In Matt 21:12–17, the Gospel writer captures a dramatic scene in which Jesus enters the temple precincts in Jerusalem and performs a series of actions that challenge the temple authorities. After entering the city to the cries of “Hosanna to the son of David,” (Ps 118:25–26) from the crowds, vv. 12–13 report how he proceeds into the outer courts of the temple complex driving out the money changers, and those selling sacrificial animals. Following this, in v. 14, a number of sick people approach Jesus at the temple for healing, a task willingly performs. Responding to the previous events—the healings and expulsion of traders—in addition to still hearing children declaring, “Hosanna to the son of David,” the temple authorities, scribes, and priests confront Jesus, with the intent of convincing him to silence the children. As a stern rebuke to

1 The act of temple purification recalls acts performed by renowned figures from Israelite literary history who purged the temple of impurities, such as Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:3–11), and Josiah (2 Kgs 23). Furthermore, in the post-biblical era, Jesus’ actions echo those of Judas Maccabee, who cleansed the temple after fighting back the forces of Lysias (1 Macc 4:37–61). On this background, Jesus’ actions appear almost messianic.

2 The court of the Gentiles, a division of the temple precinct enabling God’s desire for the temple to be a place of worship for all nations.

3 The cry of “Hosanna” was originally a prayer, meaning “Save” or “I/we beseech you,” but by the first century it had become more of a celebratory or festive shout. More troubling to the temple authorities, however, were the earlier cries of “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” found in Matt 21:9. By the time of the Second Temple period, the expression “the one who comes” had taken on eschatological and messianic overtones; cf. Matt 11:3, 23:39, and E. Boring, The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections (NIB 8; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 403.

4 Jesus’ response to the temple authorities was undoubtedly intended as a statement stressing the obstinacy of the scribes and priests, who were well versed in the Hebrew Bible. Knowing this, Jesus poses the rhetorical question “have you never read”? Elsewhere in Matthew, the expression arises in conflicts between Jesus and various religious authorities (see for example Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4).
the temple authorities, and in defense of the children, Matthew records Jesus directly citing from the first half of Ps 8:2 [v. 3, Heb.], “have you not heard, ‘out of the mouth of infants and babes you have prepared praise for yourself.’” (NASB) Immediately afterwards, without any response from his accusers, Jesus leaves the temple, retreating to Bethany to lodge for the night.

Regarding the partial quote from Ps 8:2 in Matt 21:16, the preference among modern scholars is to regard the textual relation in terms of “fulfillment” or “typology.” Typifying this view are comments by Craig Blomberg; concerning Matt 21:16 he states, “This would appear to be a fairly straightforward use of typology.” Similarly, Daniel Harrington views the actions in Matt 21:16 as a fulfillment of the Scriptures. Within the rubric of this understanding, the text in Ps 8 represents “unfulfilled” words, or a pattern of events that remains incomplete, awaiting a future event or individual to “complete” it. In this

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6 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own; and verse references correspond with those in English Bibles.

7 The closest parallel in the Gospels appears in Luke 19:37. As Jesus makes his descent from the Mount of Olives, a multitude of his disciples, not specifically children, cry out “Hosanna to the son of David.” In Luke, however, it is the Pharisees, and not temple authorities (priests and scribes) who plead with Jesus to silence their words. Luke omits Jesus’ reply with a quote from Ps 8, but recalls Jesus’ reply that if the crowd does not cry out, then the stones would. It would appear that Matthew’s desire to include the children’s role in the incident not only stemmed from his desire to include the biblical quotation, but also from his understanding of children’s advanced capabilities in perceiving the truths of the kingdom of heaven. Matt 18:3 further reflects his mind-set, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

8 S. Moyise and M. Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), 72, raise the possibility that Matthew here is simply quoting an unknown source for the incident; scholarly consensus understands Matthew relying on three streams of input: Mark, Q, and the traditions of his community, frequently referred to as M (see Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 95). However, that still leaves the question of why this source was chosen over any other. Matthew had the option of omitting any reference to the incident, as Mark did (cf. 11:15–18).

9 An interpretive technique in which persons or statements represent pre-figuration “types” that are superseded by later New Testament persons or events, “antitypes.” Fundamentally, the words of Ps 8:2 depicting babes praising God with their lips represent a type that has its antitype in Matthew’s gospel with children declaring praise to Jesus in the temple precincts. See G. Beale and D. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 70.