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"If You Are Willing to Receive It": The Presentation of John the Baptist as Elijah in Matthew's Gospel

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“IF YOU ARE WILLING TO RECEIVE IT”:
THE PRESENTATION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AS ELIJAH IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

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To Michelle, and our children, Shirah, Josiah, and Benjamin.

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Finally, to my wife Michelle, a true gift from the Lord, whose love and encouragement upheld me so many times when the completion of this dissertation felt an impossibility.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D.N. Freedman. 6 Vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
AsTJ	*Asbury Theological Journal*
ATR	*Australasian Theological Review*
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bib	*Biblica*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConcC	Concordia Commentary
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
EBC	*Expositor's Bible Commentary*
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*

JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MBI	Methods in Biblical Interpretation
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NRTh	*La nouvelle revue théologique*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTL	Old Testament Library
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SBB	Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Edited by E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. Translated by M.E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1997.
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	*Word and World*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

ABSTRACT

Goldstein, Aaron, J. "'If You Are Willing to Receive It': The Presentation of John The Baptist as Elijah in Matthew's Gospel." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2021. 214pp.

In Matthew's Gospel, John the Baptist demonstrates a viewpoint of himself and Jesus, in their respective roles in the in–breaking kingdom of heaven, which is correct, but also insufficient. An exploration is undertaken to better understand this phenomenon.

With John identified in the Gospel as 'Elijah who is to come,' Malachian texts concerning expectations for Elijah's return are examined. From this context, three figures emerge, each with an expected role: 'My messenger'/Elijah, the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant, and Yahweh himself.

A survey of relevant Second Temple Jewish literature aids in reading as Matthew's implied reader. This survey demonstrates diversity, but also certain general contours of Elijanic expectation during the period.

Analysis of the Matthean Baptist's narrative arc focuses on the insufficient viewpoint demonstrated in the narrative by John and others. Interest is taken in the nature of this insufficiency and how the Gospel's narrator supplements the portrayal of John and Jesus. This occurs prominently through the use of Isaianic texts, as well as the narrative's development and the use of other Old Testament texts.

Regarding this supplementing work of the narrator, four major themes emerge. First, rather than enacting immediate and full eschatological judgement, in the manifestation of the kingdom's in–breaking, there is an emphasis instead on eschatological blessing in the ministry of Jesus. Second, when Jesus does take on the role of eschatological judge, the expressions of judgement are all, in some sense, partial in nature. Third, though the kingdom has broken in with the ministries of John and Jesus, it continues to suffer violence at the hands of violent men, such that both John and Jesus will suffer and die. Fourth, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel expands the portrayal of Jesus' messianic identity, such that Old Testament texts and themes associated with Yahweh are associated with Jesus.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

The Current Status of the Question

Modern critical scholarship on John the Baptist began in parallel with that of Jesus himself. As the so-called 'first quest' for the historical Jesus set out in academia, many of the major figures considering Jesus with new and critical approaches examined the Baptist through a similar lens. In comparable fashion, the focus was on looking beyond the John found in the text of the canonical Gospels to best reconstruct a John of history, even if the reconstructed portrait was contradictory to the one found in the Bible. This led to varied results. For example, Reimarus makes the case that though John claims not to have known Jesus before their encounter at the river Jordan, it is difficult to believe that as cousins they had no prior relationship.[1] Instead, he argues, the words of John about the coming Messiah and the events at Jesus' baptism—including the divine revelation—were all premeditated actions, "representations and inventions to further the design of Jesus, and Jesus was perfectly well aware that he did so."[2] Coming to different conclusions, Strauss argues that Jesus was in fact first a follower of John before undertaking his own ministry.[3] Schweitzer sees a contradiction present in the Gospel accounts with respect to John's identification as Malachi's Elijah figure. He asserts that John would not

[1] Reimarus writes: "But were they not cousins? Were their mothers not intimate friends who visited each other? Did not Jesus, when a boy, often go up to Jerusalem with his relations and friends, so that John, who was about his own age, and on the same road, must surely have kept up his acquaintance and cousinly relationship?" Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Fragments*, ed. Charles H. Talbert, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 139.

[2] Reimarus, *Fragments,* 140.

[3] Strauss writes that Jesus was "attracted by the fame of the Baptist, put himself under the tuition of that preacher, and that having remained some time among his followers, and been initiated into his ideas of the approaching messianic kingdom, he, after the imprisonment of John, carried on, under certain modifications, the same work, never ceasing, even when he had far surpassed his predecessor, to render him due homage," David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 233.

have fit the bill as he did not himself do any miracles or manifest supernatural powers, and that "Jesus was the first and only person who attributed this office [that of Elijah] to him."[4] Following these early works, a number of significant form-critical monographs on John the Baptist were produced in further efforts to glean historical data about him.[5]

Interest in the historical figure of John the Baptist surged with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which led to scholarly examination of a possible relationship between John and the Qumran community. Brownlee, for example, observes distinct similarities between John's teaching and Essene thought, and supposes that "it is not at all improbable that he spent his childhood in the wilderness, being brought up by the Essenes," and that this contact would "[explain] in a marvelous way the teaching of John the Baptist."[6] A number of other works undertook similar explorations.[7]

It is during this same time period that, as Dennert writes, "scholarship essentially divided into two types that one may label as study of the 'historical Baptist' and study of the 'literary Baptist.'"[8] It is the latter trend of scholarship that is of interest to this project. While there is certainly value in the study of a historical Baptist, the focus here is not in a man behind the text,

[4] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 373. In fact, Schweitzer holds that John actually expects that Jesus will be the Elijah-figure, combining that role with that of the outpourer of the Spirit anticipated in Joel (Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 373–74).

[5] E.g. Martin Dibelius, *Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1911); Maurice Goguel, *Au seuil de l'Evangile: Jean-Baptiste* (Paris: Payot, 1928); Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Urchristentum 1: Johannes der Täufer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1932); Carl Kraeling, *John the Baptist* (New York: Scribener's Sons, 1952).

[6] W. H. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls," *Int* 9 (1955): 73.

[7] E.g. A.S. Geyser, "The Youth of John the Baptist: A Deduction from the Break in the Parallel Account of the Lucan Infancy Story," *NovT* 1 (1956): 70–75; John A.T. Robinson, "The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community," pp. 11–27 in *Twelve New Testament Studies*, ed. John A.T. Robinson (London: SCM, 1962).

[8] Brian C. Dennert, *John the Baptist and the Jewish Setting of Matthew*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 9.

but the man in the text, namely John the Baptist as presented in Matthew's Gospel.[9] This increased attention to the literary Baptist first manifested itself in a number of redaction-critical projects. With respect to the Matthean Baptist, Trilling's study, "Die Täufertradition bei Matthäus" is of major influence.[10] Though he still sees them as differentiated, Trilling argues for elements of assimilation between Jesus and John in Matthew. A function of this, he asserts, is to show the two of them being opposed by a common enemy, a group he describes as "die gottfeindliche Front,"[11] and that ultimately "Johannes und Jesus werden abgewiesen und erleiden das Schicksal der Propheten."[12] This theme of "das Schicksal der Propheten" is another key idea that Trilling sees highlighted with Matthew's redactive work.[13]

Following Trilling's study, Wink wrote *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition,* a redaction-critical analysis of John in each of the four canonical Gospels. As Wink himself admits, he relies heavily on Trilling's work in his section on Matthew.[14] Among Wink's unique contributions is his assertion that "Matthew's point of departure in adapting and modifying his sources is the Elijah-concept. By making John's role unmistakably clear, Matthew introduces an element of certainty which admits of no ambiguity: John is the prophesied Elijah."[15] This

[9] As this study is on the Matthean Baptist, the focus from here is especially on literary studies that interact with Matthew's Gospel, as opposed to works focused on the other synoptics, John's Gospel, or any non-canonical gospels.

[10] Wolfgang Trilling,"Die Täufertradition bei Matthäus," *BZ* 3 (1959), 271–89.

[11] Trilling, "Täufertradition," 274–75.

[12] Trilling, "Täufertradition," 284.

[13] Trilling, "Täufertradition," 274.

[14] Wink writes: "We are fortunate to have in Wolfgang Trilling's analysis of 'Die Täufertradition bei Matthäus' a definitive study of Matthew's treatment of John. We shall therefore make the structure of his analysis our own and supplement on the basis of it." Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 27.

[15] Wink, *John the Baptist,* 40.

observation, made here by Wink, is of fundamental importance, as a right understanding of the John-as-Elijah motif in Matthew's Gospel is foundational to understanding the Baptist's role in the narrative.

Meier also produced a redaction-critical study of John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel built on Trilling's work, though his approach is different, reviewing "the data according to the order in which they appear in the gospel,"[16] rather than arranging thematically as Trilling does. In addition, Meier contends that the reason for Matthew's assimilation of Jesus and John has to do with the author's view of redemptive history. Meier sees Matthew's outline involving "three stages; the OT, the time of Jesus, and the time of the church,"[17] and argues that this is the reason behind a parallelism-yet-subordination theme. John belongs with Jesus in the second stage (hence, parallelism), but he dies before the third stage breaks through, such that "even this least in the kingdom (during the time of the church) is greater than the Baptist,"[18] (hence, subordination).[19]

In recent years, scholars have employed the tools of literary criticism in analyzing the Gospels. Using this methodology, a number of works have been written which focus on John the Baptist and his role in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel.[20] Among these types of studies on the

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[16] John P. Meier, "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 99 (1980), 387.

[17] Meier, "John the Baptist," 403.

[18] Meier, "John the Baptist," 405.

[19] Several other significant redaction-critical works of note on the Baptist include Gerd Häfner, *Der verheißen Vorläufer. Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täufers im Matthäus-Evangelium*. SBB 27 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1994) and Dennert, *John the Baptist.* Häfner presses into the notion that John as Elijah explains the assimilation-yet-subordination of John with Jesus in Matthew. Dennert argues that "Matthew presents Jesus to be the continuation and culmination of John's ministry in order to strengthen the claims of Matthew's group within its Jewish setting and to vilify the opponents of his group," (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 29). While I am placing Dennert under a redaction-critical heading, he would describe his approach as "an eclectic method that draws upon redactional, literary, and social-scientific approaches," (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 25).

[20] Notable examples of this sort of approach in recent years include: Hubert Frankemölle, "Johannes der Täufer und Jesus im Matthäusevanglium: Jesus als Nachfolger des Täufers," *NTS* 42 (1996): 196–218 and Lisa M.

Matthean Baptist is Yamasaki's *John the Baptist in Life and Death: Audience–Oriented Criticism of Matthew's Narrative*. Yamasaki takes a detailed literary approach he terms as "audience-oriented criticism."[21] He observes the narrative role that John plays in Matthew's Gospel, analyzing in order each time that he appears in the text. After asserting that the Baptist's only impact on the main storyline occurs in chapter three, Yamasaki concludes that "John's primary role in the Gospel of Matthew is not at the story level of narrative, but at the discourse level,"[22] and as such, the narrator uses John's ongoing appearances in the text to influence the narrative's characterization of Jesus. In this regard, he observes that John, who expects Jesus to come as the eschatological judge, finds that his ideological view is somewhat out of sync with the point of view belonging to the narrator and Jesus.[23] In the first instance of this, at Jesus' baptism, Yamasaki writes: "The narrator gives no indication that John is incorrect in his understanding of Jesus as the eschatological judge. ... However, John does harbour a misunderstanding when it comes to the timing of Jesus' execution of this role,"[24] which is an issue that Jesus will address in the passage.

Gibbs makes a similar observation regarding John's incomplete understanding of Jesus.[25]

Bowens, "The Role of John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," *WW* 30, no. 3 (2010): 311–18. Anderson has written a more general study on Matthew's narrative, but has a section focused on the Baptist's narrative role: Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again,* JSNTSup 91 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), esp. pp. 83–90.

[21] For a discussion of this approach, see: Gary Yamasaki, *John the Baptist in Life and Death: Audience-Oriented Criticism of Matthew's Narrative,* JSNTSup 167 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 33–63.

[22] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 148. For a discussion on *story* and *discourse*, see the "Methodological Procedure" section below.

[23] E.g. Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 95–97.

[24] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 96–97.

[25] He will further assert that with language used at the Matthean baptism scene, the narrator makes a subtle suggestion that John's opposition to Jesus in 3:14–15 is "ultimately satanic in origin," as the exact same phrase—τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτόν—is used both of John ("Then he permitted him") in Matt 3:15 and of Satan ("Then the devil left him") in Matt 4:11. With that said, Gibbs explains that this does not mean that John is to be rejected, "for the narrator has announced him as the fulfillment of Scripture (3:3), and Jesus calls him to join in fulfilling all

Prior to his appearance for baptism, John's expressed expectation of Jesus' role is that of eschatological judge (Matt 3:7–12). As Gibbs explains, however, while the implied reader knows that Jesus will bring eschatological judgment on the last day, "his present ministry brings with it eschatological salvation, for Jesus is the Christ who has come to save his people from their sins (1:21). What John has not adequately expressed is the salvific nature of the presence of 'God with us' in the eschatological 'now' time of the story."[26]

This is the point at which this project purposes to enter into the discussion.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

This dissertation will examine the narrative arc of the Matthean Baptist, analyzing in order each appearance John (or relatedly, Elijah) makes in the Gospel's text. The specific texts to be included are: Matt 3:1–17; 4:12–16; 9:14–17; 11:2–30; 14:1–13a; 16:13–14; 17:1–13; 21:23–22:44; 27:45–50. Though John the Baptist is presented generally as a reliable character,[27] in Kingsbury's words, "John's conception of Jesus' ministry, though it is correct, is also insufficient."[28] This insufficiency, noted by Kingsbury, is not limited to the baptism scene, but manifests throughout the Baptist's narrative arc. Furthermore, John is not alone in having an incomplete understanding of his and Jesus' ministry as they participate together in the surprising in–breaking of the kingdom of heaven. Many others in the narrative, like the Baptist himself, demonstrate an insufficient understanding of John and Jesus. This dissertation will seek to

righteousness" (Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia: Jesus' Eschatological Discourse in Matthew's Gospel* [St. Louis: Concordia, 2000], 42).

[26] Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia*, 42.

[27] For discussion on reliable and unreliable characters, see Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 52–54. For reading John as a reliable character in Matthew's narrative, see: Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia*, 34–35.

[28] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 48.

further the conversation on this matter, in aiming to examine the nature of this ongoing 'insufficient' viewpoint exhibited by John and others. Furthermore, this project will observe ways in which the narrator of Matthew's Gospel—often through the words of Matthean Jesus—interacts with this viewpoint, reshaping it for the sake of the reader, in order to provide a fuller portrait of John and Jesus.

An important feature of this discussion is the ubiquitous presence of the Old Testament in the background of Matthew's Gospel. It will be argued that John does have a clear sense of a certain Old Testament expectation, particularly one formed by Malachi, for both himself and Jesus. With this in mind, in the context of the narrative, John can be both reliable in that he sees a part of the picture, but also deficient in understanding because he does not see the full picture. To put it differently, John's viewpoint is not wrong, it is just incomplete. A prominent reshaping strategy of the narrator is to supplement John's (and others') 'insufficient' viewpoint through the use of texts from Isaiah, though it also occurs with the development of the narrative generally, as well as the use of other Old Testament texts. These things will be explored.

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

Under the heading of methodology, the following topics are briefly discussed. First, a discussion on narrative critical approach will describe generally the narrative critical perspective for this project, while engaging specific key terminology. Second, a section on Matthean engagement with the Old Testament will offer some brief comments on the manner in which Matthew's Gospel employs texts from the Old Testament, and how those contours affect the perspective of this dissertation.

Narrative Critical Approach

A first step towards reading the Gospel of Matthew with a narrative critical approach is to

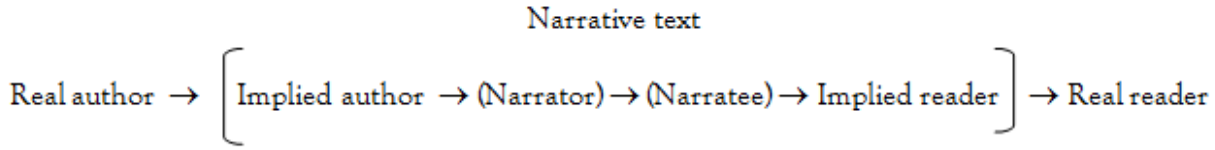
read it as a literary whole. As is discussed above in the "Status of the Question" section, regarding Matthean studies, historically there was an increased interest in a literary analysis of the Gospel, shifting from previous approaches. While prior studies often centered on diachronic readings, more scholars began to pursue synchronic readings of the Gospel. Anderson describes the distinction between the former and the latter: "Source, form, and redaction criticisms focused on the individual tessarae of the Gospels or on the seams that connected them. Narrative critics, rebelliously rejecting what they saw as disintegrating methods, began to examine the Gospels as literary wholes."[29]

At present, reading the Gospels with narrative critical methodology is not a novel approach. Others have come before and have laid a foundation in method. The intended contribution of this project is not in method generally, but in the product of an established method applied. With that said, rather than re-state what has been elsewhere established with clarity and skill,[30] it will suffice here to instead focus on key narrative critical concepts and their associated terminology.

[29] Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web,* 26.

[30] For a general book–length discussion of narrative critical reading methodology, see: Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* For discussion more specifically focused on the Gospels, and Matthew in particular, see: Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web,* 26–30; Jeffrey A Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 30–38; *Jerusalem and Parousia,* 15–18; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story,* 1–40; Mark Allan Powell, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew," *Int* 46 (1992): 341–46.

Author and Reader



A first set of terms to consider involves the author and reader of a narrative. As the above diagram from Chatman[31] indicates, within narrative criticism, a distinction is made between the real author and reader, and the implied author and reader.[32] The real author and reader are the flesh and blood, historically located creator and consumer of the text. Unlike the real author and reader who stand outside and apart from the text,[33] the implied author and reader are constructs presupposed by the details of text.

Anderson describes an implied author as the voice or persona that is "the authorial presence the reader experiences in the work."[34] Regarding the notion of an implied reader, Kingsbury explains that he or she is the "imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment."[35] The effect of this move from real to implied author and reader is to shift the conversation to the text. The goal, therefore, is not to use the text as a window to get at the world behind the text, but rather focus on the world created in the narrative itself.[36]

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[31] Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 151.

[32] The terminology of "implied *reader*" is employed here and throughout, though as Yamasaki suggests, there are reasons that some would prefer instead the language of "implied *hearer."* See his discussion on pp. 37–41 (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*).

[33] As Chatman observes, even though the real author and real reader are "outside the narrative transaction as such," they are "indispensable to it in an ultimate practical sense" (Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 151).

[34] Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web,* 27.

[35] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story,* 38.

[36] This is not to say that a narrative critical reading is an implicit denial of historicity. Rather, it is simply a

Furthermore, as Powell asserts: "The implied reader of Matthew's Gospel knows everything that the Gospel expects him or her to know, but does not know anything that the Gospel does not expect him or her to know."[37] In addition to general linguistic competence to receive the text in Greek, Powell will go on in the article to describe four other types of knowledge that "may be assumed to belong to the repertoire of Matthew's implied reader": (1) Knowledge that might be considered universal, (2) knowledge of what is revealed within the narrative, (3) knowledge that is presupposed by the spatial, temporal and social setting of the narrative, and (4) knowledge of other literature that is cited (by reference or allusion) within the narrative.[38] As this project intends to engage Matthew's use of the Old Testament, it is worth highlighting this last type of knowledge. The implied reader of Matthew is expected to be familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and not only with explicit citations, but he or she knows them "well enough to recognize subtle allusions to them."[39] Furthermore, when the implied author employs texts from the Old Testament, those texts carry a particular weightiness in the narrative. For this is one way in which the narrator presents the voice of God. As Gibbs notes, in quoting from the Old Testament, the narrator is "offering the authoritative, divine interpretation of events that take place in the story."[40]

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shaping of focus for the sake of discussion. Also of note, as Powell explains, employing an implied reader concept "moves narrative criticism away from being a purely reader-centered (pragmatic) type of criticism and makes it a more text-centered (objective) approach" (Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 24).

[37] Mark Allan Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows," *AsTJ* 48, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 32.

[38] Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings," 32–47.

[39] Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings," 42.

[40] Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia,* 18. Consider, for instance, the manner in which Hos 11:1 is presented in Matt 2:15. The quotation is introduced with the words: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet ..." That is to say, they are presented as the words of God that were first issued from Hosea (i.e. God is the first person speaker in "Out of Egypt *I* called *my* son"), and that same voice continues to speak as the words find fulfillment in the life of Jesus.

A related concept to that of the implied author is the matter of *evaluative point of view*. As Powell explains, the evaluative point of view "refers to the norms, values, and general worldview that the implied author establishes as operative for the story" and "may be defined as the standards of judgment by which readers are led to evaluate the events, characters, and settings that comprise the story."[41] Furthermore, in the New Testament Gospels, this right way of thinking "is aligned with God's point of view."[42] This is especially relevant in the consideration of the Baptist, for in Matthew's Gospel, John is not completely aligned with the implied author's evaluative point of view.

A further distinction can be made, as indicated by the above diagram, between the implied author and the narrator of a given text. Per Chatman, the narrator is the principle created by the implied author to tell the story. In describing the distinction between implied author and narrator, he writes that the implied author is the one "that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happen to these characters, in these words or images. ... It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn."[43]

With regard to the Gospel of Matthew, because the voice of the narrator is consistently a trustworthy conveyor of the implied author's point of view, as Gibbs notes, "there is no effective difference between the 'implied author' as perspective and the 'narrator' of the Gospel as the

[41] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 24.

[42] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 24. As Powell asserts, an initial acceptance of the implied author's evaluative point of view is essential, "for without such acceptance the story can never be understood in the first place." As examples, he suggests that "We may have to believe in talking animals or flying spaceships. And even if we are atheists, we will have to become Christians for a while if we are to read Bunyan or Dante."

[43] Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 148.

actual voice that tells the story."[44] As he notes, however, there is at least one instance in the Gospel (Matt 24:15—"let the reader understand") in which the implied author "bypasses completely the characters in the narrative (Jesus and the disciples) and directly addresses the 'implied reader.'"[45]

Story and Discourse

Another set of narrative critical terms to consider is that of *story* and *discourse*. Powell's definitions are helpful here: "*Story* refers the content of the narrative, what it is about. A story consists of such elements as events, characters, and settings, and the interaction of these elements comprises what we call the plot. *Discourse* refers to the rhetoric of the narrative, how the story is told."[46] This distinction between story and discourse plays a major role in Yamasaki's study on John the Baptist. In the concluding section, he writes:

> From this summary of the conclusions drawn by the present study, it is evident that John's primary role in the Gospel of Matthew is not at the story level of the narrative, but at the discourse level. With the exception of John's baptism of Jesus, the material on John in this narrative makes no significant contribution at the story level. In fact, most of the material on John could be excised from the narrative with little or no impact on the unfolding of the story. ... Thus, the narrator uses John mainly to influence the way in which the narratee experiences the narrative; this is John's primary significance in Matthew's Gospel.[47]

For the purpose of the present study, this distinction is significant, for much of the reshaping work of the narrator occurs for the sake of the reader, and as such often occurs on the discourse level rather than the story level of the narrative.

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[44] Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia,* 16.

[45] Gibbs, *Jerusalem and Parousia,* 16.

[46] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* 23 (emphasis original).

[47] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 148. In general, Yamasaki is correct here. However, as he describes on p. 103, John's disciples function as an extension of his own voice, and as such, they represent the "reappearance of John." For this reason, John still enters and influences the story level of the narrative when his disciples appear and speak in chapters four and eleven.

Matthew's Engagement with the Old Testament

Matthew's interest in the Old Testament can be readily seen by the frequent use of it in the context of the Gospel—via direct quotation as well as allusion. Regarding the former, Blomberg points out that "[a]pproximately fifty–five references prove close enough in wording for commentators typically to label them 'quotations,' compared to about sixty–five for the other three canonical Gospels put together."[48] Of those direct citations, a majority come from the mouth of Jesus, who introduces the quotations in various ways. Sometimes he will first provide an introductory statement of sorts, such as "it is written," in order to indicate he is referring to Scripture (e.g. Matt 4:4; 21:13). On other occasions, Jesus will simply weave the quotation into his speech without any formal setup (e.g. Matt 9:13; 10:35).

Another frequent source of direct quotations in Matthew is the Gospel's narrator. When this occurs, in each instance, the narrator provides some form of introductory formula. France describes: "The introductory 'formula' varies slightly, but the first is typical: 'All this happened to fulfill what had been declared by the Lord through the prophet, who said …' (1:22). Sometimes the prophet is named (but only when it is Isaiah or Jeremiah), and the agency of the 'the Lord' is more often left to be understood."[49] Furthermore, with the exception of Matt 3:3, the introduction to each of the narrator's direct quotations features the Greek word πληρόω, a term associated with a key theme in the Gospel, as is discussed below.[50]

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[48] Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1.

[49] R.T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 11.

[50] The remaining few direct quotations listed in the UBS index come from various sources, including the chief priests and scribes speaking with Herod in Matt 2:5–6 and the crowd with Jesus in Matt 21:9, as well those opposing Jesus and using Scripture for their purposes (Satan [Matt 4:6], Pharisees [Matt 19:7], Sadducees [Matt 22:24]).

In addition to these direct quotations, however, Matthew's Gospel is filled with allusions to the Old Testament. As France writes, the UBS *Greek New Testament* lists "262 'allusions and verbal parallels,' and that is a conservative figure based only on the most widely recognized allusions."[51] Regarding the discerning of what he terms as "echoes" of the Old Testament, the work of Richard Hays is instructive. In his book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul,* Hays suggests that in discerning an echo, a reader is always dealing with varying degrees of certainty. As he explains:

> Sometimes the echo will be so loud that only the dullest or most ignorant reader could miss it ... other times there will be room for serious differences of opinion about whether a particular phrase should be heard as an echo of a prior text and, if so, how it should be understood. ... Precision in such judgment calls is unattainable, because exegesis is a modest imaginative craft, not an exact science; still it is possible to specify certain rules of thumb that might help the craftsman decide whether to treat a particular phrase as an echo.[52]

In his book, Hays proceeds to lay out seven criteria for use in determining the viability of a potential Old Testament echo: Availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation, and satisfaction.[53] Building on the work of others, Berkley

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[51] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 10–11.

[52] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29.

[53] Hays' seven "tests" are here summarized, albeit with descriptions adapted for general use in New Testament texts, as opposed to being Pauline–specific in definition: (1) *Availability.* Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or original readers? (2) *Volume.* The volume of an echo is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns, but other factors may be relevant: how distinctive or prominent is the precursor text within Scripture, and how much rhetorical stress does the echo receive? (3) *Recurrence*. How often does the NT author elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? This applies not only to specific words that are cited more than once ... but also to larger portions of Scripture to which the NT author repeatedly refers. (4) *Thematic Coherence.* How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that the NT author is developing? ... Do the images and ideas of the proposed precursor text illuminate the author's argument? (5) *Historical Plausibility.* Could the NT author have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it? (6) *History of Interpretation.* Have other readers, both critical and pre–critical, heard the same echoes? The readings of our predecessors can both check and stimulate our perception of scriptural echoes. (7) *Satisfaction.* With or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation? (Hays, *Scripture in the Letters of Paul,* 29–32).

offers his own criteria, which he describes as "largely modifications dependent upon the work of Stockhausen, Hays, and Fishbane."[54] Berkley's emendations to Hays' list are helpful as he places greater weight on direct verbal connections between a potential Old Testament echo and the New Testament passage. He is working with Pauline texts, and as such, the descriptions of his criteria are Pauline-specific. They are, however, useful generally for any New Testament text. Berkley's criteria are summarized (and generalized for broad New Testament usage) below. Berkley designates items one through four as "primary criteria" and items five through seven as "confirmatory criteria."

> (1) *Common vocabulary.* There is specific vocabulary shared between the New Testament passage and the potential Old Testament text in question. This is especially weighty if the vocabulary shares specific grammatical forms, or if they are rare or technical words.
>
> (2) *Vocabulary clusters.* There are several significant vocabulary correspondences between the New Testament text and an Old Testament context.
>
> (3) *Links with other texts*. There are vocabulary links to other Old Testament passages that could be used together by the New Testament author.
>
> (4) *Explication.* The presumed Old Testament text helps explain the New Testament author's argument or the presuppositions underlying his argument.[55]
>
> (5) *Recurrence.* Whether by allusion or citation, there is evidence that the New Testament author has referred to this Old Testament passage elsewhere.
>
> (6) *Common themes.* The New Testament author picks up or treats the same themes as those found in a perceived Old Testament reference.

[54] Timothy W. Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart: Pauline Intertextual Exegesis in Romans 2:17–29* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 60 n132. The works that he references by these authors are: Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Hays, *Scripture in the Letters of Paul*; Carol Kern Stockhausen, "2 Corinthians 3 and the Principles of Pauline Exegesis," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel,* ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, JSNTSup 83 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 143–64.

[55] Berkley writes: "This corresponds to Hays's tests of Thematic Coherence and Satisfaction, but goes farther in attempting to determine not only if an OT passage 'fits' into Paul's line of argument, but if it has helped shape Paul's argument" (Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant,* 63).

(7) *Common linear development.* Vocabulary correspondences and/or themes occur in the same order in which they appear in the OT text.[56]

These criteria are generally adopted for this project as helpful guidelines for evaluating the potential presence of an echo. In particular, the notion of "recurrence," which Berkley explains that he borrows directly from Hays, is foundational. Arguments will be made that themes from larger sections of both Malachi and Isaiah are alluded to in Matthew's Gospel, anchored by the fact that explicit citations from those same sections bubble to the surface in several key places in the narrative.

In looking for these sorts of verbal and syntactical connections between Matthew and Old Testament Scriptures, primary attention will naturally be given to the LXX.[57] On occasions in

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[56] Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant*, 60–64.

[57] France writes:

> A translator of a work which regularly quotes from the Bible naturally presents those quotations in the form in which they appear in the current translation of the Bible in the language into which he is translating, unless there is something about that translation which makes its version inappropriate to what his text is trying to convey by means of the quotation. In most cases this is the procedure which the gospel writers adopted in conveying quotations originally made by Jesus presumably in Aramaic. And where they are themselves referring directly to the Old Testament they, and the rest of the New Testament writers, generally use the familiar LXX version. This is only to be expected (R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004], 172–73).

With that said, it must be acknowledged that to speak of "the LXX" is overly simplistic. In addressing the problem of terminology, Peters describes a number of different ways in which scholars will employ the language of "the LXX" or "the Septuagint," including: to speak of (1) only the Pentateuch, or (2) the entire collection of Jewish-Greek Scriptures, (3) the use instead of "Ur-Septuagint," "Original Septuagint," or "Proto-Septuagint" (i.e. the Old Greek) as a recognition of potential corruption to extant LXX manuscripts, (4) to refer to a critical edition of the LXX, (5) choosing one or two well-known manuscripts, such as Codex Alexandrinus (A) or Codex Vaticanus (B), and citing instead something like LXX^{A} or LXX^{B}, (6) to refer to "any printed edition so labeled," (7) the refusal of the idea of the LXX as a single enterprise altogether. (Melvin K. H. Peters, "Septuagint," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman. [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 2:1093–94). The general practice of this dissertation, when using language of "the LXX" is in reference to Peters' fourth category, that is, to speak of text from a critical edition of the LXX. Among these sorts of critical editions, the Göttingen text has become an industry standard resource (*Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Säentiarum Göttingensis editum*. 16 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931–). For a book-length treatment of the complex issues entailed with the study of the LXX, see: Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

For a discussion on the history of scholarship concerning the nature of Matthew's Bible, see, for example: Maarten J.J. Menken, *Matthew's Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 1–10; Graham Stanton, "Matthew," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of*

which Matthew's citation does not conform to an LXX reading, due consideration will be given as to why this might be the case.[58]

Having discussed the presence of quotations and allusions of the Old Testament, we turn our attention briefly to the matter of how Matthew's Gospel employs and interprets the Old Testament. The amount of literature on early Jewish interpretive practices often employed by New Testament authors is broad, and for our purposes need not be handled in–depth.[59] There are, however, two specific issues worth commenting on at this point.

The first specific issue is the repeated use of the verb πληρόω in Matthew's Gospel, and the concept surrounding it. For as France writes, "This verb, and the formulae in which it is incorporated, are only the most visible signs of a whole orientation of thought which comes to expression in many other ways."[60] Fulfillment, as he writes, involves for Matthew "a systematic attention to the place of Jesus' ministry within the unfolding purpose of God which affects and controls his presentation of all aspects of the story and the teaching of Jesus."[61] Perhaps another

Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 205–11.

[58] In a consideration of the text form for Matthew's "formula quotations," France suggests a number of reasons why Old Testament citations found in Matthew may deviate from an LXX reading. Within the discussion, he mentions various possibilities, such as: offering "a more direct translation of the Hebrew," or "the incorporation into the basic text of words and phrases drawn from one or more other Old Testament passages, which relate to the same theme" (France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 173–74).

[59] Evans writes that Jewish exegesis in late antiquity took many forms, and regarding those exegetical practices, that "a distinctive body of materials did emerge in Jewish circles, exemplifying interpretive approaches also found in the writings of the NT." He then goes on to list the following five categories of early Jewish interpretive method: (1) Targum—paraphrasing of canonical texts, (2) Midrash—"searching the text for clarification beyond the obvious," involving methods such as comparing passages with common vocabulary or allowing a general rule to be deduced from a specific passage (and vice versa), (3) Pesher—understanding "specific biblical passages as fulfilled in specific historical events and experiences," (4) Allegory—extracting symbolic meanings from the text, (5) Typology—"based on the belief that the biblical story (of the past) has some bearing on the present, or, to turn it around, that the present is foreshadowed in the biblical story." (Craig A. Evans, "The Old Testament in the New," in *The Face of New Testament Studies,* ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 131–35).

[60] France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 167.

[61] France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, 167.

way to say this is that for Matthew, the use of the Old Testament is more than just an examination of isolated citations, but is in fact a holistic orientation for his presentation of Jesus. As such, Hays writes:

> The understanding of Matthew's use of Scripture will be far too narrow if we are enraptured by the formula quotations. These citations, to be sure, express a theological perspective that pervades Matthew's Gospel—as expressed in certain key programmatic statements such as Jesus' declaration in the Sermon on the Mount that he has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). Yet precisely this saying suggests that we must reckon with a Matthean hermeneutical program considerably more comprehensive than a collection of a dozen or so prooftexts.[62]

Hays will go on to describe other ways in which Matthew engages with the Old Testament. He lists figuration, in which the reader is encouraged to see Jesus "as the fulfillment of Old Testament precursors, particularly Moses, David, and Isaiah's Servant figure"[63] (more on this below in the section on typology). Furthermore, Hays writes, "at a level still deeper than these narrative figurations, Matthew's language and imagery are from start to finish soaked in Scripture; he constantly presupposes the social and symbolic world rendered by the stories, songs, prophecies, laws, and wisdom teachings of Israel's sacred texts."[64] With this in mind, because Matthew's Gospel is so oriented towards the Old Testament and the notion of fulfillment, the question of how Matthew's Gospel is engaging with the Old Testament is always at the forefront.

Related to this, the second specific issue is the matter of typology, akin to what Hays refers to as "figuration."[65] In the consideration of individual texts, while Matthew's Gospel does engage some Old Testament texts in a manner along the lines predictive prophecy (e.g. Mic 5:2

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[62] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 108–09.

[63] Hays, *Scripture in the Gospels*, 109.

[64] Hays, *Scripture in the Gospels*, 109.

[65] Cf. Hays, *Scripture in the Gospels*, 109.

in Matt 2:6), frequently, it appears that the usage could be better described as typological. As the language of "typology" is used with a variety of differently nuanced meanings, it is helpful to define terminology here. By typology, what is meant is the manner in which a New Testament author—in this case the author of Matthew's Gospel—sees an Old Testament text which, understood in its own context, provides a category to better understand some aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus. As France puts it, he recognizes

> some concept of ongoing patterns in the purpose of God whereby later events may be helpfully understood in the light of the earlier. On the basis of such a concept it becomes possible to see a 'fulfilment', a theologically significant future relevance, for passages which in their original writers' apparent intention were not in any way predictive, but merely records of the way things were.[66]

Furthermore, Evans and Novakovic write regarding typology that "[s]cholars generally agree that typology entails three basic components: (1) a correspondence between the type and its antitype; (2) a qualitative progression from the type to its antitype (*Steigerung*); and (3) the concept of salvation history."[67] They go on to list some of the more commonly discussed typological connections, including: Moses typology, Davidic typology, Servant typology, etc.[68] Within Matthew's Gospel, among the more prevalent and perhaps overlooked[69] typological connections is that of Jesus as the new Israel. In this connection, Jesus is the very embodiment of the people of God. On this, Gibbs writes: "Jesus *is* the people of God, standing in the place of sinful people … Jesus' identity as 'Israel reduced to one' is a profoundly salvific reality. In the place of the

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[66] France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher,* 185.

[67] C.A. Evans and L. Novakovic, "Typology," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 986.

[68] Evans and Novakovic, "Typology," 987–90.

[69] So Gibbs, who writes: "I would suggest that insufficient attention has been given to the OT theme of 'Israel as Yahweh's son'" (Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13–17)," *CBQ* 64 [2002]: 515).

people, he is baptized, he defeats Satan in the wilderness, and ultimately dies and rises, the 'new and greater Israel' on behalf of sinful Israel and the whole fallen world."[70]

With these things said, the general practice followed in discerning the function of an Old Testament text in this dissertation will be to look at each proposed instance of an Old Testament passage in Matthew, evaluate the viability of its presence, and then consider how it is being employed in Matthew's Gospel.

[70] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 53 (emphasis original).

CHAPTER TWO

'ELIJAH WHO IS TO COME' IN MALACHI AND SECOND TEMPLE JEWISH LITERATURE

Exegetical Study on the Figures in Malachi 3

A clear feature of Matthew's presentation of John the Baptist is that in a sense defined by the narrative and (especially) its engagement with the Old Testament, John is 'Elijah who is to come' (Matt 11:14; cf. 17:12–13). It is appropriate to begin, then, with an exegetical analysis of the key texts in Malachi.

After the opening statement (Mal 1:1), the book of Malachi is structured around six "disputations" (Mal 1:2–5; 1:6–2:9; 2:10–16; 2:17–3:5; 3:6–12; 3:13–21 [Eng. 3:13–4:3][1]), followed by an epilogue of sorts which calls the people to remember the Law of Moses and speaks of the restorative coming of Elijah (Mal 3:22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]). With each of the

[1] The chapter and verse demarcations differ here between the MT, LXX, and contemporary English versions. The MT and LXX only have three chapters, with the third chapter running through v. 24 (i.e. Mal 3:1–24). Most contemporary English versions end Mal 3 with v. 18, and feature a fourth chapter with six verses (i.e. Mal 3:1–18; 4:1–6). Furthermore, the LXX features a different order than the MT for the last three verses, placing the verse about Moses (MT 3:22) at the end (LXX 3:24), and pushing forward the two preceding verses. With these things in mind, the default mode of presentation for this dissertation when referencing texts from these sections is to list by the MT chapter and verse(s), and include the English chapter and verse(s) (and the LXX chapter and verse[s], if there is a relevant distinction) in brackets.

Concerning the reason for the additional demarcation of chapter four in many English versions, Smith explains that with Mal 3:19 [Eng. 4:1], "𝔊 𝔅 and many Hebrew mss. begin a new chapter or, at least, leave an extended space between 3^{18} and 3^{19}. But the best Hebrew tradition supports the continuation of ch. 3 to the end of the book. Our English translation follows 𝔊 𝔅 in this respect" (John Merlin Powis Smith, *Malachi*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912], 79–80.) So Petterson, who suggests "Those who made the division seem mistakenly to have understood 'For look!' at the beginning of 4:1 [3:19] as disjunctive (Hill 1998: 327). Yet 4:1–3 clearly continues the argument of 3:13–18 and the chapter division is inappropriate" (Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* [Nottingham, England: IVP, 2015], 378). The work Petterson alludes to is: Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

With regard to the motivation behind the alternate order of the final three verses of Malachi, Petterson writes: "The LXX places 4:4[3:22] after 4:5–6[3:23–24], and the Masorah of the MT instructs that 4:5[3:23] be reread after 4:6[3:24]. Both of these suggest that the LXX translators and the Masoretes did not want to end the book on the note of curse (*ḥērem*). However, Hebr. textual witnesses (4Q76, MT^{A}, MT^{C}, MT^{L}) are all in agreement" (Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 378).

disputations, a common pattern is followed in which an issue is raised with respect to the Lord's relationship with Israel, an anticipated response from the people is given voice, and then the Lord answers that anticipated response.[2]

For our purposes, there are two passages of particular interest. The first of these is Mal 3:1–5. The text comes within the fifth disputation. The initial issue raised is that the people have "wearied the LORD" with their words (Mal 2:17a),[3] and the anticipated response from the people is to ask how they have done this (Mal 2:17b). Then the following complaints among the people are verbalized: "'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them.' Or by asking, 'Where is the God of justice?'" (Mal 2:17c). Following this, as a response, Yahweh speaks (cf. Mal 3:5) of a series of coming figures, as well as his own advent, for the purpose of justice.

Malachi 3:1–5 begins with a prophetic statement about a coming preparatory messenger—מַלְאָכִי—(Mal 3:1a), and continues by offering two titles for a figure (or two)—הָאָדוֹן and מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית—that will come after this forerunner (Mal 3:1b–4). Then, after these things, Yahweh of hosts himself (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) will come (Mal 3:5). Aside from Yahweh of hosts, how many distinct figures are present in v. 1? Miller details how "recent commentators have advanced at least four different interpretations of Mal 3.1." He includes a helpful table with those commonly proposed interpretations of the named figures: (1) Three titles for one messenger, (2) God and two

[2] Hubbard and Dearman write: "Some scholars suggest that audience unresponsiveness to earlier prophetic oracles was behind the prominence of the disputation speech in Malachi's rhetoric" (Robert J. Hubbard Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman, *Introducing the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018], 392).

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Also of note here, as with many other English translations, it is the convention of the ESV to translate the divine name with "LORD" in small capital letters. When citing Scripture from the ESV, the convention will be maintained in this dissertation.

messengers (הָאָדוֹן is God, and each of מַלְאָכִי and מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית are distinct messengers), (3) God and one messenger (הָאָדוֹן is God, and מַלְאָכִי and מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית are both titles for the same messenger), and (4) God is one of the two messengers (הָאָדוֹן and מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית both refer to God, and מַלְאָכִי is a messenger distinct from God).[4]

In a recent article, Clendenen makes a compelling case that with regard to the three titles in Mal 3:1, the reader should find two distinct figures—"my messenger" (מַלְאָכִי) being the first one, with "the lord" (הָאָדוֹן) and "the messenger of the covenant" (מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית) both being titles describing the same figure. He offers seven arguments for interpreting the latter two titles as being in reference to one figure. In this author's opinion, the first argument, which is based on the grammar and syntax of the verse, is the strongest.[5] Clendenen sees a chiastic structure in Mal 3:1b, laid out as follows:

A—And suddenly he will **come** to his temple
  B—הָאָדוֹן **whom you** are seeking
  B'—וּמַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית **whom/which you** delight in
A'—Look, he is **coming**

He explains that "[t]he A lines both use the verb בוא, "come"—an imperfect in the first line, and a participle in the second" and that "[t]he B lines are structurally parallel and repeat the phrase אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם, 'whom you' followed by a verbal participle (line B) or a verbal adjective (line B') from roots that are roughly synonymous."[6]

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[4] David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *NTS* 53 (2007): 3–6. As argumentation for הָאָדוֹן referring to God, Miller writes: "The word אדון refers to God in its only other occurrence in Malachi (1.6)" (Miller, "Coming Judgement," 4 n13).

[5] The other six arguments are: (2) "'Whom you delight in' would make no contextual sense if מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית= הָאָדוֹן,", (3) "הִנֵּה־בָא is not the predicate for the previous line," (4) "Verses 2–4, describing refining the Levites, hardly fits anyone but God," (5) "מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית may be compared with מַלְאַךְ יהוה based on the similarity of function between the two," (6) "Establishing justice was a primary function of Yahweh's Messiah," and (7) "Reestablishing temple worship was also associated with the Messiah" (E. Ray Clendenen, "'Messenger of the Covenant' Once Again," *JETS* 62, no. 1 [2018]: 87–101).

[6] Clendenen, "Messenger of the Covenant," 88–89.

To Clendenen's case for seeing a chiastic structure, a few further pieces of evidence can be added. First, in Hebrew the וְ conjunction can readily be employed epexegetically,[7] such that the phrase would be rendered "The lord whom you are seeking, *that is* the messenger of the covenant whom you delight in." Second, both A and A' lines feature an element of suddenness or immediacy. In line A, the word פִּתְאֹם, functioning adverbially, achieves this end. Lexicons will offer the gloss "suddenly,"[8] and many English versions (e.g. ESV, NASB, NIV, KJV) follow suit. In line A', the particle הִנֵּה functions in a similar fashion. Arnold and Choi, under the heading of "immediacy," describe a use of הִנֵּה that when "used with verbs or participles can point to the immediacy of the action of the verb or participle."[9] Third, this same structure—which is here argued to be chiastic—is maintained in the Greek of the LXX.

The result of reading Mal 3:1–5 as discussed above is the following list of three figures and demarcation of each's role.[10] The first figure is "my messenger" (מַלְאָכִי), and he comes in order to prepare the way for "Yahweh of hosts."[11] The second figure is "the Lord"/"the Messenger of the Covenant" (מַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית/הָאָדוֹן), and he comes for the purpose of purification of the people (vv. 2–4). The third figure is "Yahweh of hosts" (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) himself. His explicitly expressed role in the text is to send "my messenger" in v. 1, and to draw near "for judgment" (לַמִּשְׁפָּט, cf. Mal 2:17) and to be a "swift witness" against the wicked in v. 5.

The second Malachian passage for consideration is Mal 3:22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]. This text,

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[7] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: 1990), §39.2.4; Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), §4.3.3.d.

[8] E.g. BDB, s.v. פִּתְאֹם a–b; William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), s.v. פִּתְאֹם b.

[9] Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* §4.5.1.b.

[10] This does not include the plural addressees in the text, indicated by the twice–used pronoun אַתֶּם in v. 1.

[11] That Yahweh is the first person speaker for whom "my messenger" is preparing the way is indicated by the combination of the first person pronoun suffix on מַלְאָכִי and the end of the verse: "says Yahweh of hosts."

which serves as something of an epilogue or a conclusion for the book, exhorts readers to remember the law of Moses (Mal 3:22 [LXX 3:24 / Eng. 4:4]) and alerts them to the imminent advent of Elijah in advance of the day of Yahweh (Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]). There are good reasons to see the sending of Elijah in these verses as being in parallel to the sending of the messenger in Mal 3:1. First, the two texts start out in similar fashion: "Behold, I am about to send…" The language between the two is virtually the same in Hebrew—הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ in v. 1 and הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ in v. 22, only differing in whether the personal pronoun is an independent word or a suffix. The Greek of the LXX is similarly comparable—ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω in v. 1 and ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω in v. 23. Second, both "my messenger" and Elijah are coming to perform preparatory actions. Third, in each case the preparatory figure arrives in advance of Yahweh—"before me" in 3:1 and "before the great and fearful day of Yahweh" in 3:22 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:5].[12]

Taking these two passages in consideration together, a certain portrait emerges of Malachi's Elijah figure. Yahweh himself is indeed going to arrive (Mal 3:1, 5, 23–24 [LXX 22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]). Before his great and fearful day, however, Elijah will come. Elijah's role is, broadly, to prepare the way for the advent of Yahweh of hosts (Mal 3:1). This preparatory work is given specification with the description in Mal 3:22 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:5]: "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers."[13] In noteworthy

[12] Miller demonstrates that this connection between Mal 3:1–5 and 22–24 was being made in Second Temple Jewish literature. He discusses in particular Ben Sira, 4Q521, and the LXX. (Miller, "Coming Judgment," 6–11). It can be added that the Matthean Jesus makes this same connection in Matthew 11, when he quotes Mal 3:1 in reference to John (Matt 11:10) and then refers to him as "Elijah who is to come" (Matt 11:14).

[13] Petterson capably surveys and evaluates the "main interpretations of this unique OT phrase." His own view, which is taken up here, is that "the phrase refers to a future reconciliation of the generations," and that "Elijah will seek to restore covenant faithfulness across the generations with fathers honouring the law of Moses in a way that benefits their sons, and sons honouring the law of Moses in a way that honours their fathers." In part of his argumentation for the view, Petterson observes that the maintenance and restoration of human relationships is an important part of obedience in Deuteronomy, and that a breakdown in human relationships will also "disrupt Israel's

fashion, however, there is a third figure that emerges—the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant—who comes in immediate subsequence to Elijah (Mal 3:1b–4). As will be discussed below, the identity of 'my messenger'/Elijah and the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant, as well as the particular expressions of each's role, is developed in Matthew's Gospel through John the Baptist's narrative arc.

Second Temple Jewish Conceptions of 'Elijah who is to Come'

Prior to the discussion of Matthean texts, a survey of Second Temple Jewish literature is offered for the purpose of providing background. In general, the traditional categories of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls (or Qumran Scrolls), Philo, and Josephus are considered.[14] The focus of this survey is on texts that speak about Elijah, and particularly those that address his second advent as described in Malachi (Mal 3:1–5, 23–24).[15] Observations focus

relationship with Yahweh (cf. Deut 6:1–9)" (Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 385–86).

[14] Nickelsburg describes this as a common demarcation, writing: "The noncanonical literature of early Judaism, which bulks considerably larger than the New Testament, is traditionally divided into [these] five categories" (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981], 5). For a general summary of the material in these categories, see: Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 5–7 and Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 21–24.

VanderKam argues that there are inherent difficulties with these categories, particularly those of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, as they are descriptors that are artificially "later imposed on a literary corpus for which they are not always entirely appropriate." His suggestion instead would be to consider the texts by literary types and chronologically (James VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 58). With that said, this dissertation maintains usage of the traditional categories.

In addition to the material discussed above, Helyer states: "[I]t should not be forgotten that the NT itself is a product of Second Temple Judaism" (Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 23). Though a look at New Testament material in this section along with other early Jewish literature would have merit, it will not be considered in the present work for two reasons. First, a thoroughgoing discussion of how those texts—especially the Gospels—interact with Malachian prophecy and the second advent of Elijah would expand this project beyond workable bounds. Second, it seems likely that this would move in the direction of redaction critical work, the sort of which is decidedly not the goal of this dissertation, and is the sort of work that has been done previously by authors such as Wink (Wink, *John the Baptist*).

[15] This is not the first time that this sort of work has been done. For example, see Miller, "Coming Judgment," 6–11 and Markus Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God," *JBL* 118, no. 3 (September 1999): 461–64. In addition to reflecting on their work, the purpose of this chapter is to look at the

on the manner in which each text coheres with and/or deviates from the Elijah–figure as presented in Malachi.

Why include this sort of background study in a project that has a narrative critical focus? The answer has to do with the notion of the implied reader. In his article referenced earlier—"Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew: What the Reader Knows"—Powell describes various areas of knowledge that can be assumed for the implied reader of Matthew's Gospel. In the list, he includes knowledge presupposed by the spatial, temporal, and social setting of the narrative. Of this category, he writes: "Such knowledge is not explicitly revealed within the narrative, nor can it be derived from universal human experience. Rather, it is knowledge intrinsic to this particular narrative, assumed by all of the characters as well as by the narrator to be common knowledge within the world of the story."[16] In what follows, he goes into various particulars that fit into this sort of knowledge—geography, history, social and cultural realities of life in Palestine during the time of Jesus, symbolic language and actions.[17] The impression that one comes away with is that reading Matthew's Gospel as an implied reader requires a significant amount of knowledge concerning a first century Jewish context.[18] Thus, for an implied reader situated in such a context, a general awareness of contemporary literature would fit in this realm of expected knowledge.

Ultimately, though, the goal of this study is not to make a case for or against literary

primary source data afresh with the purpose of this dissertation in focus.

[16] Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings," 35.

[17] Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings," 36–37. See also: Mark Allan Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 89–106.

[18] So Gibbs, who writes: "Matthew's implied reader is rooted firmly in the first-century context in which the Gospel was written. Since the very goal of narrative criticism is to become the implied reader, this is no a–historical task, no reader-response endeavor in which any perspective results in a valid reading." (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 34.)

dependence in any specific instance. Rather, the purpose is to come away with a sense of the general contours present in Second Temple Jewish literature. Knowing these contours, it makes it all the more likely that the implied reader of Matthew would see the contrast between the Gospel's presentation of John the Baptist as Elijah and what is found elsewhere in the contemporary literature. To put it differently, it brings any distinctions into sharper relief. As such, this knowledge of Second Temple Jewish literature aids in the efforts of reading the Gospel's narrative with the eyes of the implied reader.

Apocrypha

Sirach 48:1–11

In Sirach 48, the author offers a laudatory exposition of Elijah. This chapter is found in the larger context of Sirach 44–49, a section in which the author honors various biblical exemplars of godly faithfulness. Skehan and Di Lella describe the section in this way: "What the God of the universe and of all peoples had done in his lovingkindness toward Israel is gloriously proclaimed by the long line of patriarchs, matriarchs, kings, prophets, teachers, and other heroes of the faith."[19]

The first nine verses of Sirach 48 feature a description that echoes the Elijah encountered in 1–2 Kings, mentioning "many incidents in Elijah's prophetic career concerned with his struggle against the apostasy of the northern kingdom."[20] Verse 10, however, appears to shift from the Elijah of the historical books to the one who appears at the end of Malachi: "At the appointed

[19] Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 499–500. They note that "[c]haps. 44–49 form a distinct and unified division of the book, having as the subject matter 'Praise of the Ancestors of Old,' the title that appears before 44:1 in MS B. In most of the MSS of G as well as Lat and Syr, the title reads: 'Praise of the Ancestors.'"

[20] John G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 329.

time, it is written, you are destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and to restore the tribes of Jacob" (Sir 48:10, NRSV).[21] With the use of the expression "it is written," the author indicates that "he is quoting, or referring to, a Scripture text for his belief in the return of Elijah."[22] Thus, it is no surprise to find the text to be largely congruent with Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]. In Sir 48:10, Elijah is "destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury" (cf. Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]) and "turn the hearts of parents to their children" (cf. Mal 3:23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5]).

With that said, there are two supplements made by the author of Sirach to Malachi's Elijah, expansions of his role as it is described in Malachi. First, in addition to restoring "parents to children," we read that Elijah will also "restore the tribes of Jacob" (Sir 48:11). Miller argues that "the recurrence of the verb שוב appears to have prompted Ben Sira to interpret Malachi's והשיב לב־אבות על־בנים in terms of Isaiah's ונצורי ישראל להשיב (Isa 49.6). Despite the change from קום to כון, Ben Sira's ל[.....]ש ולהכין is similar to להקים את־שׁבטי יעקב (Isa 49.6)"[23] Öhler attributes this addition to a transference of the role of the Servant of God in Isa 49:6 to Elijah.[24]

The second supplement is a bit more subtle than the first, and as such, is more tenuous in nature. Miller makes the case that Sirach associated additional themes from Mal 3 with Elijah. His argument is based on two proposed textual links. First, Sir 48:1 describes Elijah as a prophet "like fire" (כאש). This same form, he observes, is found in Mal 3:2—הוא כאש מצרף—where the

[21] Quotations marked (NRSV) are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

[22] Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira,* 534.

[23] Miller, "Coming Judgment," 7 n25.

[24] Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 462.

Lord/Messenger of the Covenant is described as being like "a refiner's fire." Second, in Sir 48:1, Elijah's words are described as being "like a burning oven" (כתנור בוער). Miller asserts that this is an inverted quotation, "which alludes to the description of the day 'burning like an oven' (בער כתנור) that will burn up the evildoers like stubble in Mal 3.19."[25] With the appropriate cautiousness, Miller summarizes the implications of these findings:

> If this is correct, Ben Sira not only identified Elijah as the one 'destined to appease wrath *before* (the time of God's) anger' (Ecclus 48.10; cf. Mal 3.23), he also associated him with the fire of the 'burning day' of judgment. Because Ben Sira links Elijah to passages in Mal 3 that are concerned with both purification (3.2) and judgment (3.19), he most likely identified the Elijah messenger of 3.1a with the 'messenger of the covenant' who purifies the sons of Levi (3.2–4).[26]

In summary, the view of 'Elijah who is to come' in Sirach entails the following. First, the Malachian expectation that Elijah would come to restore fathers to sons in advance of the Lord's judgment is taken up in Sirach as well. Second, Sirach appears to expand upon Malachi by adding to Elijah's work the restoration of Jacob, a job that Isaiah ascribes to the servant of the Lord (Isa 49:6). Finally, if Miller is correct in noting the subtle themes from Mal 3 elsewhere in Sirach's presentation of Elijah, it would mean that the text has assimilated to Elijah the task of purification and judgment, a role perhaps more appropriate in the context of Malachi for the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant.

Pseudepigrapha

4 Ezra 6:26

The allusion to Elijah in 4 Ezra comes in the larger context of the book's presentation of

[25] Miller, "Coming Judgment," 7–8. So J.G. Snaith, "Biblical Quotations in the Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus," *JTS* 18 (1967): 1–12; Skehan and Di Lella, *Ben Sira,* 533.

[26] Miller, "Coming Judgment," 8. The assimilation of Elijah and the "messenger of the covenant" would be contrary to Malachian design, which, as argued above, makes the distinction between "my messenger" and the Lord/Messenger and the Covenant.

the eschaton, with the "heart of the pericope" being "the revelation of 'the end of the signs' (6:12)"[27] which accompany the close of the age. In the more immediate context, God declares[28] that he will soon "draw near to visit the inhabitants of earth" (4 Ezra 6:18, NRSV). This advent is preceded by a series of "signs" described in vv. 20–24, and of those people that remain after them, the Lord says they "shall be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world" (4 Ezra 6:25, NRSV). Then these ones will "see those who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death; and the heart of the earth's inhabitants shall be changed and converted to a different spirit" (4 Ezra 6:26, NRSV). Though there are no individuals specifically named, Stone asserts that "there are ample references to individuals who will appear before the eschaton. The most famous of these is Elijah (Mal 3:23–24). On the other hand, it is clear that the traditions that Enoch and Elijah were 'taken up' are deeply rooted and widespread."[29] In fact, as will be seen going forward in this survey, Elijah and Enoch are grouped together elsewhere in extant Second Temple literature, likely a result of the fact that neither experienced death in the biblical narrative (cf. Gen 5:21–24; 2 Kgs 2:11–12).

Regarding the activity of changed hearts and converted spirits that accompanies the coming of these individuals, Öhler suggests that "[t]his is probably an allusion to Mal 3:24."[30] If this is indeed an allusion to Elijah, there are several similarities to the Elijah–figure in Malachi. First,

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[27] Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 166.

[28] On the voice heard belonging to God, Myers writes: "The interlocutor changes from the interpreting angel to 'a voice sounding like many waters.' The voice is that of the lord himself." (Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras* [New York: Doubleday, 1974], 202). Stone adds that "'Like a sound of many waters' is commonly the way a supernatural voice is described." (Stone, *Fourth Ezra,* 169).

[29] Stone, *Fourth Ezra,* 172. Cf. Bauckham, who writes: "4 Ezra 6:26 expects the appearance of those who had not died (cf. 7:28; 13:52), but doubtless means not only Enoch and Elijah, for Jewish writers of this period exalted others (Moses, Baruch, Ezra) to the privilege of escaping death" (Richard Bauckham, "Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?," *JBL* 95, no. 3 [September 1976]: 451).

[30] Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 462. In this, he is following Stone, who makes the same claim (Stone, *Fourth Ezra,* 172).

Malachi's Elijah appears before the coming of Yahweh ("before the great and awesome Day of the LORD") in Mal 3:23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5] (cf. Mal 3:1, 5). Second, in Malachi, at the time of Elijah's arrival—though the connection with Elijah himself is not directly made in 4 Ezra—there is change and conversion among the people (Mal 3:3–4, 24 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:6]). Finally, in Malachi, after Elijah's appearance, there is a purgation of evil in a purification process (Mal 3:1b–5), and something similar occurs in 4 Ezra—"For evil shall be blotted out, and deceit shall be quenched; faithfulness shall flourish, and corruption shall be overcome, and the truth, which has been so long without fruit, shall be revealed." (4 Ezra 6:27–28, NRSV).

With these things said, there is no specific language of reconciliation between fathers and sons in 4 Ezra, and as mentioned, any connection between the unnamed Elijah and the revival must be implied. Therefore, there is congruity with Malachi in some ways, but in other ways 4 Ezra says less than Malachi, leaving out certain details present in the latter.

Sibylline Oracles 2:187–195

Elijah is referred to in the second book of the Sibylline Oracles. In the introduction to his translation, Collins explains that books one and two constitute a single unit and that "[t]he work consists of an original Jewish oracle and an extensive Christian redaction."[31] Describing this section of interest further, he writes:

> The remainder of the Sibylline Oracles 2 (vss. 34–347) is an account of eschatological crises and the last judgment. It shows clear signs of Christian redaction but is probably not an original Christian composition. Rather the Christian Sibyllist modified the eschatological conclusion of the Jewish work by interpolations. The extent of the redactor's work is difficult to determine exactly.[32]

[31] J.J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:330.

[32] Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 1:330.

Elijah appears, introduced as "The Theshbite"[33] and riding in a chariot, perhaps an allusion to his departure from earth in a "chariot of fire" in the biblical narrative: "Then the Theshbite, driving a heavenly chariot at full stretch from heaven, will come on earth and then display three signs[34] to the whole world, as life perishes" (Sib Or 2:187, cf. 2 Kgs 2:11).[35] What follows is a dramatic description of fiery judgment and cosmic upheaval at the final eschaton. Öhler observes that in this text, Elijah's work of reconciliation, which is a key component of his mission in Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:4–6], "is absolutely lost," and that instead, "he will be a fiery prophet, as during his first earthly period."[36]

Öhler is correct in observing that the reconciling work is absent in the Sibylline Oracles, but Elijah as a "fiery prophet" ought not to be constrained to his first earthly period alone. In Mal 3:1–5, the messenger precedes the purifying judgment of the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant (Mal 3:1b–4) and the witness of Yahweh of hosts against the wicked (Mal 3:5).[37] Furthermore, in Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:4–6], his advent comes in advance of the "great and awesome day of the LORD." Therefore, there is congruity in this way, but the lack of reconciling work as mentioned by Öhler should also be noted.

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 23:13; 48:1

Pseudo–Philo makes two references of note to our present study in *Liber Antiquitatum*

[33] Cf. 1 Kgs 17:1; 21:17; 21:28; 2 Kgs 1:3, 8; 9:36. In each of these texts, "the Tishbite" is added as a further descriptor for Elijah.

[34] In his translation notes, Collins suggests that the reference to "three signs" may be an allusion to Did 16:6: "And then shall appear the signs of the truth. First the sign spread out in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead."

[35] Translation from Collins, "Sibylline Oracles."

[36] Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 462.

[37] This project has argued above that the first "messenger" in Mal 3:1 is the same person as "Elijah" in Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6].

Biblicarum. The first of these is in LAB 23:13, a portion of a larger eschatological section of the book, which Jacobson describes as "[a]nother of LAB's typical 'otherworldly' apocalyptic passages with nothing whatsoever similar in the original biblical source."[38] It is in this context that we find a possible reference to Mal 3:24. Various promises are made to the faithful regarding their lot "at the end." Among these is the promise from the Lord that "I will restore you unto your fathers and your fathers unto you" (LAB 23:13).[39] In his prolegomenon to James' translation of LAB, Feldman includes in his supplemental notes here the instruction to "Cf. Mal 3^{24} (4^{6})."[40] With this in mind, Jacobsen observes even the similarity in "eschatological context" between the two texts.[41] However, in Malachi this is a part of Elijah's role, whereas in LAB, Elijah is absent. So Jacobson's comment: "If there is any connection [to Mal 3:24], then it is also worth noting that LAB has taken the prophetic verse and given it utterly different sense."[42]

Also of interest is LAB 48:1, a passage concerning Phineas, a priest who Yahweh describes in Num 25:11 as being "zealous for my honor." While this text in LAB is not about Elijah *per se*, there is here an apparent identification between the two. Harrington, in a footnote to his translation, writes that "Phineas is described in terms reminiscent of Elijah."[43] Jacobson goes further, arguing that "the view of… Harrington that [Phineas] is (merely) assimilated to Elijah is incorrect." Rather, he asserts that "for LAB [Phineas] and Elijah are identical, one and

[38] Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo–Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (New York: Brill, 1996), 2:728.

[39] Translation from M.R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (New York: KTAV, 1971).

[40] Louis H. Feldman "Prolegomenon" in James, *Biblical Antiquities of Philo,* CX.

[41] Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo–Philo,* 2:729.

[42] Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo–Philo,* 2:729.

[43] D.J. Harrington, "Pseudo–Philo," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:362.

the same person."[44] There are descriptions of Phineas being on a mountain and nourished by an eagle (LAB 48:1, cf. 1 Kgs 17:4), and that afterwards he will "shut the heaven" and that by his mouth "it shall be opened" (LAB 48:1, cf. 1 Kgs 17:1). Particularly noteworthy for the current discussion is the Lord's promise to Phineas at the end of 48:1: "And after that thou shalt be lifted up into the place whither they that were before thee were lifted up, and shalt be there until I remember the world. And then I will bring you and ye shall taste what is death." Of the lifting up, Jacobson writes that this is "a reference to Elijah's translation at 2Ki 2:11," and that "[t]he only person in the Bible about whom this can be reasonably said, other than Elijah, is Enoch (Gen. 5:24)."[45] If this is indeed another allusion to Elijah, it could be that Phineas' return after his being lifted up bears some connection to Elijah's second advent in Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:4–6]. That would be the only possible point of congruity, however, with the absence of any other detail connecting Phineas to Malachi's Elijah.

Apocalypse of Elijah 4–5

Elijah is involved extensively in the events of *Apocalypse of Elijah* 4–5, a composite document with both Jewish and Christian material.[46] Frankfurter dates the work somewhere between the second half of the third century and the beginning of the fourth.[47] The book does not

[44] Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo–Philo*, 2:1060

[45] Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo–Philo*, 2:1063.

[46] John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 130; Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 463; O.S. Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Elijah," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:721.

[47] David Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 17–20. Frankfurter's *terminus ante quem* derives from an Achmimic manuscript of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* as the "earliest evidence of the text, dating from the beginning of the fourth century C.E" (Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt*, 18). The *terminus post quem* is "bound by the availability of the New Testament texts reflected in its composition" (Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt*, 18–19). In particular, the way that one dates Revelation—a key source for the *Apocalypse of Elijah*—would influence the latter. Though *Apocalypse of Elijah* features this later date, it is included in the survey so as to trace the trajectory moving forward from the

feature an apocalyptic message delivered to Elijah, as one might expect, but to the "Son of Man" instead (*Apoc El* 1:1). Elijah is mentioned twice by name (*Apoc El* 4:7, 5:32), both times together with Enoch, and Wintermute suggests that "[t]he fact that Elijah is mentioned in the text might explain why his name is joined to the title."[48] The two first appear to oppose the "shameless one," the "son of lawlessness" in *Apoc El* 4:7–19. They descend and after seven days fighting him, Elijah and Enoch are martyred, after which "they will spend three and one half days in the market place dead, while all the people will see them."[49] After this, on the fourth day, they rise from the dead. As Wintermute suggests, this text "is strongly influenced by the martyrdom of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:1–12."[50]

In the narrative, Elijah and Enoch return in *Apoc El* 5:32 after a description of the Lord's coming judgment. Upon their descent, "They will lay down the flesh of the world, and they will receive their spiritual flesh. They will pursue the son of lawlessness and kill him since he is not able to speak" (*Apoc El* 5:32). Following the destruction of the son of lawlessness, Christ comes, and after fiery judgment—"he will burn the earth" (*Apoc El* 5:37)—he ushers in a millennial age

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Second Temple period, given its attention to relevant themes.

[48] Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Elijah," 1:721.

[49] Translation from Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Elijah."

[50] Wintermute, "Apocalypse of Elijah," 1:725. He goes on to explain that "[m]ost interpreters of Revelation identify the two witnesses described there as Elijah and Moses, but from the time of Hippolytus onward a number of Church Fathers reinterpreted the passage in Revelation to apply to Enoch and Elijah, the two men who never died." Cf. Bauckham, who similarly sees this development within early Christian writers. In looking carefully at Hippolytus, however, Bauckham finds it noteworthy

> that he apparently found it unnecessary to argue for his identification of the witnesses: he cites Mal 4:5–6 for the return of Elijah but seems to regard as unquestionable the identification of the second witness as Enoch. Arguably, once one witness had been identified as Elijah, Enoch's claim to the other was obvious, for these were the two men who had not died. But it is more probable that an existing tradition of the return of Enoch with Elijah influenced Hippolytus' exegesis (Bauckham, "Enoch and Elijah," 452).

The source of that tradition, be it Jewish or Christian, remains unknown.

(*Apoc El* 5:37–39). In an article discussing Enoch and Elijah's martyrdom in early Jewish and Christian literature, Bauckham argues that this second appearance of the two possibly "belonged to an original Jewish *Apocalypse of Elijah.*"[51] He explains:

> This motif of the destruction of Antichrist by Enoch and Elijah is likely to be of Jewish origin, as is also the alternative tradition of his destruction by the archangel Michael, which found its way from Judaism into the Christian tradition: the elimination of the last great enemy of the people of God was a messianic function in both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic. A Christian author is unlikely to have originated a tradition in which Enoch and Elijah are permitted in this way to usurp the role of Christ.[52]

Regarding connections to Malachi's Elijah from the two appearances in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, there are some general contours of similarity. Elijah returns to earth (albeit twice) prior to the ushering in of the final eschatological judgment. However, his work in *Apocalypse of Elijah* does not involve bringing about repentance or restoration. Instead, his role (along with Enoch) is significantly expanded from Malachi and involves things like martyrdom, resurrection, and slaying the son of lawlessness.

Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Scrolls)

4Q521

Collins describes 4Q521 as "a Hebrew text that survives in a single exemplar. Seventeen fragments have been identified. An eighteenth is possible but less sure. The handwriting dates from the Hasmonean period."[53] One of the fragments, fragment 2, column iii, features the line

[51] Bauckham, "Enoch and Elijah," 458. So Öhler, who writes: "This could very well be a Jewish form of the expectation of Elijah, whereas the longer pericope on the return of the prophets in 4:7–20 is an expanded version of Rev 11:3–13" (Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 463).

[52] Bauckham, "Enoch and Elijah," 457.

[53] Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 131.

"(the) fathers will return to (the) sons (באים אבות על בנים)."[54] As Puech writes, "Cette phrase introduit la citation *ad sensum* du prophète *Malachie*, B'YM 'BWT 'L BNYM, comp. 3, 24: WHŠYB LB 'BWT 'L BNYM WLB BNYM 'L 'BWTM."[55] The previous line of the fragment contains the word נכון, from the verbal root כון. This form is found in the Hebrew of Sir 48:10 ("… appointed [נכון] for the time…"), a verse that also describes Elijah as the one who will "turn the hearts of parents to their children." This connection leads Puech to suggest that—though not explicit—Malachian Elijah is the likely subject described in the line באים אבות על בנים.[56] To supplement this evidence Miller observes that in 4Q521, there are "several allusions to Mal 3 ranging in intensity from faint echo to direct quotation" that in sum "point to the author's familiarity with the prediction of Elijah's return as well as with the wider context of Mal 3."[57]

If this is indeed an allusion to Malachian Elijah, what do we see of him in this fragmentary text? It is fairly difficult to determine. In terms of genre, Collins labels 4Q521 as an "eschatological psalm."[58] Regarding the content of 4Q521 generally, Miller writes that it is

> More positive than Mal 3; its statement that those who seek the Lord through obedience will find him transforms Malachi's ominous pronouncement against those who claim to seek God, but who will instead face his judgment (Mal 3.1–4), into a promise of blessing for those who do not turn from the holy commandments (4Q521 2 II 2–3). Still 4Q521 does not neglect the punishment of the disobedient (cf. 4Q521

[54] Text from Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 6:160.

[55] Emile Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 496.

[56] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique (4Q521)," 496–97. Miller adds the note that while the phrase אבות על־בנים is fairly common in the Hebrew Bible, "it only appears in an eschatological context in Mal 3.24" (Miller, "Coming Judgment," 9).

[57] Miller, "Coming Judgement," 10. His additional collected echoes are as follows. (1) Puech's reconstruction of ע]ק לרש בין צדי in fragment 14 is a citation of Mal 3:18, (2) Puech's suggestion that "חק in 2 iii 1 alludes to the 'statutes and ordinances' (חקים ומשפטים) of Mal 3.22 because of its proximity to the clearer allusion to Mal 3.24 in line 2," (3) The idea and presence of the words ברכה (Mal 3:10) and רצון (Mal 2:14) in the phrase אשר ברכת אדני ברצונו (2 iii 3), (4) The phrase מבקשי אדני בעבדתו which recalls both the cognate verb עבד in Mal 3:14, 18, as well as the phrase האדון אשר־אתם מבקשים in Mal 3:1 (Miller, "Coming Judgement," 9).

[58] Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 131.

> 7, 5, 13), and the focus on blessing and healing for the righteous (2 ii 5–14) is consonant with Mal 3 as a whole, which concludes with a promise of eschatological healing for the righteous God–fearers on the day when God acts (cf. Mal 3.16–21).[59]

This emphasis on blessing in the larger context coheres well with Fragment 2 more specifically, a portion of text where scholars have suggested echoes of Ps 146:7–8 (2 ii 8) and Isa 61:1 (2 ii 12) present in the document.[60] The third column of this same fragment is the location of the key allusion to Mal 3:24. With that said, it is difficult to determine where Elijah fits in the activities of 4Q521. Miller asserts: "As Elijah does not explicitly appear in the text, it is fruitless to speculate further about his precise role. The author is much more concerned with God's future activity than with any human figure."[61] Furthermore, as Öhler cautions, there are several messiah figures in the text, and he contends that a connection with one of the other "messiahs who are prominent figures in this text is more probable."[62] Both Collins[63] and Xeravitis[64] argue that the messiah figures present in 4Q521 should be associated with the unnamed Elijah figure. While potentially compelling, the fragmentary nature of the document makes it difficult to know with certainty. In more general terms, though, one can see an allusion to Malachian Elijah in an eschatological context which features an emphasis on blessing, though not an absence of judgment. Furthermore, in 4Q521, the allusion to Mal 3:24 is pulled together with allusions to other Old Testament texts (Ps 146 and Isa 61).

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[59] Miller, "Coming Judgment," 10.

[60] E.g. Collins, *Scepter and the Star,* 132–33.

[61] Miller, "Coming Judgment," 10.

[62] Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 463.

[63] Collins, *Scepter and the Star,* 131–41.

[64] G. Xeravitis, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 188–91.

4Q558

This text mentions Elijah by name: "to you I will send Elijah, befo[re]... (לכן אשלח לאליה [...ם]קד)."[65] As Öhler suggests, this appears to be "an Aramaic citation of Mal 3:23a."[66] However, the document is fragmentary in nature, and as such, it is difficult to ascertain much else by way of context.[67]

Philo

Philo makes a passing reference to Elijah in *Quaestiones in Genesim* 1.86. The mention comes in the context of Philo's discussion of Gen 5:24, which reads: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." In the section, Philo seeks to explain "the meaning of the words, 'And he [i.e. Enoch] was not found, for God had translated him'" (QG 1:86).[68] Elijah is offered as another person who experienced God's translation from earth into heaven—"And still another, Elijah, followed him on high from earth to heaven at the appearance of the divine countenance, or, it would be more proper and correct to say, he ascended" (QG 1:86).[69] With that

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[65] Text from Parry and Tov, *Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, 6:148.

[66] Öhler, "Expectation of Elijah," 463.

[67] So Collins, who writes: "Several small scraps of this papyrus survive, but the context is unclear. The preceding line contains the words 'the eighth as an elect one and behold.' The line after the reference to Elijah contains the word 'lightning' (ברקא), perhaps a sign of the day of the Lord" (Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 130). Likewise, Xeravitis writes:

> Unfortunately, due to the damaged state of the fragment, we do not have enough data to decide with certainty, before what or whom will Elijah be sent. It seems most probable that Elijah is here the precursor of the day of judgment, as in the case of Malachi and Ben Sira. As far as the fragmentary context of 4Q558 allows us to conclude, the sending of Elijah is connected to the impressively described day of judgement (a future theophany), during which the powers of the sky (זי[קיא and ברקא) will break loose (Xeravitis, *King, Priest, Prophet*, 187).

[68] Translation from Ralph Marcus, *Philo, Supplement I: Questions and Answers on Genesis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

[69] Hay notes that Philo's "interpretation of Enoch's translation as movement from a sensible form to 'an incorporeal and intelligible form,' (QG 1.86)"—which is also experienced by Elijah—"strongly suggests influence from the Platonizing allegorists mentioned in *QG* 1.8" (David M. Hay, "References to Other Exegetes," in *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*, ed. David

said, there is no reference to the works of Malachi's Elijah, especially as the reference to Elijah is secondary to Philo's purposes.

Josephus

Josephus discusses Elijah (Elias), and mentions him by name various times in Books 8–9 of the *Jewish Antiquities*,[70] introducing him first as "[a] certain prophet of the most high God from the city of Thesbone in the country of Galaditis" (*Ant* 8:319).[71] Throughout these passages, however, the focus is on Elijah as presented in the historical books of 1–2 Kings, as opposed to Malachi's Elijah.[72] He is also mentioned once in *The Jewish War* (4:460) in connection with Elisha, his successor. There, it is in the context of a discussion on a particular well near Jericho, which to everything alike once "brought disease and destruction, until it was reclaimed and converted into a most salubrious and fertilizing source by a certain prophet Elisha, the disciple and successor of Elijah." (*J.W.* 4:460).[73] This is just a passing reference to Elijah, and as such,

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M. Hay [Atlanta: Scholar's, 1991], 95).

[70] *Ant.* 8:328, 331, 333, 337, 343, 347, 353, 360, 407, 417; 9:20, 25, 33, 99, 101, 119, 124, 129.

[71] Translation from Ralph Marcus, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, Books VII–VIII* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934).

[72] A reason for this could be what Feldman describes as Elijah's role as "the forerunner of the Messiah." He explains that in various pieces of Jewish literature, due to his "close association with the Messiah, whose principal achievement will be to create a truly independent Jewish state, we should not be surprised to find that Elijah is depicted as strongly opposed to the Roman Empire." As a result, Josephus, like the rabbis

> was in a dilemma as to how much importance to give to Elijah and how to treat him. How could Josephus, who had surrendered to the Romans at Jotapata and had been given so many gifts by them—a tract of land outside Jerusalem, some sacred books, the liberation of some friends, Roman citizenship, lodging in the former palace of Vespasian, and a pension—aggrandize a figure who was apparently a forerunner of the Zealots that had fought so tenaciously against the Romans and who was so closely allied with the Messiah, whose function it was to overthrow the Roman Empire and to establish an independent Jewish state? (Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 292, 294).

Given this tension, it would make sense that Josephus' focus would be on Elijah's prophetic ministry as reported in 1–2 Kings, as opposed to his return announced in Malachi, which was to precede the Day of the Lord.

[73] Translation from H. ST. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Jewish War, Books III–IV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927).

there is no mention of any activities performed by him in the text, let alone his second advent as described in Malachi.

Summary

Having surveyed the Second Temple material on 'Elijah to come,' a few general observations are in order. While some themes occur more prominently than others, the portrayal from one document to the next is certainly not uniform. With that being said, two noteworthy contours do emerge. First, there is a tendency within the Second Temple literature to take Malachi's portrait of Elijah and supplement it, often with additional Old Testament texts and themes. As will be demonstrated below, this is *similar* to what is seen in Matthew's Gospel, which supplements Malachi with texts and themes, especially from Isaiah. The texts and themes in Matthew, though, are not identical to the supplements offered elsewhere in early Jewish literature.

Second, in the Second Temple literature when Elijah returns (often with Enoch) the associated events are eschatological in nature, and more pointedly, there is a finality to the eschaton. Unlike the first contour, this is *different* from the portrayal in Matthew. There, the second advent of Elijah in John the Baptist is not part of a final eschaton, but rather an unexpected and surprising in–breaking of eschatological events. As we will see, John's own point of view exhibits strong continuity with the themes observed in Second Temple Jewish literature, and as a character in the narrative John himself will give evidence that he does not fully understand how redemptive history will unfold, particularly as it relates to himself and Jesus.

CHAPTER THREE

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATTHEAN BAPTIST NARRATIVE ARC, PART ONE: JOHN IN LIFE

From here, we turn to an exegetical analysis of the John the Baptist narrative arc in Matthew's Gospel. By this, what is meant is all of the texts in Matthew which mention John, or by extension Elijah (Matt 3:1–17; 4:12–16; 9:14–17; 11:2–30; 14:1–13a; 16:13–14; 17:1–13; 21:23–22:14; 27:45–50). Each passage will be considered in turn, focusing on the characterization of role for both John and Jesus.

Matthew 3:1–17

John Proclaims the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 3:1–12)

When the reader is first introduced to John in Matt 3, he is presented as a preparatory figure, but not with the preparer text from Mal 3:1, which does not appear in the Gospel until Matt 11:10. Rather, in Matt 3:3, the narrator uses a prophetic preparer text from Isa 40:3,[1] which

[1] Concerning the text form, the citation comes nearly verbatim from the LXX of Isa 40:3, with the only deviation being the end of the line, in which Matt 3:3 has "his" (αὐτοῦ) in "his paths," rather than the LXX's "of our God" (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν) in "the paths of our God."

Schuchard, writing on John's use of Isa 40:3 in John 1:23, provides additional evidence that the quote finds its source in the LXX, rather than a translation from MT Hebrew. The MT of Isa 40:3 features both בַּמִּדְבָּר and בָּעֲרָבָה. The LXX, however, appears to only translate one of these prepositional phrases—ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ—thereby removing בָּעֲרָבָה. Schuchard suggests that "the OG translator apparently concluded that this Hebrew parallelism is a synonymous parallelism capable of condensation." As a result, he argues that "[t]he absence of any reference to the MT's ערבה in either Matt 3.3, Mark 1.3, or Luke 3.4 suggests dependence of these on the OG" (Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John*, SBLDS [Atlanta: Scholars, 1992], 4).

With regard to Matthew's "his paths," rather than the LXX's "the paths of our God" (τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, cf. MT—מְסִלָּה לֵאלֹהֵינוּ), the change seems to be Christologically driven. As Gibbs writes, "Matthew's rendering, literally, 'the ways of him,' and John the Baptizer's role as forerunner of Christ make it all the more certain that John is preparing the way for the κύριος, that is Jesus, who is 'God is with us' (1:23)" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 153). See also Davies and Allison (William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997], 1:293). In the near narrative context, John first speaks of the one who comes after him (Matt 3:11–12), and then Jesus appears on the scene (Matt 3:13–17).

comes from the beginning portion of a section in Isaiah that opens with words of comfort for God's people. This sets the stage for the narrative's usage of Isaiah to supplement Malachian expectations for John and Jesus. This sort of use of Isaiah is a pattern that will continue to be employed throughout the Gospel in the Baptist's narrative arc, and it occurs frequently on the discourse level.

Following this in the narrative, the reader is immediately given a physical depiction of John ("Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist" [Matt 3:4]) which evokes descriptors of Elijah the prophet from 2 Kgs 1:8.[2] Though Jesus will later make the connection explicit in Matt 11:7–15, this first subtle allusion in John's choice of clothing already hints towards the larger theme of John as Elijah. With this in mind, Isaiah's voice calling in the wilderness (Isa 40:3) is brought together with the theme of John as Elijah who is to come (cf. Mal 3 [Eng. 3–4]) at the introduction of the Baptist.

Prior to Jesus' arrival at the river Jordan, John's reported words, which are directed towards the Pharisees and Sadducees, contain a warning that there is a coming eschatological judgment. According to Yamasaki, this speech serves to demonstrate John's view of his own role, as well as the role that Jesus will play:

> Therefore, John's ideological point of view of himself involves an understanding of his own ministry as a process of separating the repentant from the unrepentant—the wheat from the chaff—in preparation for the conferral of blessing, or the execution of judgment, by the one coming after him. ... With [the words describing the threshing floor scene], the narrator impresses on the narratee John's ideological point of view on the nature of Jesus' ministry: he comes as an eschatological judge.[3]

[2] Gibbs observes that there are two features of Elijah in 2 Kgs 1 worth noting here. The first, is the descriptive language of the LXX of 2 Kgs 1:8 itself. But beyond the description itself is the fact that "Elijah was able to be *recognized* by his appearance ... When [King Ahaziah's] messengers described the appearance of that prophet, the king replied, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite' (2 Ki 1:8). So Elijah's appearance was distinctively his, and John the Baptist looks like him" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 163 n35) (emphasis original).

[3] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 94.

John's understanding of himself and Jesus is at this point thematically aligned with the roles played by the non-Yahweh figures (i.e. "my messenger" and the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant) in Mal 3. John is preparing the way (Matt 3:1–6; cf. Mal 3:1, 23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5]), calling for repentance (Matt 3:2, 8, 11; cf. Mal 3:24 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:6]), declaring the coming of a great eschatological judge coming after him (Matt 3:11–12; cf. Mal 3:1–4), and warning of a pending judgment from the Lord (Matt 3:10–12; cf. Mal 3:5, 24 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:6]).

At the same time, regarding the one who is coming after him, John declares that he has come to act as a judge. John employs a sequence of images in describing the nature of this judgement, and with these images, fire is a consistent theme. Trees that do not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire (Matt 3:8–10), this mightier one will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11), and chaff will be separated from wheat and burned with unquenchable fire (Matt 3:12). In this imagery, there are several reasons to best understand fire here as representing judgement. First, fire in the Old Testament commonly stands as a picture of divine judgement.[4] Second, elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, when fire (πῦρ) imagery is used figuratively, it is done so exclusively to refer to judgement (Matt 5:22; 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8, 9; 25:41).[5] Third, in two of the three images John uses that employ fire—the fruitless trees (v. 10) and the chaff (v. 12)—the fire clearly leads to destruction. With these things in mind, it seems best to understand the fire imagery used here as representing God's judgement.

[4] As biblical examples, Davies and Allison mention Isa 10:15–19; 66:24; Jer 11:16; Joel 2:30; Mal 4:1 [MT/LXX 3:19] (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:310).

[5] The only other place that πῦρ occurs in Matthew, it is not used in a figurative sense, but literal one. In Matt 17:15, a man comes to Jesus and pleads: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire (εἰς τὸ πῦρ), and often into the water."

In Matt 3:11, John says that though he baptizes with water for repentance, the mightier one coming after him "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." As is argued above, baptism with fire likely stands as a figurative expression of judgement. What of baptism with the Holy Spirit? While some would argue that Holy Spirit and fire must here represent the same thing,[6] there are good reasons to see the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a picture of salvation, coming in the context of eschatological judgement. First, there are numerous Old Testament texts that speak of God pouring out his Spirit on his people.[7] Second, Dennert makes the point that in Matthew's Gospel, there is "positive value attributed to the Holy Spirit (1:18, 20; 12:32; 28:19) and Spirit of God (3:16; 12:18, 28, 31, cf. 22:43)."[8] Third, in the immediate context, the other images John employs feature a separation of sorts, with dual destinies for the good and the wicked, either stated explicitly or implied. In v. 12, wheat and chaff are separated, with the wheat being gathered into the barn and the chaff being burned. In v. 10, the destiny of trees that do not bear good fruit is explicitly described—"cut down and thrown into the fire." Implied, however, is that there are trees (or at least the possibility of trees) that do bear good fruit, and as such are not cut down, and do not experience this fate.[9]

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[6] E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:316–17; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 113. A key feature of this argument is grammatical, recognizing the presence of one preposition (ἐν) governing both "the Holy Spirit" and "fire," and arguing on that basis that the two words should be understood in unity, perhaps even as a hendiadys (so Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:317). As Gibbs notes, however, "the Greek grammar can be understood as conveying that both eschatological salvation ("the Holy Spirit") and judgment ("fire") are administered at the same time (on the Last Day) on two different groups of people as part of the same event (the final judgment of all people)" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 173–74 n80).

[7] For texts in which the outpouring of the Spirit is viewed as a gift of God, Keener lists as examples: Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:29; Zech 12:10 (Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio–Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 130).

[8] Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 158–59. Dennert allows that in the Scriptures "'spirit' does appear with relation to judgement at times," but deems the addition of the adjective "holy" as significant (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 158). In this allowance, he lists in a footnote the following examples, which are drawn from Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:316–17: "Isa 4:4; 30:27–28; 40:24; 41:16; Jer 4:11–16; 23:19; 30:23; Ezek 13:11–13" (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 158 n122).

[9] Dennert notes that this is, in fact, a feature of the Gospel more broadly. He writes: "The announcement of

Having said these things, it seems best to understand baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire" as expressing a single baptism, with dual effects. It is important, though, not to miss the clear emphasis in John's preaching. On this, Dennert writes: "While noting two effects, however, the stress in the passage as a whole seems to be on judgment, as the image of 'fire' dominates 3:10–12."[10]

The sort of purifying judgement that John anticipates with his preaching coheres well with the work of the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1b–4. At least two points can be made here. First, the theme of fire that is emphasized in Matt 3:7–12 is also prevalent in the imagery of Mal 3:1b–4. The word "fire" (πῦρ) is mentioned directly in the phrase πῦρ χωνευτηρίου (LXX Mal 3:2, cf. MT כְּאֵשׁ מְצָרֵף), and the idea is contained within the refining or smelting imagery employed in Mal 3:2–3.

Second, in both cases the imagery conveys the notion of purifying judgement by way of separating out the ungodly. In the Baptist's preaching, fruitless trees are cut down and burned, removing them from the picture, and leaving (presumably) trees producing good fruit (Matt 3:8–10). As argued above, the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, brings salvation to some, but destruction to others (Matt 3:11). Finally, the wheat remains and is gathered into the barn, but that only happens as the chaff is separated out and burned. Though the images are different in Malachi, the ideas conveyed are similar with both the refiner's fire (Mal 3:2–3) and the fuller's soap (Mal 3:2). Verhoef writes: "It is evident that the coming of the Lord will serve to purify and

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salvation for the truly repentant and judgment on the unrepentant matches expectations of what would happen with the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. In addition, Matthew highlights the various fates of the obedient and disobedient (13:36–43, 47–50; 25:31–46)" (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 159).

[10] Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 159. So Gundry, who similarly asserts: "The weight of emphasis falls heavily on the aspect of punishment" (Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 49).

refine the covenant people from within, as an *innerjudische* concern. The ungodly and the ungodliness will be removed, as the slugs are removed from the metal and the stains from the garment."[11]

With these two points noted, the case here is that the eschatological judgement that John envisions sounds rather like what one reads in Mal 3:1b–4. To put this matter succinctly, if John has been reading Malachi, and sees himself and Jesus in "my messenger" and the Lord/ Messenger of the Covenant of Mal 3:1–4, his expectations demonstrated here make good sense.

In addition, though a subtle point, ahead of his arrival in the scene, in Matt 3:11 John refers to Jesus as "the one who is coming after me" or ὁ ... ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος. The Greek word ἔρχομαι is one of the more common translation options in the LXX for the Hebrew verb בוא,[12] which is used twice in Mal 3:1—"the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come (יָבוֹא)" and "the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming (בָּא)." Both times, it is in reference to the figure that comes after the initial preparer, and the second time even in participle form. On its own, this is not necessarily noteworthy. For one, both ἔρχομαι and בוא are common words in their respective languages. Furthermore, in the LXX of Mal 3:1, only the second instance of בוא is rendered with a form of ἔρχομαι (the first is translated with a form of ἥκω). Additionally, as Gibbs notes, while in Judaism "the coming one" was not widely known as a title specifically for the Messiah, "such language was employed more generally to express the expectation of a Deliverer who would come in the last days to bring salvation,"[13] and so its use in Malachi is not unique. However, this is a title that the Matthean Baptist will use twice with

[11] Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 290.

[12] E. Jenni, "בוא *bo* to come," in *TLOT,* ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:204.

[13] Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 553.

respect to Jesus (Matt 3:11 and 11:3), and as noted, it does have a connection with Mal 3:1. Therefore, when thinking of John's Malachian expectations for Jesus, this is weighed as an additional piece of evidence.[14]

The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17)

Yamasaki continues in discussion of Matt 3, "Because of John's immediately preceding depiction of the one coming after him, the narratee now expects to see Jesus entering the story–line as the eschatological judge, ready to perform a baptism of the Holy Spirit and a baptism of fire."[15] But Jesus does not enter the scene in this way. Instead, he comes to be baptized himself, which does not fit John's expectation, causing him to ask of Jesus: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Matt 3:14). And yet the reader of Matthew's Gospel has, on the discourse level, first been introduced to John as a preparatory figure with the text of Isa 40:3. There, the voice in the desert does not herald eschatological judgment, but consolation and good news. Therefore, the fact that Jesus does not come first as eschatological judge is not as disorienting as it is to John on the story level of the narrative.

John initially objects to baptizing Jesus, to which Jesus responds: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). There is much discussion over the meaning of the term "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη) in Matthew's Gospel, the noun form of which occurs seven times (Matt 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32). Hagner surveys the discussion, explaining that some scholars argue for a single understanding of the term throughout the Gospel—either as (1) imperative; human righteousness corresponding to ethical demand or (2)

[14] Gibbs writes: "In this Matthean context with John the Baptist, the promised Elijah of Mal 3:23 (ET 4:5), particularly relevant for this Christological title is Mal 3:1: 'the Messenger of the covenant ... *is coming* [בָּא],'" Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* 553.

[15] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 95.

indicative; a gift dependent upon the grace of God—while others argue the possibility that Matthew uses the word both ways.[16] Hagner's own reckoning of the word's usage, in considering each instance on a case–by–case basis, falls into the latter category, for as he asserts, "[N]o author is obligated to use any word consistently in only one sense or with the same meaning."[17] He builds his understanding of the 'gift' nuance of the term on Old Testament (LXX) usage of δικαιοσύνη, explaining that "God's righteousness in the OT refers not abstractly to God's ethical character, but to his saving activity that brings about eschatological deliverance."[18] It is in this category of meaning that he places the usage of δικαιοσύνη in Matt 3:15, which makes good sense of the narrative context. Hagner writes: "If we think of δικαιοσύνη as righteousness in the sense of God's salvific activity, then John and Jesus may together be understood as fulfilling the salvific plan of God in the inauguration of Jesus' ministry, the culmination of which will be his redemptive death on the cross."[19]

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[16] For Hagner's survey of scholarship, see Donald A. Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," in *Worship, Theology, and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin,* ed. Terence Paige and Michael J. Wilkens (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 107–10.

[17] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 110.

[18] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 114. In an earlier paragraph, Hagner summarizes on this OT usage:

> The Hebrew word (ה)צדק has a variety of meanings in the OT depending on the context. This, of course, is also true of its LXX counterpart δικαιοσύνη. Among the most important of these meanings is found in the reference to the eschatological salvation and vindication brought to the people of God. This sense of the word as the saving righteousness of God is particularly prominent in the prophets. This can be seen in passages such as Mic. 6.5 (NRSV: 'the saving acts of the LORD'), 7.9 ('his vindication'), and the question of Mal. 2.17, 'Where is the God of justice?' The word has this sense very frequently in Second Isaiah (e.g., 46.13, 'salvation'). In the LXX of 51.5 we have an especially good example: ἐγγίζει ταχὺ ἡ δικαιοσύνη μου, καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ὡς φῶς τὸ σωτήριόν μου, 'My righteousness [NRSV translates the Hebrew, "deliverance"] quickly draws nigh, and my salvation will go forth as light' (cf. the last clauses of vv. 6 and 8, where again, σωτήριον and δικαιοσύνη are paralleled (cf. 61.11; 62.1f.). In 59.9 δικαιοσύνη is paralleled with κρίσις, 'judgment'. And in 63.1 we encounter the combination of δικαιοσύνην καὶ κρίσιν σωτηρίου, 'righteousness and saving judgment' (Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 112–13).

[19] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 116.

The appearance of the word δικαιοσύνη in relation to John's ministry here and in Matt 21:32 may provide a further point of contact between John and Malachian Elijah. As mentioned above, in Malachi, Yahweh's sending of "my messenger" (Mal 3:1), and subsequently the coming of the Lord/ Messenger of the Covenant is in response to the people questioning: "Where is the God of justice (MT— מִשְׁפָּט / LXX—δικαιοσύνη)?" (Mal 2:17). And so it is fitting that Malachian Elijah comes together with Jesus to "fulfill all righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)" (Matt 3:15).

The Isaianic theme begun in Matt 3:3 continues in the same chapter at Jesus' baptism, with a likely allusion to Isa 42:1a in the words from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17).[20] In spite of notable differences between the texts of Matt 3:17 and LXX Isa 42:1a, Gibbs offers three cogent arguments for the presence of such an allusion. First, in the immediate context for each text, there is a "common theme of the descent of the Spirit."[21] In the latter half of Isa 42:1, God says of the servant: "I have put my Spirit upon him." Similarly, in Matt 3:16, the heavens open, and Jesus "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him." Second, in Matt 12:18–21, the Gospel features an extended citation of the first Servant Song, in which it is clear, for all the complexities of Matthew's text form, that Isa 42:1–4 is front and center in Matthew. For our purposes here, note that the Greek text of Matt

[20] There is also likely an allusion to Jer 38:20 in the language of the voice from heaven. This is argued convincingly in: Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel." For the specific argumentation on the presence of an allusion to Jer 38:20, see pp. 515–19. Gibbs summarizes the points of his argument as follows:

> The agreements in wording between Jeremiah and Matthew, Matthew's use of LXX Jeremiah 38 at Matt 2:17–19 and elsewhere in his narrative, the presence of "new Exodus" motifs in both the LXX of Jeremiah 38 and Matthew's opening chapters, and the strong presence of "Jesus–the–son as Israel–the–son" Christology in Matthew 2 and 4, all lend credence to the primary thesis of this paper, namely that Matthew intends the reader to find in LXX Jer 38:20 the OT background for the words from heaven, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" (Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel," 518–19).

[21] Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel," 522.

12:18 closely parallels the text of Matt 3:17.

Matt 3:17b	Matt 12:18a
οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα.	ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ᾑρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου.

Between the two texts, one key similarity is the common language of "beloved" (ἀγαπητός). Matthew 3:17b has "my beloved son" (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός), while Matt 12:18a has "my beloved" (ὁ ἀγαπητός μου)." Another key similarity comes with the comparable prepositional phrases, "In whom I am well pleased" (ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα) in Matt 3:17b and "in whom my soul is well pleased" (εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου) in Matt 12:18a. In the Greek, both begin with a preposition (ἐν/εἰς), followed by a relative pronoun (ᾧ/ὃν), and then a form of εὐδοκέω (εὐδόκησα/εὐδόκησεν). Given these similarities, the idea is that if one sees an allusion to Isa 42:1a in Matt 12:18–21, it seems reasonable to see the same in Matt 3:17.[22] Third, "Matthew connects the ministry of Jesus with other servant passages in Isaiah (Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17; Isa 61:1 in Matt 5:3; 11:6."[23] Therefore, it would not be unusual for him to include here an allusion to a servant passage. In light of this argumentation, the presence of an allusion to Isa 42:1a will be acknowledged for the purposes of the present work.

In terms of its function in the text, the alluded to verse (Isa 42:1a) is the beginning of the

[22] Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel," 522. For further discussion of the similarities between Matt 3:17 and 12:18, see: Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:336–39. This repeated use of Isa 42 exhibits Hays' and Berkley's criterion of "Recurrence"; see the discussion above, pp. 14–16.

[23] Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel," 522–23.

first Servant Song, in which the reader is introduced to the Servant figure, who will bring justice, but in doing so, is characterized with an ethos in harmony with the opening words of consolation and good news from Isa 40:1–11:[24] "He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice" (Isa 42:2–3).

Summary of Key Points

So to set the prophetic parallels, Mal 3 speaks of a preparatory figure ("my messenger" [Mal 3:1a]) who will prepare the way for eschatological justice, in which is involved a figure designated variously as "the Lord" (Mal 3:1b) and "the Messenger of the Covenant" (Mal 3:1c). John's preaching in Matt 3:7–12 demonstrates this expectation. Isaiah 40:3, however, similarly speaks first of a preparatory figure (a crying "voice"), but in this case ushers in a season of consolation and good news, in which is involved the "servant" introduced in Isa 42. Here, the use of Isaiah provides an early hint towards the fact that John's Malachian expectations do not provide the full picture for himself and for Jesus.

[24] Contrary to the work of scholars following after Duhm, such as Westermann (Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary,* trans. David M.G. Stalker, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 27–30; 92; 269–274) or Blenkinsopp (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* AB 19A [New York: Doubleday, 2002]), 76–81; 359–63) who would argue that the four "Servant Songs" of Isa 40–55 (42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12) were later, postexilic insertions into the text, there are good textual and thematic reasons to see a unified corpus. For example, Lessing argues that

> Isaiah invites us to read the end of chapter 41 along with the beginning of chapter 42. He does this by means of two catchwords in 42:1, both of which are in the prior verse (41:29). The first catchword is the particle of immediacy הֵן, 'behold.' It contrasts the servant in chapter 42:1 with the idols who were on trial in chapter 41. ... The second catchword is רוּחַ, 'wind; Spirit.' The verdict at the end of chapter 41 is that the heathen images are merely 'an empty wind' (41:29). In contrast to the spiritless idols, Yahweh anoints the servant with the Holy Spirit (R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 40–55,* ConcC [St. Louis: Concordia, 2011], 245).

Matthew 4:12–16

Prior to the discussion of the text proper, a quick word about structure is needed. Following other scholars,[25] this dissertation assumes a three-part organization for Matthew's Gospel. Employing language from Kingsbury, the three sections could be labeled "(I) The Person of Jesus Messiah (1:1–4:16); (II) The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah (4:17–16:20); and (III) The Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah (16:21–28:20)."[26] The key hinge points between the sections are Matt 4:17 and 16:21. Each of these verses begins in identical fashion with Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ("From then, Jesus began …") followed by an infinitive clause expressing what it is that Jesus began to do from that point forward in the narrative. While these are important structural markers, Gibbs summarizes a variety of arguments beyond the two verses alone for holding this three–part outline.[27] Recognizing this structure in Matthew is significant here for at least two reasons. First, it helps set the boundaries for the pericope currently in discussion (Matt 4:12–16). Second, because Matt 4:15–16 brings to a close the first section of the Gospel, it gives greater prominence to the quoted text from Isaiah (more on this

[25] E.g. David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, JSNTSup 31 (Sheffield: Almond, 1988), Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 38–47, 207–9, Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975), Edgar Krentz, "The Extent of Matthew's Prologue: Toward the Structure of the First Gospel," *JBL* 83, no. 4 (December 1964): 409–14.

Another common view of the Gospel's structure is to see it built around five blocks of teaching. Some have compared these discourse sections to the five books of the Pentateuch, a view that Keener explains "originated with Papias in the early second century and was revived by B.W. Bacon early in the twentieth." Others are skeptical of the Pentateuchal design, but still see the five–discourse structure, e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:61. Keener's view is that "[o]ne need not choose between these two common alternatives; the threefold chronological narrative structure and the fivefold discourse structure are not incompatible" (Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 37). Witherington takes a similar position (Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* [Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006], 14–16).

[26] Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 9.

[27] See Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 39–47. In particular for Matt 1:1–4:16, he mentions the boundary markers in the section of: no public discourse from Jesus, no explicit ministry in and on behalf of Israel, and an understanding of the whole section as Matt 1:1's "book of origin" (Βίβλος γενέσεως). Furthermore, Gibbs sees internal continuity for the section in: the front–loading usage of the citation formula (five of ten occurrences), the rapid introduction of major Christological titles, the phrase "Now in those days" (Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις) in 3:1 to tie text portions together, the consistent theme of "God's unexpected ways of salvation in Jesus," and the fact that the sequence of texts in this beginning section mirrors the end of the Gospel (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 40–42).

below).

The Arrest of John the Baptist and the Withdrawal of Jesus (Matthew 4:12–16)

Subsequent to his baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt 4:1–11). Upon his return, the reader receives a second mention of John, as the report of the Baptist's arrest prompts Jesus to withdraw to Galilee. The arrest of John subverts expectations given the narrative flow to this point. John is first presented to the reader as a fulfillment of Scripture (Matt 3:1–3). In terms of his activities, as Gibbs summarizes, "He announces the coming of the Mightier One (Mt 3:11), and he participates with Jesus in fulfilling all righteousness (Mt 3:15). Jesus, announced by John, has emerged victorious from conflict with Satan."[28] Given these things, along with the expectation that he is Malachian Elijah, reading that John has been imprisoned comes as a surprise. How could this happen to the great prophetic preparer? As Gibbs asserts: "This should catch our attention: *John* was handed over (4:12)."[29]

Coming from his triumph in the wilderness, in another unexpected narrative detail,

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[28] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 203.

[29] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 203 (emphasis original). With the language used in Matt 4:12, it appears likely that John's arrest foreshadows the handing over of Jesus himself. Hagner writes: "The παρεδόθη may be intended to anticipate Jesus' betrayal (17:22; 20:18–19; 26:2, etc.), thus drawing a parallel between the suffering of John and of Jesus" (Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* WBC [Dallas: Word, 1993], 72). This is certainly not the only place in which John foreshadows Jesus, or that parallels are drawn between the two in Matthew's Gospel. In fact, just a few verses later at the outset of the Gospel's second section, the reported summation of Jesus' teaching—"Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17)—repeats verbatim John's message in Matt 3:2. Regarding the parallels generally, Kingsbury summarizes:

> As the forerunner of Jesus, John foreshadows in his person and work the person and work of Jesus. Both John and Jesus are agents of God sent by God (11:10; 10:40). Both belong to the time of fulfillment (3:3; 1:23). Both have the same message to proclaim (3:2; 4:17). Both enter into conflict with Israel: in the case of the crowds, a favorable reception ultimately gives way to repudiation (3:5–6; 4:24–25; 11:16–19); in the case of the leaders, the opposition is implacable from the outset (3:7–10; 9:3). Both John and Jesus are 'delivered up 'to their enemies (4:12; 10:4). And both are made to die violently and shamefully (14:3–12; 27:37). To know of John is to know in advance of Jesus" (Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story,* 47).

For more discussion on the ways in which John and Jesus are both similar and yet distinct from one another, see: Meier, "John the Baptist," 386–405.

victorious Jesus withdraws (ἀνεχώρησεν) upon hearing that John is in custody. Regarding the word ἀναχωρέω, are we to read this as a flight on the part of Jesus in response to danger? There is some discussion on the matter. Davies and Allison summarize the issue:

> In 4.12 are we to think that Jesus' life is already in danger in the south, so that he takes what will later be his own advice (10.23) and flees (cf. 12.15), it not being time for him to be delivered up (cf. Jn 7.6)? Or does ἀναχωρέω lack the connotation of fear and flight (cf. 9.24; 27.5; Acts 26.31; Josephus, *Vita* 151; so Soares Prabhu, pp. 124–6, who interprets 4.12 not as a flight but as a challenge)?[30]

Matthew uses some form of the word ἀναχωρέω ten times. Of these, three are especially noteworthy for the present discussion.[31] The first is Matt 2:22, in which after bringing his family back to Israel from Egypt, Joseph "withdrew (ἀνεχώρησεν) to the district of Galilee" for fear of Archelaus. Gibbs notes a number of parallels between Matt 2:22–23 and 4:12–14: "[B]oth hear that a danger exists (Archelaus rules in Judea; John was arrested), both withdrew to a different place, to Galilee, and of both it is said that after coming, he 'dwelt in' that place 'in order that what was spoken' in the OT 'might be fulfilled.'"[32] The other two occurrences of note both feature Jesus as the subject of the verb, as in Matt 4:12. In Matt 12:15, Jesus withdraws in response to being aware of the Pharisees, who "went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him" (Matt 12:14). As with 4:12, this is rather clearly in response to danger of which Jesus is aware. In Matt 14:13, Jesus withdraws after hearing that the Baptist had been beheaded. This parallels 4:12 even more closely as Jesus withdraws in response to a violence committed

[30] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:376.

[31] Regarding the remaining occurrences, three appear in consecutive verses, describing an escape from Herod—the magi taking an alternate route home (Matt 2:12, 13) and Joseph fleeing with his young family to Egypt (Matt 2:14). These all fit the flight from danger notion. In Matt 15:21, Jesus withdraws (ἀνεχώρησεν) to Tyre and Sidon after a confrontation with the Pharisees and a follow–up conversation with his disciples. This seems a bit more neutral in connotation, as with the final two. In Matt 9:23–24, Jesus tells the "the flute players and the crowd making a commotion" to "Go away (ἀναχωρεῖτε), for the girl is not dead but sleeping," and Matt 27:5 describes Judas as he departs (ἀνεχώρησεν) to hang himself.

[32] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 204.

against John. Whether he sees John's death as a threat to himself is not explicit, though it is certainly possible, if not likely. Given these parallels in which Jesus or Joseph "withdraws" (ἀναχωρέω) in response to some danger, it seems reasonable to read ἀνεχώρησεν in Matt 4:12 in this light as well, particularly as his flight comes after hearing of John's arrest.

Soares Prabhu pushes back against this sense of ἀναχωρέω, asserting that an understanding of whether the word suggests "a flight from danger" must be drawn from context. His claim is that the surrounding context for Matt 4:12 argues against this connotation for the word. He writes: "For Jesus 'withdraws' not away from but into the territory of the tetrarch who has imprisoned John; and he does this, not to go into hiding, but to begin a life of the most intense public activity. The coming of Jesus into Galilee is, if anything, not a flight but a challenge."[33] For Soares Prabhu the connection between John's arrest and Jesus' withdrawal should be understood theologically: "Mt sees the connecting thread of a providentially guided sacred history. The mission of Jesus is linked to that of John because both are parts of a pre–ordained divine plan."[34] Regarding the first point, even though Jesus remains in the territory of Archelaus, his withdrawal can be viewed as movement away from the area of most intense danger. Nolland explains: "Since Herod Antipas ruled over both Perea (where John would have been arrested) and Galilee, the withdrawal is not from Antipas's territory, but rather from the area in which John the Baptist had been active and, ultimately, apprehended."[35] With that said, Soares Prabhu's

[33] George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976), 125. Osborne takes a similar position: "Some think 'withdraw' (ἀνεχώρησεν) indicates that Jesus was fleeing a dangerous situation, as if John's arrest might herald his own. However, that makes more of the scene than is there, and likely Jesus saw an opportunity to spread the gospel where it would be better received" (Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew,* ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 141).

[34] Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations,* 126.

[35] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 169. So France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 140.

latter point is well taken, and in fact is the very point towards which we are pressing. Even though Jesus is withdrawing from danger, his movement also fits as part of a "pre–ordained divine plan."

In surprising fashion, John has been arrested, and Jesus has withdrawn. In order to demonstrate how this fits within the plan and purpose of God, the Gospel employs a quotation from Isaiah to help the reader see how the events of the narrative do indeed harmonize with Old Testament expectations. The quote comes from Isa 8:23–9:1 (Eng. 9:1–2). As Jesus changes geographical location from Nazareth to Capernaum, Matthew presents the move as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.[36]

In its original context in Isaiah, these verses offer hope to those in the Northern Kingdom experiencing the pain of the Assyrian exile—they are the "people who walked in darkness" that receive the promise of light (Isa 9:2).[37] In this context, an original provision of light comes by way of return from exile. But even in Isaiah, the hope extends further. Soares Prahbu explains: "Originally, no doubt, this triumph referred to the return from exile. But in its present context, Is 8,23b is surely to be read in the light of 9,1–6, which speaks, undoubtedly, of the messianic triumph of the eschatological age."[38] Therefore, the greater hope for those dwelling in this region comes with the salvific work of Jesus, and his geographic relocation signals this messianic hope.[39]

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[36] Blomberg, "Matthew," 18.

[37] France writes: "The imagery of darkness and light is clear and conventional (cf. 6:23). It speaks in Isaiah of the transformation from hopelessness to hope, in the immediate context of the devastation caused by the Assyrian invasion" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 143).

[38] Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 91.

[39] Contrary to the notion that Matthew's use of "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν) implies hope for the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη), Nolland asserts that

> it is not at all clear that the originally pejorative connotation of 'of the Gentiles' (the presence of the Gentiles

In addition to this, there is a connection between this citation of Isa 8:23–9:1 and the earlier citation of the Immanuel passage (Isa 7:14) in Matt 1:22–23. These two texts are not only connected in Matthew, but also come from the same unit in Isaiah.[40] Gibbs writes:

> Matthew had cited Isaiah's first Immanuel passage in Mt 1:22–23. Now Matthew's citation of Is 8:23–9:1 (ET 9:1–2) casts beams from its larger context upon the narrative of Jesus, "God is with us. (Mt 1:23). Light has dawned in Galilee (Is 8:23–9:1 [ET 9:1–2]); the joy of the nation in victory over her enemies is greater than the joy at harvest or when dividing the spoils of battle (9:2–4 [ET 9:3–5]). Why is this so? "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is 9:5 [ET 9:6]). The "Son of David" (Mt 1:1) will reign on David's throne, establishing an expanding kingdom that will bring peace without end (Is 9:6 [ET 9:7]).[41]

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lies behind the darkness) is now to be freshly construed in a positive way (foreshadowing the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles). The images of the text come from the eighth–century experience of devastation of the northern kingdom, and in such a context, the value of the Gentiles can only be negative (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 172).

Luz adds to this argument the detail that "elsewhere in Matthew 'people' (λαός) always means Israel" (Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7,* trans. James E. Crouch [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 159).

Gibbs, however, suggests that the phrase "Galilee of the Gentiles" speaks of both Jew and Gentile in Galilee and perhaps anticipates the light going to all the nations. The foundation for this assertion comes from the fact that both Jews and Gentiles resided in Galilee (see: John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39,* NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986]), 239–40) and a connection Gibbs sees between Matt 4:12–16 and Matt 28:16–20. His argument for the latter is based upon three points: First, both passages feature the promise of Immanuel. There are Immanuel passage citations in Matt 1:23 and 4:15–16, and in Matt 28:20, Jesus promises: "Behold, *I am with you* always" (emphasis mine). Second, in Matt 28:16–20, Jesus meets with his disciples *in Galilee,* and sends them out into the world from there. Third, Gibbs sees a parallel sequence of events between Matt 3:13–17/4:1–11/4:12–16 and 26–28: Jesus the Son of God stands in place of sinners, he wins a victory choosing humble obedience and is attended to by angels, and then goes to Galilee in the north (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 205–7).

[40] Oswalt sees this unity, and in making a distinction between Ahaz and the promised child of Isa 9:5–6, he writes: "In this segment [9:1–6] Isaiah reaches the climax of the section begun at 7:1. In place of an unfaithful monarch whose shortsighted defensive policies will actually plunge the nation into more desperate straits, there is lifted up the ideal monarch who, though a child, will bring an end to all wars and establish an eternal kingdom based upon justice and righteousness" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39,* 241).

[41] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 205. France notes that this prophecy regarding the coming child from Isa 9:5–6 is "remarkably never directly referred to in the NT" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 142). Here, as is suggested, it is at least alluded to in Matthew's Gospel as part of the larger context of Isa 8:23–9:6 [ET 9:1–7].

Further, Gibbs notes that in combining this Immanuel formula citation with first one in Matt 1:23, the author has enclosed "his narrative's first major section with references from the Immanuel section of Isaiah."[42]

Thus, while Jesus' move to Galilee has the appearance of mere flight from danger after his victory in the wilderness, Matthew employs the use of a text from Isaiah in order to demonstrate that it is in fact also an affirmation of his identity as Immanuel and his mission as the Son of God. Though John's arrest and Jesus' withdrawal appear unexpected to the reader, the divine plan is still on course and even aligned with Old Testament prophecy.

A final point to mention has to do with the text form of Matthew's citation, which is itself a complicated issue.[43] The particular matter of import for our purposes is found in the phrase "a light rose for them"[44] (φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς) in Matt 4:16b.

Isa 9:1b (MT)	Isa 9:1b (LXX)	Matt 4:16b
אוֹר נָגַהּ עֲלֵיהֶם	φῶς λάμψει ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς	φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς

In each case, the phrase begins with a word for light, אוֹר in MT Isa 9:1b and φῶς in both LXX Isa 9:1b and Matt 4:16b. From there, however, Matthew's phrase features two deviations from

[42] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 205.

[43] Gibbs summarizes on the text form:

> The form of Matthew's OT citation is a complex matter. It does not agree precisely in its wording or grammar with either the MT or the LXX. The LXX is different enough from the MT's Hebrew that it is possible that a different Hebrew *Vorlage* gave rise to the translation of the LXX. Some think Matthew has primarily given his own translation of the MT. Others argue that the evangelist is using a revised LXX text, and this might be the case. … The reader should be aware that the text of LXX Is 8:23–9:1 itself is quite controverted, since a number of variant Greek readings exist (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 200–201).

For detailed discussions of the text form generally, see: Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel,* SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 97–110; Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 200–203; Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 105–8; Menken, *Matthew's Bible*, 15–33; Soares Prahbu, *Formula Quotations*, 88–106.

[44] My translation, offered for the sake of highlighting the grammar being discussed.

the MT and the LXX of Isa 9:1b [Eng. 9:2b], both of which offer the potential of a link to Isaianic and Malachian texts.

In the first deviation, Matthew amends from a light shining (MT—אוֹר נָגַהּ / LXX—φῶς λάμψει) to a light dawning (φῶς ἀνέτειλεν). In the second deviation, both the MT and the LXX of Isa 9:1 [ET 9:2] feature a prepositional phrase at the end of the verse led by a preposition often meaning something like "on/upon"—the MT has עֲלֵיהֶם, and the LXX has ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς. In the Gospel's citation, however, Matthew replaces the prepositional phrase with a dative pronoun (dative of advantage): αὐτοῖς.

Regarding these changes, it seems unlikely that this simply represents an independent translation of the Hebrew. Concerning the verb נגה specifically, it occurs six times in the MT, and the LXX never translates it with ἀνατέλλω.[45] Furthermore, lexical data for נגה lacks any notion of 'rising' or 'dawning.'[46] Rather than a direct translation of the phrase from Isa 9:1b, a better explanation may be found in evidence that this phrase represents the confluence of some number of related Old Testament texts, evoked by the subtle change in wording. In this regard Nolland suggests that "Matthew is responsible for moving the final image from the shining of light to the dawning of light, probably to provide a cross reference to other Isaianic salvation texts (58:8, 10; 60:1–3; cf. Mal. 4:2)."[47]

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[45] One ought not be overly dogmatic in determining a 'correct way' to translate נגה. As Soares Prahbu notes regarding the verb נגה, in its six occurrences, it is never translated the same way twice. He writes:

> Of the six appearances of the root in the Masoretic text, the LXX translates the three "qal" forms (Is 9,1 ; Job 18,5 ; 22,28), with λάμπειν, ἀποβαίνειν and the periphrasis εἶναι φέγγος, respectively. The "hiphil" appears as ἐκλάμπειν in 2 Sam 22,29, but as φωτίζειν in the exactly parallel (" *YHWH yaggîah ḥoškî* ") Ps 18,29. And Is 13,10 is again periphrastic with [φῶς] διδόναι. Clearly the LXX is far from consistent in its rendering of *ngh* (Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 99 n216).

[46] E.g. BDB, s.v. נָגַהּ; Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, s.v. נָגַהּ.

[47] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 174. See also: Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 174 n4.

In the ensuing discussion, there are a number of textual features that make LXX Ps 96:11[MT/Eng.—97:11] an intriguing candidate to be featured in the conversation. The wording at the beginning of the verse—φῶς

Isaiah 58:8–10 is particularly noteworthy for several reasons. First, vv. 8 and 10 are two of only six places in the LXX in which φῶς and ἀνατέλλω appear in the same verse,[48] and v. 10 is one of only two which feature φῶς as the subject of the verb ἀνατέλλω.[49] Second, Isa 58:8–10 shares with Isa 8:23–9:1 [Eng. 9:1–2], the primary source text for Matthew's quotation, the theme of light coming forth in the midst of darkness. Third, Isa 58:8–10 comes from an Isaianic context, as does the primary quotation.

Isaiah 60:1–3 is significant for similar reasons, though perhaps to a slightly lesser degree. It too shares in the common themes of light appearing in the midst of darkness and also comes from an Isaianic context. Furthermore, it also features a verse in which φῶς and ἀνατέλλω appear together, though φῶς is not the subject of ἀνατέλλω; rather, it is "the glory of the Lord" (ἡ δόξα Κυρίου) which rises (v. 1).

The third text mentioned by Nolland as potentially featuring a connection to the phrase φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς in Matt 4:16 is Mal 3:20 [Eng. 4:2], which carries intrigue due to the nature of this project, one that attends to the interactions between Isaianic and Malachian texts and themes in the Gospel. Regarding the connections to Matt 4:16, first, LXX Mal 3:20 also has a form of the verb ἀνατέλλω (ἀνατελεῖ, cf. MT—וְזָרְחָה), though here it is a particular source of light—"the sun of righteousness" (ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης)—rather than φῶς, which 'rises.' Second, in the LXX of Mal 3:20, the form of ἀνατέλλω is followed by a dative pronoun (dative of advantage)—καὶ

ἀνέτειλεν—is identical to the start of the phrase being discussed in Matt 4:16b. Furthermore, in similar fashion, the verb is followed by a dative noun—τῷ δικαίῳ—as is the case in Matt 4:16b (αὐτοῖς). With these things noted, though, this verse does not share in an Isaianic, or even prophetic, context. Furthermore, unlike Isa 40–66 and Mal 3 [Eng. 3–4], there does not appear to be any evidence that Matthew cites Ps 96 [MT/Eng. 97] elsewhere in the Gospel.

[48] The others are: 2 Sam 23:3; Ps 96:11 [MT/Eng.—97:11]; Isa 13:10; 60:1.

[49] Ps 96:11 [MT/Eng.—97:11] is the other.

ἀνατελεῖ ὑμῖν (τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά μου). This is similar to the dative pronoun following the verb in Matt 4:16 (ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς).[50]

Moreover, LXX Mal 3:20 [Eng. 4:2] and Isa 58:8–10 have additional connections to one another, in that they both contain the themes of 'healing' and 'righteousness.' Isa 58:8 includes the phrase "and your healing (τὰ ἰάματά σου) shall spring up speedily; your righteousness (ἡ δικαιοσύνη σου) shall go before you." Mal 3:20 [Eng. 4:2] promises: "for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness (ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης) will rise, and healing (ἴασις) will be in its wings."

With these things said, given the subtlety of the expression in Matt 4:16, and the various potential connections, it is difficult to tell if one, some, none, or all of these passages are being alluded to in the text of Matthew's Gospel. But it seems at least possible, if not likely, that Matthew is engaging some portion of these texts in order to expand the sense of his primary Isa 8:23–9:1 [Eng. 9:1–2] citation.

If present, as Nolland suggests, an allusion to the Isaiah passage(s) (Isa 58:8–10; 60:1–3) would "provide a cross reference to other Isaianic salvation texts"[51] What should be made of a connection between Mal 3:20 and Matt 4:16, particularly in the context of the present study? On its own, it is perhaps not remarkable. We might, in fact, point out that this Malachi reference does not even come directly in one of the key Elijah texts (Mal 3:1–5, 22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]), but a

[50] The MT of Mal 3:20 [ET 4:2] has וְזָרְחָה לָכֶם. Not having a way to mark dative functions morphologically by case ending as with Greek, Hebrew will often employ the לְ preposition for the purpose (see: Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §4.1.10.e).

None of the uses of ἀνατέλλω in Isa 58:8–10 and Isa 60:1–3 is followed by a dative noun. One does have an adverbial prepositional phrase in the dative case (ἐν τῷ σκότει in Isa 58:10), while another has a prepositional phrase in the accusative case, that is somewhat similar in meaning (ἐπὶ σὲ in Isa 60:1).

[51] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 174.

few verses before Elijah is mentioned by name in Mal 3:23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5]. With that said, as this dissertation highlights various connections between Matthew, Isaiah, and Malachi, it is worth mentioning as a potential point of contact. If indeed there were an echo of sorts here, the purpose may be to demonstrate that Isaianic notions of salvific hope are not foreign to the Malachian context.[52]

Summary of Key Points

To summarize, Matt 4:12–16 marks a surprising shift in narrative action. In the previous chapter, John baptizes Jesus, an activity purposed that they might together fulfill all righteousness. The next the reader hears of John is from the report which reaches Jesus that John has been imprisoned. In response, Jesus—who comes immediately from his triumph in the wilderness—"withdraws" into Galilee, presumably in avoidance of the forces that had arrested John. To help the reader make sense of this, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel provides a quotation from Isa 8:23–9:1 [Eng. 9:1–2]. In so doing, the reader is assured that in spite of appearances otherwise, Jesus' movement into Galilee demonstrates continuity with the redemptive purposes of God, and his actions in the narrative even stand as a fulfillment of prophetic expectations. Jesus, great Immanuel, comes to bring the light of messianic hope.[53]

[52] More particularly, some have some have even suggested a connection to Matt 2:2 ("For we saw his star when it rose [ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ], and have come to worship him") and the LXX of Num 24:17 ("a star shall come out [ἀνατελεῖ] of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel") such that an allusion to Mal 3:20 would take on a specifically messianic connotation (Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ*, 109–10; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:386; Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 100).

[53] This pericope does not immediately represent an illustration of John's point of view, as John himself is not given voice in this text (He will speak again, through the words of his disciples, in Matt 9 and 11). Rather, the mention of John provides the opportunity for the narrator to speak to the reader concerning the reported narrative events.

Matthew 9:14–17

A Question about Fasting (Matthew 9:14–17)

As was learned in Matt 4:12, John has been imprisoned. Yet this imprisonment has not removed John's voice from the storyline. He now speaks through his disciples. Yamasaki argues:

> Because John has been arrested (4:12), he is no longer able to interact directly with Jesus. However, despite his imprisonment, John is still able to communicate with Jesus through his disciples. In fact, Darr points out that John's disciples are 'representative of their master and so function as a narrative extension of his character.' As a result, their appearance in 9.14 does not represent the introduction of a new character group; instead, it represents the reappearance of John.[54]

In Matt 9, the voice of John comes via his disciples to Jesus with a question about fasting. They ask: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" (Matt 9:14).[55] The grouping of John's disciples together with the Pharisees is unusual, given the fact that earlier in the Gospel, John refers to the Pharisees (along with the Sadducees) who were coming to him as a "brood of vipers" (Matt 3:17).

There is some discussion as to what exactly is seen as lacking in the fasting practices of Jesus' disciples, for Jesus himself has already been seen fasting in the Gospel (Matt 4:2) and has advocated for fasting of some sort in the lives of his disciples (Matt 6:16–18). With this in mind, it seems probable that the issue is not *whether* Jesus' disciples fasted, but *how* they fasted. The fasting practices of the Pharisees were known for going beyond that which was required by the Law—fasting specified on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31; Num 29:17–31), or even "private fasting of individuals in their own engagement with God."[56] They held a collective

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[54] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 103. The text that Yamasaki cites is from: John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 75. Cf. Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 184–85.

[55] My translation, presented to include the word "often," the inclusion of which is discussed on p. 66, and especially n60.

[56] Nolland, *Matthew,* 390.

practice of fasting twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.[57] This rigorous fasting practice is likely the reason for the odd alignment of Pharisees and John's disciples. France writes: "We know nothing specifically of John's teaching on fasting, but an ascetic regime would fit John's own lifestyle (3:4) and his dour popular image (11:18, with specific mention of John's own fasting). They may well have adopted the Pharisaic pattern of fasting twice a week."[58] This understanding of the inquiry from John's disciples is supported by the wording of their question: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"[59] (τί ἡμεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι νηστεύομεν πολλά,[60] οἱ δὲ μαθηταί σου οὐ νηστεύουσιν;) (Matt 9:14). It is not merely about fasting, but fasting *often,* i.e. it is a matter of frequency.

While the Pharisees and John's disciples share the practice of frequent fasting, their reasons for it need not be the same. Yamasaki makes the observation that while John's disciples ask

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[57] Cf. Luke 18:12; Did 8:1. France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 356, Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 243, Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 390.

[58] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 355–56.

[59] My translation. See n55 above.

[60] The UBS Greek NT and the NA[28] include the word πολλά in brackets, while the SBLGNT does not. Regarding the UBS, Metzger describes the thought process:

> It is more difficult to decide whether πολλά, which is absent from the Markan account (Mk 2.18), was originally added by Matthew or by subsequent copyists. The Committee decided that, on balance, the non–parallel reading should be preferred; yet in view of the absence of the word from several important witnesses (א*, B al), a majority thought it best to enclose πολλά within square brackets (Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2d ed. [Stuttgart: UBS, 1998], 20).

Further evidence for this reading comes from Dennert, who notes: "[t]here is widespread geographic support for the reading πολλά (Alexandrian: א^{2}, 33, 579, 892, bo, sa^{mss}; Western: D, k; Byzantine: K, W, Maj; Caesarean: Θ, f$^{1, 13,}$ 700), and this reading is unique among the Synoptic parallels (Luke 5:33 uses a different word for frequency: πυκνὰ)" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 187 n16). Others suggest in addition that the absence of πολλά in some manuscripts could represent an attempt at harmonization with the Markan account (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 349 n5; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 241 textual note a.).

Nolland seems noncommittal, and points out that while πολλά could be original, its inclusion here "could also be a half–hearted attempt to locate the difference between Jesus' disciples and John's in the frequency of fasting (in the interest of the early church practice of fasting)" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 388 textual note a.).

about the fasting practices of Jesus' disciples, they do not question Jesus himself regarding his lack of fasting.[61] For Yamasaki, this all has to do with John's previously expressed understanding of Jesus' role as that of eschatological judge. This was established in Matt 3, and in the narrative, nothing has occurred since then that would lead the reader to believe that John's viewpoint has changed. For this reason, Yamasaki asserts that this mention of fasting is not

> a reference to the common custom of fasting, but rather as a reference to fasting as a sign of repentance in the face of eschatological judgment. This explains why John's disciples exempt Jesus from their expectation of fasting, for certainly the eschatological judge would not be required to fast as a sign of repentance in the face of the judgment that he himself is executing.[62]

This expectation of Jesus coming as eschatological judge is consistent in theme with the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant figure introduced in Mal 3:1b–4. As such, the question seeks to reconcile the difference between expectation and reality. This occasion offers Jesus (and the narrator) another opportunity to augment expectations for his role. As Yamasaki says, Jesus "presents an entirely different picture of the Kingdom. Jesus speaks of the celebration of a wedding feast, thus indicating that his messiahship involves a celebratory, and not a fearful, inauguration of the Kingdom of Heaven."[63] To do so, he employs an image of a bridegroom with his wedding guests. Bridegroom or husband metaphors for God are not uncommon in the Old Testament.[64] What is striking, however, is the fact that Jesus transfers this imagery typically

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[61] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 104.

[62] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 105. See also: Dennert, who similarly argues that "the continued frequent fasting of John's disciples stems from a lack of recognition of the arrival of the figure about whom John spoke due to an overemphasis on coming judgment" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 191).

[63] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 106. Hagner highlights this as a general distinction between the respective dispositions of John and Jesus, writing that "John's way was that of asceticism (cf. 3:4; 11:18) in preparation for imminent eschatological judgment, and it stood in remarkable contrast to the demeanor of Jesus, who was controlled by the joy of the appearing kingdom (see the expression of the contrast esp. in 11:19–19)" (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 242).

[64] E.g. Isa 54:4–6; 62:4–5; Jer 2–3; 31:32; Hos 2–3.

associated with Yahweh to himself. In so doing, he supplements a strictly Malachian portrayal, which makes a distinction between the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant (Mal 3:1b) and Yahweh of hosts (Mal 3:5).

Regarding the Old Testament background for the bridegroom imagery in Matt 9:15, various texts have been suggested, including several from Isaiah—Isa 54:4–8 and Isa 62:4–5.[65] The latter has the advantage of featuring the same "bridegroom" (νυμφίος, Isa 62:5) terminology present in Matt 9:15, while the former employs the language of κύριος (Isa 54:5) instead. Isaiah 54:4–8, however—which Witherington claims is the "proper background to the first short parable"[66]—is preferred, as it is in the same section of Isaiah as the fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12).[67] This close proximity in Isaiah is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the whole of Matt 8–9, which features a number of miracles performed by Jesus, is conditioned by a quotation from Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17—"This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.'"[68] As Kingsbury suggests, "[t]o ascertain the christology of chaps. 8–9, the formula–quotation 8:16–17 is in fact the place to begin."[69] Second, the Fourth Servant song (Isa 52:13–53:12) is alluded to in various places throughout the

[65] In addition to these two, for example, Hagner and Nolland suggest Hos 2:16–20 (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 243; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 390) and Witherington suggests Ezek 17:7–10 (Witherington, *Matthew,* 201).

[66] Witherington, *Matthew*, 201.

[67] Broadly, this section includes Isa 40–55, which is a common demarcation within the book. More narrowly, a case can be made for literary connections between Isa 52:13–53:12 and Isa 54–55. The present author has made this case in "Textual and Thematic Hinges between Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and Isaiah 54," (Covenant Theological Conference, January 21, 2014, St. Louis, MO). For examples of those who see similar reasons for literary unity between Isa 52:13–53:12 and Isa 54–55, see: Lessing, *Isaiah 40–55,* 636–37; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 413–15 .

[68] Gibbs observes of this citation that "Matthew's rendering differs strikingly from the LXX, which offers an explicitly 'spiritual' translation of Is 53:4: 'This one bears our sins and suffers on behalf of us' (οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυνᾶται)" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 422).

[69] Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Matthew 8–9," *CBQ* 40, no. 4 (October 1978): 564.

Gospel, so it is clearly a known and employed text.[70] Finally, and most notably, in Matt 9:15b there appears to be an allusion to Isa 53:8.[71] The basis for seeing the allusion is the presence of the phrase "is taken away from" (ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ᾽), cf. αἴρεται ἀπὸ in Isa LXX 53:8 (MT—נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ).

How do these allusions to Isaiah within the wedding image supplement the Malachian portrait of Jesus' role? There are two elements added. First, contrary to the expectations of John (via his disciples) who expects fasting in advance of eschatological judgment, with his appearance Jesus invites celebratory joy. This joy is akin to that which is experienced in a wedding—the sort of joy described in the context of Isa 54:1–8. As France explains: "The festivities in connection with a wedding, which usually went on for several days, are a symbol of joy and celebration, and provide a natural image for the new life of the kingdom of heaven … Here that joy is not just a future hope, but characterizes the whole of Jesus' earthly ministry."[72] Second, the bridegroom will inexplicably be taken away from the wedding guests. Nolland writes:

> '[A]s long as the bridegroom is with them' already prepares for the shadow to fall since it already disturbs the link with the imagery of the OT background (one would not expect to need to think in terms of interruption or termination in relation to this culmination of God's purposes). … 'Is taken away' refers to an unnatural removal since the guests and not the couple are left at the end of the celebrations. The removal

[70] Wilson lists the following: "Note that Matt 8,17 cites Isa 53,4, Matt 27,12 alludes to Isa 53,7, Matt 27,27 alludes to Isa 53,9, Matt 20,28 alludes to Isa 53,10–12, and Matt 12,29; 26,27–28; and 27,28 allude to Isa 53,12" (Walter T. Wilson, "The Crucified Bridegroom and His Bleeding Daughter: Reflections on the Narrative Logic of Matt 9,9-26," *ETL* 89, no. 4 [December 2013]: 338 n65).

This detail is important, for it fits with the notion of *recurrence* discussed above in the "Methodological Procedure" section. In short, it goes to show that the author of Matthew's Gospel is aware of this section of Scripture, as demonstrated by its clear citation elsewhere, and as such, this one too has the likelihood of also being a known text.

[71] That there is an allusion is suggested by a number of scholars, e.g. A. Feuillet, "La Controverse sur le jeûne (Mc 2,18–20; Mt 9,14–15; Lc 5,33–35)," *NRTh* 90 (1968):, 252–59; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 356; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 243.

[72] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 356.

> is ominous. The anticipated fasting is related to an anticipated disaster. The fasting will lament the loss.[73]

With the dramatic shift, Wilson describes how the reader is left with "a disconcerting juxtaposition of images: the bridegroom of joy will become the bridegroom of woe."[74]

Building off the wedding imagery, Jesus offers two further metaphors, both of which make essentially the same point, namely that with his advent Jesus brings something that is new. He is not merely one voice among others in first century Judaism, but represents a genuine development in redemptive history by presenting himself as the Bridegroom of Israel. As Gibbs asserts, "Jesus' words extend an *exclusive* invitation since he himself is the sole Bridegroom. Just as in the OT Yahweh called Israel to forsake her adulterous liaisons with other gods and be his wife exclusively (e.g., Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 1–3; cf. Ex 20:3–5), so Jesus brooks no rivals."[75]

In the first of these two additional images, Jesus explains that one would not put "a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made" (Matt 9:16). As Gibbs describes, this image speaks to the paradigmatic newness that Jesus brings, such that he cannot be a mere supplement, but must be primary. For "[h]e has not come to fix a small breach in the existing religion, nor just to supplement it. Rather, he has come to fulfill the entirety of the OT Scriptures and inaugurate the promised new covenant in himself."[76]

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[73] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 390.

[74] Wilson, "Crucified Bridegroom," 337.

[75] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 479 (emphasis original).

[76] Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 479. Cf. Nolland who senses the danger that one could read into this image the idea that a wholly new garment would therefore be needed, and that "would fly in the face of Matthew's emphasis on fulfilment rather than supersession." He goes on to note, however, that there is in the image "a potential for use with a continued valuing of the old coat" and that "Matthew's addition at the end of v. 17 ('and [so] both are preserved') suggests that this potential was not lost on him" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 391–92). One wonders, however, if this concern arises from pressing too hard into the metaphor, such that its meaning breaks down and the point is lost.

This, of course, fits with the larger Matthean theme of fulfillment (cf. Matt 5:17).[77]

The meaning of the second image is similar to the first. Jesus explains that new wine is not "put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed" (Matt 9:17). The newness brought by Jesus' advent is not something smaller or less significant that fits into the existing religious structures of first century Judaism ("old wineskins"). This image too fits with the Matthean notion of fulfillment, for the wine is not spilt, and through the action of putting the wine into the new wineskins, "both are preserved" (Matt 9:17). Nolland explains that "what is being asserted is that the new does not need to be constrained by the old, and that only in this way can the new be welcomed and the abiding value of the old be preserved."[78] Therefore, both this image and the one that precedes it offer further explanation for why it is that Jesus' disciples do not fast. With Jesus, there is a new development—the bridegroom is present with the wedding guests!

Subsequent to these three images comes a report of Jesus performing several miraculous healings. At the beginning of v. 18, a genitive absolute phrase—Ταῦτα αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος αὐτοῖς ("While he was saying these things to them")—connects the events of Matt 9:14–17 temporally with what follows.[79] In addition to the grammatical link, the narrative details remain unchanged,

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[77] Given the emphasis, it is tempting to draw the connection between the word used in v. 16 for "patch" (τὸ πλήρωμα) and the etymologically related verb πληρόω (cf. LSJ, s.vv. "πληρόω"; "πλήρωμα"). As a result of the way that πληρόω is used in Matthew, this connection would strengthen the stated understanding of the garment image. Such an argument, however, would run the risk of committing the "root fallacy" (D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996], 28–32), and as such this observation is simply noted in this footnote.

[78] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 392. So Gibbs, who writes: "It is not that there will be no overlap or similarities between the disciples of Jesus and the Judaism that surrounded them in the first century. Judaism was not completely wrong–headed about everything; it preserved some elements of OT teaching. The starting point, however, has to be new. Jesus himself must be the starting point!" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 480).

[79] See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 654–55. Nolland asserts that this close linking "Can only be to make the present episode a further instance of what Jesus has been speaking of" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 394). This is contra Hagner, who argues that the genitive absolute "is not to be understood as a particular time indicator." His argument is based on a different order of events in Mark and Luke, as well as Matthew's ἰδοὺ ("behold"), which for him

reading as a continuous narrative in moving from vv. 14–17 to v. 18, "so that the scene remains in Capernaum, and we are to envisage the official approaching Jesus as he concludes his response to John's disciples."[80]

The payoff in making this point is that a connection can be seen between what Jesus has just said and what he is about to do. The blessedness of the Isaianic bridegroom is expressed through a triad of miracles—the restoration of two women to life (Matt 9:18–28),[81] the healing of two blind men (Matt 9:27–31), and the healing of a man unable to speak on account of demon possession (Matt 9:32–34). As will be discussed below, each of these miracles is reflected in Jesus' Isaianic description of his activities in Matt 11:5.[82]

Summary of Key Points

To summarize the discussion's main points, Matt 9:14–17 opens with John's query (through the voice of his disciples) concerning the reason that Jesus' disciples do not fast with greater frequency. The expectation that they should has to do with John's own view of Jesus. John expects that Jesus has come as an eschatological judge, and therefore his disciples should

"signifies a new, remarkable story" (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 248).

[80] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 362. France, however, does not put the same interpretive weight on the link as does this dissertation. He writes that "it would probably be attributing too much to this formal link to suggest that Matthew intends us to see the new life given to the girl as an illustration of the new wine Jesus has just been speaking about" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 362).

[81] Though seemingly unrelated at a first glance, as France writes, "[i]n a sense, each of these women is restored to life, the one literally, the other metaphorically in that she is free from social restriction, and the use here of the language of 'salvation' … perhaps draws attention to this aspect of her deliverance" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 361). Keener summarizes the far–reaching implications of the woman's long-term discharge of blood. In addition to medical considerations, he points out that she would either be prevented from marriage or bound for divorce (being unable to bear children), have a sense of social stigma due to childlessness and feeling "left over," and would struggle economically without a husband or children for long–term support (Keener, *Gospel of Matthew,* 303–304). Cf. Amy–Jill Levine, "Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus, Biblical Law, and Hemorrhaging Women" in *Treasures Old and New: Contributions to Matthean Studies* ed. D.R. Bauer and M.A. Powell (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 386–92.

[82] France makes this connection between the phrase "and the deaf hear" (Matt 11:5) and the healing of the demon–oppressed man who was mute in Matt 9:32–24, observing that "[d]eafness and dumbness are associated and are described by the same term, κωφός" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 424).

be fasting in light of imminent eschatological judgment. To supplement this expectation, Jesus offers the image of himself as a bridegroom. This is not a unique image in Scripture, but unusual (and surprising!) in usage because the Old Testament oft employs the image metaphorically for Yahweh. The particular background for the bridegroom imagery likely comes from Isaiah and highlights two further realities. First, Jesus' kingdom inauguration is to be celebratory in nature and abundant in blessing. In the immediate context of Matthew, this blessing is manifested in the narrative through Jesus' miraculous healing. Second, Jesus, the bridegroom, will ultimately be taken away, a potential allusion to Isa 53:8 and an anticipation of his death.

Matthew 11:2–30

In Matt 11:2–30, Jesus himself offers extended explicit teaching about John's identity as Malachian Elijah. This passage, in that sense, is perhaps the most significant in the entire narrative arc in the Gospel's presentation of the Baptist.

In terms of structure, Dennert argues that "[t]he appearance of the word ἔργον in 11:2 and 11:19 forms an *inclusio,*" with the reference to John the Baptist present throughout the section functioning as a unifying element.[83] As such, this portion of text will be primary in the present discussion. With that said, vv. 20–30 are also included at a secondary level for two reasons. First, as Dennert observes, "The use of τότε in 11:20 indicates a logical connection between 11:2–19 and 11:20–24."[84] Second, there is a thematic coherence between Matt 11:2–19 and what follows in vv. 20–30. The denouncement of specific cities is a continuation of Jesus' critique in Matt 11:16–19 regarding the response of "this generation," and they are rebuked specifically for

[83] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 195–96.

[84] Dennert argues that the shift in subject and audience overrides the continuity otherwise provided by the use of τότε. (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 196). However, in addition to the points made on pp. 73–74 of the dissertation, one could argue that there is also a change of subject and audience at Matt 11:7, within Dennert's designated unit.

neglecting to repent in response to Jesus' "mighty works" (δυνάμεις, vv. 20, 21, 23). Though the terminology is different, Jesus authoritative actions are what is taken up initially in Matt 11:2. Following this, Matt 11:25–30 interacts with the question of who it is, then, that has "ears to hear" (v. 15). Matthew 11:2–30, then, can be broken up into four portions: (1) Clarifying Jesus' Identity (Matt 11:2–6), (2) Clarifying John's Identity (Matt 11:7–15), (3) Unbelieving Response of 'This Generation' (Matt 11:16–24), (4) The Father's Revelation of the Son (Matt 11:25–30).[85]

Clarifying Jesus' Identity (Matthew 11:2–6)

After hearing from John's disciples in Matt 9, Matt 11 represents the next we hear from John, as his voice comes again through his disciples. John sends them to Jesus in response to the report he has heard regarding Jesus' activities. The fact that the question asked originates with John is highlighted by the use of the singular verb form (εἶπεν) in v. 3. Furthermore, when Jesus responds in v. 4, he says "Go and tell John what you hear and see …" So as Gibbs explains, "Grammatically, John has asked a question, and Jesus has answered him."[86]

In his question, John asks from prison, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" His ongoing imprisonment, first indicated in Matt 4:12, continues to appear paradoxical. As Gibbs writes, "Jesus' teaching about the Baptist's significance in the following pericope (11:7–15) will afford more opportunity to develop this theme, but let it be said here that this does not look like the reign of God!"[87] John is, after all, Malachian Elijah, and yet this does not appear in Malachi's prophetic script.[88] His question implies some level of confusion

[85] Among those who recognize a similar structure in Matt 11 are: France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 417–18; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, ix; Osborne, *Matthew*, 43.

[86] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 556.

[87] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 556.

[88] The case that John continues to reckon himself and Jesus through the matrix of Malachi is bolstered by the

regarding Jesus' identity. As is seen thus far in the scenes from the Baptist's narrative arc, John expects Jesus to arrive in the mold of an eschatological judge,[89] and to this point, Jesus' actions do not line up with those expectations. As Beasley-Murray writes:

> [T]he comprehensibility of his question is clear. John had proclaimed God's impending retribution, the coming of one who would baptize not with water, but with the Spirit of God and with fire, who would cleanse the threshing floor, gather wheat into the barn, and burn chaff with an inextinguishable fire.[90]

Yet, John remains in prison, and as such, the victory of the great eschatological judge seems further away than when John's arc began in Matt 3. How can God's salvation manifest in the absence of judgement, as the wicked continue to mount opposition to God?

John's question affords the narrator of Matthew's Gospel—this time through the words of Jesus—another opportunity to reorient expectations. Jesus answers John's question regarding whether he is "the one who is to come" by referencing multiple texts from Isaiah in describing his activities.[91] Regarding the effect of this sort of composite allusion, Novakovic writes: "Jesus' reply alludes to various Isaianic texts by combining several motifs that appeared in them with the

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fact that he again refers to Jesus as "the coming one" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος, Matt 11:3), discussed above as a potential connection to Mal 3:1.

[89] Yamasaki writes of this scene that "[T]he sentiments that give rise to John's question in 11.3 are already evident long before this point in the narrative." John has expressed unease with Jesus neglecting to execute his role as eschatological judge both at the baptismal scene (Matt 3:13–15) and with his disciples failure to appropriately fast (9:14–17). Yamasaki continues:

> Therefore, John's expression of doubt in 11.3 does not simply arise from what John hears about Jesus at this point in the narrative. Rather, it represents the third instalment of a growing uneasiness in John's mind regarding Jesus' identity, an uneasiness first revealed politely in a deferential question (cf. 3.14), then expressed more seriously in a straightforward question (cf. 9.14), and now put bluntly in a question containing an actual expression of doubt (cf. 11.3) (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 106).

[90] G.R. Beasley–Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 81.

[91] The lists of texts potentially alluded to includes: Isa 26:19; 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1 (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:242; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 424; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 554).

Of note, Jesus does not, at this moment, address the presupposition underlying John's question, namely, if Jesus is "the one who is to come," why is he not acting as eschatological judge. Jesus takes up some expressions of judgement later in the chapter (Matt 11:16–24), but notably these comments are not included in his response to John.

purpose of showing that the promises given in the past are now being fulfilled."[92] And as Davies and Allison suggest, this also "supplies a hermeneutical suggestion," an "invitation to put Jesus' ministry and Isaiah's oracles side by side."[93] In the context of Matthew's narrative, this is indeed the case, with Jesus doing the same things to which the Isaianic allusions refer. Regarding each of the particular claims, France provides the following list: "blind cured, 9:27–31; lame walking, 9:2–8; lepers cleansed, 8:1–14; deaf hearing, 9:32–33;[94] dead raised, 9:18–26. For the good news to the poor, see not only 4:17, 23 but also chapters 5–7 as a whole, and especially the Beatitudes, which begin with the promise of the kingdom of heaven to the 'poor in spirit.'"[95]

Jesus' response to John's inquiry as to whether he is indeed the "coming one" is answered in the affirmative. But in answering the question with scriptural allusions to Isaiah, he demonstrates that while he may not fit John's strongly Malachian expectation, his activities do still fit Old Testament expectations. In other words, Jesus emphasizes that while his ministry to this point has not demonstrated eschatological judgment, it has been characterized by eschatological blessing, the sort of which is expressed in Isaiah.[96] No one prophetic passage fully explicates every aspect of the messianic portrait. It is only when all of them are brought together

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[92] Lidja Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 160–61. In a similar vein, France writes: "The whole theological argument is achieved not by direct quotation of the relevant Isaiah texts, but by an evocative drawing together of motifs of eschatological blessing which anyone familiar with Isaiah's prophecies could hardly fail to recognize" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 424–25).

[93] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:243.

[94] France notes: "Deafness and dumbness are associated and are described by the same term, κωφός" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 424).

[95] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 424. See also: Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 108–9, esp. n15.

[96] So Dennert, who writes: "[T]hese activities literally fulfill those Isaiah stated would be performed at the end of time … Therefore these activities show that the kingdom of God has come (cf. 12:28) and that Jesus is the figure about whom John spoke. While Jesus' activity causes confusion, a closer look at what Jesus has been doing reassures one that Jesus is the figure John expected" (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 203).

To be sure, Malachi is not the only prophetic book that speaks of God's judgment. The argument here, though, is that the Matthean Baptist's demonstrated expectation is particularly Malachian in its contours. See especially the discussion above on Matt 3:1–12.

in Jesus that the fullness of the portrait emerges, and this is something the narrator of the Gospel is helping the reader to see.

Jesus' next words in the text serve as an acknowledgement of his paradoxical advent, one whose unexpected nature manifests in John's misunderstanding. He says: "[B]lessed is the one who is not offended by me" (Matt 11:6). Who is the singular addressee of this beatitude? At a first level, it is John for Jesus is responding to a question from him. However, Yamasaki explains how Jesus' words of blessing reach beyond John:

> At the story level, this statement addresses John's situation; it directs him not to be offended by the nature of the messianic ministry he sees in Jesus, even though it does not meet John's own expectations. This statement, however, also has significance at the discourse level. The subject of this beatitude is indicated by the indefinite ὃς ἐάν ('whoever'). David Howell asserts that 'whoever' statements, though addressing characters in the story, serve also to address the implied reader/narrate. Therefore, the use of ὃς ἐάν in the beatitude of 11.6 indicates that the narrator intends to address this beatitude to the narratee. Support for this contention is found in the fact that there are no signs of uptake by any character in the story, thus indicating that the narrator intends this statement to be for the benefit of the narratee.[97]

With this in mind, Jesus is speaking here to the paradox present in the narrative. He does so not only for John's sake, but also for the sake of the reader who has witnessed the unfolding events. Jesus is "preaching, healing, and driving out demons," and the message of his kingdom involves "[b]eatitudes, parables of the gracious rule of God, prospects of feasting in the kingdom of God."[98] But he has yet to usher in the sort of final judgment that John expects and Malachi seems to indicate.[99] Furthermore, John, the great eschatological Elijah sits in prison. The eschaton has

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[97] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 109–10. Yamasaki refers to: David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study on the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 221. Others who note this beatitude reaching beyond John include: Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 557; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 301–2; Nolland, *Matthew,* 452. Contra France, who emphasizes that "unlike the beatitudes of 5:3–10 and John 20:29, [this beatitude] is expressed in the singular, and in this context it must have reference to John's question" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 425).

[98] Beasley–Murray, *Kingdom of God*, 81.

[99] To be sure, Malachi is not the only Old Testament Scripture that anticipates God's judgement. However, it

come, but in partial, not fully expected fashion. Gibbs summarizes: "Jesus' words invite John to accept in faith the strangest of all paradoxes in the world. The reign of God has broken into history in the person of Jesus, and he is the Coming One. But the power of evil men remains strong, and Christ will not overthrow that evil—yet."[100]

Clarifying John's Identity (Matthew 11:7–15)

After answering John via John's disciples, Jesus turns to the crowds to speak to them regarding John's identity. This shift can be seen by "a change in both audience and in the subject of the discourse in 11:7. As John's disciples depart, Jesus speaks to the crowds (τοῖς ὄχλοις) that seem to be gathered around him and have heard the discussion between Jesus and John's disciples."[101] After asking a few rhetorical questions with vivid language (Matt 11:7–8), Jesus affirms to the crowd that John is a prophet, and in fact even "more than a prophet" (Matt 11:9). Given the citation immediately following this statement, John's status as "more than a prophet" derives from his role in redemptive history; he is the great forerunner and preparatory messenger. Yamasaki asserts that "[t]his citation [in v. 10] of John as fulfilling this prophecy pertaining to the way–preparer of the Messiah[102] does not constitute a new insight for the narratee, for the narrator presents essentially the same citation of John back in ch. 3 (3.3)."[103] While he is correct that both texts speak generally to the same subject, and so highlight John's role as a preparatory

is named here specifically on account of the connections that have been made between Malachi and the Baptist's expectations.

[100] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 557.

[101] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 206.

[102] For discussion over whether Elijah was seen as a forerunner specifically for the Messiah, see the discussion in: Morris M. Faierstein, "Why Do the Scribes Say that Elijah Must Come First?," *JBL* 100 (1981): 75–86; Dale C. Allison Jr, "Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 103 (1984): 256–58; Joseph A. Fitzmeyer "More about Elijah Coming First," *JBL* 104 (June 1985): 295–96.

[103] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 111.

figure, there is a significant distinction between them in their respective Old Testament contexts. In Matt 3:3, John is introduced with a way–preparer text from Isa 40:3, foreshadowing the narrative's ongoing use of Isaianic texts to supplement John's Malachian expectations for the sake of the reader. However, in Matt 11, on the heels of a tapestry of Isaianic allusions (Matt 11:5), Jesus quotes from Mal 3:1 to affirm that in spite of appearances John is indeed the Malachian messenger.

Some have suggested the presence of a composite quote here, with the beginning of Jesus' words alluding to Exod 23:20, and the latter portion to Mal 3:1a.

Exod 23:20 (LXX)	Mal 3:1a (LXX)	Matt 11:10b
Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ἵνα φυλάξῃ σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, ὅπως εἰσαγάγῃ σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἡτοίμασά σοι	ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου, καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου	ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου
Exod 23:20 (MT)	Mal 3:1a (MT)	
הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָךְ לְפָנֶיךָ לִשְׁמָרְךָ בַּדָּרֶךְ וְלַהֲבִיאֲךָ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הֲכִנֹתִי	הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכִי וּפִנָּה־דֶרֶךְ לְפָנָי	

The reason for this claim is that the first nine words in the LXX of Exod 23:20 match the first nine words of Matthew's citation exactly—ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου. The opening to Mal 3:1a is also quite similar to Matthew's reference—ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου—but does not match with exacting precision as Exod 23:20 does.[104] Malachi 3:1a has ἐξαποστέλλω rather than

[104] Without the existence of LXX Exod 23:20, it would be reasonable to assume an allusion to LXX Mal 3:1a alone, but the exact reproduction of the nine words in a row is compelling evidence that Matthew's Gospel indeed alludes to Exod 23:20 in the first part of the quotation.

ἀποστέλλω, describes the messenger surveying "before *my* face" (πρὸ προσώπου μου) rather than "before *your* face" (πρὸ προσώπου σου), and places καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν prior to πρὸ προσώπου μου (cf. the later position of similar phrases ἵνα φυλάξῃ σε ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ and κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου in LXX Exod 23:20 and Matt 11:10b, respectively).

The latter portion of Matthew's citation—ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου—does not exactly align with either LXX Exod 23:20 or LXX Mal 3:1a. It appears to conform more closely to Mal 3:1a, and particularly if it is an independent translation from the Hebrew. Gundry suggests that the relative pronoun ὃς does not properly belong to either text, but rather functions "as a grammatical link between the two OT passages."[105] In this reading, κατασκευάσει represents a proximate translation to the MT's *piel* וּפִנָּה, over and against the LXX's ἐπιβλέψεται, which would be more suitable for a *qal* stem version of the verb.[106] While the LXX never translates the *piel* of פנה with a form of κατασκευάζω, the fact that other Greek versions of Mal 3:1 render with similar verbs (Theodotion—ἑτοιμάσει; Symmachus—ἀποσκευάσει) adds some credibility to the supposition.[107] Also notable is the switch at the end of the clause from the first person "before me" (לְפָנָי) to the second person "your way before you" (τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου). This change brings the latter half of the verse more in line with the second person sense of the former half. The potential motivation behind such a change is discussed below.

There is some evidence that Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1 were brought together elsewhere in Jewish sources. Scholars, in particular, have noted the reference to Mal 3:1 in *Exod. Rab.* 32.9.

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[105] Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 11. So James DeYoung, "The Function of Malachi 3.1 in Matthew 11.10: Kingdom Reality as the Hermeneutic of Jesus," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel,* ed. Craig A. Evans and Williams R. Stenger (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 71.

[106] So Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 11; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 51.

[107] Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 11; Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 51.

On the significance of this, Stendahl writes:

> Certainly both texts are given in ExR. 32, but without any interweaving of the wording. However, Mann has shown how the sermon in the synagogue was based as much upon the *haftaroth* as on the Torah section itself. According to Mann the homiletic literature to Ex. 23_{20} (seder 61 a) shows that the sermon was given on Mal. $3_{1–8} + _{23} +_{24.}$ Such a homiletic tradition, inspired by the prophetic text connected with the Pentateuch, forms a possible background to the adaptation and fusion of the two texts.[108]

This early written evidence may serve to show that this link was already present in a first century Jewish context. As Blomberg notes, however, "the combination is natural enough for anyone familiar with the Scriptures, given the detailed parallelism of language."[109]

With this composite quote acknowledged, what are the implications of Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1 for the Matthean context into which Jesus speaks them? Concerning the former text, as France notes, "the Exodus passage can only with difficulty be applied to the John/Jesus connection."[110] Attempts have been made to suggest potential connections. For example, DeYoung writes: "This could mean that Jesus may have deliberately pointed to himself as the angel sent before Israel in the desert."[111] Others have suggested approaches that are more typological in nature. Osborne offers a parallel: "As God sent the angel to guide his people into Canaan, so Jesus sends John to prepare the entrance into the promised kingdom."[112] Gibbs

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[108] Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 51. The text he refers to is Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue, I: The Palestinian Triennial Cycle: Genesis and Exodus* (Cincinnati: JPS, 1940), 6, 11–15, 479. Others commenting on this early linking of Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1 include: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 428; R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1992), 242–43; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 559; Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 11–12.

[109] Blomberg, "Matthew," 39.

[110] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 428.

[111] DeYoung, "Function of Malachi 3.1," 71.

[112] Osborne, *Matthew,* 420. Similarly, Blomberg writes: "To the extent that Jesus (or Matthew) has Exod. 23:20 in mind, we must speak of a typological use of the Scripture. God's pattern of sending a special messenger to prepare the way for a key event in the salvation history of his people is repeating itself" (Blomberg, "Matthew," 40).

mentions a different possible sense. In Exodus, God's messenger leads Israel through the wilderness and across the River Jordan. Similarly, John prepares the way for Jesus, who is typologically identified as "Israel reduced to one," and who enters the land via the water of his baptism in the River Jordan.[113]

With these ideas noted, it seems probable that the primary meaning to be evoked from the citation comes from Mal 3:1a. There are at least two reasons for this. First, as was mentioned, there is evidence that Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1 were brought together previously, and in that combining, there was an emphasis on the Malachian text.[114] Second, in the near Matthean context, Jesus seemingly alludes to Mal 3:23–24 [LXX—3:22–23 / Eng. 4:4–6]: "And if you are willing to accept it he is Elijah who is to come" (Matt 11:14), which would work in concert with an allusion to Mal 3:1.

The function of Mal 3:1a in the Matthean context is clear enough. John is Elijah; he is the preparatory messenger described in Mal 3:1a. There remains to consider, however, the matter of the alteration from the first person "before *me*" (לְפָנָי) in MT Mal 3:1a to the second person "*your* way before *you*" (τὴν ὁδόν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου) in Matt 11:10. The change seems to be Christologically motivated, to apply the text to Jesus; John as Elijah is preparing the way before *him*. Gibbs writes:

> We should not miss the Christological implications when Jesus' citation of Scripture here changes "a way before *my* [God's, Yahweh's] face" (Mal 3:1a) to "*your* way

[113] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 564–65. To be sure, Gibbs qualifies this idea in a footnote:

> Such a connection [to Exodus 23:20] would be subtle and would appeal not simply to the near context, but to more distant passages in the Gospel that identify Jesus with Israel (e.g., Mt 2:6, 15, 20–21; 20:6; 15:24, 31; 19:28; 27:42). It seems unlikely, however, that Matthew intends for his hearers to find significant meaning from any allusion to Ex 23:20 (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 565 n20).

[114] France will go so far as to assert: "There is evidence that the two passages had already been connected in Jewish interpretation, so that this conflated form of words had become the standard form in which Mal 3:1 would be remembered and quoted" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 428). See further: France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, 242–43. Cf. Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 209–10 n127; DeYoung, "Function of Malachi 3.1," 71.

> before *your* [Jesus'] face" (Mt 11:10). The prophecy about the preparation of the way of God, who will come to renew and refine Israel, is being fulfilled in Jesus, who is "the Coming One" (Mt 11:3) and who is "God is with us" (1:23).[115]

A similar interpretive move occurs in Matt 3:3 with the citation of Isa 40:3. In Isaiah's context, the voice cries out, "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD (MT—יהוה/ LXX—κυρίου); make straight in the desert a highway for our God," specifically preparing the way for Yahweh. In Matt 3, however, John is preparing the way for Jesus (cf. Matt 3:11–12), and after John's preparatory work in the beginning of the chapter, Jesus does in fact arrive in Matt 3:13–17.

Highlighted by the ἀμὴν at the beginning of the verse,[116] Jesus further emphasizes John's significance and his place in redemptive history by asserting that "among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt 11:11). In the words of Hagner, "John is the climax of the old order: a prophet like those of the past but more than a prophet (cf. v 9). He is the one in whom the OT expectation has finally been distilled into one final, definitive arrow pointing to the presence of the Messiah."[117] In spite of this elevated status, however, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater. This does not involve anything inherent to John personally, but rather has to do

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[115] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 565. So Hagner, who writes: "The shift in pronouns from μου, 'me,' to σου, 'you,' is undoubtedly the result of the application of the passage to Jesus (the μου referred to God, the σου to the coming of God in Jesus). The repeated σου, 'your,' thus refers here to Jesus. John is accordingly identified as the one who prepares the way, identified later in Mal. 4:5 as Elijah, as also the present pericope (v 14; cf. 17:12)" (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 305).

[116] On the significance of the dual introductory formula—Ἀμὴν and λέγω ὑμῖν, yielding "Truly I say to you"—Yamasaki writes:

> Like the basic formula, 'I say to you', this one also signals that the following statement is made with the authority of a prophetic spokesperson of God. However, the addition of the word 'truly' enhances the solemnity of the statement; as David Hill asserts, 'In the Gospels…and in every strand of Gospel tradition, *amen* is used, without exception, to strengthen a person's own words'. Therefore, while a statement introduced by 'truly I say to you' carries even more weight" (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 112).

The work Yamasaki cites is: David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 64. Cf. Davies and Allison, who describe the phrases as being functionally equivalent (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:490).

[117] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 305.

with his place in redemptive history. He has come to prepare the way for Jesus, who is now ushering in the kingdom, and it seems clear that John has an awareness that his role is preparatory for something greater that is to come. In his preaching, John calls for repentance in light of the fact that the kingdom has drawn near (ἤγγικεν) (Matt 3:2). Furthermore, he emphasizes that the one coming after him is greater than he is (Matt 3:11–12).[118] John has, in Gibbs' words, "one foot in the old era even as it concludes,"[119] and he has led the way for Jesus who ushers in the kingdom. This is not to exclude John from the kingdom's manifestation. Rather, it is emphasizing the greatness of the kingdom of heaven, that with its advent even the "least" is greater than this greatest man.

In v. 12, Jesus makes a key explanatory comment. If John is indeed Elijah, as prophesied by Malachi, how is it that he sits in prison? Jesus' answer: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force." The difficulty in understanding this verse is summarized by various commentators. For example, Luz describes "[t]he original meaning of the 'violence saying'" as "one of the greatest riddles of the exegesis of the synoptics."[120] Davies and Allison assert that it is "without a doubt, one of the NT's great conundrums."[121] Dennert writes that "Matthew 11:12 has proven to be one of the most difficult verses in Matthew and perhaps all of the New Testament."[122] In spite of the difficulty, the meaning of this verse will prove critical for understanding this passage as a whole.

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[118] Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 212.

[119] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 566.

[120] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary*, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 140.

[121] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:254.

[122] Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 213. So much has been written on this text, that as Dennert notes, "A whole monograph is devoted to the interpretation history of this verse: P.S. Cameron, *Violence and the Kingdom: The Interpretation of Matthew 11.12* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1988)" (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 213). For a shorter treatment on the history of interpretation of Matt 11:12, see Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 569–71; Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 140–44.

The verse can be broken into two parts: v. 12a (ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται) and v. 12b (καὶ βιασταὶ ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν). Each part of the verse can be understood with a positive or negative connotation. The key to v. 12a is whether the verb βιάζομαι is read as middle–intransitive or passive in meaning. If the former, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται refers to the kingdom of heaven forcefully advancing (middle–intransitive, e.g. NIV—positive). If the latter, it refers to the kingdom of heaven suffering violence (passive, e.g. ESV, NASB—negative). Regarding v. 12b, the issue is whether ἁρπάζουσιν is best understood as a laudable "seizing" of the kingdom of heaven (positive, cf. NIV), or whether it ought to be understood as an act of aggression against it (negative, e.g. ESV, NASV). Related to this, then, is the identity of the βιασταὶ.

The possibility of reading each half of the verse either positively or negatively leads to four possible broad interpretive categories (positive/positive, positive/negative, negative/positive, negative/negative).[123] The first option features the kingdom of heaven breaking in with great strength (middle–intransitive) and followers of Jesus (βιασταὶ) taking hold of it (ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν). The second option sees the kingdom of heaven likewise breaking in (middle–intransitive), and yet violent men (βιασταὶ) still do it damage (ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν). With the third option, the kingdom of heaven has violence inflicted upon it (passive), yet disciples (βιασταὶ) overcome to take hold of the kingdom (ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν). The fourth option holds that, again, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence (passive), but this time the βιασταὶ are violent individuals who seize the kingdom of heaven (ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν).

With these options in mind, it is the fourth—that both 12a and 12b be understood

[123] For similar approaches to categorizing interpretations for Matt 11:12, see e.g. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 306–7; Osborne, *Matthew,* 421–22.

negatively—that is most likely for two primary reasons. First, it best fits with the lexical data for three key words in the text—βιάζεται, βιασταὶ, and ἁρπάζουσιν. The word βιάζομαι is only used twice in the New Testament, here and in Luke 16:16, a similar text found in a different context. Of the term, Gibbs summarizes: "[T]his verb most often denotes a forceful action in a negative sense."[124] Per Luz, βιάζομαι is most commonly in "the middle with the active meaning ('to use force, to do violence, to overwhelm'). The corresponding passive is also frequently documented."[125] Could it then be understood with the middle–intransitive sense here? As noted above, that would require a positive sense of the verb, with the kingdom of heaven as its subject. On this possibility, Schrenk writes:

> At the same time, the καὶ βιασταὶ ἁρπάζουσιν αὐτήν causes difficulty, since it is construed most naturally as an interpretation of the first part of the statement, βιασταὶ agreeing with βιάζεται. Since the reference (→ βιαστής) is obviously to a powerful hostile action, it seems better to seek an explanation which will better harmonise the two parts of the saying.[126]

[124] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 561.

[125] Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 140.

[126] Gottlob Schrenk, "βιάζομαι, βιαστὴς," in *TDNT,* 1: 610–11. Contra Carson who argues for the presence of an antanclasis, which he describes as "a figure of speech in which the same word is repeated in a different or even contradictory sense (Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 267). Here it would be a cognate word used, rather than a repetition of the exact form. For Carson, this is the preferable interpretation in context, as it allows for a continuation of the thought from v. 11—i.e. John is great, those coming after him are greater, and now the kingdom is forcefully advancing—while still noting that the kingdom "has not swept all opposition away, as John expected" (Carson, *Matthew 1–12,* 267). Gibbs, however, offers two arguments to the contrary. First, the use of καὶ functions better as a conjunction joining the clauses together than setting them in contrast with one another. Second, with a passive voice relationship between ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν and βιάζεται, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν becomes the recipient of the verbal action in both clauses. Furthermore, "from the verb in 11:12a, βιάζεται, 'be violently attacked,' the cognate noun βιασταί, 'violent men,' becomes the subject of the active voice verb in 11:12b, ἁρπάζουσιν, 'seize, snatch away.'" For Gibbs, this leads to a chiastic structure of sorts, which he lays out as follows:

"X is being Y–ed,

and Y–people are Z–ing X." (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 562).

Though the precise rendering for ἁρπάζουσιν is difficult,[127] Reid suggests that "'[p]lunder' or 'lay waste' is the best meaning for ἁρπάζω with βιάζομαι and βιαστής, and also coheres with Matthew's use of the verb in 12:29 and 13:19."[128]

Second, this understanding of the verse's meaning makes best sense within the narrative context. John is in prison (v. 2), making him a victim of the violence communicated by the verb βιάζεται. Schrenk writes: "The strongly negative tone of the utterance is striking. It is partly explained, however, by the first passage in this whole series of sayings concerning John the Baptist; for we are told at the outset that John as a βιαζόμενος is in the prison of the βιαστής, and this dominates the whole section."[129] In addition, immediately following this section Jesus further characterizes this hostile opposition with a parable (Matt 11:16–19) and a declaration of woes (Matt 11:20–24).[130]

With this understanding, v. 12 serves as an opportunity for the Matthean Jesus to make sense of the events in the narrative. Though he serves as the climax of the old order, the "days of John the Baptist" also coincide with the advent of the kingdom of heaven.[131] Yet John,

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[127] See: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 430–31.

[128] Barbara E. Reid "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," *CBQ* 66, no. 2 (April 2004): 240. Matt 12:29 describes the plundering (ἁρπάσαι) of goods from the strong man's house after he has been bound. The verb occurs in Matt 13:19 in the context of The Parable of the Sower. In Jesus' interpretation of the seed that falls along the path, he explains: "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away (ἁρπάζει) what has been sown in his heart."

[129] Schrenk, "βιάζομαι, βιαστὴς," 1:612.

[130] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 213; France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 429–30.

[131] There is some potential for contradiction here, as v. 11 seems to set John in a different era than Jesus and the kingdom. Davies and Allison, however, offer the following points of argument to the end of John rightly belonging to the kingdom: (1) In Matthew, ἀπὸ is "much more often than not" inclusive, (2) If the purpose were exclusionary, one would expect a reference to a *point* in time rather than a *span* of time (i.e. "the days of John"), (3) Since John and Jesus were alive at the same time, the time of the kingdom must have included also "the days of John," (4) With the activities of Jesus and John set in parallel, it is most likely that thy belong to the same period of salvation history, (5) John's designation as "more than a prophet" (Matt 11:9) "hints at his inclusion in a new period, the period after the law and the prophets" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2.253–54). For a similar understanding of John's place in the kingdom, see: Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* 566–68; Reid, "Violent Endings," 239–40;

eschatological Elijah sits in prison and the one coming after him faces active opposition. Hence, the explanatory import of Jesus' words in v. 12. Hagner writes: "Given the obvious greatness of the kingdom, the present verse is bound to come as a shock. For all its greatness, the kingdom suffers violence and violent men plunder it. The kingdom involves suffering. In the same way, Matthew continues, so must the Son of Man suffer."[132]

It is this paradox, in fact, that leads to Jesus' affirmation of John's identity in vv. 13–15. He declares that in spite of present appearances John is indeed Elijah, alluding to Mal 3:23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5] and connecting to his earlier citation of Mal 3:1 in Matt 11:10. This also explains the qualifying phrases within which Jesus couches his assertion about John. Before, he says "if you are willing to accept it" (v. 14a) and after he says: "whoever has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 15). Both of these statements from Jesus represent a tacit acknowledgment that the manner in which he and John have arrived on the scene is unexpected. As Gibbs writes:

> [Jesus] says it because in his wisdom, God has come to reign in a way that will not look right to normal human perception. Is there power in the reign of God in Jesus? Yes—but it is power for those in need who believe and repent, and not power to overthrow violent men. They will be overthrown, but not yet. Is there glory in the reign of God in Jesus? Yes—but it is a glory that will be shown most importantly in what appears to be shame and defeat, for John himself, and more importantly for Jesus on the cross.[133]

In spite of this allowance, there remains accountability for those that do not receive John and Jesus. Subsequent to Jesus' teaching on John, he addresses "this generation" (τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην) (v. 16), those who have not rightly responded to himself and the Baptist. What follows in the text is a parable characterizing the response of "this generation" (vv. 16–19), and then concrete statements of judgement for cities that have rejected Jesus (vv. 20–24).

Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 117.

[132] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13,* 307.

[133] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* 568.

Unbelieving Response of "This Generation" (Matthew 11:16–24)

The parable begins with a rhetorical question seeking an apt comparison for "this generation," a phrase heard here for the first time and which will reappear in Matt 12:41, 42; 23:36; 24:34. Nolland describes the designation of "this generation" as follows: "By the phrase Jesus means his own contemporaries as the generation in whom the eschatological events, beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, are being played out."[134] The parable then describes a group of children sitting in the marketplaces who call to another group of children: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn" (Matt 11:17). The key interpretive question in understanding the parable is whether "this generation" is represented by the children calling out or the children refusing to dance/mourn. While there are various understandings of the parable's meaning, [135] it seems most likely that the children calling out are "this generation," and those they call to are intended to represent John and Jesus, respectively.

There are three reasons for this reading of the parable, the first two are offered by Gibbs,[136] with the third from Davies and Allison.[137] First, there are three uses of the word λέγουσιν in the passage. The first instance introduces the quote from the children who are calling out to others

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[134] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 460. He goes on to note that "As it is quickly evident here, 'this generation' is generally viewed as not experiencing this unfolding in a positive manner."

[135] Luz groups the modes of interpretation into three different categories: (1) "This generation" is the group of children addressed in v. 17. They respond neither to the invitation to dance (Jesus), nor the call to mourn (John). (2) "This generation" is represented by the children who are calling out in v. 17. John and Jesus, then, are the children who reject the invitations to dance and mourn, respectively. (3) "This generation" is not compared with one group of children or the other, but with the whole thing. The point is with the general capriciousness of the children—"Like children at play you do not know what you really want! You want *everything*, and you cannot agree on anything. Beneath the surface it may be: Your contradictions reveal that in the final analysis you do not want at all!" (Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 146–48). After discussing each in turn, Luz's preference is for the third understanding. However, per the argumentation on pp. 89–91 of the dissertation, the preference here is for the second.

[136] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 577–78.

[137] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:262.

(v. 17). The next two instances, however, introduce words from "this generation," "the people who 'say' (λέγουσιν) the condemning and unbelieving caricatures about John ('he has a demon') and Jesus ('the man [is] a glutton and a drunkard…'). It is more likely that the people who are 'saying' the comparison (11:16–17) are the same as those who are 'saying' in the explanation (11:18–19)."[138] Second, there appear to be parallel sequences present in the text. The children first call out against the one who does not dance in response to the flute (v. 17a). This would line up well if this image is intended to invoke John, who came "neither eating nor drinking" as he is the first mentioned in the subsequent explanation (v. 18). Then the second target for the children, the one who does not mourn (v. 17b), would correspond to Jesus, the glutton and drunkard (v. 19).[139] Third, a common alternative interpretation of the parable is to suggest that Jesus and John are the ones calling out—Jesus with the flute and John singing a dirge. "This generation," then, would be the children who fail to respond to either's call. However, if this were correct, it would reverse the order of events present in the narrative. For as Davies and Allison observe, "John made his appeal before Jesus appeared on the scene,"[140] whereas the figure representing Jesus in

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[138] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 578. Davies and Allison make a similar observation about the use of λὲγω: "Those who speak (λέγουσιν) their complaint in v. 17 (the children) are like those who speak (λέγουσιν) their complaint in vv. 18 and 19 ('He has a demon', 'Behold, a glutton …')" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:262). Others who align "this generation" with the children who call out in the marketplace include: Carson, *Matthew 1–12,* 270; Simon J. Gathercole, "The Justification of Wisdom (Matt 11.19b/Luke 7.35)," *NTS* 49, no. 4 (October 2003): 479–480; Keener, *Matthew,* 341.

[139] Cf. Osborne, who suggests the possibility of a "deliberate chiasm in the order of vv. 17–19a." His proposed structure is as follows:

A Jesus inviting to a wedding (v. 17a)

B John preaching a message of judgment (funeral, v. 17b)

B' the people rejecting John's ascetic ministry (v. 18)

A' the people rejecting Jesus' joyous kingdom ministry (Osborne, *Matthew,* 426).

Osborne's schema offers an alternate explanation of the data, but for the reasons discussed on pp. 89–91 of the dissertation, it is not the preferred reading here.

[140] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:262. With this point, Davies and Allison are sure to note that "[t]he force of this observation is somewhat lessened by the possibility that Jesus was quoting a traditional rhyme."

the parable appears first.[141]

With this interpretation in mind, the parable represents the rejection of John and Jesus on account of the fact that neither fit the preferred vision of "this generation." The fashion of each's advent was different in tone—John an ascetic prophet, a voice in the wilderness, and Jesus the joyous bridegroom, sharing the blessings of the kingdom. Yet "this generation" is dissatisfied with both. Gibbs summarizes: "They deem John's ministry too harsh; many in this generation, particularly among the religious leaders, refuse John's call to mourn in repentance (3:7–12). On the other hand, in their view, the new wineskins of Jesus' ministry are too 'liberal' and unabashedly celebratory—and welcome the wrong kinds of people!"[142] Instead, they call for John to dance, and he does not do it. They call for Jesus to mourn, and he does not do it.

Following this, Jesus turns from parabolic description of "this generation's" rejection of him and John to concrete expressions of judgment on account of it. In fact, it is here in the narrative, as Yamasaki suggests, that the reader encounters "Jesus' first declaration of judgment up to this point."[143] As John earlier anticipated, Jesus now "begins to express his identity as a judge, first introduced in 3.11–12 and kept alive in 9.14–15 and 11.2–6 by the questions posed to Jesus by John and John's disciples."[144] Even his expressions of judgment, however, arrive in

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[141] It is tempting to add a fourth argument, namely that "this generation" (τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην) has the appearance of a likely antecedent for ὁμοία ἐστὶν παιδίοις. Jeremias, however, asserts that this is a common way of introducing a parable and that it ought to be understood as introducing the parable's theme generally rather than making a direct comparison with a specific element of the parable (Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* [New York: Scribner's Sons, 1972], 101–2). So Nolland, who adds specific examples to prove the point: "[I]n Mt. 13:45 the kingdom of heaven is not like a merchant, but rather the comparison focuses on the pearl; in 25:21 the likeness is not with the ten virgins but with the wedding" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 461 n41).

[142] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 578.

[143] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 127. Yamasaki notes further that while Jesus expressed criticism of his opponents earlier in the narrative (e.g. Matt 5:20; 8:12; 10:14–15), "this is his first pronouncement of woes. Further, instead of calling for repentance as he did earlier in his ministry (4.17), Jesus clearly declares the fate of those who have opposed him and rejected him, a fate involving judgement (11.22, 24)" (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*, 127).

[144] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 127.

unexpected fashion, being only partial in nature. While Jesus declares "Woe!" to particular cities for lack of repentance in spite of mighty works done in them, the manifestation of judgment is twice cast into the future, delayed until a later "day of judgment" (Matt 11:22, 24). The only ones, in fact, who will receive the message are the "little children" to whom the Father has revealed "these things" (Matt 11:25).

The introductory phrase "Then he began to denounce…" (Τότε ἤρξατο ὀνειδίζειν), along with the entire first sentence, joins this passage with what comes immediately before it, and also serves as summary of what Jesus says in Matt 11:20–24.[145] In terms of structure, there are two oracles of judgement, which parallel one another formally. They both begin with an address of sorts (vv. 21a, 23a), followed by an indictment or charge (vv. 21a, 23b), and then a verdict (vv. 22, 24).[146]

The introductory statement in v. 20 describes the cities that Jesus denounces as "cities where most of his mighty works (δυνάμεις) had been done." As Davies and Allison note, the word δυνάμεις, here and from the mouth of Jesus in v. 21, "recalls the 'deeds' of 11.2 and 19 and refers to a sensational event beyond normal human abilities, an event which has religious meaning, and therefore should garner a religious response."[147] It apparently does not, for the cities that witnessed such δυνάμεις "did not repent" (v. 20). Matthew 5–9 serves as something of a picture of Jesus' Galilean ministry, with Matt 5–7 (the Sermon on the Mount) functioning to demonstrate his teaching and Matt 8–9 containing a series of healings and other miraculous activities. As Hagner writes, "[a] few signs of unbelief and rejection are given as early as 9:3, 11,

[145] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 313; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 466; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 299.

[146] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:265; Turner, *Matthew*, 298–99.

[147] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:266.

and 34 (cf. 10:25; 11:19), but now the extent of the rejection of Jesus comes into full light."[148]

The desired outcome of repentance (cf. vv. 20, 21) connects back to the last time the verb μετανοέω occurs in the Gospel, in a summary of Jesus' preaching: "Repent (μετανοεῖτε), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). In fact, the only other occurrence of μετανοέω to this point in the Gospel is in the identical summary of John's preaching in Matt 3:2.[149] As such, repentance is the desired response to the respective ministries of John and Jesus. Yet apparently, not even the manifestation of the kingdom through Jesus' δυνάμεις elicited this response in these cities.

Jesus begins the first judgement oracle with a declaration of "Woe" (οὐαί) to each of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Due to the context, the implication of the "Woe" is almost certainly one of judgement, rather than any sort of pity or sorrow.[150] The Hebrew equivalent is common in the Old Testament,[151] and functions often in a sort of prophetic woe oracle. Of what is typical in an Old Testament context, Clements writes: "It is an intense outburst of invective directed against wrongdoers, conveying a note of threat, which is then more fully spelled out in the pronouncement that follows."[152] This particular oracle, leveled against Chorazin and Bethsaida, would seem to fit the mold.

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[148] Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 313. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 152.

[149] Matthew's Gospel will employ the verb once more, in Matt 12:41: "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented (μετενόησαν) at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." The context of this usage is similar to the context of Matt 11:21. In both instances, contemporaries of Jesus are compared to pagan cites/people from the Old Testament (Tyre and Sidon, Matt 11:22 / the men of Nineveh, Matt 12:42).

[150] Contra Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 191; Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 273.

[151] As examples, Osborne lists Isa 5:8, 11, 18–22; Ezek 16:23, 24:6; Amos 5:18; 6:1, 4: Hab 2:6–19 (Osborne, *Matthew*, 432). France notes that the traditional prophetic formula "Woe to you" is found "twenty–two times in Isaiah alone" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 438).

[152] Ronald E. Clements, "Woe," *ABD*, 6:945. Clements offers Isa 5:8 as an example of a typical prophetic woe oracle.

In this midst of the first oracle, Jesus declares to the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida that if the δυνάμεις they witnessed were done in Tyre and Sidon, "they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (v. 21). In the Old Testament, Tyre and Sidon are at times the object of judgement oracles, for example in Isa 23[153] and Ezek 26–28, where they are targets of the Lord's retribution as a result of their arrogance and pride.[154] From this point forward, as Davies and Allison note, "it evidently became common for the two cities, which were thought of as arrogant centers of wealth, to be spoken of together—like Sodom and Gomorrah—, and sometimes in warnings of judgement (cf. Jer 25.22; 27.3; 47.4; Joel 3.4; Zech 9.1–4; 1 Macc 5.15; Jud 2.28)."[155] In light of this, it is striking that Tyre and Sidon receive the kinder evaluation when compared with Chorazin and Bethsaida.

As a result, Jesus declares that "it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for Tyre and Sidon" than for Chorazin and Bethsaida (v. 22). He says something similar about the day of judgement in v. 24 after comparing Capernaum to Sodom. This declaration of judgement, though real, is not immediately realized. It is forward looking in nature, an eschatological judgement that has not yet arrived with the present in–breaking of the eschaton.

In the second judgement oracle, Jesus addresses Capernaum by saying "And you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades" (v. 23a). This appears to be an allusion to Isa 14:13–15. The first phrase from Jesus, "will you be exalted to heaven?" (μὴ ἕως οὐρανοῦ ὑψωθήσῃ;) is similar to a phrase in the LXX of Isa 14:13—"I will ascend to heaven" (Εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναβήσομαι), though verbal parallels here are minimal. The only direct connection is differing forms of the word οὐρανός. The strength of the argument for

[153] Isaiah 23 focuses more on Tyre, though Sidon is addressed in vv. 2–5.

[154] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:267; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 438; Osborne, *Matthew*, 433.

[155] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:267.

the allusion, though, comes from the latter phrase from Jesus, "You will be brought down to Hades" (ἕως ᾅδου καταβήσῃ). For here, there is a close parallel with a phrase from the LXX of Isa 14:15—εἰς ᾅδην καταβήσῃ—with the verb form specifically being identical. That the clear connection is with Isa 14:15 makes some sense, for it is there that the allusion's function likely lies.

In its original context, Isa 14:13–15 speaks poetically of the king of Babylon (cf. Isa 14:3). In arrogance and pride, he seeks to greatly exalt himself, to make himself "like the most high" (Isa 14:14). Instead, he will be brought low (Isa 14:15) and become an object of humiliation (Isa 14:15–16). Though some have made the case for Capernaum paralleling both the king of Babylon's exaltation and humiliation,[156] the emphasis seems to be especially on the latter. As France explains: "The example of the king of Babylon is apparently being used not because of any specific equivalence, but as a proverbial example of pride going before a fall, the pride in this case being Capernaum's failure to recognize any need to respond to Jesus' call to repentance."[157]

In the indictment and verdict for Capernaum, Jesus adds to the Old Testament imagery by alluding to Sodom. In similar fashion to the way that Tyre and Sidon were previously evoked,

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[156] Davies and Allison summarize:

> The commentators have discussed at some length the meaning of 'would you be exalted unto heaven?' Most have thought of Jesus' presence: he exalted Capernaum by residing there. … Others have referred the expression to the city's geographical situation, to its prosperity, or to its pride. Of the various proposals, the last has the most to commend it, for pride is the subject in Isa 14.13. Yet even this may read to much into the text. The phrase under discussion may be wholly rhetorical; that is hypothetical, serving simply to introduce her abasement: 'You shall be brought down to Hades.' (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:268–269).

[157] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 439. So Nolland, who writes: "The various speculations about what the basis for Capernaum's price are misplaced: the concern is rhetorical; the optimistic expectations of Capernaum are only a foil for the coming disaster which Jesus announces" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 468). See also: Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 81.

Jesus asserts that had Sodom witnessed his δυνάμεις, it would have remained, and as such, it will be more tolerable on the day of judgement for Sodom than for Capernaum (vv. 23b–24). Genesis 19 tells of the wickedness of Sodom (along with Gomorrah), and God's destruction of that city on account of that wickedness. As a result, Sodom continues to serve as a paradigmatic example of human wickedness and/or the resulting destruction that comes from it (e.g. Deut 29:23; 32:32; Isa 1:9–10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lam 4:6; Ezek 16:46–57; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9).[158] This, then, makes for a startling comparison for Capernaum.[159]

The Father's Revelation of the Son (Matthew 11:25–30)

In contrast to the rejection of these Galilean cities, Jesus moves to speak about who it is that will receive him, and how that reception comes about in Matt 11:25–30. In terms of the passage's structure, Gibbs suggests that the passage is best divided into two parts, vv. 25–26 and vv. 27–30. He offers at least two reasons for this demarcation. First, the twofold division corresponds with the two addressees of Jesus' words. In vv. 25–26, he is speaking to the Father, "Lord of heaven and earth," and in vv. 27–30, he appears to be addressing the crowds in attendance. Second, the two parts of the passage relate to the preceding and following context, respectively. In the preceding context, Matt 11:16–24, Jesus has spoken to the issue of those who reject his (and John's) ministry. Matthew 11:25–26, then, interacts with the question of how this has happened. In the following context, Matt 12:1–14, Jesus interacts with the Pharisees in a

[158] So Wright, who asserts that Sodom "stands in Scripture as a proverbial prototype of human wickedness and of the judgment of God that ultimately falls upon evildoers" (Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006], 359). For Wright's survey of biblical texts, see pp. 359–60.

[159] Davies and Allison write: "In the first century Sodom was no longer a city. Tyre and Sidon, on the other hand, although they had in the past been sacked and burned to the ground, were still inhabited (cf. Acts 12.20; 21.3). One wonders, therefore, whether 11.20–4 does not intentionally bring together the living wicked and the wicked dead" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:269).

narrative concerning the Sabbath. This fits rather well with Matt 11:27–30, in which Jesus offers rest to those "who labor and are heavy laden" (v. 28).[160]

The passage begins with the introductory phrase "At that time Jesus declared" (Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν). Both parts of the clause—Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ and the verbal phrase beginning with ἀποκριθεὶς —indicate a link between what Jesus is about to say, and what he has just said.[161] Regarding the latter, ἀποκριθεὶς need not indicate a connection or an 'answering,'[162] but here the thematic connection between vv. 1–24 and vv. 25–30 leads to reading it as a response of sorts.[163]

In particular, this passage addresses the question of why so many within Israel, and in particular in the Galilean towns mentioned, have rejected Jesus (and John). Gibbs summarizes:

> [Jesus'] ministry has gone out to Israel—and Israel is rejecting his ministry! The Messiah himself has come, and although some have responded to his call and become disciples, many have turned away from both his ministry and that of John, the voice who prepared the way. These questions naturally arise: Has something gone wrong? Who is in charge here? Why is God not at work?[164]

[160] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 584. Contra Davies and Allison, who suggest a tripartite structure for vv. 25–30. They describe what they see as three closely related strophes: "The first strophe is an exultant thanksgiving which offers praise for the revelation that God has hidden form the wise and made known to 'babes' (vv. 25–6). This is followed by a christological declaration: the revealed *gnosis* resides in Jesus (v. 27). The passage then ends with an invitation … (vv. 28–30)" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:271–72). The reasons for instead seeing a bipartite structure instead are given on p. 96–97 of the dissertation, primary among them the change of addressee that begins in v. 27 and continues through vv. 28–30.

[161] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 439 n1; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 470; Osborne, *Matthew*.

[162] So Davies and Allison, who write: "ἀποκρίνομαι usually means 'answer', 'reply'. That cannot be so here. Jesus is not answering, nor … is he exactly reacting to what has preceded." (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:273). Cf. Wallace's category of "Redundant (a.k.a. Pleonastic)" participle (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 649–50).

[163] So Hagner, who sees ἀποκριθεὶς as indicating a response to the "unbelief of the Galileans" (Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 316, 318). So also Osborne, *Matthew*, 438.

[164] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 585.

The response, as will be rolled out in the coming verses, is that God has not failed, the kingdom has not been thwarted. Rather, right reception of Jesus depends upon the revelatory actions of the Father (v. 25) and the Son (v. 27).

In a prayer of thanksgiving, Jesus declares that "these things" (ταῦτα) have been hidden from the wise and understanding and revealed to little children. Nolland comments that "[t]he imprecise 'these things' is best taken as pointing to the significance of what in the purposes of God is happening in and through the ministry of Jesus (and of John the Baptist)."[165] This fits, as it describes well what has seemingly been hidden from those characterized as rejecting John and Jesus in vv. 16–24. Rather, "these things" are revealed to "little children" (νηπίοις). Who are these "little children," and how to they contrast with "the wise and understanding"?

The descriptors "wise" (σοφῶν) and "understanding" (συνετῶν) do not inherently carry with them a negative connotation. In this context, however, especially as it is being contrasted with "little children," to be "wise and understanding" likely conveys that these people understand themselves to be self–sufficient, those who are "wise and understanding" in their own eyes.[166] There is a possible allusion to Isa 29:14 here, which would support this reading. Isaiah 29:1–14 is an oracle against Jerusalem in particular. In v. 14, the Lord promises: "Therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden." The LXX of Isa 29:14 employs the same substantivized adjectives used in Matt 11:25—"the wisdom *of the wise*" (τὴν σοφίαν τῶν σοφῶν) and "the understanding *of the understanding*" (τὴν σύνεσιν

[165] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 470. For similar descriptions of the meaning of "these things" in v. 25, see: Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 585–86; Osborne, *Matthew*, 438.

[166] So Carson, *Matthew 1–12*, 275; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 444; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 586.

τῶν συνετῶν).[167] Here, as in Matt 11:25, the wisdom and understanding of men is contrasted with that which is given from God—"these things" which are "revealed" in Matt 11:25, and "wonderful things" and "wonder upon wonder" in Isa 29:14.

Those to whom "these things" are revealed are "little children" (νηπίοις). By way of comparison, these "little children" are those who are aware of their inherent need and dependence. France writes:

> [T]he wisdom which [Jesus] has just celebrated in 11:19 and whose tones he will adopt in this pericope is not that of human cleverness but of divine revelation. Even the best of human insight which relies on its own resources cannot penetrate the divine wisdom; it is "hidden" from it. By contrast, "little children," precisely because they do not rely on their own resources, are open to receiving the revelation.[168]

The "little children" described here are similar to those Jesus speaks of in Matt 18:1–5. Furthermore, the other time the word νήπιος is used in Matthew's Gospel it is in a quotation of Ps 8:2 in Matt 21:16. In that context, a similar contrast is pictured. While Jesus is healing in the temple, the children are shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the chief priests and teachers of the law become indignant (Matt 23:15). After asking Jesus about whether he hears it, he responds: "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants (νηπίων) and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" (Matt 23:16).

Why is it that God works in this way, hiding things from the wise and understanding and revealing them to little children? The answer Jesus gives is simply, "yes, Father, for such was your gracious will" (Matt 11:26).

At this point, Jesus switches from his second person address to the Father to describing the Father in the third person (v. 27) to the crowds in attendance (cf. 11:7). His speech from this

[167] Furthermore, the verb κρύπτω is used in both LXX Isa 29:14 and Matt 11:25.

[168] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 444.

point will continue to be addressed to those same crowds as he offers the invitation of vv. 28–30. In v. 27, Jesus speaks of the reciprocal personal knowing shared between the Father and the Son, and goes on to assert that the Son also has the prerogative to reveal. And yet, lest the reader assume by this that Jesus only desires that some hear and respond to his message, in the very next verse, Jesus issues an invitation that is all inclusive. As Gibbs writes: "Jesus' words in 11:28–30 jerk Matthew's readers away from the precipice of such a one-sided understanding of this passage. They restore the saving paradox of the God who alone brings *some* people to faith through the message that *all* are invited to believe!"[169]

Jesus' invitation to "all who labor and are heavy laden" may contain an allusion to Jer 6:16. Nolland summarizes well both the formal connection and the function of such a connection when he writes: "Matthew has a text that agrees with the LXX in verb form and in the use of the plural for ψυχαῖς ('selves'), but with the MT for 'rest' (the LXX has ἁγνισμὸν ['sanctification']).[170] The value to Matthew of the link with Je. 6:16 is that it connects the present offer of peace with God's offer of peace which, when rejected, led to the Exile."[171] In addition to this primary function for the allusion to Jer 6:16, France makes the observation that "Jesus now issues the same promise under his own authority," which was in Jeremiah issued by Yahweh. In so doing, the Matthean Jesus assumes the authority belonging to Yahweh. This sort of thing, though, is consistent with the high Christology expressed in v. 27.

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[169] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 589 (emphasis original).

[170] Contra France, who suggests that "'You will find rest for your souls' echoes the Hebrew text of Jer 6:16 (LXX has 'purification' instead of 'rest')" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 450). With the exception of the noun ἀνάπαυσιν instead of ἁγνισμὸν, the version of Matt 11:29 actually matches the LXX exactly. While the MT does have מַרְגוֹעַ ("rest"), the Hebrew verb וּמְצָאוּ is an imperative in form, which is distinct from the Greek future tense indicative form in Matt 11:28. One might expect to see an imperfect or a *weqatal* form in the Hebrew instead.

[171] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 478.

Summary of Key Points

In summary of the key points, Matt 11:2–30 opens with a question from the imprisoned John as to whether Jesus is indeed "the coming one," or whether they ought to expect someone else (v. 3). Jesus responds to John (and the reader of Matthew's Gospel) with a description of his activities, framed by a composition of allusions to Isaiah. This response serves to answer John in the affirmative, and to show that Jesus is in fact "the coming one." He does not, however, address John's underlying query concerning eschatological judgement. Instead, Jesus answers in a fashion that expands the portrait of who he is and what he has come to do. The use of Isaianic texts in particular demonstrate that Jesus' healing and preaching fits with Old Testament expectation.

After responding to John, Jesus turns to the crowds to offer further explication. He affirms that John is Malachian Elijah (vv. 10, 14), while acknowledging the inherent challenge with seeing and understanding the kingdom's current manifestation. For though the kingdom of heaven has come, it presently suffers violence from violent men (v. 12). Yet in spite of this difficult teaching, people are still called to hear and respond rightly (v. 15–30).

CHAPTER FOUR

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATTHEAN BAPTIST NARRATIVE ARC, PART TWO: JOHN IN DEATH

Matthew 14:1–13a

The Death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1–13a)

The next appearance of the Baptist occurs in an episode reported in Matt 14. Though the bulk of the section describes John's death, the retrospective account is prompted by the news that Herod has heard reports about Jesus, and proclaims that he is John resurrected (vv. 1–2). This statement about Herod forms one side of a frame for the narration of John's imprisonment and execution. On the other end, the pericope is bounded by v. 13a, which describes Jesus' withdrawal in a boat to a desolate place.

The reason for the inclusion of v. 13a in the section is that this first portion of the verse functions as a bridge between Matt 14:1–12 and the subsequent narrative.[1] On the one hand, Jesus withdrawing to a desolate place leads into the account of crowds hearing about it, following him on foot (v. 13b), and ultimately the feeding of the five thousand. On the other hand, Jesus' act of withdrawal is seemingly instigated by his hearing about *something* that has previously occurred (v. 13a). So it belongs also to the preceding text.

What, in particular, does Jesus hear about that prompts his movement? Matthew 14:13a begins with the aorist participle ἀκούσας, likely understood with temporal force—"when Jesus heard." There is, however, no explicit object in the text to indicate what it is that Jesus heard that prompted the action of the main verb, ἀνεχώρησεν ("he withdrew"). There are several possibilities for the implicit object of the participle. The first possibility is that Jesus heard that

[1] So Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 235–36; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 740–41; Häfner, *Der verheißene Vorläufer*, 288–89.

Herod's attention has been turned in his direction, with the Tetrarch believing Jesus' miraculous powers are a sign that he is John, raised from the dead (Matt 14:1–2). This reading would envision Matt 14:3–12 as a long parenthetical explanation. The main storyline, in this understanding, would be left at v. 2 and picked back up in v. 13 ("Now when Jesus heard this…"). The withdrawing, then, would be in response to the implicit danger of Herod's attention. The second possibility is that Jesus heard the report from John's disciples of John's death and burial (Matt 14:3–12). This reading, however, would require the assumption that Matthew lost track of the way that he started the story.[2] Furthermore, it does not provide quite so clear a logical explanation for why Jesus would withdraw. The third possibility is that the hearing expressed with ἀκούσας refers to both of these things. As Gibbs describes this option, "it is possible that John's disciples have brought to Jesus the news of John's death and burial (recounted in 14:3–12a) and, at the same time, the news that Herod's attention has now turned towards Jesus (14:1–2). If so, then both of these news items are what Jesus 'heard.'"[3]

Among these options, the first seems most likely—that Jesus' withdrawal comes in response to his hearing that Herod's focus has shifted in his direction, as reported in vv. 1–2. As mentioned, this also necessitates vv. 3–12 being read as an aside, out of sync with the main narrative. Cope makes a compelling grammatical argument to this effect. He starts by explaining that Matthew "introduces the story with *gar*, the standard Greek device for noting an explanatory insertion." He continues, however, "[t]he difficulty arises when this story is finished and the

[2] Examples of scholars taking this sort of position include: Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:463; Donald A Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995).

[3] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* 741. That Jesus could be responding to both things is plausible enough. However, the reading adopted in this paper, namely that vv. 3–12 is an excursus, makes it more straightforward to see Jesus in v. 13a responding to something outside of the excursus.

narrative resumes. The last lines of the story of John's death and the resumption of the narrative appear to run together."[4] In other words, if vv. 3–12 are indeed a parenthetical insertion, how can the reader tell when the excursus ends and the main narrative resumes? Cope explains: "In unpunctuated Greek there were only limited ways to mark off units of thought. One of these was the use of *gar,* 'for,' to introduce an explanatory aside … The usual device for noting the resumption of the original context was the conjunction *de,* 'but' or 'and.'"[5] If he is right, with the γάρ in v. 3 opening the explanatory aside and the δέ in v. 12 closing it, removing the parenthetical leaves a fairly seamless narration:

> **1** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, [2] and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." … [13a] Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.

To Cope's argumentation, one further point in favor of this reading can be added. The same Greek verb—ἀκούω—is used in both v. 1 and v. 13a, potentially providing a verbal link between the two texts for the reader, signaling the connection between Jesus *hearing* (ἀκούσας) about what Herod *heard* (ἤκουσεν).

Yamasaki observes that this parenthetical narration of John's death in Matt 14:3–12 "constitutes one of only two passages of any significant length in which Jesus does not appear and is not even mentioned,"[6] and further, that "it constitutes the most important divergence in the narrative between story time and discourse time," with the events of John's death occurring

[4] O. Lamar Cope, "The Death of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew; or The Case of the Confusing Conjunction," *CBQ* 39 [1976]: 517.

[5] Cope, "Confusing Conjunction," 518. In addition to citing lexical entries for γάρ, Cope offers examples of this γάρ ... δέ grammatical construction from the NT in Gal 6:2–6, as well as a passage from Josephus, which like Matt 14, describes Herod's killing of John—*Ant 18:116–119.*

[6] The other is Matt 3:1–10, which is also about John the Baptist.

earlier, but their reporting delayed until this point.[7] The peculiar placement of this narrative, which is told in retrospective fashion, has at least two functions. First, the placement of this account serves to explain how Herod could have thought Jesus to be John *redivivus*. To put it simply, if John had not died, he could not have in some sense risen from the dead. The last that the reader of Matthew's Gospel has heard of John was in Matt 11, where he was in prison, but still very much alive. So an explanation of his death is needed at this point.

Second, the placement of John's death here puts it close after Matt 13:53–58, enabling it to be a picture of a prophet's fate. Yamasaki writes:

> This delay allows the narrator to use John's fate as an illustration of the motif 'the fate of the prophets' introduced at the end of ch. 13. Up to that point, Jesus had been shown as facing opposition and rejection from many sides. Then the narrator drew together this growing theme of opposition and rejection into the motif of 'the fate of the prophets' (13.57). Only after the introduction of this motif does the narrator insert the account of John's execution.[8]

While the pericope proper begins in Matt 14:1, the importance of Matt 13:53–58 as context cannot be overlooked. Dennert asserts that there is a thematic link present "between 13:53–58 and 14:1–2 because both passages chronicle inadequate responses to the miraculous works (δυνάμεις) of Jesus."[9] After delivering a series of parables in chapter thirteen, Jesus goes to his hometown and speaks in the synagogue there. He is met with incredulity, ultimately such that the people "took offense (ἐσκανδαλίζοντο) at him" (v. 57a). Dennert sees the rejection of Jesus here recalling "11:2–6 through the use of σκανδαλίζω, as the works of Jesus lead to the synagogue participants of his hometown 'being scandalized' (13:57) and missing a blessing (11:6). Placing

[7] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 131–32. Yamasaki describes the first of these two items as being significant from the perspective of point of view on the spatial plane, and the second on the temporal plane.

[8] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 132.

[9] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 236.

the rejection of John after the rejection of Jesus also resembles the linking of the opposition to each figure in 11:18–19."[10] In what will follow with the narration of John's death, as was described in Matt 11:12, the reader witnesses the kingdom of heaven suffering violence, and a violent man—in this case Herod Antipas—on the attack. Jesus identifies the opposition he faces as opposition to a prophet (v. 57b). Because he has already identified John as a prophet, and "more than a prophet" (Matt 11:9), it is no surprise to find the Gospel turning attention to opposition faced by John.

Matthew 14:1–2 reports that Herod thinks Jesus has miraculous powers because he is somehow John *redivivus*. The reader of Matthew's Gospel knows that Herod is wrong—John and Jesus have distinct roles. John is Elijah who is to come (Matt 11:14), the great prophetic forerunner (Matt 3:3; 11:10). Herod has conflated John and Jesus, as will others (Matt 16:14). He is wrong, and yet, he in some sense has a better view of Jesus than do the people from his hometown discussed in the previous chapter. On this, Dennert writes: "Herod's conclusion is incorrect, but he comes nearer to the truth by recognizing a connection that exists between John and Jesus and seeing special power standing behind Jesus' activities."[11] Furthermore, he asserts that "[t]he sole inclusion of Herod's opinion that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead offers a stronger focus on the link between John and Jesus."[12] Their respective narrative roles, though distinct, remain intertwined. John comes to prepare the way for Jesus, and his death will

[10] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 237. So Yamasaki, who points out that the word choice prompts "retrospection to the beatitude which concludes Jesus' lists of messianic deeds reported in 11.5: 'blessed is the one who is not offended by me' (11.6)'" (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 129).

[11] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 238. So Nolland, *Matthew,* 580; Turner, *Matthew,* 362.

[12] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 239. Dennert also makes the case that because he shares a name—Herod—with his father, a figure known for his hostility towards the Christ child in Matt 1–2, readers may make a connection between the two, and expect this Herod to oppose Jesus in like manner to his father. Furthermore, Matthew's infancy narratives "help characterize this Herod and create a link between John and Jesus, as both are opposed by figures named Herod" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 239).

provide a preview of what is to come for the Son of Man.

In this regard, Davies and Allison describe Matt 14:1–12 as a "christological parable." They write:

> On its surface the passage is about John; but its organic connection with Jesus' story is unmistakable. First of all, by illustrating the fate of a true prophet (martyrdom), John's sad end foretells what is in store for Jesus. Hence the juxtaposition with 13.53–8, when Jesus the prophet is rejected by his own, is hardly accidental. 14.1–12 discloses the true meaning of the previous pericope: the Messiah will surely die. Secondly, 14.1–12 not only sheds light upon what has gone before (13.53–8), it also portends in some detail exactly what is to happen in the passion narrative.[13]

From this point, Davies and Allison go on to list a series of parallels between John's death as recorded in Matt 14, and Jesus own suffering and death. Each has a Roman governing authority responsible for his death (Herod the Tetrarch/Pilate the governor). Both are "seized" (κρατέω; John—Matt 14:3/Jesus—Matt 21:46, etc.[14]), and both are "bound" (δέω; John—Matt 14:3/ Jesus—Matt 27:2) prior to their death. In each case, authorities involved fear the crowds because they hold John/Jesus to be a prophet. In John's case, it is Herod (Matt 14:5). In Jesus' case it is the chief priests and the Pharisees (Matt 21:46). Both Herod and Pilate are asked by others to enact the execution, and both are reluctant to do so (Herod—Matt 14:6–11/Pilate—Matt 27:11–26). Finally, both John and Jesus are buried by disciple(s) (John—Matt 14:12/Jesus—Matt 27:57–61).[15]

The narration of John's death itself is fairly straightforward, and as Luz claims, "artless and

[13] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:476. See also: Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 249–50 and France, who writes that "this pericope is not just a flashback but also a foreshadowing of what is to happen to the 'second John'" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 552).

[14] Though not mentioned by Davies and Allison there are other occurrences of κρατέω in connection with Jesus passion that seem germane: Matt 26:4, 48, 50, 55, 57.

[15] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:476. Cf. Yamasaki, who has a comparable list of parallels. In similar fashion to Davies and Allison, he concludes: "After having witnessed these things in John's experience, the narratee now expects to see them in Jesus' experience as well" (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 131).

very brief."[16] John was arrested by Herod on account of his consistent rebuke concerning Herod's marriage to his brother Phillip's wife: "It is not lawful for you to have her" (Matt 14:4).[17] Initially, Herod is reluctant to put John to death because he fears the people who regard John as a prophet. John's fate, though, is sealed at a celebration of Herod's birthday. After dancing and pleasing Herod, Herodias' daughter is promised whatever she would request. Upon her mother's prompting, she asks for John's head. As the text says, "the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given" (Matt 14:9). And so John is beheaded.

After the description of John's death is relayed, there are no explanatory remarks made. As Luz writes: "The macabre story is finished. The narrator need not comment on it; it speaks for itself."[18] Despite the unadorned narration of Matthew's account, there may well be connections with certain Old Testament texts, connections that help to highlight John's paradoxical identity as eschatological Elijah. Note especially the following.

On the one hand, there are no clear Scriptural quotations in this pericope. Scholars have, however, suggested possible Old Testament allusions in the backdrop of the story's telling. Chief among these is the conflict of Elijah with Ahab and Jezebel in 1–2 Kings.[19] Bruner comments: "As Ahab and Jezebel once opposed the prophet Elijah (1 Kgs 18–2 Kgs 1), Herod and Herodias

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[16] Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 305.

[17] As Gibbs notes, the use of the imperfect ἔλεγεν conveys that this message was proclaimed repeatedly. John has a "dogged commitment to proclaiming God's unpleasant truth" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:24,* 738).

[18] Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 307. Gibbs gives voice to questions that arise in response: "Why does God allow these evils to go unchecked during the present time? Why has God chosen to manifest his reign in ways that are so open to attack, so weak in comparison with the power of evil and ambitious men and women?" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:24*, 744). John, the great prophetic preparer has met an ignominious end.

[19] Another common suggested backdrop for the story is that of Esther and Ahasuerus. See, e.g. Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 325; Osborne, *Matthew,* 555–56, 558.

now oppose the prophet who comes 'in the spirit of Elijah.'"[20] This proposal is based primarily on a number of thematic similarities. A prophet (Elijah/John) speaks against the actions of a ruling household. In the conflict with the royal couple, the husband (Ahab/Herod) is somewhat reticent to seek the death of the prophet, while the wife (Jezebel/Herodias) is more aggressive in this regard.[21] Though not directly focused on Malachian Elijah, this would fit with the Gospel's larger 'John as Elijah' motif. Furthermore, this would not be the first time Matthew offers an allusion to the Elijah of 1–2 Kings, as John's description in Matt 3:4 is intended to evoke just such an allusion. Such a move highlights the paradox of John's identity. Old Testament Elijah escaped death at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel. They died, not he—as Elijah himself prophecies (cf. 1 Kgs 21:17–23). But eschatological Elijah dies at the hands of Herod and Herodias!

In this regard, some even suggest a further connection with Jesus' words about John in Matt 17:12: "they did to him whatever they pleased" (ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν). Here is seen, in reflecting back on the events of Matt 14, a resolution to the words of Jezebel concerning Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:2: "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the

[20] Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 2:65.

[21] Hoehner is representative of this view, generally. He sees a particular thematic parallel in the narrative involving Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kgs 21. He writes:

> Although there are several divergences in the present story from that of the Old Testament, some of the main features are similar in both. Elijah was denouncing the action actions of the royal household and Jezebel was out to kill him, while Ahab was ambivalent. These same attitudes of Ahab and Jezebel are portrayed in the seizure of Naboth's vineyard. The two husbands (Ahab and Antipas) may have wanted at first to accomplish their designs, but later they became ambivalent. The two wives, however, accomplished their designs by means not always known to their husbands (Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas: A Contemporary of Jesus Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], 162).

For a similar discussion of general thematic connections, see Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 246. Taylor writes specifically on the similarities of Elijah and Ahab/Jezebel with Mark's account of John's death. The things she mentions, though, also hold generally for Matthew's account.

life of one of them [the prophets of Baal put to death by the sword] by this time tomorrow."[22] Beare writes: "The enemies of Elijah sought his life, but he escaped by fleeing to Mount Horeb, and lived to resume his prophetic ministry (1 Ki. 19; 21:1–27; 2 Ki. chaps. 1, 2). But the enemies of John brought him to his death: 'they did to him what they wished.'"[23] Derrett observes concerning Jezebel: "[H]er oath that Elijah should be slain with the *sword* was not fulfilled because God enabled him to escape; could it be argued that whenever Elijah reappeared such a fate would befall him? It is impossible at present to deny this possibility."[24]

Admittedly, these intertextual connections are not as strong as others are in the Gospel because they are merely thematic and lack the direct verbal links present in other places. With that said, a narrative told in such a way that the reader thinks about Elijah while reading about John would certainly not be out of place in Matthew. If present, what effect might be intended? The death of eschatological Elijah comes as an unexpected turn of events in the narrative. It clearly does not fit with the Malachian script. But to connect John–as–Elijah to 1–2 Kings Elijah in this way could show that his death is not outside the realm of possibility for Old Testament expectation. In this regard, France writes: "The imprisonment and death of John were not part of the expectation for the returning Elijah, though the confrontation of the historical Elijah with Ahab and Jezebel and his narrow escape from death at their hands (1Kgs 19:1–3, 10) might have suggested it."[25]

After the digression of 14:3–12, Matt 14:13a functions as the latter half of the frame around the narration of John's death: Jesus "withdrew (ἀνεχώρησεν) from there in a boat to a desolate

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[22] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 654–55; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 499.

[23] Beare, *Gospel according to Matthew,* 366.

[24] J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Herod's Oath and the Baptist's Head: With an Appendix on Mk 9:12-13, Mal 3:24, Micah 7:6."*BZ* 9, no. 1 (January 1965): 54 (emphasis original).

[25] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 655.

place by himself." The reader following John's narrative arc has seen something similar before. In Matt 4:12, upon hearing of John's arrest, Jesus "withdrew (ἀνεχώρησεν) into Galilee." In both places, in light of potential danger instigated by Herod, Jesus withdraws. It is the same action, and the Greek even employs the exact same form in both places—ἀνεχώρησεν. As described above in the section discussing Matt 4:12–16, this is not the sort of thing one would expect to see with the in–breaking of the kingdom of heaven.

Summary of Key Points

To summarize the key elements of the discussion, Matt 14:1–13a functions as something of an illustration of Jesus' statement in Matt 11:12. In the actions of Herod (along with his family), we see a violent man acting with hostility towards the kingdom of heaven, and specifically against Elijah who was foretold in Malachi. John has been killed, and Jesus has withdrawn. This is not what one would expect with the advent of the kingdom. Yet this coincides with Jesus' teaching on John and the kingdom of heaven in Matt 11. Furthermore, as the account of John's death is narrated, there is the appearance of a subtle thematic connection to Elijah's conflict with Ahab and Jezebel in 1–2 Kings. Eschatological Elijah suffers a fate far worse than Old Testament Elijah. As such, he surely does not fit the mold laid down by Malachi. Thus the connection to Elijah's 1–2 Kings narrative serves to shape and re–make John's role as 'Elijah' in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew 16:13–14

Who People Say the Son of Man Is (Matthew 16:13–14)

The reason for including Matt 16 in this study is the people's (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) identification of Jesus with both John the Baptist and Elijah in vv. 13–14. Thus, the primary focus is these two verses. These verses, however, fall in the larger pericope of Matt 16:13–20. As discussed above

in the section on Matt 4:12–16, the second major section of Matthew's Gospel is Matt 4:17–16:20, and that major section concludes with this text.

Matthew 16:13–20 opens with a geographic relocation of Jesus to Caesarea Philippi. As Gibbs writes, at this point in the narrative, "[t]he question of Jesus' identity has been on the table ever since the Baptizer sent his disciples to ask, 'Are *you* the Coming One? (11.3)."[26] Jesus asks his disciples what "people" (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) are saying concerning the identity of the Son of Man, and they respond with a series of suggested answers: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matt 16:14). With regard to this list, Davies and Allison observe that the grammar (μέν ... δὲ ... δὲ) indicates that "one group of people identifies Jesus with John the Baptist, a second group identifies him with Elijah, and a third group thinks he might be Jeremiah or one of the prophets"[27]

The identification of Jesus with John the Baptist is not new in the narrative, for Herod believed Jesus to be John *redivivus* in Matt 14:2. This view was apparently held by others in addition to Herod; presumably these people were not present at Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan (Matt 3:13–17).[28] Even though there are a number of similarities between the two, their ministry and message, the reader of Matthew's Gospel knows them to be distinct individuals with distinct roles. It does, however, create a narrative connection between John and Jesus, and invites the reader to assess this connection.

The second suggestion for Jesus' identity is that of Elijah. That there is expectation of Elijah's return in the air is discussed above in the Second Temple literature section, and is

[26] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 811 (emphasis original). So France, who writes: "So now it is time for this central issue for the Galilean story to be clarified: who is Jesus?" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 612).

[27] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:619.

[28] Osborne, *Matthew,* 625.

evident in the Gospel with the disciples' question in Matt 17:10: "Why then do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" While the Matthean Jesus and the narrator identify John the Baptist with Elijah, here the people have suggested that Jesus is Elijah. Davies and Allison explain how, while incorrect, this is explainable: "Jesus' miracles and preaching of repentance no doubt reminded many of Elijah and thus encouraged speculation that the Nazarene's ministry should be associated with expectations about the Tishbite."[29]

Third, some of the people also think that Jesus is "Jeremiah or one of the prophets." The most likely reason for the specific inclusion of Jeremiah is that "certain parallels between Jesus and Jeremiah were noticed."[30] First, there are similarities in their respective messages. Jeremiah is known for bringing prophecies of judgment, particularly against Judah and the Jerusalem temple. This will increasingly become a theme in Jesus' teaching as the Gospel progresses. France summarizes:

> The three parables directed against the current Jewish leadership in 21:28–22:14 will be followed by the denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in ch. 23 with its warning of a climactic judgment to come, and the explicit prediction of the total destruction of the Temple (23:34–24:2; note the echo of Jer 22:5 in 23:38). It will be as a threat to the temple that Jesus will be tried (26:61) and derided on the cross (27:40). While this remains in the future as far as the narrative sequence is concerned,

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[29] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:618. So Nolland, who writes that the expectation of Elijah's return "combined with the memory and impact of Elijah, as celebrated in Sir. 48:1–9, with its focus on the prospect of judgment and miracles of nature and healing, makes sense of an identification of Jesus as Elijah" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 659).

[30] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:618. Others in line with this explanation for the identification include: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 616; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 810–11; M.J.J. Menken, "The References to Jeremiah in the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 2,17; 16,14; 27,9)," *ETL* 60 (1984): 5–24; Mark F. Whitters, "Jesus in the Footsteps of Jeremiah," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 229–47; David J. Zucker, "Jesus and Jeremiah in the Matthean Tradition," *JES* 27 (1990): 288–305. For a robust treatment of the parallels, see: Michael P. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction,* JSNTSup 68 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993).

Davies and Allison suggest other possibilities for the identification of Jesus with Jeremiah: (1) That "[t]he text could be referring to a Jewish eschatological expectation, one which some connected with Jesus," and (2) Jeremiah is suggested simply as "an example or specification for 'one of the prophets', chosen simply because his book stood at the head of the latter prophets" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:618).

> we have already heard Jesus' cryptic comment that "something greater than the temple is here" (12:6), and his threat of judgment on Galilean towns in 11:20–24.[31]

Second, and related to the first point, Jesus, like Jeremiah, faces hostility in response to his message. Menken asserts: "[T]he reason for the addition of Jeremiah in Mt 16,14 is that Jeremiah is pre–eminently the prophet who had to suffer because of his message from his own people, especially from the authorities, and who even, according to a certain tradition, died as a martyr; in these things, he and Jesus resemble each other."[32] Jesus will speak to the matter of his own suffering shortly in the Gospel (Matt 16:21).

In addition to these parallels between the respective ministries of Jeremiah and Jesus, there are several instances in which Matthean Jesus appears to employ language from Jeremiah. In a footnote, Davies and Allison suggest a number of places where he potentially "borrows" from Jeremiah. They write: "Cf. 7.22 with Jer 14.14 and 29.13–14; 11.29 with Jer 6.16; 21.13 with Jer 7.11; 23.34 with Jer 7.25–6; 26.28 with 31.31–4."[33] Furthermore, as they observe with regard to Jeremiah and Jesus, "the one prophesied the new covenant instituted by the other."[34]

With these things said, what then would be the implications of such an association of Jesus with Jeremiah? Though the focus of this project is especially on the role of Elijah (Malachi) and Isaiah in the Gospel, the affect is similar here to what we have seen thus far. Connecting Jesus to Jeremiah offers something of an apologetic for the unexpected suffering of Jesus (and John). Dennert writes: "Jeremiah's example thus serves as a defense for the suffering of Jesus,

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[31] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 616.

[32] Menken, "References to Jeremiah," 17–18.

[33] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:619 n53.

[34] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:619. In addition to these textual connections, Menken observes that Matthew "is the only NT author to mention Jeremiah by name; he even does so three times"—Matt 2:17; 16:14; 27:9 (Menken, "References to Jeremiah," 5).

indicating that he stands as yet another prophet who is rejected. … If an honored figure like Jeremiah suffered and other prophets were rejected, then it is neither surprising nor problematic that Jesus and John the Baptist also suffer due to the rejection of the people."[35]

The commonality between all those listed in Matt 16:14—John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets—is that they are all prophets.[36] This is how "the people" (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) described in vv. 13–14 see Jesus. Ultimately, though, it does not suffice to name Jesus a prophet; he is clearly more than that. This has been evident from the very first words of the Gospel, where he is declared to be "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). So Gibbs asserts: "despite similarities between the careers of Israel's prophets and the ministry of Jesus, it is in no way satisfactory or sufficient to name Jesus merely as a prophet of the kind God sent in the OT."[37] Simon Peter will confess Jesus' identity in just a few verses: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). His answer to the question of who Jesus is receives immediate and clear validation from Jesus: "And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar–Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 16:17).

For the reader, then, the various prophetic identifications of "the people" are placed into immediate contrast with Peter's confession. The reader knows that what Peter has said is correct, for it receives endorsement from the Father in heaven, by way of Jesus. That marks "the people,"

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[35] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 242–43.

[36] Though John is commonly labeled as "the Baptist," as Yamasaki explains, "the way in which he is presented in 3.7–12 clearly depicts him in a prophetic role, and he is expressly designated a prophet by Jesus in 11.9" (Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 133 n12).

[37] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 811. So Turner, who writes: "All these popular views of Jesus are positive, but they are inadequate. Although the crowd views Jesus as a prophet (21:11, 26), their understanding proves to be superficial and fickle (27:15–26), and Jesus becomes the ultimate rejected prophet" (David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015], 154).

in their understanding, as wrong about Jesus. As such, Kingsbury writes:

> [T]he lack of personal commitment which the term "prophet" connotes for Matthew as applied to Jesus is well documented in the pericope on Peter's confession (16:13–20): whereas those to whom Matthew never ascribes the attitude of faith ("men" [or the "crowds"]) are said to regard Jesus as "one of the prophets" (16:14), the disciples assert with Peter that he is the Christ, the Son of God (16:16; cf. 14:33). Because the relationship in this pericope between the confession of Peter and that of "men" is one of antithesis, this "confession of men" simply pales into insignificance.[38]

With that said, in their manifestly incorrect identification of Jesus as a prophet, "the people" may ironically be hinting towards a truth that Jesus himself will speak in Matt 16:21: Though not a prophet, like them, he will face rejection and suffering.

Summary of Key Points

In summary of the discussion on Matt 16:13–14, we once again see the narrator giving greater shape and form to role expectations for John and Jesus for the sake of the reader. John is listed among the prophets, and so one should not be surprised that even though he was a prophet, and even "more than a prophet" (Matt 11:8), indeed the great prophetic preparer (Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1, 23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]), he has not escaped the fate of the prophets. Neither will Jesus escape this outcome. Although the "people" inadequately identify Jesus as one of the prophets, ironically they speak the truth; Jesus will share in the rejection experienced by the prophets. By pulling Peter's confession into close proximity of v. 14, the fate that Jesus will endure is added to the Gospel's portrait of Messiah. This, then, would be another instance in which the narrator of Matthew's Gospel shapes the portrait of John and Jesus.

Matthew 17:1–13

On the one hand, the relevance of Matt 17:9–13 seems self-evident, as the relationship of

[38] Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 88–89.

John the Baptist and Elijah (and Jesus) is taken up directly. Matthew 17:1–9 is also considered, however, for three primary reasons. First, in the transfiguration account, Elijah appears to Jesus, along with Moses. The Baptist has been portrayed as Elijah in various ways thus far in the Gospel. So the presence of Elijah, even as John is dead and gone, is worthy of discussion. Second, the appearance of Elijah on the mountain in 17:1–9 leads to the discussion in 17:9–13 concerning what the scribes say about Elijah coming first.[39] Third, though there is a minor shift in scene from on the mountain to descending down it, the two texts effectively make up one continuous sequence. The same primary characters are present throughout, and the setting (the mountain) is broadly consistent.

The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9)

In the transfiguration account of Matt 17:1–9, Nolland observes two structural elements present. First, the passage is framed at the beginning and the end with descriptions of the ascent and descent of Jesus and his three select disciples, Peter, James, and John, with v. 9 also functioning "as a hinge between the two parts."[40] Second, there are three points of emphasis within the pericope, marked by "uses of the emphatic ἰδου (lit. 'behold'); they are the conversation between the three exalted figures, the arrival of the enveloping cloud, and the voice from heaven."[41] Each time ἰδου is used, it indicates a further development of the revelatory vision.

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[39] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 707; Osborne, *Matthew,* 649; Witherington, *Matthew,* 326–27.

[40] Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 394.

[41] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 698. Of the use of ἰδου throughout the Gospel, Gibbs writes: "This aorist imperative middle second person singular of ὁράω, 'to see,' functions as an interjection and is a favorite word of Matthew, who uses it sixty–two times. It emphasizes the point about to made, and in some pericopes it is an obvious structuring device" (Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1,* 97). As noted on pp. 117, 122–24 of the dissertation, ἰδου does function as "an obvious structuring device" in this pericope.

The passage begins in v. 1 with a temporal designation—"After six days"—setting apart this new portion of the narrative.[42] Once on the mountain, Peter, James, and John witness Jesus "transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matt 17:2). Jesus' appearance likely evokes an Old Testament background, and scholarship has suggested that he is being portrayed in a way that resembles Moses or Yahweh.[43]

Those who think that Matthew is portraying Jesus in terms that evoke Moses connect Jesus' shining face to the radiance of Moses' face after his descent from Mt. Sinai in Exod 34:29–35. For many who understand the imagery this way, it is read as part of a larger 'Jesus as new/greater Moses' typology present in the transfiguration account. The parallels are well summarized by Turner: The six–day interval (17:1; Exod 24:16), the presence of three witnesses (17:1; Exod 24:1), the high mountain (17:1; Exod 24:12), the glorious appearance of the central figure (17:2; Exod 34:29–30, 25), the overshadowing cloud (17:5; 24:15–18), the voice from the cloud (17:5; Exod 24:16), and the fear of those who witnessed the glory (17:6; Exod 34:29–30).[44] If correct, Jesus is the new and greater Moses who ascends the mountain with three

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[42] Though some have sought to find symbolic meaning in this phrase, as Gibbs explains, that seems unlikely. He writes: "The time reference 'after six days' is quite remarkable in Matthew's narrative. It is the first specific reference as to the passage of time in the entire Gospel. Since Matthew rarely employs such references and shows no interest in overtly assigning symbolic or theological meanings to them, there is likely no more significance to this notation other than to reflect the historical and chronological reality" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 849). For those that would see an allusion to Exodus 24 in this passage, though, the "six days" is used as evidence of intentional connection (cf. Exod 24:16).

[43] As with many elements in the transfiguration account, even this first aspect of the vision is rich in depth of meaning, such that Luz writes:

> The transfiguration narrative is difficult to interpret. It contains a multitude of possible associations and reminiscences of biblical and Jewish materials, but there is no key in the tradition that completely unlocks it. Repeatedly there are individual statements that do not fit a certain background or a certain expectation or that fit several of them. Thus one has the impression that the transfiguration story is distinctively 'of manifold meanings'" (Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 395).

So also Terence L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, JSNTSup 8 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 136.

[44] Turner, *Matthew*, 419. For a more expansive summary, Blomberg writes:

companions, and his is the face that is radiant as a result of the experience.

Despite noteworthy evidence in favor of this view, several points of rebuttal readily come to mind.[45] First, while there are a number of thematic connections, there are limited direct verbal connections to the relevant Exodus passages—primarily Exodus 24 and 34:29–39. With regard to Exodus 24, aside from the names Moses and Joshua/Jesus,[46] there are only two elements of verbal agreement. The first is the aforementioned phrase "six days" (ἓξ ἡμέρας / ἡμέρας ἓξ—Exod 24:17/Matt 17:1), which finds the order of "six" and "days" reversed. The second is the lexeme ἀναφέρω—"they offered" (ἀνήνεγκαν, Exod 24:5) and "he led (them) up" (ἀναφέρει, Matt 17:1), though as can be observed, the forms are notably different between these two

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> Here appears extensive, unambiguous Mosaic typology. The reference to six days (17:1) parallels Moses' six days of preparation on Mount Sinai before God revealed himself to him (Exod. 24:16). It is possible that we are also meant to recall Exod. 24:1, as Moses takes a special group of three companions with him (Davies and Allison 1988–1997: 2:694). Moses, with Elijah, is of course explicitly present for this theophany as well (17:3). The glorious transformation of Christ matches Moses dazzling splendor as he descended from the mountain (Exod. 34:29–35). Peter's misguided suggestion that they erect shelters (17:4) is probably based on the pattern of living in tents as Moses led the Israelites in the desert and perhaps even alludes specifically to the Feast of Tabernacles (c.f. Lev. 23; Deut. 16). The bright cloud (17:5a) makes one think of the cloud that enveloped the tabernacle when God's glory filled it (Exod. 40:34), along with the cloud that followed the Israelites by day throughout their wilderness wanderings (Exod. 40:36–38). At Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 3:17), a heavenly voice refers to him by alluding to Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1, combining allusions to his roles as messianic king and Suffering Servant (17:5b). The additional charge, "Listen to him," alludes to Deut. 18:15 on heeding the prophet like Moses who would arise in later days. The disciples' fear in 17:6 matches that of those who saw Moses' face in Exod. 34:30 (Blomberg, "Matthew," 55–56).

See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 685–88, the work to which Blomberg alludes in the cited quotation. They build a similar case, but do so especially from a redaction critical perspective, looking at ways that Matthew appears to have adapted Mark's account. For a book–length treatment on the theme of Jesus as a new Moses, see: Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For his treatment of the transfiguration account, see esp. pp. 243–48. Regarding seeing Jesus portrayed as a new Moses, Gibbs makes the point that "one's prior decisions about whether Matthew has portrayed Jesus as a new or greater Moses elsewhere in the Gospel will determine the extent to which one finds such a typology or Christological message here in 17:1–18" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 855).

[45] In addition to the major points discussed on pp. 119–20 of the dissertation, France mentions a few minor ones. First, though Moses' face continues to shine after descending from the mountain, Jesus' face "shone *on* the mountain, but is not said to be visibly different when coming down from it" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 647 n26 [emphasis original]). Second, the voice of God in v. 5 "will make a clear separation between Moses and Elijah, the servants of God and witnesses to his glory, and Jesus, whom God uniquely designates as his Son" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 647–48).

[46] Joshua in the LXX is Ἰησοῦς (cf. Exod 24:13).

passages, as is the meaning. In the former, it refers to the offering of burnt offerings, and in the latter, it refers to Jesus leading Peter, John, and James up the mountain. Concerning Exod 34:29–39, aside from the name Moses, the points of verbal agreement are the phrase "his face" (προσώπου αὐτοῦ, Exod 34:29 / πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, Matt 17:2) and forms of the verb συλλαλέω (συλλαλεῖν, "to speak with"—Exod 34:5 / συλλαλοῦντες, "talking with"—Matt 17:3).[47] Though the forms are different here as well, the verbal similarities are at least comparable in meaning in their respective contexts. So to summarize the data, while there are some possible verbal connections present, as Gibbs writes: "If Matthew had wanted his readers to think of Jesus as Moses going up the mountain, he certainly could have made the verbal connections clearer."[48]

Second, while the presence of only Jesus and Moses on the mountain could invite the reader to see a singular connection between the two, with Jesus presented as a new and greater Moses, the presence of Elijah as well makes the connection more opaque. To put it differently, if the reader is meant to primarily see a direct parallel between Moses and Jesus in this moment, how should the presence of Elijah be understood?[49]

With these points of pushback noted, it seems more likely that the shining of Jesus' face (and the brightness of his clothing) allude to the glory of Yahweh himself. Two points are in order here. First, there are numerous biblical instances of the shining face of God, and general brightness/radiance associated with his appearance. As examples, Nolland lists: Num 6:25; Ps 4:7 [Eng. 4:6]; 31:17 [Eng. 31:16]; 44:4 [Eng. 44:3]; 67:2 [Eng. 67:1]; 80:4, 8, 20 [Eng. 80:3, 7,

[47] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 647 n26. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:685–86. In these pages, they attempt to reckon with the lack of verbal agreement.

[48] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 854.

[49] So Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 854; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 701.

19]; 89:16 [Eng. 15]; 119:135; Dan 9:17.[50] Regarding the brightness of Jesus' clothing, Nolland provides further biblical examples: "Relevant comparisons are 'Yahweh will be our everlasting light' in Is. 60:19; … the 'Ancient of Days' in Dn. 7:9 whose 'clothing was white as snow'; God compared to 'the light when it is bright in the skies' to make the point that 'around God is awesome majesty' in Job 37:21–22."[51] Furthermore, as Luz points out, similarly to the brightness of Jesus' clothing, "the cloud out of which God himself speaks (v. 5) is full of light."[52] It is also worth noting that while Moses' shining rather clearly appears to derive from coming in contact with the glory of God (cf. Exod 34:29), Jesus' shining originates with himself.[53]

Second, in the biblical record, both Moses and Elijah ascend Mount Sinai/Horeb to meet with God and while there experience his glory (Exod 24:15–18; 33:18–34:8; 1 Kgs 19:8–13).[54] In light of what has been said, it is perhaps appropriate to see Moses and Elijah—those great prophetic figures of the Old Testament—as once again atop a mountain to meet with the Lord. Gibbs writes:

> Now the hearers/readers of this account are specifically invited to recall the significant ministries of Moses and Elijah. Even a relatively uninformed disciple of Jesus can recall the times when the great mediator and Law–giver (Exodus 24 and 34) and the great prophet (1 Kings 19) went up onto the mountain and spoke *with the Lord God.* As with the account of Jesus walking on the sea with power over the troubled creation (Mt 14:22–33), here it is difficult to avoid the implication that

[50] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 699 n43. Though he lists these instances, Nolland himself will see the "strongest links" to the shining of Jesus' face in Matt 17:2 to "the shining of Moses' face in Ex. 34:29, 30, 35, where 'the skin of his face shone' after being in the presence of God" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 700).

[51] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 701.

[52] Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 398. In v. 2, Jesus' clothes became "white as light" (λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς), and in v. 5, the cloud is described as "bright" or "full of light" (νεφέλη φωτεινὴ).

[53] So France, who writes: "Moses shone for a time with a reflection of the divine glory he had seen; Jesus shone with his own heavenly glory. Moses' radiance was derivative, Jesus' essential" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 647).

[54] So Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 142 and Davies and Allison, who succinctly write: "Why are Moses and Elijah mentioned? Probably because they are the two OT figures who encountered God on Sinai/Horeb" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:697).

> Matthew wants his hearers/readers to see in Jesus the embodiment of Israel's God, now visible with them.[55]

So rather than being the antitype of Moses, it is better to understand Jesus in connection with the One that Moses ascended Sinai to meet in Exodus.[56] To be sure, though, he is also clearly distinguished from the Father in this text, for the divine voice that speaks from heaven about him in v. 5 is not Jesus' voice.

After Jesus' transfiguration in v. 2, the reader encounters the first of three structural occurrences of the word ἰδου, drawing attention to a new wonder: "And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him" (Matt 17:3). Moses and Elijah's manifestation is touched on above, but the matter requires further discussion. In addition to what has been said, why is it that these two in particular appear to speak with Jesus? A variety of interpretive suggestions has been offered, and a number of scholars have summarized them.[57] Perhaps the most common view claims that Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets, respectively, which Jesus has come to fulfill (cf. Matt 5:17).[58] A better understanding, however,

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[55] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 855 (emphasis original).

[56] Applying Old Testament texts and imagery about Yahweh to Jesus is a prominent feature in the Baptist's narrative arc. For example, in the Old Testament context of the prophetic preparer texts cited by Matthew (Isa 40:3—Matt 3:3; Mal 3:1—Matt 11:10), the prophet prepares the way for Yahweh, rather than Jesus. In Matt 9:15, Jesus occupies the role of bridegroom, a role typically associated in Scripture with Yahweh (e.g. Isa 54:4‑6; 62:4‑5; Jer 2‑3; 31:32; Hos 2‑3). Furthermore, as will be discussed below on pp. 164–65, there is a possible allusion to Isa 8:14–15 in Matt 21:44 wherein Jesus is the stone on whom people will fall and be "broken to pieces." In its original context, though, it is Yahweh of hosts who is a "stone of offense and a rock of stumbling" over whom many "will fall and be broken."

[57] E.g. Blomberg, "Matthew," 56; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:697–98; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 648–49; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 701 n54; Osborne, *Matthew*, 646–47; Turner, *Matthew*, 417.

[58] Seeing Moses as representative of the Law makes some sense, as even in the Gospel of Matthew there are instances in which someone in the narrative will refer to a commandment from Moses, and then allude to a passage from the Pentateuch—e.g. Matt 8:4 (Lev 14:1–32); Matt 19:7–8 (cf. Deut 24:1–4); Matt 22:24 (Deut 25:5–10). Seeing Elijah as the comparable representative of the Prophets, though, is more opaque. Gibbs makes two objections: First, it seems unlikely that Elijah would function "as a synecdoche for the whole prophetic corpus, since he was not a writing prophet in the same sense as Isaiah (e.g., Mt 3:3; 4:14; 12:17), Jeremiah (2:17; 16:14; 27:9), or other prophets named in Matthew, such as Jonah (12:39–41; 16:4) and Daniel (24:15)." Second, as has been explored in this dissertation, Elijah has a specific role in Matthew's Gospel, "rather than a generalized sort of

sees Moses and Elijah together as eschatological forerunners.[59] That such a description fits for Elijah has been argued at length thus far in the present work. In this context, though, it suits Moses as well. Along with Elijah, "[b]oth were, according to tradition, spared death, and (perhaps) both were expected to return."[60] As France explains:

> [M]ystery surrounds the end of Moses on Mount Nebo. So these two men, along with Enoch (Gen 5:24), became known as the deathless ones. This was no doubt a major factor in the belief that Elijah would come back in the last days … and while there is less evidence of a clear expectation of the return of Moses himself, the promise of a 'prophet like Moses' in Deut 18:15–19 played a significant role in Jewish (and still more Samaritan) eschatological hope … These two men therefore also symbolize the coming of the messianic age, and their conversation with Jesus marks him out the more clearly as the Messiah who comes as the climax to their eschatological role.[61]

In addition to this, it is perhaps noteworthy that the only time in the Old Testament that the names Moses and Elijah appear together is in Mal 3:22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]. There, Elijah comes as a precursor to the great and awesome day of the Lord. In Malachi, however, along with the announcement of Elijah's pending advent, there is a call from the Lord to "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel" (Mal 3:22 [LXX 3:24 / Eng. 4:4]). Thus, Moses and Elijah appear together in Malachi's eschatological

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function as representing the fulfillment of all OT prophecy" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 856). To this latter point, we could add that the divine speech in v. 5 invites the reader to recall Jesus' baptism, where John was present, and so rehearses the connection between the Baptist and Elijah.

[59] So Jeremias, who asserts that they "appear on the Mount of Transfiguration as the precursors of Jesus," and that their appearance "proclaims the inauguration of the last time" (J. Jeremias, "Ηλ(ε)ίας" in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976], 2:939).

[60] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:698. Davies and Allison, however, do note the obvious, namely, that the Old Testament records Moses' death (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:698 n69).

[61] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 648. In a footnote describing Moses' mysterious end, France writes:

> Deut 34:5–6 records that he [Moses] died alone with God on the mountain and that he had no grave. Patristic writers speak of a book called *The Assumption of Moses* (perhaps the latter part, or a revised edition, of the extant *Testament of Moses*, which breaks off before Moses' death) which apparently spoke of his removal to heaven (cf. Jude 9). Josephus, *Ant.* 4.323–26, says that Moses "disappeared" in a cloud, but that he wrote about his own death so that people would not "presume to say that he had returned to the Divine because of his exceptional virtue" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 648 n28).

For more detail on the early Jewish belief on Moses' death, or lack thereof, see: Jeremias, "Ηλ(ε)ίας" 2:939 n92.

context, and so it is fitting that they both appear together to speak with Jesus atop the mountain in Matt 17:1–8.

The second and third occurrences of ἰδου occur in rapid sequence in v. 5. The second occurrence interrupts Peter in the middle of his suggestion that he might set up tents for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. The reader is told that "a bright cloud overshadowed them." In the biblical record, a cloud is frequently symbolic of Yahweh's presence.[62] For example, in a cloud, the Lord leads the Israelites through the wilderness towards Sinai (Exod 13:21–22), and at Sinai, the Lord is manifested on the mountain in a cloud and he speaks from it (Exod 19:9–19, esp. v. 9; 24:15–18, esp. v. 16; 34:1–7, esp. v. 5). Then, when they depart Sinai, the cloud descends upon the tabernacle as a visible representation of the divine presence, and continues to do so as the Israelites travel from Sinai (Exod 40:34–38). Furthermore, a similar manifestation occurs when the Temple is dedicated (1 Kgs 8:10–11).[63] Thus, it is relatively clear that the cloud's appearance indicates the presence of the God of Israel.

The third occurrence of ἰδου introduces the divine voice, which speaks from the cloud. The greater portion of the words uttered—"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα)" (Matt 17:5)—are repeated verbatim from Jesus' baptism scene (Matt 3:17). With this connection, the reader is prompted to think of John,

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[62] Donaldson writes:

> The cloud is an important feature in both the Sinai account (Ex 19.16; 24.15–18; 34.5) and the wilderness period general, where it is a visible sign of God's presence (e.g. Ex 13.21f.; 33.7–11; 40.34–38; Num 9.15–23). Especially noteworthy is the fact that the verb ἐπισκιάζω, used of the cloud in Mk 9.7, also appears with reference to the cloud over the Tent of Meeting in Ex 40.35—one of the few occurrences of this word in the LXX (Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 143).

The verb ἐπισκιάζω, which Donaldson references, also appears in Matt 17:5 (ἐπεσκίασεν).

[63] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:700–701; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 649–50; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 858.

who was present and participated in Jesus' baptism. This creates a tension. By this point in the narrative, the reader knows John to be eschatological Elijah (Matt 11:10, 14). But the reader also knows that John is dead (Matt 14:3–10). Yet here is Elijah, present atop the mountain to meet with Jesus. There does not seem to be anything to indicate that this is other than Old Testament Elijah (i.e. not John *redivivus*), even as the reader expects Moses to be actual Old Testament Moses in some sense.[64] The reader will be left to ponder this juxtaposition into the next section, as Jesus and his disciples discuss John and Elijah coming first (Matt 17:9–13).

The divine reaffirmation in Matt 17:5 makes clear that in spite of the fact that Jesus will suffer and be killed before being raised from the dead (16:21), he is indeed the Son of God. That the idea of a suffering Christ would have been a challenge for the disciples is clear enough from Peter's interactions with Jesus in the previous chapter. Though affirmed for his identification of Jesus, Peter nonetheless rebukes his master upon hearing Jesus describe the suffering that was to come (Matt 16:22).[65] Thus France writes of the declaration from heaven in the transfiguration account: "Its purpose at this point is to confirm the disciples in their newly discovered christological understanding (which has been severely tested by Jesus' declaration of the nature of his messianic mission in 16:21), underlining especially the truth that this Messiah is, in Peter's words, 'the Son of the living God' (16:16)."[66]

As with elsewhere in the Baptist's narrative arc, here a reference to Isaiah again serves to

[64] When considering the appearance of these two, one finds a genuine puzzle with the fact that in the Old Testament record, Moses clearly died (Deut 34:5–8), while Elijah apparently did not (2 Kgs 2:11–12).

[65] Of note, Peter is one of the three disciples who will hear the divine voice on the mountain.

[66] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 650. So Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:703 and Turner, who writes: "It is significant that this endorsement occurs soon after Jesus' announcement of his upcoming suffering in Jerusalem and Peter's negative response to it (Matt 16:21–22). The disciples are evidently still somewhat perplexed by the prospect of a suffering Messiah, and this renewed divine endorsement of Jesus is necessary" (Turner, *Matthew,* 418). Nolland makes the case that statements concerning Jesus' suffering in fact frame the transfiguration narrative, with 16:21–25 on the one end and 17:9 (implicitly), 12 on the other. (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 704).

shape messianic expectations within Matthew's Gospel. As argued in the discussion of Matt 3:17, the words "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" likely entail an allusion to Isa 42:1. From the context here in Matt 17, this connection of Jesus to Isaiah's servant figure takes on new relevance, for it shows that Jesus' role does in fact include the tribulation that is to come. Hagner, moreover, suggests even further links to Isaiah when he writes: "If the second clause ['with whom I am well pleased'] contains an allusion to the suffering Servant of Isaiah … this now takes on enormously heightened significance, given the preceding announcement by Jesus of his suffering and death. Jesus is the Messiah in whom God delights (Isa 42:1) but also the suffering Servant upon whom 'the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all' (Isa 53:6)."[67]

While most of the divine voice's words repeat verbatim from Matt 3:17, there is at the end a brief addition: "Listen to him" (ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ). These words seem directed especially at the disciples, given that they are the ones that respond in the subsequent verse. A number suggest that this is perhaps an echo from Deut 18:15, in which Israel is called to listen to a prophet like Moses who the Lord will raise up from among the people.[68] The particular import of this command likely has to do, again, with the difficulty of the message that God's Son should have to go the way of the cross. It was given scriptural grounding via the connection to the Servant Songs, and now this imperative underscores the need for the disciples to attend to Jesus in spite of the road ahead.[69]

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[67] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1995), 494.

[68] E.g. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 650; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 494; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 704.

[69] So Gibbs, who writes: "The truth to which disciples need to listen has to do with the new revelation that Jesus has now begun to show to his disciples about the way of the cross for himself and for them (16:21–28). Without this understanding of Jesus' person and work, there can be no true understanding of Jesus at all" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 859).

Descent from the Mountain (Matthew 17:9–13)

After the transfiguration scene, in their descent down the mountain, Jesus commands his disciples: "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead" (Matt 17:9). Though they had just witnessed the transfigured Jesus, this injunction forcefully pulls them back to the stark teaching Jesus spoke to them in Matt 16:21—though resurrection is on the horizon, Jesus' path leads first to his death. To put it differently, the disciples had experienced a foretaste of Easter glory, but Good Friday must come first.[70] As such, Jesus instructs them to refrain from sharing what they had witnessed until after the resurrection, so that the report would not draw away from the present mission that must come first, his passion. And as France plausibly explains, it will not be until after the death and resurrection that "the disciples may be expected to have a clear enough grasp of what it all means to be able to talk responsibly about what they have just seen."[71]

In response, the disciples ask Jesus a question: "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" (Matt 17:10). The particle οὖν (translated "Then") implies that their question is based on, or arises from, something that has come before. Some have suggested that their question is specifically in response to Jesus' command in v. 9,[72] while others see it connected to

[70] On the connection of transfiguration glory to the resurrection, see: Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 498; Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 399.

[71] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 653.

[72] E.g. D.A. Carson, "Matthew," pp. 1–599 in EBC, ed. Frank E. Gabelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 388–89. After describing two of what he describes as "false solutions," Carson provides his own understanding of the connection between Jesus command and the disciples' question. It is based on the understanding that Elijah comes first "to restore all things—to bring about a state of justice and true worship." With this presupposition about the work of Elijah, their question is: how is it possible that "Messiah would be killed in such a restored environment—killed, Jesus had told them only a week before, by elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law (16:21)?" (Carson, "Matthew," 389). As France points out, though, the issue with this reading is that Elijah's role in restoring all things is not mentioned until v. 11. "[T]he disciples' question is about Elijah coming, not his mission" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 653).

the transfiguration more generally.[73] It seems better, though, to understand their question in response to both Jesus' command and the transfiguration that precedes it in the narrative, for the two things are related to one another. Gibbs describes the general line of thinking that led to the disciples' question in three parts. First, they had heard scribal teaching that Elijah's advent is a necessary precursor to the Day of the Lord, i.e. the Lord's own coming. Second, the disciples had just seen Elijah speaking with Jesus, after which he departed. Third, having just witnessed these things, they seem to be confused with the command not to speak of them. Gibbs writes: "Apparently both Elijah and the Lord have now come in their full glory! Why should they keep these arrivals secret until after Jesus' death (if indeed it is necessary) and resurrection? So in their lack of understanding, they ask about Elijah, and in asking about him, they are asking about the reign of God and about Jesus himself."[74]

The disciples' question relates to the teaching of the scribes on Elijah's return. In his response, Jesus first affirms the general contours of what the disciples have heard from the scribes, before reorienting the perspective: "He answered, 'Elijah does come, and he will restore (ἀποκαταστήσει) all things'" (Matt 17:11). There is discussion over Jesus' use of the future tense with ἀποκαταστήσει here. Some will suggest that Jesus is here describing a return of Elijah that is yet future from his vantage point and is supplementary to the ministry of John the Baptist.[75] A better understanding, however, sees Jesus' use of ἀποκαταστήσει as an intentional connection to

[73] E.g. France, who describes the question as a change of subject, with οὖν connecting their question "loosely to the experience itself rather than making a specific inference from Jesus' instruction to keep quiet about it or from his mention of his resurrection." For him, the question is brought to mind for the disciples as a result of their seeing Elijah on the mountain (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 653).

[74] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 865.

[75] E.g. Gundry, *Matthew*, 347–48; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 708; Turner, *Matthew*, 421–22.

the biblical text from which this Elijanic expectation arises.[76] In speaking of the ministry of the Elijah who will be sent, Malachi describes how he "will turn the heart of the fathers towards the sons" (Mal 3:24). In the MT, the word used for "turn" is וְהֵשִׁיב, a *hiphil* form of the verb שׁוּב. The LXX translates this verb with ἀποκαταστήσει, the precise form employed by Jesus in Matt 17:11.

After first taking up the scribal teaching, however, Jesus takes a sharp turn in v. 12, starting with the adversative δὲ:[77] "But I tell you that Elijah has already come." The way that Jesus begins this statement is not unlike how he speaks in the Sermon on the Mount's 'Antitheses.' In each instance there, Jesus presents some teaching that is commonly heard, and then follows up with his own authoritative teaching on the matter, and in doing so, he uses the phrase "But I say to you…" (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν) (Matt 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). In similar fashion here, as he shifts to his own authoritative explanation, Jesus uses the phrase "But I say to you" (λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν).[78] What this underlines is that while Jesus may affirm the scribal teaching on Elijah coming first in some sense, true understanding on the matter requires significant reorientation. As such, Jesus shifts to the aorist indicative—"Elijah has already come" (Ἠλίας ἤδη ἦλθεν)—and then explains that "they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased" (Matt 17:12).

Here, then, the teaching of the scribes proves faulty. As Osborne writes: "[T]he scribes are

[76] So Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:714–15; Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 126; Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 865–66; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 499; Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 400. France makes a related, though not identical suggestion: "The tenses ('is coming' … 'will set') are those of the scribal perspective, still looking for the coming of Elijah and for his future work of reconciliation" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 654). Given that the exact form from the LXX of Malachi is employed, it seems best to see that as the referent of the statement.

[77] As Osborne observes, this δὲ works grammatically in conjunction with the μὲν in the preceding verse: "The 'indeed … but' (μὲν … δὲ) construction in vv. 11–12 shows that Jesus places the emphasis on this statement" (Osborne, *Matthew,* 649–60). That is to say, the scribes rightly understand with regard to v. 11, but do not with regard to v. 12.

[78] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 654.

right about Elijah coming before the Messiah[79] but wrong because they have failed to realize that the Baptist already was the forerunner. Their understanding of the future was correct, but their understanding of the present fulfillment of that future was fatally flawed."[80] This inability to rightly perceive John, and by association Jesus, is not, however, limited to the scribes.

The implicit "they" (third person plural) in v. 12's verbs οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν, ἐποίησαν, and ἠθέλησαν (*they did not recognize* him, but [*they*] *did* to him whatever *they pleased*) seems to have a referent beyond the scribes alone. The natural reading grammatically would be to understand "they" to be the scribes, as Jesus is responding to a question from the disciples about something that the scribes have said. Of Jesus statements in v. 12, the first clause could fit with the scribes, as they indeed did not recognize Elijah when he came in the person of John. The phrase "they did to him whatever they pleased," though, alludes to John's suffering and death described especially in Matt 14:3–12.[81] In Matthew's Gospel, the scribes are not directly implicated in John's arrest or death. This instead is attributed to Herod (Matt 14:3). So what is happening here? Dennert describes it well:

> While Matthew still depicts John's death at the hand of Herod and includes no note about the participation of the religious leaders in John's death, this comment could reflect that these groups did nothing to stop Herod from killing John and were pleased

[79] With regard to whether Malachian Elijah was understood as coming before the Messiah specifically, or simply the day of the Lord more generally, see: Faierstein, "Why Do the Scribes Say," 75–86; Allison, "Elijah Must Come First," 256–58; Fitzmeyer "More about Elijah Coming First," 295–96.

[80] Osborne, *Matthew,* 649–50. Dennert argues that the scribes' portrayal here is congruent with elsewhere in the narrative, as they seem to have the right knowledge, but do not act appropriately on it (Jesus will characterize them directly this way in Matt 23:2–3). In Matt 2:3–6, the scribes are able to correctly determine the birthplace of the Messiah from Scripture. Yet they do not go to worship him, as do the magi. Instead, they are presented in the narrative as aiding and abetting Herod in his quest to kill the Christ child. So here, "[t]he scribes therefore teach what is right (Elijah must come) but do not practice it (they refuse to acknowledge his arrival in the form of John). … Thus, their lack of recognition of John and Jesus is not an intellectual deficiency, but an active rejection and opposition" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 125).

[81] Davies and Allison point out a number of Jewish texts that demonstrate this was "a standard way of expressing ungodly tyranny"—Dan 8:4; 11:3, 16; Jub 2:29; *Ant.* 10.103. (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:715). So France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 655; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 709.

> with it. Moreover, the chief priests, elders and scribes do not actually kill Jesus, as he is executed by the Romans.[82]

So Herod can be included among those that do not recognize Elijah, which fits well with Matt 14:1–2.

In addition, though they do not act in the same hostile fashion, the disciples too have not fully understood John until now. Though the reader of Matthew's Gospel knows John to be Malachian Elijah, implicitly from Matt 3:4 and explicitly from Matt 11:10, 14, it is only at this point in the narrative that the disciples make the connection between John and Elijah: "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist" (Matt 17:14).[83]

Widespread misunderstanding concerning John and Jesus is certainly nothing new in the Baptist's narrative arc. As Malachian Elijah, John comes in advance of the great and awesome Day of the Lord and calls for repentance in preparation for the one who is to come after him. Yet what follows in the narrative was not anticipated, for John is arrested and executed, and Jesus affirms that John's path sets the pattern for his own: "So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands" (Matt 17:12b). Gibbs writes:

> This means that the Day of the Lord is at hand, but in a way scarcely envisioned by the disciples and able to be received only in faith. God's powerful ministry of restoration was taking place through the Baptizer, *who was arrested and beheaded.* John himself spoke of the reign of God (Mt 3:2) and of the coming of one mightier than he (3:11). Through this mightier one, God's day is at hand. God is powerfully at

[82] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 124–25. So Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:716; France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 654–55. Also, Luz, who writes: "It does not bother Matthew that it was not the scribes who killed John; he includes them in the common negative front of Jesus' opponents" (Luz, *Matthew 8–20,* 400).

[83] Gibbs suggests that there are two potential explanations for why the disciples only now understand the relationship between John and Elijah, when the reader knows of this from Jesus' explicit statements in Matthew 11: "The first is that we have here yet another example of the disciples' slowness in comprehending Jesus' teaching (cf. Lk 24:25). A second possibility is that Matthew wants to communicate that the disciples were not present for that teaching by Jesus to the crowds (Mt 11:7), because Jesus had sent them on their specific missionary journey (10:5)" (Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34,* 866 n13).

> work through this mighty one, the Christ, God's son (16:16), *who is going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die and rise from the dead* (16:21). This is the reign of God![84]

Once again, Jesus provides a fuller portrait of John's role and his own. In his words to the disciples, Jesus reaches for the passage in Mal 3:23–24 to affirm that John is indeed Elijah, and he has already come. Yet the fact that he suffered and died does not negate this reality,[85] even as Jesus' suffering and death will not negate the fact that he is God's Son.

There is one more phenomenon present in this text to explore, namely, that there are two 'Elijahs' present in the pericope. The first is the Elijah who appears with Moses atop the mountain in the transfiguration vision. The second is John the Baptist, who does not appear, for he is dead and gone in the narrative, but is alluded to ("Elijah has already come…") in v. 12, and then mentioned by name in v. 13. Regarding their respective identities, the latter is made clear by the narrator's comment regarding the disciples understanding in v. 13. Regarding the former, there is every reason to see this as a manifestation of 1–2 Kings Elijah, even as the reader understands Moses to be the one known from the Pentateuch.

The more difficult question is how the two relate to one another in Matt 17. A proposed answer is that the appearance of 1–2 Kings Elijah atop the mountain with Jesus serves as an assurance concerning the legitimacy of John, great eschatological Elijah. An analog might be useful here. As discussed above, a function of the transfiguration is as a confirmation of Jesus' identity as the Son of God, in spite of what he said in Matt 16:21 and will say in 17:12 concerning his suffering and death. To put it succinctly, the vision of Jesus in glory affirms the

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[84] Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 867 (emphasis original).

[85] Dennert offers three arguments that just because John suffers and dies, it "does not mean that his ministry failed and thus that the prophecy was not fulfilled." First, just because Jewish leaders do not heed John's teaching, it does not mean that other Jews followed in suit. Second, "the prophecy of LXX Mal 3:23b shows that Elijah's ministry is to help avoid a curse coming on the land, indicating a possibility for his ministry to be rejected." Third, suffering and death cannot preclude the accomplishment of one's ministry, as Jesus suffered and died, and is certainly portrayed as completing his work (Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 127–28).

identity of Jesus in suffering. In a similar fashion, the appearance of (1–2 Kings) Elijah in glory affirms the identity of eschatological "Elijah" in suffering. Even though the Elijah who appears in the transfiguration scene is distinguishable from John, because of the Gospel's portrayal of the Baptist as eschatological Elijah, the reader is invited to think of the latter when the former appears. As such, the glory of Elijah validates the ministry of "Elijah" (i.e. John the Baptist). For in context of the passage, the reader encounters Jesus and Elijah together in glory (Matt 17:3–5) and Jesus and "Elijah" together in suffering (Matt 17:12).

Summary of Key Points

To summarize the major contours of the discussion from Matt 17:1–13, the text first opens with an extraordinary occurrence. The disciples witness the transfiguration of Jesus, and in the event, Moses and Elijah are once again atop a mountain to meet with the Lord. The divine voice speaks on behalf of Jesus, which is important contextually because it reaffirms his identity as the Son of God, in spite of the message that he will soon suffer and die. The divine voice's words repeat what God also proclaimed at Jesus' baptism, reminding the reader of John's involvement, and prompting a tension—eschatological Elijah was present there, but now Old Testament Elijah is here. In addition, the divine proclamation, in the context of Jesus' words about his suffering and death, connects to the Servant Songs of Isaiah: Jesus is the one in whom the Lord delights, but he is also the Suffering Servant.

The transfiguration event, and particularly Elijah's appearance, prompts a question from the disciples as to why they have heard that "first Elijah must come." In his response, Jesus affirms the truth of the teaching, alluding to Mal 3:24 (LXX—3:23/Eng.—4:6), but explains how Elijah has already come in the person of John the Baptist. And even as John suffered, so will the Son of Man. Matt 17:1–13 does much to affirm this truth. Of note, however, is that Isaiah

functions in continuing to inform Malachian expectations in the narrative's understanding for John and Jesus.

Matthew 21:23–22:44

The final explicit references to John the Baptist come in Matt 21:25, 26, and 32. The larger section, Matt 21:23–22:14, is one in which Jesus speaks with religious leaders who challenge his authority. The first references to John in the section (vv. 25, 26) occur as Jesus responds to a question from the chief priests and elders of the people with a question of his own for them, concerning the origin of John's baptism. After hearing their response, Jesus tells a related parable, which concludes with a final reference to the Baptist (v. 32). Naturally, Jesus' dialogue with the religious leaders in vv. 23–27 will be considered, as will the parable he tells in vv. 28–32. After this first parable, however, Jesus tells two more parables, one in Matt 21:33–44 and another in 22:1–14. These latter two parables will also be considered, as there are a number of arguments in favor of thinking that all three parables in this section are intended to be read together. A general discussion on the unity of the extended section and its three parables is taken up first.

To start, Luz lists five reasons to understand these three parables—the Parables of the Two Sons, the Wicked Tenant Farmers, and the Wedding Feast—as constituting a single unit. First, all three are formally linked, each being a parable. The formal similarity is especially pronounced in the case of the first and second parables, after which Jesus "directs a question to his hostile listeners (21:31a, 40). They in turn express their judgment in a 'paradigmatic legal decision' (21:31b, 41) that is used then by Jesus in a formal concluding word (21:31c, 42–44)."[86]

[86] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 20.

Second, Luz argues that the first and third parables "have been inserted into the Markan account."[87] Third, there are similar introductions to the second and third parables that serve to tie all three parables together—"another parable" (ἄλλην παραβολὴν, 21:33a) and "again" (πάλιν, 22:1).[88] Fourth, all three are linked by content and intended impact—"They are directed to the leaders of Israel and pronounce judgment on them."[89] Fifth, there are various keywords that link the three parables together:

> [I]n all three parables, "man" (ἄνθρωπος, 21:28, 33; 22:2); in the first and second parables "vineyard" (ἀμπελών, 21:28, 33), "similarly" (ὡσαύτως, 21:30, 36), "afterward" (ὕστερον, 21:29, 32, 37), "Jesus says to them" (λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς) as an introduction to the concluding statement (21:31, 42), "kingdom of God" (βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, 21:31, 43); in the first and third parables "I will not" (οὐ θέλω, 21:29; 22:3); cf. μεταμέλομαι–ἀμελέω, 21:29, 32; 22:5); and in the second and third parables "he sent his servants" (ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ, 21:34; 22:3), "again he sent other servants" (πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους, 21:36; 22:4), "kill" (ἀποκτείνω, 21:35, 39; 22:6), "son" (υἱός, 21:37–38; 22:2), "destroy" (ἀπόλλυμι, 21:41; 22:7), "parables" (παραβολαί, 21:45; 22:1).[90]

To Luz's five arguments, a few can be added. Carter observes that in context, all three parables respond to the same conflict in the narrative.[91] In addition, Olmstead makes the case that

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[87] Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 20. Though this is a redaction critical argument, the sort of which is not part of this dissertation's approach, it is included here for the sake of carrying the entirety of Luz's argumentation.

[88] Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 20.

[89] Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 20. Others have proposed various specifics going deeper into Luz's general point. For example, Kingsbury takes the theme of judgment, and specifies that "[t]he three parables Jesus narrates bespeak judgment on Israel owing to its repudiation of John the Baptist (21:28–32), of himself (21:33–46), and of his messengers (22:1–10)" (Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 83). Blomberg sees a progression with the three parables, such that "in sequence, they depict God's indictment, sentence, and execution of the present Jewish leadership." For the indictment in the first parable, see esp. Matt 21:31. For the sentence in the second, see esp. Matt 21:41, 43. For the execution in the final parable of the three, see esp. Matt 22:7 (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 320). So Osborne, *Matthew*, 778). France observes that in all three parables, there is "a radical and unexpected reversal of roles." He writes: "In all three parables, two groups of people are contrasted, those who assume that they have a right to their privileged position and those who instead find themselves unexpectedly promoted" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 800).

[90] Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 20.

[91] Warren Carter and John Paul Heil, *Matthew's Parables: Audience–Oriented Perspectives*, CBQMS (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1998), 147. Luz seems to acknowledge the same point, when he writes in a concluding paragraph: "The three parables constitute the first part of Jesus' major reckoning with his opponents in the temple on the second day of his brief stay in Jerusalem. This reckoning is introduced by the brief episode of the cursing of the fig tree early in the morning when Jesus and his disciples again go up to the temple

throughout the Gospel, Matthew demonstrates an inclination to arrange material in groups of three. Because of this observation, he argues that "[t]he formation of the trilogy at 21.28–22:14 certainly corresponds to this tendency."[92] With these arguments for the unity of the section in mind, it seems best to hold the three parables together, and so consider the entirety of Matt 21:23–22:14 in this part of the Baptist's narrative arc.

In context, this passage comes after Jesus clears the temple (Matt 21:12–17) and his symbolic cursing of the fig tree (Matt 21:18–22). Following those events, Jesus returns to the temple and is teaching there.[93] The proceedings of this section—the questioning of Jesus' authority, and what follows—come about in response to Jesus' provocative actions in the temple.[94] At the beginning of the pericope, Jesus is approached by the chief priests and the elders of the people, who confront him by asking: "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" (Matt 21:23). Here, it is the chief priests and elders who speak with Jesus. Turner notes that they "are in charge of the temple, and so it is not surprising that they question Jesus's activities, which presume an authority that overrides their own."[95] Later in the pericope, however, after Jesus has finished with his first two parables, it is the chief priests and Pharisees who have heard his parables and perceive "that he was speaking about them"

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from their night's lodging" (Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 20).

[92] Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39. For Olmstead's full study of triads in Matthew, see pp. 33–39. Assuming that Matthew has constructed this trilogy of parables as a triad, Olmstead will go on to look for redactive seams that give evidence of Matthean redaction (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables,* 40–46). On the notion that a trilogy of parables fits into a larger Matthean pattern of writing things in threes, see also: Carter and Heil, *Matthew's Parables*, 147–48; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 769.

[93] Hagner and Osborne both assert that the beginning of this text occurs on the day following the temple clearing incident. This may well be, but it is not clearly indicated as such in the text, and neither offers any sort of argumentation for the assertion (Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 609; Osborne, *Matthew*, 776).

[94] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 796.

[95] Turner, *Matthew,* 508.

(Matt 21:45–46). After the third parable, it will be the Pharisees who make plans as to how they might "entangle him in his words" (Matt 22:15). Nolland suggests that this narratival interchanging of Jewish religious leaders may be strategic in demonstrating "that in the building opposition to Jesus various groups came together to oppose a common foe."[96]

The question the chief priests and elders ask Jesus concerns his authority—his authority to act and teach as he is, and what he understands to be the source of his authority (Matt 21:23). Though he does not give a direct answer, in what follows, Jesus will give an answer that is clear enough for them to understand. He first responds to the religious leaders' question with a question of his own, promising to answer their question, if they will first answer his: "The baptism of John, where did it come from? From heaven or from man?" (Matt 21:25). Rather than being evasive, "[a] counterquestion in place of a direct answer was an accepted pattern in rabbinic debate, where the second question further opens up the subject raised by the first."[97] Like the question he received, Jesus' question also has to do with authority. However, it is John's authority he asks about, rather than his own. The reference to John's baptism here functions at one level as a synecdoche for John's entire ministry.[98] On another level, though, the reader has not encountered the noun "baptism" (βάπτισμα) at all, let alone in connection with John, since Matt 3:7.[99] As Yamasaki suggests, "[w]ith this reference to John's *baptism*, the narrator prompts a retrospection to ch. 3."[100] More on this connection to the Baptist's first appearance in the

[96] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 857.

[97] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 798–99. So Hagner, who cites as examples *b. Ta'n. 7a* and *b. Sanh. 65b.* (Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 609).

[98] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 858; Osborne, *Matthew,* 776; Turner, *Matthew,* 508 n2.

[99] The related verb βαπτίζω occurs several times in Matt 3 (vv. 6, 11 [2x], 13, 14, 16). In addition, βαπτιστής as a designation for John's particular identity (i.e. John *the Baptist*) occurs a number of times in the intervening chapters of Matthew's Gospel (11:11, 12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13).

[100] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 137. Emphasis original.

narrative in Matt 3 will be explored below.

In asking whether John's authority comes from heaven (a circumlocution for God, cf. "kingdom of heaven") or from man, Jesus sets up a strict dichotomy, the sort of which is not uncommon in Matthew's Gospel.[101] With his question, Jesus is, in effect, also asking the chief priests and elders what they think about his authority. Osborne explains that "[s]ince John was the messianic forerunner, he and Jesus share the same source of authority," and as such, "[t]he two options—heavenly or human—fit Jesus as well as John, and their attitude toward the one will reveal their attitude toward the other."[102]

Before giving a response, the chief priests and elders of the people reason together as to how they should respond. The reader of Matthew's Gospel knows the correct answer, for John was endorsed by heaven via the quotation from Isa 40:3 that introduces his ministry in Matt 3:3. In their deliberations, however, it becomes clear that the chief priests and elders are not interested in determining the correct answer. Rather, as Yamasaki explains, "they put all their efforts into discerning the answer that will best suit their purposes."[103] They seem rightly to ascertain Jesus' intent with the question, for they know that if they answer "from heaven," Jesus will respond by asking: "Why then did you not believe him?" (Matt 21:26). Yet they do not want to answer "from man" for fear of the response. In particular, their hesitancy comes from the fact that the crowd believes John to have been a prophet.

The chief priests and elders vocalize this fear in their private discussion: "[W]e are afraid

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[101] Kingsbury writes: "Characteristic of a gospel–story such as that of Matthew is that the many conflicting evaluative points of view expressed by the various characters can fundamentally be reduced to two, the 'true' and the 'untrue.' The measuring rod for distinguishing truth from untruth is, as Matt. 16:23 indicates, 'thinking the things of God' (as opposed to 'thinking the things of men')" (Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story,* 33). So also Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 136.

[102] Osborne, *Matthew,* 776. So Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 609.

[103] Yamasaki, *John the Baptist,* 138.

of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet" (φοβούμεθα τὸν ὄχλον, πάντες γὰρ ὡς προφήτην ἔχουσιν τὸν Ἰωάννην) (Matt 21:26). In this comment, there are verbal parallels to Herod's reason for not killing John in Matt 14:5. In spite of his desire to do so, Herod did not put John to death for "he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet" (ἐφοβήθη τὸν ὄχλον, ὅτι ὡς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον). In each, the primary clause concerning fearing the crowd begins with a form of φοβέω, followed by the accusative τὸν ὄχλον. Then, in each, a following causal clause features a form of ἔχω, an accusative object referring in each case to John (αὐτὸν / τὸν Ἰωάννην), and then the prepositional phrase ὡς προφήτην. The effect of this parallel is to remind the reader of John's death in Matt 14, and to draw Herod's perception of John in line with that of these Jewish religious leaders. Nolland writes: "The leaders' sentiment here echoes that of Herod in 14:5 and in Matthew's hands tends to tar the present leaders with the same brush as the ruler who had the Baptist executed. Though John had been dead some time, his hold on popular imagination had apparently remained strong."[104]

This same explanation is given as a consideration for the chief priests and Pharisees when they seek to arrest Jesus in Matt 21:46: "they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet" (ἐφοβήθησαν τοὺς ὄχλους, ἐπεὶ εἰς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον). As with John, Jesus is understood by the people to be a prophet (cf. Matt 21:11). As is explored above, there is good and bad with this evaluation of Jesus. There are certainly elements of continuity between his ministry and John's, and there are also elements of Jesus' activities that align with the careers of the Old Testament prophets. Furthermore, the reader expects Jesus to experience the suffering that belongs to the fate of the prophets.

Yet it is also clear that Jesus is more than just a prophet—he is "the Christ, the Son of the

[104] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 859.

living God" (Matt 16:16)! In a way that the narrative has been anticipating, the surprising truth is that although John is greater than a prophet, indeed, Elijah foretold by prophecy (Matt 11:10–11, 13–14), still he died at the hands of violent men (Matt 11:12; 14:3–12). In an even greater way, Jesus the Christ, God's Son, will in his ministry share in John's fate (Matt 17:12).

Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28–32)

The chief priest and elders refuse to answer Jesus' question, and as a result, he refuses to answer theirs. This interchange prompts Jesus to tell a series of parables, the first of which comes in Matt 21:28–30. It is framed by two questions from Jesus: "What do you think?" (v. 28a) and "Which of the two did the will of his father?" (v. 30).[105]

The parable itself has been the subject of significant text critical discussion. There are essentially three prominent versions of the text, the first two of which have substantial manuscript witness. In the first version (Version 1), the first son refuses his father's request but then goes, and the second son agrees to the request but does not go. When asked which one of the sons did the father's will, the Jewish leaders answer: "The first" (ὁ πρῶτος).[106] In the second version (Version 2), the order of the sons is reversed from Version 1, and the response to Jesus' question corresponds to the difference. The first son agrees to the request but does not go, while the second refuses but then goes. This time, when asked which one of the sons did the father's will, the Jewish leaders answer: "The last" (ὁ ἔσχατος) or "the second" (ὁ δεύτερος).[107] In the third version (Version 3), which is notably distinct in meaning from the first two, the first son

[105] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 802.

[106] The manuscript evidence for Version 1 includes: ℵ C L W (Z) Δ 0102 0281 f^{1} 33 *M* f q vg^{ww} $sy^{p,h}$ sa^{mss} mae $Hier^{mss}$.

[107] The manuscript evidence for Version 2 includes: B Θ f^{13} 700, al (lat) sa^{mss} bo $Hier^{mss}$.

refuses but goes, and the second son agrees but then does nothing. This is similar to Version 1, but the distinction comes with the answer to the question of which son did the father's will. Here, the Jewish leaders answer: "The last" (ὁ ἔσχατος).[108]

Of the three, Version 3 is the most difficult reading as it has the Jewish leaders affirming the son who did not actually do the father's will (i.e. working in the vineyard). In many cases, the text critical principle *difficilior lectio potior* would be a guiding principle. In this instance, however, as Metzger suggests, the reading is "not only difficult, it is nonsensical."[109] As a result, he continues, the editorial committee for the UBS Greek New Testament "judged that the origin of [this] reading is due to copyists who either committed a transcriptional blunder or who were characterized by anti–Pharisaic bias."[110]

Between Version 1 and Version 2, then, the former is to be preferred. In terms of external evidence, the witnesses that support Version 1 are "slightly better than those that read [Version

[108] The manuscript evidence for Version 3 includes: D it sy$^{s.(c)}$.

[109] Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 45.

[110] Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 45. Jerome appears to have been aware of this reading, and suggests that the Jewish religious leaders gave Jesus an answer that was purposefully incorrect in order subvert his intentions. This seems unlikely, for as Metzger comments, "such explanations attribute to the Jews, or to Matthew, far–fetched psychological or overly–subtle literary motives" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 45). See also: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 802 n9). A more contemporary defense of this version comes from Michaels, who proposes the parable had an earlier, independent tradition. He also adopts alternate readings for the Greek phrase μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν. The summary of his proposal is as follows: (1) There was an independent version of the parable, perhaps used as an illustration of the statement now found in Matt 7:21. (2) Matthew's use of the parable in this context shifts its emphasis from saying versus doing to the idea of futile regret. (3) The intention of μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν was to express this idea of futile regret, but later scribes added "into the vineyard", moving the meaning of the parable back to its original saying versus doing meaning. (4) The changes from Version 3 to Version 1 or Version 2 represent a scribal misreading (J. Ramsey Michaels, "The Parable of the Regretful Son," *HTR* 61 [1968]: 15–26). In response to Michaels' proposal, Olmstead offers the following cogent counterargument:

> Michaels' argument is intriguing, but fails to convince. His understanding requires that we follow [Version 3] in its surprising answer to Jesus' question (21.31) and in its omission of the negative from 21.32, but *not* in its understanding of μεταμέλεσθαι or ἀπέρχεσθαι, since εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, which follows ἀπέρχεσθαι on this reading, ensures positive connotations for both of these words. In the face of two other well–attested readings that both make fine sense, it seems unnecessarily desperate to appeal to a reading that finds support in no extant MS (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy,* 169).

2].”[111] With regard to internal evidence, there is reasonable argumentation that would suggest Version 1 is a more difficult reading than Version 2, such that the latter can be viewed as an emendation of the former.

As a first argument, though he initially refuses, the first son actually does the work in Version 1. Because of this, Metzger suggests “it could be argued that if the first son obeyed, there was no reason to summon the second.”[112] Thus the order change from Version 1 to Version 2 would make better sense of the circumstances: If the first son agreed, but did not do the work, the second son would need to be sent. While this argument makes some sense, it is not wholly convincing. As Olmstead points out, this reasoning can be turned on its head. For “if the first son had declared himself ready to work, the father would have had no reason to issue the same charge to the second son.”[113] Furthermore, there is no need to assume that only one son need be working in the vineyard.

A second argument is more convincing, which has to do with the historical development of the early church. Gibbs explains: “As the church increasingly became Gentile and as Christian thinkers increasingly spoke of the Jews as rejecting their Messiah and the Gentiles accepting him, it is plausible to imagine a sort of salvation–historical lens through which this parable came to be seen.”[114] Reading through this sort of matrix would result in seeing the son who first agreed but did not go as the Jews, and the son who first refused but then went as the Gentiles. With this sort of hermeneutical approach, the more difficult reading is the one that has them out of

[111] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 46.

[112] Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 46.

[113] Olmstead, *Matthew’s Trilogy,* 171.

[114] Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, ConcC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2018), 1074.

historical sequence, with the son representing the Gentiles coming first, followed by the one representing the Jews. Hence, a reasonable explanation for how the difference between Version 1 and Version 2 arose is that in Version 1 the sequence of the son was changed in order to put them in the expected chronological order.[115]

With these things in mind, Version 1 is the reading taken up here.[116] This is also the reading preferred by NA^{28} and UBS^{4} as well as a number of contemporary English translations.[117]

In terms of the parable itself, aside from the text critical issues, the details are straightforward. In the story, a man has two sons (τέκνα), each of whom he asks to go and work in the vineyard. The first says no, but then has a change of heart and goes, while the second does the opposite. Jesus asks the religious leaders to evaluate "[w]hich of the two did the will of his father?" (v. 31a). The challenge is not with the story itself, but rather how to understand its application in light of the dialogue that follows, in which the Jewish leaders answer "the first" (v. 31b) and Jesus replies: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it,

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[115] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 802 n6; Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1074; Metzger, *Textual Commentary,* 46; Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy,* 171–72; Osborne, *Matthew,* 780 n5.

[116] Elliott surveys the arguments for and against all three versions of this text, and comes to the conclusion that while text critical principles may lead scholars in a certain direction, there are plausible arguments to be made for all three readings. In his conclusion, he writes:

> The purpose in using the illustration of this particular parable as an example of the dilemma textual critics face if their main purpose is to establish one particular form of the text in the New Testament as the 'original' text is to emphasize that in these circumstances an editor of a critical text or a textual critic has the obligation to present in an even–handed way both or all competing variation units, especially if (as in the case of this parable) plausible alternatives exist. Such viable alternatives mean that each is capable of bearing a legitimate meaning—each carries within it a sense which would have been used by its readers (J.K. Elliott, "The Parable of the Two Sons: Text and Exegesis," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel,* ed. A. Denaux [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002], 77).

[117] E.g. KJV, RV, ASV, NAB, JB, NJB, GNB, NIV, RSV, NRSV, ESV.

you did not afterward change your minds and believe him" (vv. 31c–32).

A common approach is to associate the first son with the "tax collectors and prostitutes" and the second son with the chief priests and elders currently in dialogue with Jesus. Like the first son, the notable sinners were first characterized by disobedience, but have now repented and turned to God through their belief in Jesus. Like the second son, the Jewish leaders promised obedience to God, but have shown themselves disobedient by rejecting Jesus, the Son of God. Therefore, with their answer the Jewish leaders have both condemned themselves and identified the tax collectors and prostitutes as those who do God's will.[118]

There are, however, several issues with this reading of the parable. First, this interpretation downplays the significant infraction of a son in a first–century Jewish context rejecting his father in this way, even if he ends up carrying out his father's wishes. As Gibbs writes, "[f]or a child to say no to his father's request as this figure did is no small offense; despite his later change of heart and obedience, the first child remains an ambiguous figure to the sort of hearer/reader that Matthew's Gospel story wanted (and wants) to have."[119] As a result, the best that can be attributed to either son is some degree of partial obedience. Second, in his comments following

[118] A characteristic example of this approach comes from Osborne, who writes:

> The allegorical elements are clear: the father is God, the vineyard is his kingdom community, the first son the outcasts, and the second son the leaders. The sinners turned against God for much of their lives, but have now come back to God (and entered his vineyard) by turning to Jesus. The religious officials originally agreed to do God's will but have now turned their backs on God by rejecting his Son. The obvious turning point in both cases is Jesus (Osborne, *Matthew,* 782).

[119] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1079–80. So Langley, who compares Exod 21:15 and 21:17, and makes the observation that Scripture "puts verbal abuse of a parent on the same footing as physical abuse." He notes further that "[t]he absence of respect in the son who says no to the beard of his father is all the more glaring when it is viewed against the affection with which the father addresses his sons" (Wendell E. Langley, "The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28–32) against Its Semitic and Rabbinic Backdrop," *CBQ* 58 [1996]: 232, 233). Examples of commentators who speak to the insult delivered by the first son to his father by his refusal include: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 803 n8; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 613; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 861–62; Osborne, *Matthew,* 780.

the telling of the parable, Jesus seems to connect the response to the parable's father to the way people responded to John the Baptist.[120] There are, however, no instances in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel in which tax collectors and prostitutes (or related groups) demonstrate initial rejection of John (or Jesus, for that matter). Neither are there instances of chief priests or elders (or other Jewish leaders) demonstrating early acceptance of John (or Jesus), only to later reject him. Therefore, the common approach's parallels do not quite line up with the narrative details. Third, when Jesus responds to the answer given by the Jewish leaders ("the first"), he does not indict the leaders in the parable's terms. That is to say, he does not ask them why they have not acted like the first son, or why they have acted like the second.[121] He in fact makes no direct connection at all.

With these sorts of issues in mind, an alternate interpretation has been put forward by Langley[122] and later Gibbs.[123] With the parable, Jesus presents "a first–century Palestinian audience with a choice between two viable alternatives. For making the choice, there is, initially at least, no obviously correct answer."[124] The reason for this is, as mentioned, that each son demonstrates a mix of both obedience and disobedience in his response to his father. Yet, with whichever son the Jewish leaders choose as the one who "did the will of his father" (Matt 21:31),

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[120] Dennert observes that "the application seems to equate John with the father of the parable, a figure one would typically associate with God" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 106). This could be viewed as problematic, given the obvious fact that John is not God, nor is he the Son of God. However, John's message and ministry are not done of his own accord, but rather, as a prophet, John is a spokesman for God. John is expressly given divine authorization in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel through the various Scriptural quotes and allusions connected to his activities (e.g. Matt 3:3; 11:10). Therefore, response to (or rejection of) John's message amounts to response to (or rejection of) God.

[121] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1078.

[122] Langley, "Parable of the Two Sons," 228–43.

[123] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1078–81.

[124] Langley, "Parable of the Two Sons," 234. Contra France, who writes: "Jesus' question thus allows only one reasonable answer, which the Jewish leaders duly provide" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 804).

they will have condemned themselves. For unlike the two sons in the parable, they have neither responded appropriately at the first (like the second son), nor have they repented of their initial refusal and acted appropriately later (like the first son). Jesus' intention with the question, then, seems to be an argument from the lesser to the greater. Langley summarizes:

> Jesus presents a situation in which each son is partly obedient, partly disobedient, and neither is totally obedient, totally disobedient. Thus Jesus grounds his use of the *qal wāḥômer* [lesser to the greater], for if we admit that, by implication, either son failed to do the will of the father (though each is obedient on one of two accounts), how much more so a son who is disobedient on both accounts. Jesus is free to dog his adversaries, whichever way they jump.[125]

More specifically, in terms of what Jesus says after their answer, the initial failure is a lack of believing response to John as he called for repentance in light of the coming kingdom of heaven. Yet, their failure to respond with belief has continued in spite of observing the unfolding response to John's message. Gibbs writes:

> What the religious leaders should have done was to repent and believe the message of John the Baptizer in the first place! Even after refusing John at first, the sight of the marginal and the outcasts of Israel coming to John for baptism, for faith, and for expectation of the reign of God in the Coming One could have caused them to come to their senses, change their minds and hearts, and believe. This second opportunity, however, has also come and gone.[126]

There is one other item of note to observe concerning the Two Sons parable before moving forward, and it has to do with the parable's setting. The father asks each of his sons to go work "in the vineyard" (Matt 21:28, 30). The next parable Jesus tells will also involve a vineyard, and there, the parable's vineyard will be connected to the vineyard of Isa 5. To this end, France writes of the Two Sons parable: "[T]his is already the second vineyard parable (cf. 20:1–16), and another will immediately follow. There it will become clear that the vineyard is a symbol of

[125] Langley, "Parable of the Two Sons," 242.

[126] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1080.

Israel, based on Isaiah's famous analogy … so that it would not be difficult for Matthew's readers to transfer the same symbolism to this story and so to apply it to God's plans for the care of his people."[127] The Isaianic background for the vineyard imagery will be explored below in the discussion of Jesus' second parable (Matt 21:33–44).

In describing the Jewish religious leaders' rejection of the Baptist, Jesus explains that "John came to you in the way of righteousness (ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης)" (Matt 21:32). Matthew's use of δικαιοσύνη ("righteousness") is engaged with above in the discussion on Matt 3:15. Contrary to Przybylski,[128] and scholars who follow after him,[129] Matthew's Gospel does not appear to have a uniform 'ethical demand' usage of δικαιοσύνη. Instead, Matthew uses the term in different ways in different contexts, for as Hagner has argued, "no author is obligated to use any word consistently in only one sense or with the same meaning."[130] In some instances, δικαιοσύνη does rather clearly seem to have the meaning of human righteousness corresponding to ethical demand. For example, in Matt 5:20, Jesus tells his disciples that their δικαιοσύνη must surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Or, in Matt 6:1, Jesus cautions his disciples not to practice their δικαιοσύνη in front of others to be seen by them. In other instances, however, δικαιοσύνη appears to mean God's righteousness, i.e. his gracious actions in redemptive history. It is argued above that Matt 3:15 is an example of this latter meaning.[131]

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[127] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 803.

[128] Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[129] E.g. Davies and Allison who write, specifically in consideration of Matt 3:15: "Yet because, with the possible exception of 5.6, δικαιοσύνη seems in Matthew to be uniform in meaning—moral conduct in accord with God's will … —, we are inclined to define the 'righteousness' of 3.15 as moral conduct" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 1:327). So also Luz, *Matthew 1–7,* 177–79.

[130] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 110.

[131] Hagner offers the following reasons for this interpretation: (1) There is no command in the OT regarding baptism, therefore it would be difficult to understand John baptizing Jesus as fulfilling righteousness. (2) If δικαιοσύνη is taken to mean ethical demand, because the phrase "all righteousness" (πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην) is used,

This brings us to the use of δικαιοσύνη in the phrase ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης in Matt 21:32. On the one hand, the phrase "way of righteousness" or some variance of it appears a number of times in the Old Testament, there generally with an 'ethical demand' understanding. So Hagner writes: "The phrase occurs in the LXX, where it regularly means practiced righteousness (e.g. Prov. 21.16, 21; but more frequently in the plural ['ways' or 'paths of righteousness]: 8.20; 12.28; 16.17, 31; and 17.23)."[132] On the other hand, there are several good reasons to understand δικαιοσύνη being used in Matt 21:32 in a redemptive historical sense. First, as Gibbs observes: "Given the reference to 'John's baptism' in 21:25, scholars often make their prior interpretation of 3:15 a determinative factor in how they read the way of righteousness' in 21:32."[133] So the reading there should influence the reading here. Second, in the context, the focus in Jesus' words is not narrowly on ethical behavior, but rather more broadly on belief. In fact, in v. 32, the verb πιστεύω is used three times, when Jesus says to the Jewish leaders: "[Y]ou did not *believe* him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes *believed* him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and *believe* him" (Matt 21:32b, emphasis mine). Hagner asserts that "[t]he implicit appeal to the chief priests and Pharisees in this passage is not that they should do a better job at being righteous, but that they too should believe in, and accept the gift of, the dawning of the kingdom of God now inaugurated by Jesus, of whom and of which John was the forerunner."[134]

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the act of baptism would have to be reckoned as "constituting the whole of righteousness" or "the last of a host of commandments now regarded as obeyed." (3) If the ethical righteousness of Jesus is in view, the reader would expect Jesus to describe the act as fitting "for me" (ἐμοί), rather than "for us" (ἡμῖν) (Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 116).

[132] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 117.

[133] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1081.

[134] Hagner, "Righteousness in Matthew's Theology," 117–18.

With this in mind, the similar usage of δικαιοσύνη in Matt 3:15 and 21:32 functions to draw the two passages together for the reader. Both passages focus on John, and Matt 21:23–22:14 is the only other place in the Gospel that explicitly mentions his baptizing activity. Furthermore, the "way of righteousness" language concerning John "recalls the use of Isa 40:3 to introduce John's ministry as 'preparing the way of the Lord' (Matt 3:3; cf. 11:10)."[135]

In addition to these specific connections with the phrase "the way of righteousness," Dennert observes a number of other connections between Matt 3:1–17 and 21:23–22:14. First, the crowd's favorable opinion of John, reported in Matt 21:26 "reflects John's popularity with the people displayed in 3:5–6." Second, there is a vineyard theme present in the first two parables of the trilogy (Matt 21:28–32; 21:33–46). Dennert sees this theme as relating "to John's preaching on the necessity for 'fruit' and judgment coming upon those who do not bear 'fruit' (3:7–10), with the judgment that the teaching parables highlight (21:33–46; 22:1–14) reminiscent of John's teaching on judgment (3:7, 10) and the ability for God to raise up children to Abraham (3:9)." Finally, references to the "kingdom" (Matt 21:31, 43; 22:2) reflect the subject of John's preaching (Matt 3:2).[136]

The effect of this is to see these two passages (Matt 3:1–17 and 21:23–22:14) as connected in the Baptist's narrative arc—the first and last mention of John in the Gospel—and to read the two passages in tandem with one another. In the former passage, John anticipates that Jesus will come as an eschatological judge, and finds that his expectations are not immediately fulfilled. Yet in the latter passage, Jesus does in fact take on the role of eschatological judge, declaring

[135] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 96.

[136] Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 96. Dennert will further argue that Matt 21:23–32 "recalls key words and themes in previous passages discussing the Baptist in Matthew synthesizing the Gospel's portrayal of John the Baptist and thus helping reveal his function in the work" (Dennert, *John the Baptist,* 96). The specific points he makes are mentioned at various points elsewhere in the present work.

judgment on Israel's religious leaders even as John expected he would in Matt 3:11–12. This affirms that while John's expressed viewpoint was incomplete at an earlier point in the narrative, he was not incorrect in what he believed about Jesus. Though even Jesus' manifestations of judgment arrive in unexpected nature. For while he declares judgment, that judgment is not directly enacted at this moment in the narrative. Even more pointedly, Jesus' authoritative description of John's ministry—that he came in "the way of righteousness"—both validates John's ministry and underscores the paradoxical character of the eschatological work of both John and the one with whom John fulfilled all righteousness (Matt 3:15). As John's walking the way of God's righteousness led to his death, so even more will that be true of Jesus, whose sandals John was "not worthy to carry" (Matt 3:12).

Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers (Matthew 21:33–46)

After these words, the present narrative continues with Jesus exhorting those in attendance to "hear another parable" (Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἀκούσατε) (v. 33). These words serve to introduce the parable, and then one could see two structural endpoints, which are not mutually exclusive. The first endpoint occurs after v. 39, when Jesus completes the initial telling of the parable and turns in v. 40 to ask those in attendance about what would happen next.[137] The second endpoint occurs with v. 41, after Jesus has played out the end of the parable in dialogue with those listening.[138] The structure for the parable proper, as laid out by Davies and Allison, "consists of an introduction (v. 33b, the setting) followed by a series of three actions and three responses (vv. 34–9)." (1) Action—The master of the house sends servants (v. 34) / Response—The tenants

[137] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:174–75; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 34–35.

[138] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1091.

beat one, kill another, stone another (v. 35). (2) Action—The master of a house sends other servants (v. 36a) / Response—The tenants do the same to these servants (v. 36b). (3) Action—The master of a house sends his son / Response—The tenants kill the son (vv. 38–39).[139]

The introduction to the parable in Matt 21:33b alludes to Isa 5:2, the opening of Isaiah's vineyard song. The grounding for this comes in the similarities of a number of phrases in the Greek of Matthew and the LXX of Isa 5:2. Those phrases are: "planted a vineyard"—ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα (Matthew) / ἐφύτευσα ἄμπελον σωρηχ (LXX Isaiah, cf. MT וַיְּטָעֶהוּ שֹׂרֵק), "put a fence around it"—φραγμὸν αὐτῷ περιέθηκεν (Matthew) / φραγμὸν περιέθηκα (LXX Isaiah), "dug a winepress"—ὤρυξεν ἐν αὐτῷ ληνὸν (Matthew) / προλήνιον ὤρυξα ἐν αὐτῷ (LXX Isaiah), and "built a tower"— ᾠκοδόμησεν πύργον (Matthew) / ᾠκοδόμησα πύργον ἐν μέσῳ αὐτοῦ/ (LXX Isaiah).

There are two major distinctions between the LXX of Isa 5:2 and Matt 21:33b. The first is that the verbs in the LXX are all first person verbs, while the verbs in Matthew's parable are in the third person. The verbs in the Hebrew of the MT, however, are also in the third person. Given this data, Nolland describes the two most likely reasons for Matthew's use of the third person: "Though the needs of the Gospel parable could account for the move from the LXX's first person to the MT's third person, MT influence is more likely. A mixed LXX, MT influence seems, therefore, to stand behind the parable."[140] With this quote, Nolland appears to be pitting the two explanations—needs of the Gospel's parable and MT influence—against one another. Though his general conclusion seems likely, the two explanations need not be mutually exclusive. In telling the parable, Jesus would not use first person verbs forms, for as will be

[139] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:174.

[140] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 869.

argued shortly, he is the son in the parable. So third person verbs are required to tell of the house–master's vineyard work. With this in mind, assuming awareness of a Hebrew version of Isa 5:2, it seems natural enough to reach for language from the Hebrew in alluding to Isa 5 while crafting the parable. This is not to say, of course, that Matthew's version should be read as originating exclusively from a protomasoretic Hebrew text, as there are details that are better suited to a LXX reading (e.g. the fencing of the vineyard).

The second distinction comes with the order of the events described in each verse. The LXX of Isa 5:2 features this order: Fence put around, trench dug, vineyard planted, tower built, winepress dug. Matthew's parable rearranges the details in this order: Vineyard planted, fence put around, winepress dug, tower built (no trench dug).[141]

In the context of Isaiah's version, the prophet speaks of "my beloved" as the owner of the vineyard, who carefully plants the vineyard and makes provision for its wellbeing (vv. 1–2a). In v. 7, the owner of the vineyard is identified as Yahweh of hosts, and the vineyard itself is "the house of Israel, and the men of Judah." Instead of producing good grapes, the vineyard produces "wild grapes." The Hebrew word rendered "wild grapes" in the ESV and other translations is the noun בְּאֻשִׁים, which could also be understood as "sour grapes" or "rotten grapes."[142] The LXX translates the word with ἀκάνθας ("thorns"). In vv. 3–4, the people of Jerusalem and Judah are called to judge who is at fault in the situation, for the vineyard's owner has seemingly done everything needed for the vineyard to yield good grapes. Then, in vv. 5–6, the reader finds what it is that the vineyard's owner will do. As a result of its failure to produce good grapes, Oswalt

[141] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:178; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 620.

[142] Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon,* s.v. בְּאֻשׁ. Cf. BDB, s.v. בְּאֻשִׁים. Oswalt suggests that in Isa 5:8–25, "Isaiah specifies the 'wild grapes' which Israel has produced. They include greed (vv. 8–10), debauchery (vv. 11–12), arrogance (vv. 18, 19), perversion (vv. 20, 21), and injustice (vv. 22–23)" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39,* 156).

explains, “he will not merely abandon his worthless vineyard, he will also assist in its destruction.”[143] This is a picture of the Lord’s judgment, for “he looked for justice, but behold bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold an outcry!” (Isa 5:7).

With this in mind, why does Matthean Jesus frame this parable with language that is allusive to Isaiah’s vineyard song? Concerning the function of this connection, Gibbs asserts that “the single purpose of the allusions to Isa 5 seems to be to identify the vineyard in Jesus’ parable as Israel and to introduce an ominous note of judgment.”[144] As a related assessment, then, the master of the house in Matthew’s parable, who planted the vineyard and saw to its preparations, should be identified as God.[145] From this point, though, Jesus’ parable departs from its Isaianic foundation, with a series of details not present in the original. Luz writes: “Thus in contrast to the old story from Isa 5, as early as the end of v. 33 Jesus’ story moves in a new direction. The old story did not speak of leasing and tenants. Thus Jesus tells a new story about the ‘old vineyard.’”[146]

As mentioned in the above quotation, Jesus’ parable departs from the pattern in Isa 5 immediately after the wording of the introduction (21:33b); unlike Isa 5, the vineyard owner leases it to tenant farmers. These tenant farmers, as will be developed in the parable and ensuing discussion, are meant to represent Israel’s religious leaders.[147] The chief priests and Pharisees recognize this identification in v. 45. The master of the house first sends two rounds of servants

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[143] Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 154.

[144] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1092. France notes that “[t]he picture of Israel as God’s vine is also familiar from other OT passages (Ps 80:8–16; Isa 27:2–6; Jer 2:21; 12:10; Ezek 15:2–6; 19:1–14)” (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 811 n20).

[145] Nolland writes: “The link with Is. 5:2 immediately confirms that God is to be identified with the landowner. It also makes virtually certain that the vineyard is to be identified with the Jewish people, established as a people by the efforts of God himself” (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 869–70).

[146] Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 40.

[147] See: Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1089–90.

to collect fruit of the harvest from the tenant farmers. In each case, the servants are violently mistreated (vv. 35–36). The servants sent to the vineyard should be understood to be prophets. Olmstead makes two arguments to this effect. First, the Greek of "his servants," τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ, recalls the common LXX language of "his servants, the prophets" (οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ οἱ προφῆται). Olmstead writes:

> Both δοῦλος and δοῦλοι are found in the LXX in descriptions of the prophets. But the phrase οἱ δοῦλοι (or παῖδες) αὐτοῦ οἱ προφῆται becomes especially common in describing the collective ministry of the prophets. Cf. 1 Kgs. 14.18; 15.29; 2 Kgs. 9.7, 36; 10.10; 14.25; 17.13, 23; 21.10; 24.2; Ezra 9.11; Isa. 20.3; 44.26; 50.10; Jer. 7.25; 25.4; 33(26).5; 29.19; 42(35).15; 51(44).4; Ezek. 38.17; Dan. 9.6, 10; Amos 3.7; Zech. 1.6.[148]

Second, reading of the servants' violent fate "echoes a common Jewish motif and anticipates 23.37,"[149] where Jesus laments: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills (ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα)[150] the prophets and stones (καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα) those who are sent to it!" (Matt 23:37). The verbs for "killing" and "stoning" are also descriptors of how the servants in the parable are treated by the tenant farmers (ἀπέκτειναν and ἐλιθοβόλησαν, 21:35).

The master of the house sends two groups of servants to the vineyard. As interpretive options, Osborne suggests that the second group, the "other servants" (ἄλλους δούλους), "could refer to the latter prophets of future generations, or they could refer to the NT prophets and apostles (including John the Baptist, as in 21:24–26) sent to Israel." Furthermore, he writes that "[m]ost commentators opt for the former, but the latter does fit the many missions Jesus'

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[148] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy,* 112 n74. See also: Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 620–21*;* Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 40.

[149] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 112.

[150] As a feminine singular articular participle, ἀποκτείνουσα functions as an attributive participle modifying the feminine Ἰερουσαλὴμ (see: Wallace, *Greek Grammar,* 617–18). λιθοβολοῦσα, joined by the conjunction καὶ, carries the same force. The ESV likely supplies "the city" for the sake of clarity. A more wooden rendering would be something like: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who/which kills the prophets…"

disciples took by themselves or with him."[151] The problem with either of these options, however, is chronological in nature. At the end of the parable the son (Jesus) is killed by the tenant farmers, while the second group of servants is sent and violently mistreated prior to the sending of the son. This would seem to rule out both prophets of future generations, as well New Testament prophets and apostles (save John the Baptist, if he is included). A better understanding is simply to see the two groups of servants as representing the long succession of Old Testament prophets sent by God. As France suggests, "Matthew's two groups of slaves do not seem to be allegorically motivated."[152]

Though he appears in the New Testament, John the Baptist belongs in a group with the mistreated servants in the parable. Olmstead writes:

> In a narrative that has repeatedly (and recently) underlined both John the Baptist's prophetic vocation (11.9–10; 14.5; 21.26) and his rejection (3.7–10; 11:16–19; 21:23–32) and execution (14.1–12, cf. 17.10–13), the reader naturally locates John in this line of rejected prophets. … As successor to the prophets' ministry to Israel, the Baptist has also become a successor to their destiny.[153]

With this association, the reader once again sees John suffering the fate of the prophets. This is a theme that has been explored elsewhere in the dissertation, and here again serves something of an explanatory function in the Gospel. How is it that eschatological Elijah could be arrested and killed? How is it that a violent man such as Herod (cf. Matt 11:12) could so impose his will on

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[151] Osborne, *Matthew,* 788. As France notes in a footnote:

> Some commentators surprisingly refer to the "former" and "latter" prophets, but in normal Jewish usage these terms refer not to two phases of prophecy but to two types of "prophetic" book, the "former prophets" being the histories from Joshua to Kings. And the distinction between preexilic and postexilic prophets is one more familiar to modern scholarship than to Jewish usage, nor were the postexilic prophets more numerous (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 812 n23).

[152] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 812–13. Cf. Gibbs, who writes that if the groups of servants represents Old Testament prophets, "then the parable severely telescopes many centuries of biblical history" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1093–94).

[153] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 112.

one with such a significant role in the advent of the kingdom? The answer is that even though John is "a prophet," and even "more than a prophet" on account of his role as the great prophetic preparer (Matt 11:9–10), he remains a prophet, and as such will suffer their fate.

In the unit, after sending two rounds of servants who are beaten, killed, and stoned, the master of the house sends his son. If the reader has understood the master of the house to be God, then seeing the parable's son as Jesus seems a natural connection to make.[154] For by this point in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel, the reader has on multiple occasions encountered Jesus identified as God's Son (Matt 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5).[155] With this in mind, the details of the parable highlight again certain aspects of continuity and discontinuity between John and Jesus. In the parable, both the servants and the son suffer a violent end. Nevertheless, the distinction is clear: Though the son follows the same path as the servants, and endures a similar fate, the son is not one of the servants. Within the similarities, the differences stand out in sharper relief. Olmstead writes:

> In the parable of The Tenants, the reader learns once more of Jesus' impending fate: like John, the prophet Jesus from Nazareth (21:11, cf. 21:46) will die at the hands of the Jewish establishment (21.37–39). But if, as elsewhere in Matthew's narrative, Jesus walks the path that the forerunner had previously walked, then, as elsewhere, he does so in a manner that transcends his predecessor. Whereas John meets his destiny as δοῦλος θεοῦ, Jesus meets his as υἱος θεοῦ.[156]

The remainder of the unit plays out in dialogue between Jesus and his interlocutors (21:40–

[154] To be sure, as with most parables, if the details are pressed hard enough, the metaphor breaks down. As Hagner notes, the Jewish religious leaders that will plot to kill Jesus "did not recognize him as the son or the heir, nor did they anticipate receiving anything by doing away with him; instead they moved against him as a dangerous charlatan whose false claims had to be stopped" (Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 621).

[155] So Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 621; Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy,* 112–113. Kingsbury makes the case that though the reader would know Jesus to be the Son of God from various moments in the narrative, "Jesus' narration of this parable is the place where the claim that he is the Son of God is for the first time pointedly advanced in public" (Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen and the Secret of Jesus' Divine Sonship in Matthew: Some Literary–Critical Observations," *JBL* 105 [1986]: 646). For Kingsbury's argumentation on this point, see pp. 646–52.

[156] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 113.

44). Rather than simply describe the response of the master of the house, Jesus draws them in by asking what the owner of the vineyard will do to the tenant farmers when he comes (v. 40). This parable that begins with an allusion to Isaiah's vineyard song may feature an additional one at the end as well, perhaps to make the connection to Isaiah's text clear. In v. 40, Jesus asks the question "What will he do to those tenants?" (τί ποιήσει τοῖς γεωργοῖς ἐκείνοις). This language is comparable to the Lord's words in the LXX of Isa 5:5: "And now I will tell you *what I will do to my vineyard*" (τί ποιήσω τῷ ἀμπελῶνί μου).[157]

In response to this question, the Jewish leaders give an answer that is not unreasonable:[158] "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (Matt 21:41).

One of the surprising aspects of the parable is the strangeness of the house–master's behavior. Gibbs identifies three specific elements. First, he demonstrates "inexplicable patience" in sending a second group of servants after the first one has been mistreated in violent fashion. Second, he then "displays a baffling attitude" in sending his son to the same tenant farmers who have demonstrated great capacity for wickedness, now with two sets of servants, "with only the declaration 'they will respect my son' (21:37)." Third, from the response in v. 41 to Jesus' question, it becomes known that all along the house–master "had the wherewithal to punish the tenant farmers for their violence, and yet he refrained from doing so until the final straw, the murder of his son."[159]

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[157] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 875.

[158] Osborne writes of the answer from the Jewish leaders: "Their response is to be expected. When a group of tenants beats and kill the messengers and then has the gall to execute even the son and heir of the estate, they should expect no mercy from the 'master' of the estate. They have committed ultimate 'evil' and should expect 'evil' punishment in return" (Osborne, *Matthew,* 789).

[159] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1093.

This particular strangeness may serve something of an apologetic function. How is it that the kingdom has broken in with the ministries of John and Jesus, yet God does not intervene to act in judgment when John is killed, and Jesus appears to be on a path to a similar end? Perhaps this parable offers an image to make sense of it in showing that a delayed house–master is not the same as one who will never come.[160] Nolland explains that a pattern develops with the parable of mediated action alone, and that when that pattern is interrupted by the personal arrival of the master of the house, it has the appearance of being unexpected. He writes of the effect: "The strategy is intended to identify as illusion any perception of God as remote and therefore ultimately powerless."[161] Thus this parable, which features allusions to Isa 5, serves as another instance in which Isaiah is used to shape expectations for John, for Jesus, and for the nature of the kingdom's surprising in-breaking.

After the Jewish leaders respond to his question, Jesus speaks. His first words do not immediately offer commentary on the parable, but rather begin with an interjected Scripture quotation that will then lead into his explanatory comments.[162] Before quoting Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23], Jesus asks: "Have you never read in the Scriptures…" (Matt 21:42a). The same introductory phrase occurs earlier in the near context, in Matt 21:16. It is not a question of whether they are aware of the text generally, but rather a challenge as to whether they have rightly understood and applied its meaning.[163]

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[160] It could be said that this parable responds to the question given voice at the end of Mal 2:17: "Where is the God of justice?" In Malachi, this question prompts the response in Mal 3:1–5 in which the LORD of hosts promises to first send his preparatory messenger in advance of the coming of the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant (v. 1). Ultimately, however, it is Yahweh of hosts himself who arrives to act as a swift witness against the wicked (v. 5).

[161] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 875.

[162] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 814.

[163] Osborne, *Matthew,* 790.

The form of Matthew's citation of Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] is repeated verbatim from the LXX. In the broader context, there may be further verbal connections between the parable proper and the Psalm citation. A number of scholars have suggested a possible wordplay between the Hebrew words for "son" (בֵּן, Matt 21:37–38) and "stone" (אֶבֶן, Matt 21:42, cf. v. 44).[164] The implication of such a wordplay would be further to solidify the connection between the son of the parable and the stone rejected by the builders. In addition to this, Davies and Allison offer possible Greek "catchword connexions with the immediate context (λίθον, cf. v. 35; οἰκοδομοῦντες, cf. v. 33; κυρίου, cf. v. 40)."[165]

In its original context, Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] appears in the midst of a psalm celebrating God's deliverance of his people from their enemies. At this point, the psalmist employs an image that speaks of a stone rejected by builders that ends up being the cornerstone (v. 22)—an occurrence seen as marvelous (v. 23) and one that leads to great rejoicing and gladness (v. 24). In the psalm, the rejected stone, which becomes the cornerstone likely refers to Israel.[166] If this reading is correct, in the context of the psalm, the builders would best be

[164] E.g. Snodgrass, who asserts that the citation from Psalm 118 "is bound inextricably to the parable through the wordplay" (Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,* WUNT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983], 118). So also Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 622; Osborne, *Matthew,* 790. Admittedly, the likelihood of such a wordplay is reduced by the fact that it would require Matthew to be alluding to Hebrew while apparently citing a Greek version of the Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] text.

[165] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:185. So Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 877.

[166] DeClaissé–Walford describes Ps 118 as "an individual hymn of thanksgiving, but the words of the individual hymn–singer are woven into … the liturgy of the gathered worship community. Thus, the psalmic voice moves back and forth between the singular and the plural, as the individual worshipper approaches God in the context of corporate worship with thanks for deliverance from trouble." With this in mind, she suggests that the stone rejected by the builders in v. 22 may be an individual, "the psalm–singer, who has not been cast off, but has become a *cornerstone*, an essential element in the construction of the life of the ancient Israelite faithful" (Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms,* NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 517, 520 [emphasis original]). However, the choice between an individual and the gathered people of God may be a false choice—in need of distinction, but not separation. Longman explains that in the psalm

> [t]he interaction between the individual psalmist and the congregation is easy to explain if the psalmist is a leader of a group that has been saved. He thanks God for saving him, but his rescue is in the context of the rescue of the group. It is possible, but not necessary, to think of the psalmist as the king or the head of the

identified with "the nations" of vv. 10–13. The connection, then, between the rejected stone of Ps 118 [LXX 117] and Jesus is typological. As with the rejected son in the parable, Jesus, like Israel, is cast aside. And if the builders are indeed to be identified as "the nations," as Gibbs asserts, "[g]reat enemies have come against Jesus; the chief priests and the elders are cast in the role of the heathen nations who tried to destroy Israel long ago."[167]

In this regard, Jesus' use of Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] takes the conclusion of the parable a step further. In their response to Jesus' question, the Jewish religious leaders speak (reasonably) of the vineyard owner coming to seek justice for the death of his son (Matt 21:41). However, with the connection between the parable's son and the rejected stone, the reader sees not only retribution for the son, but his exaltation. For in the psalm, the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone.[168] Olmstead writes: "The lord of the vineyard is not content to bring vengeance

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army. … In the final analysis, it is best to see this as a corporate thanksgiving, although an individual leads in expressing gratitude on behalf of himself and the whole congregation.

Thus Longman will characterize the rejected stone as the people of God, when they were hard–pressed. (Tremper Longman, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary,* TOTC [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014], 399, 401). Cf. Goldingay, who characterizes the stone as the "leader of little Israel, or little Israel itself" (John Goldingay, *Psalms 90–150* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 362). With the possible focus of reading the "stone" as an individual, some have specified that the referent is David, or more generally a Davidic king. For example, Blomberg suggests that "the rejected–but–now–honored stone would represent how close the king had come to death, followed by God's salvation in making him victorious (118:15–18)" (Blomberg, "Matthew," 73). While possible, this may be pressing the details of the psalm too far in trying to specify something that the psalm does not itself specify.

[167] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1096. Gibbs further describes this typological connection: "In the place of the nation stands Jesus, who in himself sums up the history and carries out the true vocation of God's son; he is Israel reduced to one" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1096).

[168] There is some discussion as how to best understand the descriptor κεφαλὴν γωνίας (lit. "head of the corner," cf. Heb. רֹאשׁ פִּנָּה). Osborne summarizes: "It is debated whether the 'cornerstone' (κεφαλὴν γωνίας) is the foundation stone of a building at its bottom corner (*EDNT,* 1:268; Morris) or the keystone at the top of an arch (Jeremias, Derrett, Carson, Hagner) or at the top of the wall holding two walls together (*NIDNTT,* 3:389–90, Luz, Cahill). A growing number (France, Ridderbos, Wilkins, Keener, Nolland) believe it does not matter" (Osborne, *Matthew,* 790). The present author best fits in the last category, as any three of these understandings would carry the notion that a thrown out stone has become one of great importance (cf. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 877). If pressed, Davies and Allison's argument for either option two or three seems most convincing, in particular their note that "Ps 118.22 is, in T. Sol. 22–3, quoted of the stone that completes Solomon's temple" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 2:185). One could not complete a building with a stone set in its bottom foundation. Of small note, if read this way, the notions of exaltation take on both a literal and figurative sense.

on his son's murderers. He proceeds to vindicate and exalt the rejected son."[169]

After quoting from Ps 118 [LXX 117], Jesus offers further commentary on the parable and the quotation by explaining: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing fruits" (Matt 21:43). With this verse, there is an initial distinction to make. As argued above, in the parable the vineyard is Israel. However, as Gibbs observes, "the vineyard is *not* taken away from the wicked tenants. Rather, they are destroyed, and then the vineyard, which needs overseers and tenant farmers, begins to be cared for by different people."[170] Hence, when Jesus speaks to the religious leaders, he does not tell them that Israel will be taken away from them, but rather the kingdom of God.[171] The kingdom is not Israel, but in Jesus the Christ, the kingdom has come for the sake of Israel. And for those who will receive it, blessings abound (cf. Matt 9:15a; 11:5–6). The advent of the kingdom of heaven was first announced in the Gospel by John (Matt 3:2), but the religious leaders rejected John, even as they have Jesus. They had oversight of the vineyard, but when the son drew near, they killed him. Because of this, Gibbs explains, "[t]he blessings of the reign of God will be taken away from them. Others will receive those blessings and that reign. As a result, the vineyard will produce fruit and those who tend the vineyard will offer the fruit to the Father through the Son in the Spirit."[172]

Jesus says that the kingdom will be given "to a people producing fruit." Who is this

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[169] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 116. So Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:185 and Gibbs, who comments: "The fact that the stone which the builders did, in fact, reject has now been exalted to the position of capstone proclaims directly to Jesus' enemies and all those who have ears to hear that their opposition to God's Son will not succeed" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1096).

[170] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1097 n40 (emphasis original).

[171] Examples of those who equate the vineyard/Israel with the kingdom of God include: Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:176 n9; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 620; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 42.

[172] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1097.

"people" (ἔθνος)? Luz makes a careful distinction in the way the term should be understood. He writes:

> We should identify this term neither with "the Gentiles"—that is, τοῖς ἔθνεσιν—nor with "the church." Matthew could have said the latter directly, for example with "to the church" (τῇ ἐκκλησία). Clearly he wanted to define "nation" not sociologically but with the addition of "that brings its fruits." The prospect of the kingdom thus depends upon the bringing of fruits—stated clearly, on obeying the Father's will and on love.[173]

The key identifying feature of this ἔθνος, then, is the production of fruit. This harkens back to the beginning of the Baptist's narrative arc, with his annunciation of the kingdom's drawing near in Matt 3:2. In that passage, after seeing the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the place he was baptizing, John warns: "*Produce fruit* in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8, emphasis mine). Identification as physical descendants of Abraham will not suffice, for "out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham" (Matt 3:9). Furthermore, John declares: "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not *produce good fruit* will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 3:10, emphasis mine). At various points, John seems taken aback by the nature of Jesus ministry (e.g. Matt 3:14; 9:14; 11:2–3). This is, at least in part, due to the fact that Jesus is not acting as an eschatological judge. It appears that with Jesus declaration in Matt 21:41 John's warning has, at least in some sense, come to pass with the announced transference of the kingdom of God from the religious leaders to "a people producing its fruits." To be clear, Jesus does not here speak of a transfer of the kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles.[174] Rather, this

[173] Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 42–43.

[174] So Gibbs, who writes: "It is a misreading of the parable, however, to conclude that 'the time of the Jews' is over and that 'the times of the Gentiles' have now come. Historically, of course, the disciples of Jesus quickly become largely Gentile, although perhaps not as quickly as is sometimes assumed. … This parable, however, does not directly concern itself with that reality" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1098).

ἔθνος speaks of a multiethnic group, defined by belief in Jesus and production of fruit for the kingdom.[175]

There is debate over whether v. 44 should be included in Matt 21. The argument against its inclusion is based on its omission in a number of manuscripts (D 33 it sy^{s}; Or Eus^{sys}), and its apparent harmony with Luke 20:18. The theory is that v. 44 is "an early interpolation (from Lk 20.18) into most manuscripts of Matthew,"[176] a scribal attempt to harmonize the two. There are, however, good arguments for its inclusion. First, though omitted in some manuscripts, the reading has a strong textual witness (א B C L W Z (Θ) 0102 *f* $^{1.13}$ 𝔐 lat sy$^{c.p.h}$ co).[177] Second, though very similar to Luke 20:18, the text is not identical, particularly in the beginning half of each. The first portion of Matt 21:44 reads καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλασθήσεται, whereas the first portion of Luke 20:18 reads πᾶς ὁ πεσὼν ἐπ᾽ ἐκεῖνον τὸν λίθον συνθλασθήσεται.[178] Third, as France asserts, if an intentional assimilation to Luke, "one would expect an insertion into Matthew to be made after v. 42 (which would correspond to its position in Luke) rather than after v. 43 where it is separated from the stone quotation to which it relates."[179] Finally, as Metzger suggests, "[i]ts omission can perhaps be accounted for when the eye of the copyist passed from αὐτῆς (ver. 43) to αὐτόν."[180] With these things in mind, v. 44 is included here as original.

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[175] Olmstead writes: "This nation that God raises up in faithfulness to his promises to Abraham is defined along ethical—not ethnic lines, and, as in verse 41, this ethical description of the new people functions both as an indictment of those now rejected and as a warning to those who would not be rejected" (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 117).

[176] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 47

[177] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 47; Osborne, *Matthew*, 791 n24.

[178] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 807 n3; Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1088; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 47.

[179] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 807 n3.

[180] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 47. So Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1088.

Many have suggested that Matt 21:44 appears to be a composite allusion to two separate texts—Isa 8:14–15 and Dan 2:34–35, 44–45—both of which continue the stone imagery introduced with the Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] citation. The proposed allusion to Isa 8:14–15 is based primarily on thematic similarity, as verbal connections are present, but not especially strong. Matthew's version is: "the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces" (καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλασθήσετα) (Matt 21:44). Of the Greek words, LXX Isa 8:14–15 contains forms of πίπτω (πεσοῦνται, v. 15) and λίθος (λίθου, v. 14). France adds that while the last verb in Matthew's saying is not the same as LXX Isa 8:15, "it vividly conveys the sense of being broken to pieces which is in both Hebrew and LXX."[181]

In its original context, Isa 8:14–15 occurs in the midst of the Immanuel section of Isaiah.[182] Oswalt describes Isa 8:11–23 as "a reflection upon all which has proceeded from 7:1 onward," and that the verses "make plain the central theme of the segment, as well as the entire division: in what or in whom shall we trust? One possibility, when faced with potential calamities or disasters, is to forget God's sovereignty and proceed accordingly (vv. 11, 12), but to do so is to invite calamity of a more profound nature, for God is the one fact we dare not overlook (vv. 13–15)."[183] In the context of Matt 21:44, Isaiah's theme of Yahweh of hosts being a "sanctuary" (Isa 8:14a) is absent, and instead the emphasis is on the role of "a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling" (Isa 8:14b) over which many will stumble, fall, and are broken (Isa 8:15). This is fitting, given that the focus in Matthew concerns judgment. If this allusion is indeed present in the text, it represents an expansion to the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus, for in Isaiah's context, the

[181] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 818.

[182] Matthew's Gospel cites or alludes to this portion of Isaiah in other places, including in the Baptist's narrative arc in which Matt 4:15–16 cites Isa 8:23–9:1 [Eng. 9:1–2].

[183] Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39,* 231.

stone is Yahweh of hosts, and in Matt 21:44, the image has been transferred to Jesus. As France comments, this "is typical of the bold use of OT imagery which we have seen, for example, in 3:3 and 11:10, where the forerunner of God becomes the forerunner of Jesus."[184]

The potential allusion to Dan 2:35 has only one direct verbal connection between Matt 21:44b and the Greek of the LXX, the word λίθος. As the connection to Isa 8:14–15 was about falling over a stone, the connection to Dan 2:35 would be about being crushed by the stone. The context in Daniel is a vision of a statue made of various materials, representing a series of kingdoms. The statue is struck by a stone, such that all parts of the statue were "broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors;[185] and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found" (Dan 2:34). The stone then becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. In Matthew's usage, the stone crushes those who reject the son, who here take the place of Daniel's empires.[186]

After these words from Jesus, the Jewish leaders—now the chief priests and Pharisees—rightly perceive that Jesus is speaking about them. Their desire is to arrest him, but they fear to do so because the crowds "held him to be a prophet" (v. 46). This opinion of Jesus has been

[184] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 818. Both of the verses he notes (Matt 3:3 and 11:10) occur in John's narrative arc, and have been discussed above. To his examples, we can add other moments in the Baptist's arc in which the Gospel's portrait of Jesus is expanded by way of appropriating Old Testament language and themes associated with God and applying them to Jesus. In Matt 9:15, Jesus describes himself as a bridegroom, imagery that is typically associated in the Old Testament with Yahweh. And in the transfiguration account (Matt 17:1–8), Moses and Elijah appear atop a mountain to meet with Jesus, even as they each did previously with God (cf. Exod 24:15–18; 33:18–34:8; 1 Kgs 19:8–13).

[185] In this vivid description of judgment, the kingdoms will become like "the chaff (ἀχύρου) of the summer threshing floors (ἅλωνι)." Those two words—ἄχυρον and ἅλων—both occur together in John's narrative arc, in the Baptist's preaching in Matt 3:7–12— ἅλωνα and ἄχυρον, both in v. 12, as John describes the one who is coming, who will "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11).

[186] Gundry suggests that Dan 2:44 may already stand in the background of Matt 21:43. He writes of v. 43: "Usually [ἔθνος] occurs in the plural for the nations to be discipled. Here it comes from Dan 2:44, also alluded to in the next verse, … and refers to the church in a collective singular. Daniel predicts that the kingdom will *not* be passed on to another people, or nation; Matthew writes that it *will* be transferred" (Gundry, *Matthew,* 430). See also: France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 818.

previously heard in Matthew's Gospel, both in Matt 16:14 and 21:11, from "the people" and "the crowds" respectively.[187] As has been discussed, while Jesus is a prophet, he is also significantly more than that. Additionally, as Olmstead points out, this identification "also echoes 14.5 and 21.26 where it referred to John, thus reminding the reader once more that the path marked out for Jesus is the one that John has already walked (17.9–13, cf. 14.1–12). It is the way of a prophet (cf. 21.11)."[188]

There is more, though, than just participation in the typical 'fate of the prophets.' The way of righteousness, fulfilled by John and Jesus as they proclaim and enact the kingdom of heaven, is itself a way of suffering and death. Only after this path has been traveled will the stone that the builders rejected become the cornerstone.

Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14)

Following the described response of the chief priests and Pharisees, Jesus continues to the third and final parable of the section. In terms of the narrative, Jesus is still speaking to Israel's religious leaders (cf. Matt 21:23, 45).[189] In terms of the parable's structure, Davies and Allison

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[187] Osborne, *Matthew,* 792.

[188] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 118.

[189] The fact that Jesus is still addressing the same audience of Jewish leaders generally is simply asserted by some (e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:197; France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 821). Gibbs offers three points of argumentation for this reading. First, the participle ἀποκριθεὶς ("answered") may actually indicate that Jesus is responding to the chief priests and Pharisees of Matt 21:45–46, rather than simply being a formulaic introduction. Second, the plural subject of the verb ἐφοβήθησαν in 21:46, the chief priests and Pharisees of v. 45, is "the most natural grammatical antecedent of 'to them' (αὐτοῖς) in 22:1." Third, "the Wedding Feast and the Wicked Tenants parable that immediately precedes it exhibit at least four parallels, supporting the conclusion that the addressees in both cases are the religious leaders": (1) Both begin with a "certain" figure, "with the noun ἄνθρωπος functioning as the indefinite pronoun (21:33; 22:2)," (2) Both protagonists have a son mentioned in the parable, (3) Both protagonists initiate action in the same way: "he sent his servants" (ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ, 21:34; 22:3), (4) Both parables feature a second sending of servants with identical language: "again he sent other servants" πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους, 21:36; 22:4) (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1104–5).

Regarding Gibbs' first point, that ἀποκριθεὶς may indicate a reply to the chief priests and Pharisees, and not just a new contribution to Jesus' teaching to the same audience, France writes that here "there is perhaps an element of 'reply' to the unspoken hostility of the Jewish leaders in vv. 45–46" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 820 n1). To add

note that Matt 22:1–13 features "two parallel sequences," wherein "[e]ach opens in the same fashion, with an invitation, and each closes in the same fashion, with a punishment. Moreover, each recounts three actions of the king."[190] Furthermore, "the whole sequence is dominated by the direct speech of the king (vv. 4, 8–9, 11–12, 13): no one else says anything. This underlines the authority of the king and the fact that everything revolves around his words."[191] Their structure, in outline format, proceeds as follows:

2–3a	action of king (invitation)
3b	response (rejection)
4	reaction of king (invitation)
5–6	response (rejection and violence)
7	reaction of king (punishment: death and destruction)
8–9	action of king (invitation)
10	response (acceptance)
11–12b	reaction of king (entrance and question)
12c	response (silence)
13b	reaction of king (punishment: binding and casting out)[192]

The king in this parable, as with the authority figures (father, vineyard owner) in the previous two, represents God.[193] Similar to the previous parable, there is also a son involved. Because the son in that parable is identified as Jesus, the reader naturally makes the same

a bit of data, Matthew's Gospel uses the form ἀποκριθεὶς 43 times (Matt 3:15; 4:4; 8:8; 11:4, 25; 12:39, 48; 13:11, 37; 14:28; 15:3, 13, 15, 24, 26, 28; 16:2, 16; 17:4, 11, 17; 19:4, 27; 20:13, 22; 21:21, 24, 29; 22:1, 29; 24:2, 4; 25:12, 26, 40; 26:23, 25, 33; 27:21, 25; 28:5), and of the other occurrences, nearly all describe a response to something said or done in the immediately preceding context. Exceptions could arguably include Matt 11:25 and 27:21.

[190] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:193.

[191] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:194.

[192] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:193–94. The same structure is taken up by Gibbs (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1112–14). Cf. Luz, who makes similar observations concerning the bipartite structure of the parable (Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 46–47).

[193] France writes: "This new parable is introduced by one of the standard parable formulae concerning the kingdom of heaven (cf. 13:24; 18:23 …). As in 18:23 (and as in many rabbinic parables), the chief character is a human king whose exercise of his kingship is a pointer to how God rules" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 823). So Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 52.

connection with the son in this parable.[194] Furthermore, as Olmstead notes, "[t]hat it is a wedding feast in his honour is especially appropriate in a narrative that twice presents Jesus as bridegroom."[195] One of these occurrences—Matt 9:15—has been discussed above in an earlier portion of the Baptist's narrative arc.[196] There, disciples of John ask why Jesus' disciples do not fast as they (and the Pharisees) do. Jesus responds by likening his disciples to wedding guests present with the bridegroom (a striking transferal to Jesus himself of Old Testament imagery typically associated with Yahweh).

In the parable, the king first sends out two sets of servants to the invited guests. The first set goes with an invitation to his son's wedding feast,[197] but those who are invited do not come (v. 3). A second set of servants (ἄλλους δούλους) is sent, this time with a specific message: "Tell those who are invited, 'See I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast" (v. 4). In response to the message of the second set of servants, some of the invitees pay no attention and go about their own business (v. 5), while others take hold of the servants and kill them (v. 6). The killing of the king's servants would of course have been a great transgression. But even rejecting his invitation (twice!) would have been deeply offensive. Keener writes:

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[194] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:198–99; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 621; Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 119. Contra France, who asserts that Jesus belongs with the group of "martyred messengers" in vv. 5–6. His argument is that there is no separate son figure in this parable, for "[t]he son mentioned in v. 2 plays no part in the story, but simply provides the setting for the feast" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 824 n13).

[195] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 119.

[196] The other instance is the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matt 25:1–13. There, the kingdom of heaven is likened to ten virgins going to meet the bridegroom. Though not explicit, from the preceding context in Matthew 24, the returning bridegroom represents the coming of the Son of Man.

[197] In a footnote, Olmstead notes that there is Old Testament precedent for this sort of feasting imagery. He writes: "On the use of the wedding feast for the eschatological kingdom, cf. Isa. 62:1–5 … For the more general portrait of feasting in the final kingdom, cf. Isa. 25:6–8" (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 119 n108). As an observation, these texts are not specifically messianic on their own accord. That element is added as Jesus appropriates the bridegroom imagery to himself.

> Attendance at weddings was a social obligation in Palestinian Judaism (Bonsirven 1964: 151); attendance at a patron's banquet was incumbent on social dependents throughout the Empire (cf. Sir 13:9–10), and one normally accepted banquet invitations even if one did not like the host. … By refusing to come, the guests insulted the dignity of the king who had counted on their attendance and graciously prepared food for them.[198]

The sending of two sets of servants parallels the two sets sent in the preceding parable. In fact, even the language used is identical in both parables. Both begin with the sending of a first set of servants—"he sent his servants" (ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ, Matt 21:34; 22:3a). Then, after the initial servants are prevented from completing their respective missions (Matt 21:35; 22:3b), a second set of servants is sent out—"Again he sent other servants" (πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους, Matt 21:36; 22:4). On the one hand, this is another element serving to bind these two parables together. It also may, however, communicate something about how the reader is to identify the servants in the two parables. Some have seen the first and second set of servants in the Wedding Feast parable as Old and New Testament prophets, respectively.[199] Others interpret both sets of servants in the latter parable as specifically New Testament messengers.[200] In light of the strong parallels between the servants in the second and third

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[198] Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 519–20. The work that Keener cites is: Joseph Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ* (New York: Hold, Rinehart & Winston, 1964). See also: Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:199; J. Duncan M. Derrett, "The Parable of the Great Supper," in *Law in the New Testament* (London: Dartman, Longman, & Todd, 1970), 139; Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1106–7; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 52; Osborne, *Matthew*, 799.

[199] E.g. Hagner, who describes the first sending as "probably and allusion to the prophets," and the second group "consists in Matthew's mind not of the latter prophets, as in the preceding parable, but of John the Baptist, Jesus, and his disciples, i.e. those who bring the message of eschatological readiness" (Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 629–30). Osborne simply asserts "the 'slaves' are the OT and NT prophets" (Osborne, *Matthew*, 798). His reading here parallels the way that he understood the servants in the preceding parable. So also Douglas R.A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 121.

[200] This is Olmstead's position, for as he explains:

> One might argue that the decisively different role played by the son in the two parables prepares the reader for a different interpretation of the servants. Whereas in the earlier parable, the son appears after the servants and, like them, is rejected and murdered, here he is present from the outset as the

parables that Jesus tells, however, it seems best to identify them in a similar fashion. And as argued above, the servants in the Wicked Tenant Farmers parable (both sets) are best understood as the Old Testament prophets (among whom John the Baptist is included).[201] Therefore, the servants are understood the same way here.

In response to the actions of the initial invitees, the king sends his troops to destroy "those murderers" and burn their city (v. 7). There are reasons to see in this a prediction of Jerusalem's destruction. After making the case that Matt 23:29–24:2 represents "the sacking of Jerusalem as God's punishment upon *this generation* of Jewish people for their violent rejection of his servants,"[202] Olmstead argues that the connections between Matt 23:29–24:2 and 22:6–7 suggest that the parable refers to the same destruction of Jerusalem. He writes:

> Both texts highlight the repeated initiative taken by God in calling his people (22.3–4; cf. 23.37). Both texts underline the persistent, wilful rejection with which his people greet this initiative (22.3–6; cf. 22:37). In both texts, the people not only reject God's appeal, but also mistreat and murder his servants (22.6, cf. 23.34). In both texts, God responds in judgement (22.7, cf. 23.35–24.2). In both texts, God's judgement centers on their city (22.7, cf. 23.37–24.2).[203]

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bridegroom and the natural picture is the Messianic banquet; most naturally these servants do not precede Jesus (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 123).

If there is to be any distinction between the two sendings in the second parable, Olmstead's supposition is that perhaps "we should think first, of the pre–paschal and, second, of the post–paschal missions of the disciples" (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 123). Kingsbury takes a similar position, likening the servants in the Wedding Feast parable to "disciples and Christian missionaries" (Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom,* 72). So Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1108.

[201] So Gundry, who writes: "This assimilation to the preceding parable, where an allusion to the OT prophets seems obvious, favors an allusion to the OT prophets here, too. … That the time for the eschatological feast of salvation had not yet arrived in OT times shows the extent to which Matthew has imposed on the parable a reference to the OT prophets, whose predictions he often cites as fulfilled" (Gundry, *Matthew,* 434). So also Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:197 n21. Cf. France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 824.

[202] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 120 (emphasis original). For the content of his argument on this first point, see pp. 120–22.

[203] Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 122. In a similar vein, Gibbs writes: "In light of the temple incident in 21:12–17, Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in 23:37–39, and the first half of the Eschatological Discourse (24:1–35), it is crystal clear that 22:7 in the parable predicts that Jerusalem will be destroyed; this coming destruction should be understood as divine judgement" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1107).

In a reading he sees as contrary, Gundry suggests that Matt 22:7 contains an allusion to Isa 5:24–25. The foundation of this reading is that this parable is read together with the previous one, which contains a clear allusion to Isa 5:1–7, an earlier part of the same passage. Building on that foundation, Gundry sees a number of potential connections between Isa 5:24–25 and Matt 22:7. He writes:

> The prophet's parable leads to a threat against Jerusalem that climaxes in "fire" and "flame … for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts [cf. Matthew's preoccupation with the law]. … On this account the anger [cf. the king's anger in Matt 22:7a] has burned against his people … and their corpses [cf. the destruction of the murderers in Matt 22:7b] were like refuse in the middle of the streets [cf. 'the outlets of the streets' in Matt 22:9]."[204]

While acknowledging these thematic parallels, the suggested allusion lacks any direct verbal connections,[205] and as such, Gundry's proposal is held loosely, something that is possible but not definite. If accepted, however, an Isa 5:24–25 allusion and a prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction are not mutually exclusive, as Gundry seems to suggest.[206]

After taking vengeance, with the wedding feast ready, the king explains to his servants that "those invited were not worthy" (v. 8). The 'unworthiness' described here seems to refer specifically to the dishonor shown by the previous set of invitees to the king and his son, for those who are ultimately gathered for the wedding feast are described as "both bad and good" (v. 10). When the king sends out his servants a second time, the invitation that goes out is broadly

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This reading of the king's burning of "their city" (v. 7) has led many to interpret this as an *ex eventu* prophecy, i.e. written after the event and placed back into the mouth of Jesus. However, the latter is not a necessary conclusion from the former. As Olmstead asserts, "there are *two* separate questions here," namely (1) whether this is a prophetic allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem and (2) whether it is *ex eventu* in nature. (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 120 n118). The intention here is only to speak to the first question.

[204] Gundry, *Matthew*, 436.

[205] France writes: "[Gundry] argues that the wording is derived from Isa 5:24–25 … There is little in the wording of Isa 5:24–24 to support this theory" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 825 n14).

[206] See Gundry, *Matthew*, 436–37. Cf. Osborne, *Matthew*, 800.

inclusive: “Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you can find” (v. 9). Gibbs summarizes well the meaning of this portion of the parable:

> [T]he parable reveals that God’s plan to have guests who will honor and worship his Son will not be nullified or set aside. Those who hated and dishonored the Son in his earthly ministry and thus showed themselves to be unworthy for the feast cannot stop God’s plan; divine judgment will surely come upon them. Nevertheless, the gracious divine invitation goes out again with a prodigal and wasteful plentitude. All who can be found and invited will be. There are no restrictions on the invitation to come and believe in and follow God’s Son. Jews and Gentiles, “both the evil and the good” (22:10)—all will be sought and called to the feast.[207]

Yet after the inclusive invitation, and the picture of a “wedding hall filled with guests” (v. 10), the parable ends with a startling sequence of events. Upon finding a man present in the feast with no “wedding garment” (ἔνδυμα γάμου), the king asks how he got in without one. The man is “speechless” in response. Then the king instructs his attendants: “Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. 13). This leads to two separate (though related) questions. First, in the narrative world of the parable, what is this “wedding garment” that the guests are expected to be wearing? Second, in terms of the parable’s symbolism, for what does the “wedding garment” stand?

Regarding the first question, a number have suggested that a wedding garment is something that the host of such a feast would provide for the guests.[208] However, the data for such a practice is minimal, such that France asserts that “it lacks any convincing evidence in terms of contemporary wedding customs.”[209] Instead, the concept of the wedding garment here seems to

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[207] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1110.

[208] E.g. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 329; Gundry, *Matthew, 439.*

[209] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 826. In a footnote, he comments on several Scriptural proof texts that have been offered as evidence. Regarding Judg 14:12–13 and 2 Kgs 10:22, he writes, “the former refers to wedding *gifts* and the latter to vestments for worship.” On Gundry, he writes that “he offers other equally irrelevant references, only one of which, Rev. 19:8, refers to a wedding, but speaks of the clothing of the bride, not of the guests” (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 826 n21). For others with similar comments against the idea that the host furnished a “wedding garment” for his guests, see: D.A. Carson, *Matthew 13–28,* EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 457; Gibbs,

simply convey the notion of decent, clean garments, fit for a celebration. Bauckham describes such expected clothing in greater detail:

> For any such occasion guests would be expected to wear clothes that were both longer than those worn by ordinary people on working days and also newly washed. Those who could afford it would wear white, but it was sufficient for ordinary people to wear as near as white as washing their poorer quality clothes could achieve. Poor people, who might own only one patched tunic and cloak each, would often borrow clothes for occasions such as weddings or religious festivals.[210]

This understanding of the significance of the "wedding garment" in the narrative world of the parable leads to the answer of the second question, namely the garment's symbolic value. While many options have been suggested as to what specifically the garment is intended to represent,[211] Gibbs helpfully reframes the question to ask instead: "What does it mean to *lack* a wedding garment?"[212] He argues that the parable's structure (see above) places v. 7 in parallel with v. 13, such that "it seems reasonable to assume that the reason why the first group was punished ('those who had been called were not worthy,' 22:8) is close to, if not perhaps the same as, the reason why the man who lacked a wedding garment was cast out, to wit, he also was 'not worthy.'"[213] And the initial invitees were declared unworthy "because they shamed and dishonored the king and his son."[214] As such, presumably something about this person not wearing a wedding garment represented an insult to the king and his son, and communicated

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Matthew 21:1–28:20, 1111; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 631.

[210] Richard Bauckham, "The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (*Apocryphon of Ezekiel*)," *JBL* 115 (1996): 485–86.

[211] Surveying the opinions, Olmstead writes: "Numerous suggestions have been made as to the identification of the wedding garment: the Holy Spirit; charity; justification; 'the festive garment of joy'; repentance; righteousness; good works" (Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy*, 126). Gibbs notes that "Holiness or good works, Baptism, the Holy Spirit, Christ himself, and faith have all been put forward" as interpretive options (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1112).

[212] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1112 (emphasis original).

[213] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1112–13.

[214] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1113.

dishonor towards them.

In addition to suiting the structure of the parable, this explanation also fits well with the narrative world of the parable. As Bauckham explains, "[w]earing festal garments indicated one's participation in the joy of the feast. To appear in ordinary, soiled working clothes[215] would show contempt for the occasion, a refusal to join in the king's rejoicing."[216] Because this man came in such a fashion, he is cast out of the wedding feast (v. 13).

As argued above, the parable's king is best identified with God, and the son with Jesus. With this in mind, not wearing a wedding garment in the parable amounts to deliberate opposition to Jesus (and God) in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel. Gibbs summarizes: "*This is what it means to lack a wedding garment*—to oppose the claims of the Son of God and to resist his ministry of manifesting the reign of God that has now brought him to Jerusalem to be rejected, to suffer, to be crucified, and to rise from the dead."[217]

After the end of the parable proper, the following statement is offered: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt 22:14). In agreement with Meyer, this seems to be a Semitic idiom which means something like 'All are called, but not all are chosen.'[218] That is to say, the focus of the saying is not necessarily on the smallness of the number of people who will ultimately be present at the feast—the wedding hall is, after all, "filled with guests" (v. 10). Rather, that "few" are chosen is simply meant to indicate that not all those invited will

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[215] Presumably, given the nature of the invitation (cf. vv. 9–10), some of the new invitees would have received the invitation while at labor. However, as Bauckham notes, "[t]here is no reason to suppose that, once invited, these people have no time to go home, to change their clothes, and to borrow clothes from their neighbors as necessary" (Bauckham, "Royal Wedding Feast, 486).

[216] Bauckham, "Royal Wedding Feast," 486.

[217] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1113 (emphasis original).

[218] Ben F. Meyer, "Many (= All) Are Called, but Few (= Not All) Are Chosen," *NTS* 36 (1990): 89–97. So also Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:207; Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1114; Joachim Jeremias, "πολλοί," in *TDNT,* 6:536–43; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 632; Osborne, *Matthew,* 803.

participate in the wedding feast.

In the context of Matthew's narrative, France suggests that the language of "chosen" (ἐκλεκτοί) connects to the Old Testament concept of Israel as God's chosen people. He asserts, then, that

> the true "chosen people" is not automatically identified with those who belong to the Israelite community, not even those who are its official leaders: these are invited, but not necessarily the chosen. … The chosen are the new tenants who will produce fruit, who, as we have seen in the last parable, may be Jewish or Gentile; their chosenness does not depend on their racial origin but on their response to God's summons and their readiness to give God his due.[219]

Thematically, this message, again, fits with the Baptist's preaching in Matt 3:7–12. There, in speaking with two groups of Israel's religious leaders—the Pharisees and Sadducees—John presses them to "[b]ear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8, cf. Matt 21:43). And with this exhortation comes a warning: "And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (Matt 3:9, cf. Matt 21:43; 22:9–10).

Summary of Key Points

Matthew 21:23–22:14 opens with a dialogue between Jesus and a group of Jewish religious leaders who question the source of his authority. He responds by asking them a question about the source of John the Baptist's authority, which they refuse to answer, responding instead, "We do not know." This leads Jesus to tell three consecutive parables related to the matter of John's authority and his own, as well as the response of Israel's religious leaders. As with other texts in the Baptist's narrative arc, this passage provides an opportunity for Jesus (and the narrator of Matthew's Gospel) to shape expectations for John and himself as they participate in the

[219] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 827–28.

surprising in–breaking of the kingdom of heaven.

In terms of the way that this passage contributes to the narrative's reshaping, some key particulars can be categorized under two broad headings. The first has to do with the surprising rejection, mistreatment, and ultimately killing of eschatological Elijah—who came ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης—and the mightier one who comes after him. In their interconnectedness, each of the three parables Jesus tells has some association with Isaiah's vineyard song, a passage which tells of God's judgement of rebellious Israel. The Parable of the Two Sons features the mention of a vineyard, which evokes Isaiah's vineyard, especially when read in conjunction with the clear allusion to Isa 5:2 in the Wicked Tenant Farmers parable. The second parable, the Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers begins with the allusion to Isa 5:2 in Matt 21:33, but then Jesus quickly repurposes the imagery. The final parable, the Parable of the Wedding Feast, in addition to its connection to the preceding parable, has a possible allusion to Isa 5:24–25. Each of these parables allegorically tells of the rejection of God's messengers—the prophets, John, Jesus—by the religious leaders of Israel. Who would have expected this? But ultimately, as each parable explains in different ways, the refusal by Israel's religious leaders does not equate with failure for John and Jesus or a failure of the kingdom. For though both will be violently rejected, the kingdom will be given to "a people producing its fruits" (Matt 21:43) and the wedding hall will be "filled with guests" (Matt 22:10). This truth harkens back to the Baptist's preaching in Matt 3:7–12, where he warned that physical descendancy from Abraham is not an automatic guarantee of God's blessing.

The second issue at hand is one that was an early question for the Baptist. In line with Malachian prophecy (cf. Mal 3:1b–4), John expected Jesus to come in the mode of an eschatological judge. That this is the case is evident from John's preaching, in which the

mightier one coming after him would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11) and would have a winnowing fork to separate the wheat and the chaff (Matt 3:12). Instead, Jesus came as the antithesis of a mighty judge, namely, as one who would be baptized by John (Matt 3:13–17), and his ministry was characterized by eschatological blessing (Matt 11:4–6). Now, with the three parables told in Matt 21:23–22:14, the reader gets a glimpse of Jesus acting as eschatological judge. However, the character of eschatological judgement that comes with the kingdom of heaven's unexpected in–breaking itself requires an orienting of expectation. Through these three parables, associated with Isaiah's vineyard story and supplemented by citations of/allusions to other Old Testament texts (Ps 118:22–23; Isa 8:14–15; Dan 2:34–35, 44–45), Jesus pronounces judgement on Israel's religious leaders. The judgement, however, is not fully realized at this moment in the narrative. Though the transference of the kingdom is promised (Matt 21:43; 22:8–10, 14), the forecasted destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 22:7) and the destruction of those who oppose God and the Son of God (Matt 21:40–44; 22:7, 11–14) are yet future from this moment in the narrative. This announced, but not fully realized, eschatological judgment is a feature of the kingdom of heaven's surprising in–breaking. To be sure, though, a delay in divine judgement is not the same as judgment that will never come (Matt 21:34–41).

Matthew 27:45–50

The Death of Jesus, the Son of God (Matthew 27:45–50)

Many treatments of the Matthean Baptist's narrative arc conclude with some portion of Matt 21(–22),[220] given that the Gospel does not explicitly mention John after 21:25, 26, 32. The present study, however, includes Matt 27:45–50 since Elijah is referenced, and in Matthew's

[220] E.g. Dennert, *John the Baptist*; Meier, *John the Baptist*; Yamasaki, *John the Baptist*.

Gospel, John is presented as Elijah. With that said, the entire crucifixion narrative—rich in detail and depth of meaning—is not dealt with here. The focus instead is on vv. 45–50 specifically, and especially how the saying about Elijah (27:46) functions in its context to connect these verses to the overall narrative arc of John the Baptist in Matthew. It will be argued that 27:45–50 serve as a fitting climax to the message communicated in that narrative arc.[221]

In terms of structure, the fall of darkness in v. 45 "forms the dramatic prologue to the central event of the death of Jesus."[222] The remainder of the passage is then framed on either end by the repeated dative phrase, "with a loud voice" (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) to describe Jesus crying out (ἀνεβόησεν, v. 46 / κράξας, v. 50) (cf. the use of πάλιν in v. 50).

It is the sixth hour when darkness falls over the land,[223] and it lasts until the ninth hour.[224] While nothing in the text precludes natural instrumentality in bringing about the midday darkness (cf. Hagner's language of "preternatural darkness"[225]), as Osborne suggests, "more likely it was a supernatural event in keeping with Matthew's predilection for divine intervention (cf. 1:18, 20–21; 2:12, 12, 19–20; 27:51–53; 28:2–3)."[226] Among Osborne's list, the events of

[221] Gibbs suggests that Matt 27:39–56 constitutes a unit, all dealing with "directly, and by way of irony, both Jesus' identity as well as the meaning of his suffering and death." In the first section (vv. 37–44), truth is offered ironically by various parties present at the scene. In the second section (vv. 45–50)—the passage of interest here—Jesus offers his own interpretation of the events. Finally, in the third section (vv. 51–56), God's interpretation of Jesus' death comes by way of various apocalyptic signs (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1561–62).

[222] Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 541.

[223] There is discussion over whether the phrase ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν should be understood as indicating a local effect or a global one. With the word γή, either would be possible, technically speaking (cf. BDAG, s.v. γῆ; LSJ, s.v. γῆ). Nolland summarizes: "Does γή here mean 'land' or 'earth'? The latter is attractive in relation to the eschatological overtones of the darkness. But in light of the lack of intensifiers for 'darkness' and the proleptic nature of the eschatology, the more modest scope of 'land' fits better. It also fits better with the sharp Jerusalem focus of the whole Passion Narrative" (Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew,* 1205).

[224] I.e. From noon until 3:00 pm (Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 844; Osborne, *Matthew,* 1036).

[225] Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 843. Hagner alludes to a fuller discussion on the matter, which can be found in Urban Holzmeister, "Die Finsternis beim Tode Jesu," *Bib* 22 (1941): 404–11. In the article, Holzmeister offers a list of possible causes for the darkness.

[226] Osborne, *Matthew,* 1036–37.

Matt 27:51–53 seem especially significant here, as they are in close proximity contextually and are rather clearly presented as supernatural occurrences (temple curtain torn, earthquake, dead saints returning to life). In any case, the darkness has significant symbolic value, providing meaning to the Son of God's death.

In light of Old Testament imagery, the darkness appears to signify God's judgement. Darkness is one of the Lord's plagues upon Egypt (Exod 10:21–23), and because there was darkness "in all the land of Egypt three days," (v. 23), it would have extended through the divine judgement of Passover.[227] Darkness is also a common symbol for eschatological judgment in prophetic literature. Among other instances, [228] Amos 8:9–10 is especially relevant, with the Lord declaring: "I will make the sun go down at noon (MT—בַּצָּהֳרָיִם / LXX— μεσημβρίας, cf. Matt 27:45— ἕκτης ὥρας = noon) and darken the earth in broad daylight" (v. 9). Allison summarizes a number of parallels between Amos 8:9–10 and Matt 27:45: "[D]arkness falls in both; in both that darkness is at noon; and whereas there is mourning as for 'an only son' or 'a beloved one' in Amos, Jesus is, in Matthew, God's beloved son (cf. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5), and he is confessed to be God's Son precisely at the crucifixion itself (27:54)."[229]

Furthering the discussion, Hagner writes that darkness is "a common metaphor for judgment that will come on 'The Day of the Lord' (cf. such passages as Joel 2:2, 31; Zeph

[227] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 1075; Osborne, *Matthew,* 1037.

[228] Other noteworthy examples include: Deut 28:29; Isa 59:9–10; Jer 13:16; 15:9. (Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:621–22; France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 1075; Osborne, *Matthew,* 1037).

[229] Dale C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 80–81. In a footnote, Allison adds: "Perhaps it is worth observing, given the nearby rending of the veil (27:51), that, only a few verses later in Amos, the temple is shaken (9:1: 'I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said, 'Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of the people'')" (Allison, *Studies in Matthew,* 81 n6).

1:15)."[230] This will be explored further below, but as Gibbs asserts, with the death of Jesus, "[t]he great and terrible Day of the Lord has come. God's judgement has come—but it has come upon his own Son."[231]

In v. 46, Jesus speaks for the first time in the crucifixion account, crying out in a loud voice: "Eli, Eli, lema sabachtani?" (ηλι ηλι λεμα σαβαχθανι;) which is then translated for Greek readers: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἱνατί με ἐγκατέλιπες;). The latter portion of the transliterated phrase— λεμα σαβαχθανι—seems to be Aramaic, rather than Hebrew (cf. לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי in the MT). The first part, though— ηλι ηλι—has the initial appearance of better following the Hebrew of Ps 22:2 [Eng. 22:1] (cf. אֵלִי אֵלִי in the MT), such that perhaps the transliteration represents a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic. Gundry, who holds to this understanding, asserts that using the Hebrew in the first phrase, "has the purpose of conforming to the Hebrew text of Ps 22:2(1) and providing better auditory and visual bases for confusion of the divine name with Ἠλίαν, "Elijah" (see vv 47 and 49)."[232] As Davies and Allison point out, however, "the targum to Ps 22.2 uses *ʾĒlî*, and *ʾĒl* as a name for God appears in pre–Christian Aramaic (e.g. 4Q246). There is accordingly no clear assimilation to the MT …, and Mt 27:46 like Mk 15.34 may give us Aramaic alone."[233] In any case, as Davies and Allison continue, there are likely two primary answers for why the text of Matthew preserves Jesus' Aramaic (or Hebrew and Aramaic) saying. First, "the words were Jesus' last and therefore

[230] Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 844.

[231] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1566.

[232] Gundry, *Matthew,* 573. For more detail on Gundry's understanding of the text form, see: Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament,* 63–66. Cf. Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichingo, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 64–65.

[233] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:624. So Luz, who concludes: "Thus the Matthean text of Ps 22:2 is not an adaptation to the Hebrew text but a correctly transcribed Aramaic text" (Luz, *Matthew 21–28,* 542).

deemed especially important," and second, "without them, the misunderstanding about Elijah would be unintelligible."[234]

As mentioned, the words that make up the cry of dereliction derive from Ps 22:2 [Eng. 22:1]. In addition to this verse, there is evidence that more of Ps 22 is in the background of Matthew's crucifixion account from a number of other allusions to it in the text. In Matt 27:35, Roman soldiers cast lots and "divided his garments" (διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ; cf. διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτιά μου, LXX Ps 22:19). In Matt 27:39, those who pass by the crucifixion scene, deride Jesus, "wagging their heads" (κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν; cf. ἐκίνησαν κεφαλήν, LXX Ps 22:7). In Matt 27:43a, among the taunts of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, is the line "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now if he desires him (ῥυσάσθω νῦν εἰ θέλει αὐτόν)." This compares favorably with the words of those mocking the psalmist, who say: "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him (ῥυσάσθω αὐτόν); let him rescue him, for he delights in him (θέλει αὐτόν)" (LXX Ps 22:9).[235] Taken together with the Jesus' citation of Ps 22:2 [Eng. 22:1], these allusions indicate that Matthew's crucifixion account is told in such a way as to evoke Psalm 22. With that said, how much of Ps 22 is to be brought through?

Psalm 22, which is subtitled as a psalm of David, is a psalm of lament. Like some other psalms of lament, however, the psalm ends with a note of hope. Goldingay summarizes: "Psalm 22 is an individual's cry for help, closing with a particularly remarkable and extensive act of praise. There is thus a tension in the psalm. In isolation, vv. 1–21 imply that the suppliant is currently distraught, while vv. 22–31 imply that the worshipper is in a position to testify to Yhwh's deliverance."[236] On account of this feature of the psalm, some have suggested that

[234] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:624.

[235] France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 1075–76; Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1571.

[236] John Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 323.

instead of being a cry of lament, Jesus' words instead should be read as a declaration of hope, importing meaning from the latter portion of Ps 22, emphasizing hope rather than the sense of abandonment from the earlier part of the psalm.[237] This, however, seems unlikely. All of the aforementioned allusions to Ps 22 in Matthew's crucifixion account come from the first part of the psalm, and there do not appear to be any from the second. As Gibbs writes, "In observing the scene in Matthew's narrative, the connection to the victorious ending of the psalm is non–existent, while the connections with the first half are so obvious as to need almost no comment. Jesus is not being rescued. His disciples have betrayed him, his opponents are winning, and his enemies are killing him."[238] As such, it would take much to hear in Jesus' expression of abandonment an implied, overriding proclamation of hope, and there does not seem to be anything of the sort present.[239]

Other than to transliterate the cry, the narrator offers no comment. Somehow, Jesus experiences abandonment from God while on the cross. Hagner writes: "Horrible as this would be for any creature of God, when it concerns one who is uniquely the Son of God (cf. 1:23; 3:17; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63–64), not to use later trinitarian language (28:19), it is impossible to assess what this may have meant to Jesus. This is one of the most impenetrable mysteries of the entire Gospel narrative."[240] Here at the end, the paradox of how the kingdom of heaven will

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[237] E.g. Donald Senior, *The Passion Narrative according to Matthew: A Redactional Study* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1982), 298–99; L. Paul Trudinger, "'Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachani?': A Cry of Dereliction? Or Victory?" *Springfielder* 38, no. 3 (1974): 232–35.

[238] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1571. Gibbs own view is that the latter, more hopeful portion of Ps 22 is alluded to in Matthew's Gospel, not here, but in Matt 28:1–10. For his argumentation, see Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1571–73, 1612–13.

[239] France writes on the notion that Jesus words are, in effect, a "shout of defiant trust" in God: "[T]hat is to read a lot between the lines, especially after Gethsemane where Jesus has accepted that he must drink the cup to the full: he did not expect to be rescued. The words Jesus chose to utter are those of unqualified desolation, and Matthew and Mark (who alone record this utterance) give no hint that he did not mean exactly what he said" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 1076).

[240] Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* 844–45.

manifest itself reaches its sharpest point.

As mentioned, those standing by when Jesus cries out in words from Ps 22 misunderstand him. Hearing him repeat "Eli, Eli," they think he is calling for Elijah. This leads to two responses. First, "one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink" (Matt 22:48). There is, perhaps, an allusion to the LXX of Ps 68:22 [Eng. 69:21] in the Gospel's telling of this event, as the offer of "sour wine" (ὄξους) for Jesus to "drink" (ἐπότιζεν) features verbal connections to the verse. There, the psalmist says of his antagonists: "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine (ὄξος) to drink (ἐπότισάν)" (LXX Ps 68:22 [Eng. 69:21]). Why was Jesus offered "sour wine" at this moment? The context of the psalm would favor reading the offer as some sort of mockery or cruelty, "in which case one can think either of its bitter taste (cf. Prov 10.26) or of its prolonging Jesus' life and so protracting his pain."[241] As lexical data indicates, however, ὄξος refers to "sour wine, wine vinegar, it relieved thirst more effectively than water and, being cheaper than regular wine, it was a favorite beverage of the lower ranks of society and of those in moderate circumstances, esp. of soldiers."[242] Therefore, the offer may have been an act of kindness. Ultimately, it is not clear.

The second response consists of others among the bystanders saying "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him" (Matt 27:49). While one cannot be sure of the motive(s) of these onlookers (i.e. genuine interest or mockery), that there are expectations of Elijah's return in the air is clear from the Gospel itself (cf. Matt 11:10–14; 16:14; 17:10–13). Furthermore, as demonstrated in the survey of Second Temple Jewish literature above, expectations concerning

[241] Davies and Allison, *Matthew,* 3:626.

[242] BDAG, s.v. ὄξος.

the precise nature of Elijah's return are not uniform. The question of what the bystanders were thinking with their expression concerning Elijah receives no hint of an answer.

With that said, the notion that Jesus is calling Elijah at this moment represents a profound misunderstanding, and the reader of the narrative is invited to perceive both the error as well as to ponder the hidden truth regarding Elijah.[243] The very mention of "Elijah" evokes thoughts of the Baptist, given the narrative's strong and clear association of Elijah with John. Furthermore, the utterance of the bystanders invites reflection that reaches back to Matt 17:9–13, as well as to the larger theme of "salvation" in Matthew's Gospel.

In their comments, the bystanders at the cross say: "Wait, let us see whether Elijah *will come* (ἔρχεται)[244] to save him" (Matt 27:49). The language of Elijah 'coming' recalls the threefold usage of the word ἔρχομαι in Jesus' conversation with his disciples as they descended the mountain in Matt 17:9–13. The disciples first ask Jesus about the scribes' teaching on Elijah: "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah *must come* (δεῖ ἐλθεῖν, present tense indicative verb + infinitive of ἔρχομαι)?" (17:10). In response, Jesus takes up the scribal teaching, and responds using their words: "Elijah *is coming* (ἔρχεται, present tense indicative verb) and will restore all things" (17:11). Then, however, Jesus offers a new revelation on the matter: "But I tell you that Elijah *has already come* (ἤδη ἦλθεν, aorist indicative verb), and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased" (17:12a). Even with the subtle change in verb tense from present to aorist, Jesus offers a corrective on the scribal teaching heard by the disciples. So the reader of Matthew's Gospel knows that in John the Baptist, Elijah has come. With this in mind,

[243] I am indebted to my dissertation supervisor, Jeffrey Gibbs, for a substantial portion of the insight in the discussion of this paragraph and the next two.

[244] The present tense verb ἔρχεται is widely translated as what Wallace describes as a "futuristic present," a usage which speaks of a future event, but "typically adds connotations of immediacy and certainty." He includes ἔρχομαι as a common verb for this category, as its "*lexical* meaning involves anticipation" (Wallace, *Greek Grammar,* 535–36).

the supposition of the bystanders in Matt 27:49 is clearly erroneous, for their thinking on Elijah is in line with the scribal teaching discussed in Matt 17:10–12. In fact, when they speak of the possibility that perhaps "Elijah will come," they use ἔρχεται, the precise verb form employed by Jesus when taking up the scribes' words in 17:11. As a result, the bystanders find themselves expressing an idea about Elijah that the Matthean Jesus has already corrected.

Additionally, those standing around the cross make the strange suggestion that if Elijah comes, it will be in order "to save (σώσων) him" (21:49).[245] In Matthew's Gospel, aside from this occurrence, with virtually all the uses of σῴζω, the agent is either Jesus or God (Matt 1:21; 8:25; 9:21, 22; 10:22; 14:30; 19:25; 24:13, 22; 27:40, 42).[246] Considering this consistent usage, the reader knows that John did not come to save Jesus. Jesus comes to save John, and everyone else.

With these things said, the reader of Matthew's Gospel knows that Jesus is not, in fact, "calling Elijah" (v. 47), for Jesus has already explicitly identified John as Elijah who is to come in Matt 11:10–14 and 17:11–12. Furthermore, neither will Elijah "come to save him" (v. 49), for the reasons mentioned above. In the narrative, John played a major role in the in–breaking kingdom of heaven, preparing the way for Jesus. Yet those present at this moment in the narrative clearly still do not have 'ears to hear' this truth. John the Baptist, eschatological Elijah, the great prophetic preparer, died unceremoniously at the hands of Herod, a violent man. And

[245] Gibbs specifies that this rare usage of the future participle here "expresses purpose" (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1557).

[246] With a number of the occurrences, God is designated as the agent by way of the divine passive. (For the divine passive, see: Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 437–38). There is, in fact, only one exception in which the agent of the verb σῴζω is not Jesus or God, but even that exception goes to prove the point. In Matt 16:25, Jesus says: "For whoever would save (σῶσαι) his life will lose, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Here, the one who attempts to save himself, will fail in the endeavor, and will in fact have the opposite occur.

now Jesus suffers a similar fate.[247]

The last several verses of Malachi describe how Elijah will be sent "before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes" (MT—Mal 3:23 / LXX—Mal 3:22 / Eng.—Mal 4:5), and that day is to be a day of divine judgment (cf. Mal 3:5). The Day of the Lord has now arrived, and judgement has come, but in a way scarce imagined. For it falls on the Son of God.

The suggested allusion to Amos 8:9–10[248] lends support to the conclusion that the reader should understand this as the Day of the Lord, for the context in Amos concerns the Day of the Lord. On the connection of the phrase "that day" in Amos 8:9–10 to the Day of the Lord, Nogalski writes: "These verses describe the effects of the coming day of YHWH on Israel, even though they do not use the specific phrase. To solidify the association of this destruction with the day of YHWH, the concluding phrase of the verse describes the end of this destruction as being 'like a bitter day,' like a day of mourning for an only son who has died."[249] Furthermore, the matter of Day of the Lord is taken up earlier in Amos, using the phrase "Day of the LORD" explicitly, and is there twice described as a day characterized by "darkness, not light" (Amos 5:18, 20).[250]

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[247] On this, Gibbs writes:

> Jesus is not calling for Elijah at all, and he is certainly not calling for Elijah to come in order to save him from this abandonment by God. Elijah already came in the person of John the Baptizer (17:11–12), who announced and participated in the inbreaking of God's end–time reign, but who did not fully grasp how God would reign in Jesus (11:2–3). Now Elijah is dead at the hand of Herod Antipas (14:3–12). He was *truly* Elijah who was to come, but not everyone can accept that. In a similar but greater way, Jesus is *truly* God's Son/Israel in the place of Israel and suffering the fate that Israel and all people deserve. Not everyone will be able to accept that. It is true nonetheless (Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20,* 1568) (emphasis original).

[248] In support of this allusion, see the parallels described above in the quote from Allison, *Studies in Matthew,* 80–81, cited in n229.

[249] James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 346.

[250] David Allan Hubbard, *Jonah and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary,* TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 236. Cf. Mays, who asserts that the primary significance of darkness in Amos 8:9–10 "comes from its association with the complex of features belonging to the Day of Yahweh. … The failure of light from the luminaries of heaven was a sign that a time of woe had arrived" (James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*

After this, Jesus dies. The description in v. 50 is brief and simple. It is possible that as Jesus cries out, he is repeating the cry of dereliction from Matt 22:46. Two factors would seem to commend this reading. The first is that Jesus is said to cry out "again" (πάλιν), and the second is that there is an exact repeat of the phrase "in a loud voice" (φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) describing the cry.[251] Ultimately, though, the reader is not told what Jesus cried out, or even if it was intelligible.

Summary of Key Points

At this point, for the reader of Matthew's Gospel, expectations for John as Elijah have been fully transformed. As eschatological Elijah, John the Baptist is the great prophetic preparer. He is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight'" (Matt 3:3, cf. Isa 40:3). He is the one "of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare the way before you'" (Matt 11:10, cf. Mal 3:1). John completed this preparatory work, though in an unexpected way. He preached the nearness of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 3:2), but it is a kingdom suffering violence (Matt 11:12). John baptized Jesus, participating with him in this act that is to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:13–15). But then John is arrested (Matt 4:12), and ultimately executed at the hands of Herod Antipas (Matt 14:3–12). In this, John is also preparing the way for Jesus. For in John, "Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands" (Matt 17:12). Now, Malachi's prophecy has been realized. John has prepared the way for the "great and awesome Day of the LORD" (MT—Mal 3:23 / LXX—Mal 3:22 / Eng.—Mal 4:5), and that day is happening as Jesus is crucified.

[Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 146–47.

[251] Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, 1568; Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, EGGNT (Nashville: B & H, 2017), 342. France observes that the "verb used here for 'cry' is not the same as the 'shout' of v. 46; it is used three times in the LXX of Ps 22 (vv 2, 5, 24) for the sufferer's appeals to God, and its use might be a further echo of that psalm" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1078).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In many ways, this dissertation starts with Kingsbury's observation that in spite of being "the divinely sent forerunner who readies Israel for the imminent arrival of Jesus," John the Baptist's "conception of Jesus' ministry, though it is correct, is also insufficient."[1] Throughout his narrative arc, while he is alive, John's viewpoint concerning Jesus as well as himself is to some degree incomplete, or in Kingsbury's words, "insufficient." It has been the starting point of this project to explore the nature of this insufficient viewpoint. We have observed ways in which the narrator of Matthew's Gospel—sometimes through the words of the Jesus and often through citations of and allusions to Isaiah and other Old Testament texts—engages this viewpoint. It is supplemented for the sake of the reader, such that an understanding of John, and relatedly Jesus, moves in the direction of being correct *and sufficient*.

In Matthew's Gospel, John is presented as 'Elijah who is to come.' The prophetic origin of the expectation for Elijah returning at the eschaton is found in Mal 3:1–5, 22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6]. As such, an examination of these texts was undertaken. In response to the question, "Where is the God of justice?" (Mal 2:17), the passage speaks of the near advent of three coming figures, who are distinguished in the text of Mal 3—"my messenger" (v. 1a), the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant (vv. 1b–4), and Yahweh of hosts (vv. 1a, 5). In the text, the first figure, "my messenger," comes to prepare the way for Yahweh of hosts. The second, the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant, whose coming is greatly anticipated, arrives and enacts a purifying judgement on the people of God. Then, Yahweh of hosts comes and acts as a swift witness against the wicked. In addition, Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6] speaks of the sending of "Elijah the

[1] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 48.

prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes" (Mal 3:23 [LXX 3:22 / Eng. 4:5]). The argument is made that "my messenger" and this Elijah figure are one and the same. As such, the activity of turning "the hearts of father to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (Mal 3:24 [LXX 3:23 / Eng. 4:6]) is part of the preparatory work described in Mal 3:1a. This discussion is noteworthy because the Matthean Baptist demonstrates expectations for himself and Jesus that show strong continuity with the roles of Malachi's "my messenger"/Elijah and the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant, respectively.

Following the analysis of Mal 3:1–5, 22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6], the figure of Elijah in Second Temple Jewish literature was taken up. The goal of this survey was to aid in the effort of reading Matthew's Gospel through the eyes of the implied reader. Regarding the outcome of the survey, while the manifestations of Elijah in Second Temple literature are diverse (as is Second Temple literature itself), there are two general contours that emerge. First, there is a tendency within the Second Temple literature to take Malachi's portrait of Elijah and supplement it, often with additional Old Testament texts and themes. This sort of thing happens in Matthew's Gospel as well, though with different texts and themes. Second, when Elijah returns (often with Enoch) the associated events are eschatological in nature, and more pointedly, there is a finality to the eschaton described. This feature is notably distinct from Elijah's advent in the person of John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel. There, rather than a final eschaton, eschatological events break in unexpectedly and in surprising fashion. This study, along with the one on Mal 3:1–5, 22–24 [Eng. 4:4–6], lays a foundation for the reading of John's narrative arc in Matthew, wherein the narrator fills out the portrait of John and Jesus, supplementing an otherwise evident Malachian presentation of the former as prophesied Elijah, and the latter as The Lord/Messenger of the Covenant who comes to enact a purifying judgement.

As mentioned, John demonstrates an incomplete understanding of himself and of Jesus, one that fits especially well if the Baptist has a Malachian understanding of himself as eschatological Elijah and Jesus as the one coming after him.[2] Nevertheless, he is not alone in his misunderstanding. Throughout John's narrative arc, like the Baptist himself, many in the narrative misunderstand John and Jesus as they participate together in the in–breaking of the kingdom. In these places, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel takes up the opportunity to clarify expectations. As a key observation, when the portraits of Matthean John and Jesus are supplemented in this way, it happens prominently through the use of texts from Isaiah, as well as the development of the narrative and the use of other Old Testament texts.

Having explored the Baptist's narrative arc, there are several major themes that emerge with regard to the ways that the narrator augments expectations.

First, rather than enacting immediate and full eschatological judgement, in the manifestation of the kingdom's in–breaking, there is an emphasis instead on eschatological blessing in the ministry of Jesus. John first appears in the narrative, proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 3:2), and his message anticipates imminent judgement. When the Pharisees and Sadducees arrive on the scene, he warns them to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, for being children of Abraham is not enough (Matt 3:8–9)—the axe is ready at the root to cut down and burn any trees that do not produce good fruit (Matt 3:8–10)! Furthermore, John speaks of a mightier one coming after him, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, whose winnowing fork is prepared to separate wheat from chaff and throw the chaff into the fire (Matt 3:11–12). As argued, these expectations described by John harmonize with the Lord/Messenger of the Covenant figure in Mal 3:1b–4. Yet, when Jesus appears on the scene

[2] See especially the discussion above on Matt 3:1–12.

after John's preaching, he does not do these things. Instead, he comes to be baptized by John, together fulfilling all righteousness (Matt 3:13–17).

In Matt 4:12–16, in response to the report of John's arrest, Jesus "withdraws" to the region of Galilee. In characterizing this movement as a fulfillment of Old Testament promise, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel employs words from Isa 8:23–9:1 [Eng. 9:1–2]. Jesus is seen as blessing the people of Galilee by bringing them the light of the Gospel.

While in prison, in Matt 9:14–17, John sends his disciples to Jesus, and they speak with his voice. They ask Jesus: "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" (Matt 9:14).[3] As argued above, his question likely implies that Jesus' disciples should be fasting more frequently, in light of the fact that he has come as an eschatological judge. In contrast, Jesus speaks of himself as a bridegroom, and likens his disciples to wedding guests (Matt 9:15), an image that conveys celebratory joy (cf. Isa 54:4–8). Such joy invites association with eschatological blessing, particularly in light of the miraculous healings Jesus performs in the immediately following context (Matt 9:18–34).

John later sends his disciples again to speak on his behalf, and they ask Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt 11:3). The question, and specifically the language of "one who is to come" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), is perhaps intended to evoke Mal 3:1b.[4] John wants to know why, if Jesus is in fact this coming one, he is not acting like an eschatological judge. In his response, Jesus does not speak to the underlying question concerning eschatological judgement. Instead, in verifying that he is in fact "the one who is to come," Jesus affirms his messianic identity with a composite allusion, recalling various texts from Isaiah: "Go

[3] My translation, provided to add the word "often" (represented in the Greek text with the word πολλά), and so bring clarity to my reading of the verse.

[4] See comments on pp. 48–49, 74 n88.

and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt 11:3). The eschatological blessings Jesus describes are in fact all things that he has done previously in the narrative.[5] Later in the same chapter, Jesus will offer an inclusive invitation, which further describes the eschatological blessing of the kingdom: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28–30).

Finally, in Matt 21:23–22:14, Jesus interacts with the Jewish religious leaders, and in so doing, he tells a series of three parables. Though the focus of these parables is on judgement, the third parable speaks of a king's wedding feast for his son (Matt 22:1–14). As with the imagery of Matt 9:15, the wedding feast metaphor invites the notion of celebratory joy and associated blessing. In the context, all who are worthy (i.e. all who honor the king and his son) are welcomed into the feast (Matt 22:8–10).

Second, when Jesus does take on the role of eschatological judge, the expressions of judgement are all, in some sense, partial in nature. In the Baptist's narrative arc, Jesus first speaks as judge in Matt 11:16–24.[6] Using a parable of sorts, Jesus describes how "this generation" has rejected both he and John—the latter in the mold of an ascetic prophet, a voice in the wilderness, and the former as a joyous bridegroom, sharing the blessings of the kingdom

[5] France provides the following list: "blind cured, 9:27–31; lame walking, 9:2–8; lepers cleansed, 8:1–14; deaf hearing, 9:32–33; dead raised, 9:18–26. For the good news to the poor, see not only 4:17, 23 but also chs. 5–7 as a whole, and especially the Beatitudes, which begin with the promise of the kingdom of heaven to the 'poor in spirit'" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 424). Regarding the deaf hearing, specifically, France notes that "Deafness and dumbness are associated and are described by the same term, κωφός" (France, *Gospel of Matthew,* 424).

[6] Notably, this portion of Jesus teaching is not a part of his response to John, but rather directed more generally towards the crowds, after John's disciples have left (cf. Matt 11:7).

(Matt 11:16–19). Following this, Jesus begins to speak in concrete expressions of judgement in light of this rejection. He declares woes on particular Galilean cities who had rejected him—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—in spite of witnessing many of his mighty works. Indeed, he explains, it will be more bearable on the day of judgement for wicked cities of Old Testament renown, cities like Tyre and Sidon, or Sodom. Yet, though Jesus declares this judgement, it comes in unexpected fashion. For rather than being immediately enacted, the manifestation of this judgment is twice cast into the future, delayed until a later "day of judgment" (Matt 11:22, 24).

Jesus again assumes the role of eschatological judge in dialogue with the Jewish religious leaders in Matt 21:23–22:14. They ask Jesus a question about the source of his authority, and he responds with a question for the religious leaders about John's authority. When they refuse to answer, Jesus tells the first of three parables in this section, the Parable of the Two Sons. After asking the religious leaders to weigh in on which son "did the will of his father," Jesus indicts them for their consistent failure to believe in John in spite of the fact that he came "in the way of righteousness" (Matt 11:23–32).

Jesus then tells two more parables, both of which focus strongly on judgement. In the first, The Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers (Matt 21:33–44), Jesus tells a parable which starts with an allusion to Isaiah's vineyard song (Isa 5:1–7; allusion in Matt 21:33 to Isa 5:2). The allusion establishes the vineyard as Israel and God as its owner, but following this, the details of Matthew's parable move quickly away from Isaiah's version. The vineyard is leased to tenant farmers who, when the time comes to return the product of the harvest, kill two of the vineyard owner's servants, and then his son. When asked what the vineyard owner would do to those tenant farmers, the religious leaders offer a reasonable response: "He will put those miserable

wretches to death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (Matt 21:41). With this answer, the religious leaders describe their own deserved fate. Jesus affirms this by citing one Old Testament passage clearly (Ps 118:22–23 [LXX 117:22–23] in Matt 21:42), and alluding to two others (Isa 8:14–15; Dan 2:34–35 in Matt 21:44). Within his response, Jesus speaks in judgement terms clearly: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits" (Matt 21:43).

Jesus' third parable, The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1–14) tells of a king giving a wedding feast for his son. When those invited twice refuse the king's invitation sent by way of his servants, the king "sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city" (Matt 22:7). In addition to a declared judgement of those who will refuse the king's invitation, this likely speaks prophetically of Jerusalem's destruction. The king then offers an inclusive invitation to the feast. Many come, but one is found without a wedding garment, demonstrating a lack of honor towards the king and his son, even as was true of those who refused the invitation. When he has no answer for his lack of a wedding garment, the king instructs his attendants: "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 22:13).

In this passage, and with the telling of these three parables, Jesus pronounces judgement on Israel's religious leaders, and those who like them would reject John and Jesus in their proclamation of the kingdom's advent. This judgement, though announced, however, is not immediately realized in full. Jesus promises the transfer of the kingdom (Matt 21:43; 22:8–10), but Jerusalem is not destroyed (Matt 22:7) in the narrative of Matthew's Gospel, and neither are those who oppose God and the Son of God (Matt 21:43; 22:8–10, 14).

Third, though the kingdom has broken in with the ministries of John and Jesus, it continues

to suffer violence at the hands of violent men, such that both John and Jesus will suffer and die. This truth is first anticipated at Jesus' baptism, when John and Jesus together participate in an act to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). This act fulfills righteousness, for in it Jesus comes to be baptized together in solidarity with sinful Israel. This anticipates Jesus' crucifixion, in which he will suffer vicariously in their place. As Gibbs puts so succinctly, "Here at the beginning of the narrative, Jesus, son of God, stands with Israel and in the place of Israel. At story's end Jesus, son of God, dies on behalf of Israel."[7]

Immediately following the baptism scene, during which the voice from heaven proclaims: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17), Jesus is "led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt 4:1). There, Jesus wins a decisive victory over the devil, showing himself to be faithful (Matt 4:1–11). On the heels of this triumph, however, the kingdom comes under attack, for John is arrested, leading Jesus to withdraw into Galilee (Matt 4:12).

When Jesus offers bridegroom and wedding imagery in his response to John's disciples in Matt 9:14–15, the focus is on the eschatological blessing that comes with his advent, and the advent of the kingdom. Contained in his response, however, is a subtle reference to his death. For Jesus says: "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Matt 9:15b). In this statement, and especially the phrase "is taken away" (ἀπαρθῇ ἀπ᾽), there is likely an allusion to Isa 53:8. With these words, Jesus points towards the fate which is his death.

Matthew 11:2–30 picks up with John still incarcerated. This fact in itself goes to show that in its surprising in–breaking, the kingdom suffers violence. For in this remarkable moment in

[7] Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel," 522.

redemptive history, great eschatological Elijah sits in prison. In this passage, after Jesus turns to address the crowds concerning John, he makes a key explanatory statement: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt 11:12). With these words, he explains the unexpected reality of what is taking place. The kingdom has broken in, but in a way scarce imagined, for it remains possible for violent men to oppose it. This is evident from John's imprisonment, and will continue to be an observable reality as John is executed and Jesus walks the path of suffering that John walked before him. In spite of this, John is indeed "he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare the way before you'" (Matt 11:10, cf. Mal 3:1) and "Elijah who is to come" (Matt 11:14, cf. Mal 3:23–24 [LXX 3:22–23 / Eng. 4:5–6]), even as Jesus is "the one who is to come" (Matt 11:3), verified by the composition of Isaianic allusions to eschatological blessing (Matt 11:5).

The violence of violent men against the Baptist reaches its climax in Matt 14:1–13a, as John's death is reported in the Gospel. The narrative is told in such a way as to evoke 1–2 Kings Elijah in his confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel. In the narrator's reshaping efforts, this comparison sets eschatological Elijah into sharper relief, highlighting the paradox of John's identity. For 1–2 Kings Elijah escapes death at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel, while eschatological Elijah does not escape death at the hands of Herod and Herodias. Upon hearing the report of John's death, Jesus withdraws again (Matt 14:13a), even as he did upon hearing of John's arrest in Matt 4:12.

When Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" they respond: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matt 16:13–14). This identification from the "people" is patently faulty, as Peter's correct

identification—"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16)—receives validation as divinely revealed (Matt 16:17). Nevertheless, in their deficient view of Jesus, the "people" ironically communicate something true about him, namely that he will in fact experience the rejection and suffering that is the fate of these prophets.

After the transfiguration account (Matt 17:1–8), the disciples who have just seen Elijah atop the mountain with Jesus, ask: "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" (Matt 17:10). In reorienting their perspective, Jesus explains that in John the Baptist, "Elijah has already come," and furthermore, "they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased" (Matt 17:12a). With the latter statement, Jesus is referring especially back to John's death, but then he continues: "So also the Son of man will certainly suffer at their hands" (Matt 17:12b). Even after the transfiguration, which in glorious fashion confirmed his identity as the Son of God, Jesus alludes to this inexplicable reality which has remained evident in the Baptist's narrative arc. For as Jesus spoke in Matt 11:12: "From the day of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force."

All three of the parables that Jesus tells in Matt 21:23–22:14 speak in some way to the rejection and suffering of John and Jesus. The Parable of the Two Sons tells of each son rejecting the will of his father in part, either initially or later. The point that Jesus will make is that the Jewish religious leaders have in fact rejected John the Baptist as a messenger from God both initially and later, in spite of the fact that he came "in the way of righteousness" (Matt 21:32).

The Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers, which has its foundation in Isaiah's vineyard song (Isa 5:1–7), portrays the Jewish religious leaders (cf. Matt 21:45) as wicked tenant farmers who first beat, kill, and stone two sets of servants sent from the vineyard owner (Matt 21:34–36). It is argued that John the Baptist is best understood as belonging to these servants, who represent

the prophets. Furthermore, when the vineyard owner's son is sent, they throw him out of the vineyard and kill him as well (Matt 21:39). It is further argued that this son is Jesus. In addition to being the son who is killed by the tenant farmers, Jesus is also the stone rejected by the builders (Matt 21:42).

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast, those initially invited greatly dishonor the king and his son, not only by refusing the invitation, but some even "seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them" (Matt 22:6). As with the previous parable, these servants are best seen as God's prophets, a group which includes the Baptist.

While the suffering of John reached its culmination with his execution at the hands of violent men in Matt 14:1–13a, Jesus' suffering reaches its climactic moment on the cross in Matt 27:45–50. That this moment represents suffering and death needs minimal argumentation. Remarkably, while Jesus suffers at the hands of those who enact his execution, in the mystery of the cross, God himself is also responsible for the suffering. The midday darkness of Matt 27:45 likely alludes to Amos 8:9–10, portraying the crucifixion event as the Day of the Lord. As such, eschatological judgement is here poured out, but poured out on God's Son.

Fourth, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel expands the portrayal of Jesus' messianic identity, such that Old Testament texts and themes associated with Yahweh are associated with Jesus. This last theme goes in something of a different direction, for it depicts Jesus as more exalted than expected. First, in the original context for both of the Old Testament prophetic preparer texts that Matthew uses to present John the Baptist, Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1, the prophet specifically prepares the way for Yahweh. In Isa 40:3, the voice cries out: "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the LORD (MT—יהוה/ LXX—κυρίου); make straight in the desert a highway for our God." In Mal 3:1, there is a first person speaker who says: "Behold, I send my

messenger, and he will prepare the way before me." Later in the text, the identity of the first person speaker is made explicit in Mal 3:5, as the text ends with "says the LORD of hosts." Both of these verses in their Matthean context (Matt 3:3 and 11:10, respectively), however, appear to have the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus.

Additionally, other Old Testament imagery in the Baptist's narrative arc connected with Yahweh is applied to Jesus. Jesus depicts himself as a bridegroom in Matt 9:15, and in the Old Testament there are a variety of texts that feature Yahweh as the bridegroom of Israel (e.g. Isa 54:4–6; 62:4–5; Jer 2–3; 31:32; Hos 2–3). At the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8), Moses and Elijah appear on a mountain to meet with Jesus, even as they each did previously in the biblical record with God (cf. Exod 24:15–18; 33:18–34:8; 1 Kgs 19:8–13). Finally, in Matt 21:44, there appears to be an allusion to Isa 8:14–15, in which Jesus says: "the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces." In the original Isaianic context, the "stone of offense and a rock of stumbling" is Yahweh of hosts (cf. Isa 8:13). In remarkably fitting fashion, in Matthew's presentation of the One for whom John as Elijah prepared the way, the stone over which people fall is none other than Jesus.

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Previous Theses and Publications

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Current Memberships in Academic Societies

Evangelical Theological Society
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