewish leaders such as the priests.

⁷ Interest is also leading towards Wainwright's and Anderson's use of the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter as the middle part of the Shepherd Theme – Where I will bring in the words "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" as the climax point of the structure.

3.2 Analysis of the Intertextual Reading with my Farewell Experience of *Fetū Taki*

This has to be one of the most significant methods that our ancestors used to navigate on the Ocean but mostly to guide the journeys within the inter-islet travels. According to one of the Elders of our village, *Fetū Taki* is like having someone guide the way, not only that but when it comes to some sort of traditions such as fishing knowing that you had the purpose of guiding someone in a different perspective. There are some sorts of “Stars” that we are familiar with and each has different guiding or navigating purposes to its destinations.

In relation to the Intertextual reading, it has brought out the significance of a Star in both reading from the New Testament and the Old Testament in a Farewell experience of *Fetū Taki* in a Tokelau farewell moment. As was mentioned by John Gill, the star in the New Testament experienced by the wise men is the light or glory of the Lord shone from a distance to show the birth of Jesus Christ, The significance of the star and the interpretations that have been used, will highlight how the star in both reading of the New Testament and Old Testament reflect the Fetu Taki in a Mavega Faka Tokelau, Tokelau farewell and moment. The Star in the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew has a similar meaning toward the *Fetū Taki*, as mentioned before, FetuTaki is the outstanding Star that was used by our ancestor to navigate from one place to another, and in this experience reflect the important of guiding into a special destination not only for ourselves but also the community and society. Be a *Fetū Taki*, has been a challenge, having the support and the blessing from our family has been an encouragement. Intertextual reading in Matt 2; 1-12 and Numbers 24:14-19⁸ scholarly emphases to concentrate on the particularism of the people of Israel, as the chosen ones,

⁸ Bible, ed. *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (Peabody, Massachusetts, USA: Henderson Bibles, 1989).

and ‘Holiness’ traditions emphasize universalism interpret, which means that he has chosen his people, the people of Israel to do his real and the revelations of his Holiness as mentioned.

3.3 Conclusion

The intertextual shown above reveals that the star seen by the Magi is fulfilment of the star of Jacob mentioned in the book of Numbers in the Old Testament. Balak seeks help immediately when he knows that his people are in danger for Israel is near. Balak goes and sees Balaam asking him for help. According to the exegesis, Balaam’s response is not what Balak expected. Balak’s is hoping for a miracle where Israel could be defeated in the hands of the Moabites. Instead, Balaam gives them a prophecy that their being saved is in the future and will be carried out by a so-called start from Israel who is also a sceptre – his saving work will be crushing of the borderlands of Moab. The interpretation of this prophecy as shown above is that the crushing of the borderlands of Moab is to bring the people of Moab into salvation with the people of Israel. The salvation that happened when a star shines in Jerusalem is the sign of the coming of the prophesied star and scepter who is Jesus the Messiah – this star according to Mathew is seen by the magi. Jesus the Messiah will bring life and peace to the lives of the oppressed and those in need in the world. From the perspective of *Fetū Taki*, this is of course the role expected of a *Fetū Taki* in our Tokelauan world. He or she should lead our community or our people in order for them to live life without poverty and to be in peace. The final Chapter will elaborate on this claim.

Chapter 4

Conclusion and Theological discussion

The interpretation reveals that the so-called God's people have entitlements – for example a person is entitled to a place or a land. This is the blessing Israel has according to the Book of Numbers as shown in the text studied in this paper when looked at from the point of view of the Israelites returning from exile in the time of the Persian Empire. They are entitled to reclaim the promised-land. But such blessing is a curse to other people like the Moabites. When considering the return of the exiled, from the holiness point of view, as rebuilding God's kingdom, anyone is looked upon to be blessed. This is the interpretation of the farewell words of Balaam emphasized in this paper. It is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus as Messiah – revealed by a star – and this Messiah is a Shepherd struck by death but rose victoriously after three days. Thus, all his teaching to his disciple and everyone that has witnessed the power of his majesty and those practices and miracle he has done, His mission to his people, shining like a star *Fetū Taki* not only for his disciple but everyone, especially Sinners. Reflecting and interpret ourselves in comparison to become a *Fetū Taki* not only to our families and friends but also to our community and everyone surrounding us in any time of needs, receiving blessing from our families and friend when travel somewhere, it is a different emotion, being blessed by the people you have trusted and parents, it is a different feeling knowing that you had their trust to be a *Fetū Taki* to them. Being blessed by the community and parents when they leave our island, is a different feeling knowing that you had their blessing when someone leave for studies and seek medical treatment overseas.

Theologically, sin as an evil power and force has been occupying our persons, but Jesus as Messiah and Shepherd's occupation of this force is a blessing for us and should be lived and practiced according to what the Magi do after visiting Jesus. Instead of going the way of Herod's request, they decided to go the right way – the way of God. Leading by the spirit of God through the guiding of the star, that shining upon their way to witness the child, the Messiah that was revealed by the prophets in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the *Fetū Taki* for all of us, he saved us from temptation and brought us into his Kingdom through salvation and glorious resurrection from the death and for us to be saved and healed.

For the Church and for those of us who are trained to become instruments of God to take his word to the world, this study reminds us the importance of caring for our people when we have a chance. At times, we may be called to move on to other places leaving our love ones behind. It is important that we make use of the time well that we spend with our families, churches, and villages. It is important also for our Church to talk more about importance of praying for one another in moments of saying good bye or farewell – either to go to another place or to go to heaven. There seem to be people who are still suffering in silence for not being able to properly say good bye to their love ones. But as the prophecy of the star of Jacob says as revealed in this study, that star will come in the future to break down barriers that are holding back anyone from receiving salvation or freedom.

This paper also gave me the opportunity to explore the Bible from my experience as a Tokelauan, to help me make more sense the meaning of the existence of God in my *Tokealauan world*. It is an exercise that I can take back with me to my Church and my people to share with them this understanding and knowledge mainly with the youth of our church and village. The message that will go with this experience is what we have

in our own worlds regardless of their size and wealth they are God-given gifts. We just need to learn in and through our faith and understanding our relationship with God as in our exploration of the Bible how we shall receive and accept those God-given gifts as blessings.

Glossary

<i>amanaki</i>	hope, feeling of trust
<i>akoakoga</i>	teachings
<i>au</i>	me
<i>fetū taki</i>	guiding star
<i>fakamakeke</i>	be strong, courage
<i>fakatokelau</i>	Tokelau way of living and belief
<i>manuia</i>	blessing
<i>mavaega fakatokelau</i>	tokelau's farewell
<i>taku tama</i>	my child
<i>olaga</i>	life we live
<i>tatalo</i>	prayer
<i>faifeau</i>	pastor

Bibliography

- Adair, Aaron. "The Star of Christ in the Light of Astronomy *Journal of Religion and Science*". vol 47 no. 1 (2012): 7-29.
- Bauer, David R. *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988.
- Boring, Eugene. "The Convergence of Source Analysis, Social History, and Literary Structure in the Gospel of Matthew, in *Seminar Papers*": Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting. Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994.
- Brueggemann, Walter. "The Land: Places as Gift, Promises, and Challenges in Biblical Faith." Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Davies, Margaret. *Matthew (A New Biblical Commentary)*. Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2009.
- Davies, W. D and Dale C. Allison, eds. *The Gospel according to Matthew*. Edinburgh: Martin's of Berwick, 1988
- Evans, Craig A. *Matthew, New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Gill, John. Exposition of the Bible on the website
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/matthew-2-9.html> accessed on 2 January 2021.
- Hare, Douglas A. *Matthew, Interpretation*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993.
- Joosten, Jan. "People and Land in the Holiness Code." *In An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26*. New York: E.J. Brill, 1996.
- Knohl, Israel. "The Sanctuary of Silence." *In The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Language and Art*. Translated by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. Edited by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Levine, Baruch A. "Numbers 21-36: A New Testament with Introduction and Commentary." (2000).
- Malota, Perenise. "What Jesus said about divorce: A Samoan Christian biblical interpretation of Matthew" 19:1-12. || BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2010.
- Martin, Francis. "The Image of Shepherd in the Gospel of Saint Mathew." edited by no. 3 27, 1975.

- Milgrom, Jacob. *"Leviticus 1-16." In A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: DoubleDay, 1991.
- Nofoaiga, Vaitusi. *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew, The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Olyan, Saul M. *"Rites and Ranks." In Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult*. New Jersey, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Setu, Leuelu. *"Revisiting Judas's Betrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew [26:14-16; 47 – 56, 27: 3-10]"*. BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2018.
- Walvoord, John F. *"Matthew's Thy Kingdom Come: A Commentary on the First Gospel"*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1974.
- Weber, Stuart K. *Matthew, New Testament Holman Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 20
- Westerholm, Stephen. *"Matthew in New Interpreter's Bible"*: One Volume Commentary edited by Beverly Roberts Gaventa and David Petersen. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010.