SALVATION IN CONTINUITY:

A RECONSIDERATION OF MATTHEW’S SOTERIOLOGY

by

Mothy Varkey

BSc (Physics), BD, MTh (New Testament)

This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University
2014
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Mothy Varkey
This reconsideration of Matthew’s soteriology argues that Matthew understands salvation in continuity. It employs a sequential treatment of the Gospel, which enables it to avoid the danger which characterises many previous studies of limiting the discussion of salvation in Matthew to certain texts, where the theme of salvation is more direct and explicit.

To this end, the study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the need for a reconsideration of Matthew’s soteriology, and Chapters 2 and 3 furnish, respectively, a brief literature survey and the method of approach. Chapters 4–6 examine Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ saving roles as teacher and judge, healer and helper, and the significance for Matthew of Jesus’ death and resurrection—especially in Matthew 1–7, 8–25 and 26–28 respectively, but also within the Gospel as a whole. On the basis of the findings from Chapters 4–6, Chapter 7 shows that Matthew understands salvation in continuity.

The study argues that Matthew does not understand salvation as something achieved only by Jesus’ death, and nor does he limit salvation to Jesus, because Jesus’ saving does not replace or abrogate the repertoire of salvation in the past such as the Torah and the temple. Instead, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving is the fulfilment of God’s saving plans and promises for his people and the continuation of God’s saving in the past. For Matthew, Jesus’ vicarious death is soteriologically comparable with the vicarious suffering of the righteous in the past, though much wider in its reach, and like theirs does not call the temple and the Torah into question. Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity is also to be seen as his response to the historical and theological questions of post-70 C.E. Judaism.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** viii  
**ABBREVIATIONS AND STYLE** x  

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1  

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 16  

## CHAPTER 3 METHOD OF APPROACH 63  

## CHAPTER 4 THE SAVIOUR AS TEACHER AND JUDGE: MATTHEW’S INITIAL DEPICTION OF JESUS SALVIFIC ROLES IN CHAPTERS 1–7 76  

4.1 Introduction 76  

4.2 Genealogy, Fulfilment Citations, and Typologies: Affirmation of Historical and Soteriological Continuity 76  

4.2.1 Genealogy 77  

4.2.2 Fulfilment Citations 83  

4.2.3 Typologies 84  

4.3 The Status of Jesus the Saviour 86  

4.3.1 Christ 87  

4.3.2 Son of David 88  

4.3.3 Son of Abraham 95  

4.3.4 The Virginal Conception, Son of God, Emmanuel, and Other Christological Claims 98  

4.4 Jesus Saves from Sins (1:21) 108  

4.5 John-Jesus-Ecclesia in Continuity 112  

4.6 Description of Jesus’ Salvific Role as the Judge to Come 120  

4.7 The Saviour as Teacher and Judge in Matthew 5–7: Promise, Law, and Continuity 129  

4.7.1 Salvation in Beatitudes (5:3–12): Promise, Reward, and Continuity 131  

4.7.2 Salvation, Law, and Continuity (5:17–48) 139  

4.7.3 Jewish Piety (6:1–18) 156
4.7.4 Salvation: Law, Judgement, and Continuity (7:1–27) 160
4.8 Teacher and Judge: Promise, Law, and Continuity elsewhere in Matthew 163
  4.8.1 Controversies and Conflict Stories 163
    4.8.1.1 Sabbath Laws 164
    4.8.1.2 Purity Laws 169
    4.8.1.3 Temple 173
    4.8.1.4 Marriage and Divorce 179
    4.8.1.5 The Greatest Commandment 182
  4.8.2 Discourses/Teachings, Kingdom Parables, and the Judgement Scenes 185
    4.8.2.1 The Second Discourse: The Commissioning of the Disciples (Matthew 10) 186
    4.8.2.2 The Third Discourse (Matthew 13) 189
    4.8.2.3 The Fourth Discourse (Matthew 18): The Parable of the Wicked Servant (18:21–35) 190
    4.8.2.4 The Rich Young Man (19:16–22) 191
    4.8.2.5 The Parables of the Kingdom and Judgement Scenes (21:23–22:46) 195
    4.8.2.6 Jesus’ Critique of the Scribes and the Pharisees (23:1–39) 202
    4.8.2.7 The Fifth Discourse (Matthew 24–25) 208
  4.8.3 The Last Commandment of Jesus (28:18-20) 210
4.9 The Saviour as Teacher and Judge: Concluding Comments 215

CHAPTER 5 THE SAVIOUR AS HEALER AND HELPER:
MATTHEW’S DEPICTION OF JESUS’ SALVIFIC ROLES IN CHAPTERS 8–25 221

5.1 Introduction 221
5.2 Supplementing John the Baptist’s Role Description of Jesus as the Judge to Come (11:2–5) 221
5.3 The Saviour as Healer and Helper in the Present of His Ministry 226
  5.3.1 Healings 226
    5.3.1.1 Leper Cleansed (8:1–4) 227
    5.3.1.2 Centurion’s Servant (8:5–13) 228
5.3.1.3 The Healing of Peter’s Mother-in-Law (8:14–17; cf. Mark 1:29–34) 232
5.3.1.4 Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic (9:2–8; cf. Mark 2:1–12) 233
5.3.1.6 The Healing of the Disabled Man (12:9–14; cf. Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11) 243
5.3.1.7 The Epileptic Boy (17:14–21; cf. Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43) 244

5.3.2 Exorcism 248
5.3.2.1 The Gadarene Demoniacs (8:28–34; cf. Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–37) 248
5.3.2.2 The Mute Demoniac (9:32–34; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14–45) 251
5.3.2.3 Jesus and Beelzebul (12:22–37; cf. 9:32–34; Mark 3:22–30; Luke 11:14–23) 253
5.3.2.4 The Encounter with the Canaanite Woman (15:21–28; cf. Mark 7:24–30) 260

5.3.3 The Feeding Accounts 264
5.3.3.1 The Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:13–21; cf. Mark 6:32–44) 267
5.3.3.2 The Feeding of the Four Thousand (15:32–39; cf. Mark 8:1–10) 270

5.3.4 Jesus’ Authority over Nature 275
5.3.4.1 Stilling of the Storm (8:23–27; cf. Mark 4:36–41; Luke 8:22–25) 275
5.3.4.2 Walking on the Sea (14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52) 278
5.3.5 The Raising of the Dead (9:18–26; cf. Mark 5:21–43) 282
5.3.6 Conclusion 284

5.4 Authorising the Ecclesia and Issues of Continuity 284
5.5 The Saviour as Healer and Helper: Concluding Comments 292
# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 6 THE SAVIOUR IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION:
MATTHEW’S DEPICTION OF JESUS’ SAVING IN CHAPTERS 26–28

6.1 Introduction 296
6.2 Matthew’s Depiction of Jesus’ Saving in His Death in the Context of “For the Forgiveness of Sins” in 26:28 and the Relation between 26:28 and Chapters 1–25 297
6.3 What else is Salvific in Matthew’s Depiction of Jesus’ Passion and Resurrection? 331
6.4 The Saviour in Death and Resurrection: Concluding Comments 345

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS 351

## BIBLIOGRAPHY 374
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I stood at the foothills of the enormous mountain and gazed sheepishly at the summit covered by the floating clouds. The road to the summit seemed tortuous and lonely. As my feet stood rooted on the ground, I felt the soft gentle breeze beckon me to move forward. I felt an affectionate hand guide me, I heard a tender voice whisper to me and saw a bright light shimmering in front of me, helping me to trace my path and commence my journey to the summit. As I reach my zenith and submit my thesis, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the breeze, the hand, the voice, and the light, without whom this journey would have remained only a dream.

First and foremost, I thank God, the source of my being and in whom I exist, the Eternal One whose amazing grace, unfathomable mercy, and incredible providence, have guided, and moulded me all my life, especially during this research. It was in joyful obedience to that divine calling that this research was undertaken, and it is a testimony to God’s faithfulness that I have endured the winding roads and reached the summit.

This thesis is completed under the capable supervision of Revd Emeritus Professor Dr William Ronald George Loader FAHA (popularly known as Dr Bill Loader). I am deeply grateful to him for his proficient supervision, incisive comments, constructive evaluations, wholehearted affection, and unreserved encouragement throughout the course of this study. I could not have wished for a more unassuming guide in this journey, as he patiently corrected my oversights and fallacious reasoning. Not only has his gracious and insightful supervision informed my research on Matthew’s Gospel, but his honest and unparalleled scholarship, done at the highest level, has been a formative example for me. He was decisively influential toward the crafting of my arguments with care and precision. More significantly, Dr Bill Loader
has left an indelible imprint on me, both as a NT scholar and as a genuine and wonderful human being. Nevertheless, whatever weakness that surfaces through this study can only be attributed to me as it simply attests to my enduring frailty.

It is my joy to express my gratitude to Dr John Dunnill (formerly Senior Lecturer in NT Studies at Murdoch University) who helped me pack for my journey. Special thanks to Dr Mary J. Marshall for her careful proofreading and invaluable comments on the style and content of this thesis. I am extremely obliged to Mrs Jean Coleman (Librarian, Reference & Information Services, Murdoch University), and Mr Michael Stone and Mrs Tracie Pollin (Document Delivery Services, Murdoch University), who helped me gather the research materials, especially through the Inter Library loan scheme. I am greatly indebted to Mr Ross Lantzke for his technical advice and help.

I express my sincere thanks to the Most Rev Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan and the honourable Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church for providing the opportunity for me to pursue my studies. I would like to express my gratitude to Archbishop Roger Herft, Diocese of Perth, Anglican Church, not only for facilitating a partnership scholarship scheme with Murdoch University, but also for his prayerful support and encouragement. Many thanks too are due to the Perth Mar Thoma Church, especially Dr Kuruvilla Mathew (Adjunct Senior Lecturer, School of Engineering and Information Technology, Murdoch University), for granting me all the required financial and spiritual support.

Above all, I express my heartfelt gratitude to my mother (Molly) and my brother (Moncy) for their invaluable encouragement, emotional solidarity, and, most importantly, sustaining prayerful support. Their blessings helped me see the summit covered with the floating clouds. It is with deep love, as a small gesture of my gratitude, that I dedicate this study to my mother for her unconditional love and sincere prayers.
ABBREVIATIONS AND STYLE

As far as possible, the abbreviations and style employed in this study follow the guidelines set forth in *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). However, British rather than American spelling is utilised.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The message of salvation is one of the foremost themes in the Gospel of Matthew. Accordingly in the opening chapter Matthew has “the angel of the Lord” instruct Joseph to name his son “Jesus” because “he will save his people from their sins” (1:21; cf. 20:28; 26:28). “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) is the Greek form for the Hebrew name “Joshua” (יהושע), which means “Yahweh helps”. In popular etymology, however, ḫwš was related to the Hebrew verb “to save” (שׁוּחַ) and to the Hebrew noun “salvation” (שׁוּחַ). Matthew is using this popular etymology attested elsewhere.

The birth and naming of Jesus in Matthew (1:18–25) thus announces what he will do. More significantly, it defines Jesus’ name in salvific terms, and employs the verb σώζω (“to save”) for the first time. Therefore, for Matthew’s Gospel the name “Jesus” aptly evokes or points to the intent of his mission to “save his people from their sins” (1:21).

This however raises some significant questions. How does Matthew have Jesus save his people? Is his salvation primarily salvation from sins or does it entail more than that? How does Matthew understand Jesus’ saving in relation to God’s saving in the past? Does Matthew understand Jesus’ mission to “save his people from their sins” (1:21) as the historical beginning of salvation in the life of the people of Israel or as effecting a “new” kind of salvation? Does Matthew limit salvation offered through

---

1 Both the Greek version of Ben Sira (Sir 46:1: “Joshua son of Nun was mighty in war [κραταιως ἐν πολέμῳ Ἰησοῦς Ναυη] . . . He became, as his name implies, a great savior of God’s elect”) and Philo (Mut. 121: “Moses also changes the name of Hosea into that of Joshua; displaying by his new name the distinctive qualities of his character”) provide evidence that this etymology was known among authors writing in Greek. Although the same etymology is employed in Matthew, the meaning of salvation has dramatically changed; whereas ḫwš (cf. ḥwš) son of Nun saved Israel from their Gentile enemies (Sir 46:1), ḫwš (cf. ḫwš) son of Joseph will “save his people from their sins” (1:21). The Septuagint (LXX) often renders the Hebrew root ḫwš with σωζειν.
forgiveness of sins as predicted in 1:21 to the person of Jesus, especially to his death on the cross?

Many, noting the presence of ἁμαρτία in 1:21 and in 26:28, have concluded that Jesus saved his people from their sins through his death. For this they have found support in 20:28 (“and to give his life as a ransom for many”) seeing a link between “ransom for many” in 20:28 and “poured out for many” in 26:28. The fact that the words “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) are Matthew’s addition to Mark’s account of Jesus’ words at the Last Supper, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mark 14:24), underlines its centrality for Matthew, they have argued. Some have found further evidence for this emphasis in Matthew’s omission of “for the forgiveness of sins” from Mark’s account of John’s baptism (Matt 3:6; cf. Mark 1:4).

There are problems, however, in arguing that Matthew understands salvation as something which Jesus brought only or primarily by his death (26:28; cf. 1:21; 20:28). For from a narrative perspective, if Matthew limits his understanding of salvation to something achieved by Jesus’ death (cf. 26:28), what role do the preceding twenty-five chapters of his gospel narrative about Jesus’ “words” and “deeds” play? If salvation offered through forgiveness of sins (1:21) is achieved only by his death (26:28), what is it that Jesus brings to the paralytic through his healing (“your sins are forgiven”; 9:2–8)? If Jesus’ healing which could be understood as healing from the effects of sin is not saving, why does Matthew depict it as the fulfilment of God’s salvific promises to the people of Israel (cf. 11:2–6; Isa 35:5–6; 61:1; 53:4)? If Jesus’ teaching and healing are not saving, why are his “deeds” identified by Matthew as the “deeds” of the Messiah (11:2–6)? Some argue that Jesus’ teaching and healing are not saving because they have nothing to do with sins. If Matthew limits salvation offered through forgiveness of sins (1:21) to something achieved only by Jesus’ death (26:28), why does he have Jesus
extend his authority to forgive sins to his disciples in 9:8 and chapter 18, and have Jesus authorise his disciples to continue his saving mission on earth, making his mission and the mission of the disciples continuous (10:1, 5–6; cf. 15:24)?


More significantly, Matthew supplements Mark’s “Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1) with the titles “Son of David” and “son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1) and thus positions Jesus’ saving within the history of God’s salvific dealings with his people in the past. Compared to Mark and Luke, Matthew presents Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah in a number of ways (pattern of fourteen generations [1:1–18], the legend of Herod [2:1–23], and the magi [2:1–12]). Unlike Mark (1:4, 14) and Luke (3:3), Matthew even makes Jesus’ saving and John’s mission continuous, especially by means of using the same message for John and Jesus (3:2; 4:17: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”). This is further reinforced later in the parables of the kingdom (21:23–22:46).

There are more issues involved in the understanding that what is predicted in 1:21 is achieved in 26:28. If Matthew limits his soteriology to Jesus’ death, why does he have Jesus say that he has come (ἦλθον—5:17) to “fulfil” the Law and the prophets? Why does Matthew give so much importance to the ethical implications of doing the will of God as outlined in the Torah (7:12, 21; 19:16–23; 22:34–40; 25:31–46), and
Jesus’ conflict with the Jewish leaders over the correct interpretation and observance of the Law, unless the Law has a significant place in his soteriology? Why, too, does Matthew mention the temple in positive terms (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27; cf. 21:23; 26:55)? If Matthew did not want to associate John the Baptist with forgiveness of sins, why is it that he attributes the same message to John and Jesus (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”—3:2; 4:17)? Why, too, does Matthew closely link divine forgiveness and human forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–35)?

We also see that Matthew holds Jesus’ saving and other means of forgiveness together, without sensing a contradiction among them. Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew maintains an affirmative attitude towards the salvific sufficiency and efficacy of the Torah (5:17–20; 19:16–23; 22:34–40), the temple and the cultic sacrifices associated with it (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27), but as interpreted by Jesus. And human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are soteriologically linked in Matthew’s Gospel (6:14–15; 18:21–35). Matthew still thinks of John’s baptism as bringing forgiveness (3:6), as in Mark (1:4). He situates Jesus’ status and his saving mission within the history of God’s saving dealings with his people further by means of making various titles and saving roles for Jesus such as teacher, judge, healer, helper, and shepherd. For Matthew, all that God said and did in the past through various messengers is now merged and continued in Jesus the saviour (2:6; 25:31–46). Therefore, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving is not the historical beginning of salvation or bringing a “new” kind of salvation. How then does Matthew understand Jesus’ saving?

Alternatively, in the light of above indications, Matthew perhaps understands Jesus’ saving as the continuation of God’s saving in the past. But this also raises a number of issues. Does Matthew understand Jesus’ saving as a mere repetition and reenactment of God’s saving deeds in the past? Does it not deny any sense of
development or change in God’s action or initiatives? In what sense does Jesus bring anything “new”, if indeed he does, through his teaching, healing, exorcism, feedings, death and resurrection? If Jesus just tweaks what is, why is he hailed as the climax and fulfilment of God’s saving promises, as the Messiah? How far is Jesus’ saving as the miraculously conceived Son of God (1:18–25) continuous with all that God said and did in the past through his messengers? Why does Matthew make various saving roles and patterns merge in Jesus? This leads us to the next issue.

Does Jesus’ saving, his death in particular, mark the end of God’s saving initiatives in history? For Matthew, Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ἐκκλησία are continuous. He shows this by using the same message for Jesus and his disciples (4:17; 10:5–6; cf. 28:18–20), unlike in Mark and Luke. Jesus’ authorisation of his disciples in 10:1–6, chapters 16 and 18, and the last commandment (28:18–20) further reinforce the link between Jesus’ mission and the mission of the ἐκκλησία. This is evident too in the kingdom parables (21:23–22:46). Moreover, Jesus delegates his authority to forgive sins to his disciples in 9:8 and later in chapter 18. If Jesus’ saving ends with his death on the cross, then how does it account for Jesus’ future predictions, resurrection, his eschatological role as the judge (3:11–12; 7:21–24; 25:31–46), and the final judgement (7:21–24; 25:31–46)?

For Matthew, Jesus’ life and death are saving, given that Christology (“who Jesus is”) and soteriology (“how Jesus saves”) are closely linked in his Gospel. Jesus’ teaching of the Torah is saving because he will judge his people in the end on the basis of his teaching, as predicted by John (3:11–12). And Jesus’ healings also bring forgiveness as promised in 1:21 and thus fulfil what God had promised in the past for the salvation of his people (Isa 53:4). This illustrates the close relation between sin and sickness in Matthew’s world. And through his helping, Jesus aids the needy, which
characterises his role as the Messiah of Israel. Jesus himself identifies his “words” (chapters 5–7) and “deeds” (chapters 8–9) as the “the deeds of the Christ” (11:2–6).

However, we encounter a few issues here. If Jesus’ death is just as saving as his ministry, then why is it singled out and linked in particular with the forgiveness of sins (26:28)? Does Matthew understand what was predicted in 1:21 as being accomplished in 26:28? Is this just a tradition he incorporates and to which he gives no weight, or does it have a special significance in some way—indicated by the fact that he makes a specific addition in this regard (26:28)? Why does Matthew introduce an apocalyptic colouring to the scene of Jesus’ death in his account (27:51–54)? What was it in Jesus’ death that warranted such a treatment in contrast to other events in his life? What was it in Jesus’ death that brings such a crucial change that it can be celebrated as a major eschatological event? Does Jesus’ death dismiss all other means of saving such as the temple sacrifices? Is it possible for Matthew to affirm everything about God as saving and forgiving, a temple cult which mediates it, John who brings it by baptism, and also as something made possible through the vicarious suffering of the righteous, without sensing a contradiction among them or the need to treat them as alternatives?

Further, while the language of saving (σωζω) is used in 1:21 and in 26:28 in the context of sins, it also has a broader use. The verb σωζω refers five times to eschatological rescue from distress (8:25; 10:22; 19:25; 24:13, 22), and three times to healing (9:21, 22[2x]). In 27:42 (“He saved others; he cannot save himself”) the verb σωζω is used in a rather broad sense and is not to be limited to the sense of saving a person from death (27:42b). Evidently, “he saved many” (27:42a) refers to Jesus’ miracles.

Therefore, both the verb σωζω and the theme of salvation in Matthew entail more than being saved from sins as in 1:21 and that text, too, needs to be considered in the
light of the whole range of saving roles which Matthew attributes to Jesus. The following investigation will accordingly seek to uncover the full range of Matthew’s understanding of soteriology, including the saving roles the evangelist attributes to Jesus and how they interrelate.

In doing so, this research will show that salvation in Matthew is much broader and bigger than just what 1:21 possibly means. The study will also show that Matthew unfolds Jesus’ saving not in isolation, but in very close relation to his treatment of various other theological themes and issues in the Gospel: the validity and sufficiency of God’s salvific dealings with the people of Israel in the past, which began with the calling of Abraham; the status of the people of Israel as God’s people; the validity and sufficiency of the Law, the prophets, the temple, and the cultic sacrifices; the various titles and salvific roles which Matthew attributes to Jesus (Christology); Jesus’ teaching of the Torah and his polemical encounter with the Jewish leaders; his healing and helping; his death and resurrection; his last judgement; and the authority of his disciples and the ecclesia (ecclesiology).

The questions and issues identified above in relation to Matthew’s soteriology point to the need for some indication in advance on Matthew’s theological location or orientation and the possible date of composition. On the other hand, the methodological decision to give primary attention to the writing itself as transmitted, has the potential to contribute a better understanding of Matthew’s context, Jewish and Christian.

It has been argued that while the Matthean community/audience that used or produced the Gospel identify themselves as Jews, the Gospel also serves the needs of people with a non-Jewish identity who have responded to God’s saving initiative in

---

Jesus, but opposes imposing “Judaism(s)” on their way of following Jesus’ saving. These two seemingly irreconcilable positions regarding the use of Matthew’s Gospel in the first-century make the task of locating or positioning the identity of the community behind the text all the more complex and challenging. There are two major positions with regard to the identity and setting of the Matthean community, though one might find important differences of emphasis even within these two broad divisions: some scholars argue that Matthew’s community stands, even if rather awkwardly, within the orbits/“boundaries” of first-century Judaism (intra muros), while some others argue that Matthew’s audience had parted company with the “synagogue” or a very diverse Judaism immediately after 70 C.E. (extra muros).

---


The research undertaken in this thesis presupposes that Matthew and his community must have identified themselves as historically and theologically continuous with Israel and thereby hoping to attract members of the larger community to the Jesuanic form of Judaism, as reflected in the Gospel. This clarifies Matthew’s legitimation of Jesus’ messiahship and the connections with God’s engagement with Israel—expressed in the genealogy, typology and fulfilment citations—his complete acceptance of the validity and salvific efficacy of the Law (5:17–20), and his depiction of Jesus’ polemical encounter with the Jewish leaders not only over the true sense of the Law but also in terms of understanding the Messiah and the eschatological hopes and prophecies associated with the Messiah, messianic identity and the authority of Jesus and the interpretation of the Law. Such affirmation-confrontation and continuity-discontinuity dialectics and polemic among various forms of Judaism(s) or Jewish groups is normal to first-century Judaism.

But Matthew’s relation to “Judaism” is more complex than the relationship among various Jewish groups of his time because of Matthean Christology and his attitude towards the Gentile mission. For, on the one hand, Matthew depicts Jesus’ identity in thoroughly Jewish terms as the Messiah, and on the basis of strongly Jewish theological and soteriological presuppositions about fulfilment, typological correspondence, divine interventions and patterns, reflecting that the claim to fulfil Jewish hope matters and Jewish arguments count. But, on the other hand, there are christological claims that go
far beyond this. The grounds for the latter are evident in Matthew’s claims concerning Jesus’ identity as the miraculously conceived Son of God and as Emmanuel, which foreshadow identification of Jesus with Shekinah and Sophia, which almost certainly would have been intolerable for the Jews.

The second major issue, which can threaten the stability of any reconstruction of Matthew’s theological location or a supposed Matthean Judaism, is the Gentile mission. The Matthean community has engaged in mission, including to the Gentiles, which would have caused problems, at least for the Jews. But the Gentiles in the Matthean community, though possibly very few in number, were Law-observing (cf. 5:17–20) and even willing to accept the authority of the Jewish leaders to teach the Torah though not uncritically (23:2–3). However, Matthew’s association with predominantly Gentile forms of early “Christianity” such as the Markan community would have created more problems not only because of the relatively larger presence of the Gentiles in such movements but also because of their obedience to only some parts of the Torah. This explains Matthean Jesus’ disowning those who do not uphold the validity and salvific efficacy of the entire Torah.

One might argue for Matthew’s knowledge of the Pauline communities in this context. But Matthew’s critique of those who do not observe the entire Torah, as

---

reflected in 5:17–19, fits Mark rather than Paul. This is further evident in Matthew’s unhappiness over Mark’s dismissal of the food laws. While incorporating Mark’s understanding of Jesus’ identity and status into a Jewish theological framework and the pattern of covenantal nomism, Matthew reworks Mark’s Jesus by depicting Jesus’ identity as the eschatological judge, as announced by John the Baptist (3:11–12), who will judge his people in the end based on his interpretation of the Torah (7:21–23; 25:31–46), which thus effectively transforms soteriology into a form of Judaism. Matthew does so by prioritising the teachings of the Torah that are universal as weighty, rather than the cultic and the ceremonial, making his form of Judaism more acceptable to its Gentile members and potential members.

This however does not suggest Matthew’s conscious break with the dominant form of Judaism of his time, at least at the time of the writing of the Gospel, though his community must have been meeting apart from the synagogue, and much suggests conflicts, due to the intense and escalating tension with the Jewish leaders. Over the years such conflicts would have become intolerable and the Matthean community must have started identifying themselves as a distinct community (ἐκκλησία) without disowning the wider Jewish community though the Jewish leaders would have felt otherwise.

This suggests Matthew’s is a strongly Jewish theological location, at least at the time of the writing of the Gospel, and apparently under local Jewish administration. It is thus a predominantly Jewish Christian community which also includes the Gentiles, living sometime in the 80’s C.E. The possible geographic location could be in a part of

6 This terminus ad quem was suggested mainly because of four reasons: (1) Matthew seems to have used the writing of Mark’s Gospel; (2) Ignatius of Antioch, who died in 107 C.E. knew the Gospel in written form; (3) the allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem temple (22:7); and (4) the theological concerns and perspectives of Matthew are those of a “second generation” Christian. For a detailed discussion on the date of Matthew’s Gospel, see Sim, The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism, 31–40; Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew’s Gospel,” 1942–43; Donald Senior, What are they Saying about Matthew? (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1996), 17; Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier,
the territory of Agrippa 2 who died ca 100 C.E. This territory extended well into Syria after the Jewish war according to Photius (Bibl. 33; cf. Dio 66.15.4), as far as Arca which was north east of Tripolis in northern Lebanon according to Josephus (B.J. 3:57–58; 7:97). That makes the best sense of Matt 23:3 which appears to presuppose local administration being in the hand of synagogue authorities, less likely around Antioch, where some locate Matthew. 8

It is in this context of Matthew’s complex relation to the Judaism(s) of his time and various Gentile forms of “Christianity” that this study elucidates his soteriology. By “soteriology” I mean the understanding of God’s saving initiatives in history especially in Jesus. “Salvation” is a general term, denoting deliverance of various kinds. In the Old Testament, when the people of Israel were threatened by hostile nations, the term is


But Gerd Theissen has argued that the place of origin of Matthew’s Gospel is not Antioch city rather the interior of Syria: The Gospels in Context. Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 1992), 251.

But Gerd Theissen has argued that the place of origin of Matthew’s Gospel is not Antioch city rather the interior of Syria: The Gospels in Context. Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 1992), 251.


used of God’s protection. In the Gospels, especially in Matthew, it is often used in the context of Jesus’ healings (Matt 9:22; cf. 27:42) and other miracles (Matt 8:25; 14:30). In such contexts salvation means deliverance from physical weakness, sickness and danger. But, for Matthew, as in other gospels, the term is also used for deliverance from sins (Matt 1:21; 9:2, 6; 26:28) and for the ultimate deliverance in the final judgement (25:31-46). The saving from future judgement means deliverance from eternal punishment, and entering into a perfect fellowship with God. These evidences suggest that “salvation” refers both to an eschatological and a present blessing.

This shows that “salvation” has a wide range of meanings. Therefore, a discussion of soteriology, especially of Matthew’s soteriology, means addressing a number of related questions. What does one need to be “saved” from? What does the state of being saved/safe look like (i.e. is it more than absence of danger?)? What achieves and sustains that state? This means determining what the problem is: a sin in terms of a miasma that impacts all (hence the sacrificial death), danger (hence the miracles such as calming the storm), illness (hence the healing), interpersonal difficulties (hence the teaching of the Torah).

These questions are answered also in Paul, John, and Mark. For instance, in Paul there are future (saved from judgement: cf. Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 3:15)\(^9\) and present (saved from sin’s power; 1 Cor 15:2; 2 Cor 6:2) dimensions: “He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again” (2 Cor 1:10). Salvation may be future but it also extends into the present because salvation has come already with the receiving of the gospel (Rom 8:24;

\(^9\) For Paul, salvation is salvation from judgement (Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 3:15). But positively it is endowment with divine glory that comes with the resurrection/redemption of the body (Rom 8:24; Phil 3:20–21) and conforming to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29).
10:10). According to Paul, saving is by Christ’s death and is sustained by continued faith and ethics derived from a new life in the Spirit and not from the biblical Law/Torah (discontinuity). In John there is a future dimension but the main focus is the present understood as life resulting not primarily from Christ’s death but from his person, who replaces the Law and generates an ethic of mutual love in community as the state of salvation (discontinuity). In Mark being “saved” is by following Christ’s interpretation of the core ethical commands of the Law (partial continuity) and so by responding positively to/submitting to God’s reign as both a future hope and a present reality.

In contrast, the response of Matthew’s Gospel to these questions—“how Jesus saves” and “from what” he saves—stands “in continuity” (both historically and theologically) with “how God saved” his people in the past. By “continuity”, I mean the continuity of God’s saving nature and his saving initiatives in the life of his people; God’s saving nature is continuous with his saving being. This also means the continuing validity of God’s repertoire of salvation in the past such as the Torah and the temple. For Matthew, the pattern of Jesus’ saving (soteriology) matches the pattern of the Jewish understanding of God’s saving of his time: the response of believing and accepting God’s saving promises and doing the will of God as spelled in the Torah. In Matthew’s view, unlike in Paul and Mark, what God has initiated through Jesus is thoroughly Jewish and responding to it entails keeping the entire Torah but as interpreted by Jesus. For Matthew, since Jesus is the eschatological judge to come (3:11–12), who will judge his people in the end based on his teachings of the Torah (7:21–21; 25:31–46), his understanding of Jesus’ saving is fundamentally a Jewish

---

10 In Rom 8:24 the content is eschatological the use of aorist shows that salvation has a present dimension too.
soteriology, leaving aside the christological components, unlike in Paul. Thus Matthew transforms his soteriology into a form of Judaism.

According to Matthew, given that saving from sins and granting forgiveness of sins are closely linked, there would not be a problem with Jesus’ blood as atoning/forgiving and the positive light given to the temple and the Torah. Rabbinic texts have the same point, as does, by implication, 2 Maccabees. Martyrdom literature continues the “both”/“and”: martyrs can be soteriologically efficacious, even though Jesus’ death has already done its work. The Torah is not designed primarily to “save from sin”; it is designed as a maintenance issue to keep one from sinning, and in case of sin (of certain types) it provides a means of atonement. By “atonement”, I mean the means or ways that can effect or bring restoration of the fellowship between God and his people. The Psalms presume forgiveness and “salvation” (usually from the “pit of Sheol”) without attention to Halakhah. Even in terms of atonement, the Torah does not provide the only means, and the atonement is only for certain types of sin. Matthew’s recapitulation of Mark’s “ransom” idea suggests that both Matthew and Mark, as in Paul, assume the saving nature of Jesus’ death. But Matthew differed from Paul and Mark in offering a soteriology which holds the saving nature of Jesus’ death and the salvific efficacy and validity of the Torah, without observing a contradiction; Matthew offers a soteriology which is “both/and” rather than an “either/or”.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Mostly, in Matthew’s Gospel, the theme of salvation features or appears as part of or in relation to a wider range of theological themes and issues. Therefore, one can expect in Matthew’s treatment of Christology, the Law, the temple, the dietary and purity laws, Jesus’ healing and helping, his future predictions, his death and resurrection, and his final judgement, some treatment of the salvation theme. Conversely, to treat Matthew’s soteriology without reference to these themes misses vital theological connections.

According to Gerhardsson, Matthew’s interpretation of Jesus’ name in terms of his saving mission (1:21) indicates just how much weight Matthew ascribes to the atonement Jesus effects.\(^1\) The logion in 20:28 (“as a ransom for many”; cf. Mark 10:45) and Matthew’s redactional insertion of the phrase “for the forgiveness of sins” into the pericope about the Last Supper (26:28) also underline the atoning significance of Jesus’ death.\(^2\)

However, in the view of Gerhardsson, 1:21 “says nothing about the way in which Jesus saves his people from their sins”.\(^3\) Nor is there any suggestion that this is to happen exclusively through Jesus’ sacrificial death.\(^4\) In addition, the words interpreting the meaning and significance of the cup (26:28) are not a statement about Jesus’ death, “but deal rather with the practical benefit participants in the church’s Holy Communion can derive from it”.\(^5\) The Matthean Jesus does not reject the temple and its outward

---

sacrificial services (12:1–8) nor does his sacrificial death make other cultic offerings superfluous (6:1–6, 16–21). Moreover, the “ransom” saying (20:28) does not appear in the context of atonement. Therefore, for Gerhardsson, “the Matthean presentation of Jesus’ ministry cannot be interpreted solely in the light of . . . atonement”.

According to Gerhardsson, Matthew construes Jesus’ ministry as a “spiritual service of sacrifice” and plays down the historical “once and for all” in favour of a “perfect prototype” for “his people”. Consequently, Jesus’ death “as a ransom for many” is not given such an exclusive character that it has to be set against, and distinguished from, other vicarious deaths. In other words, Jesus saves his people by becoming an exceptional paradigm of “spiritual service of sacrifice”, which logically and theologically merges with serving others, and not by becoming an exclusive figure from whose sacrifice people can just “reap the fruits”. This is consistent with the ethical dimension of Matthew’s soteriology. Thus, Gerhardsson contends, by carrying out “the deep spiritual temple sacrifice”, “Jesus becomes a place of expiation and a sanctuary of atonement”.

While some of Gerhardsson’s observations with regard to Jesus’ saving in Matthew are persuasive—Jesus’ salvific ministry cannot be interpreted solely in the light of his death; and Jesus’ sacrifice does not make the temple and the cultic sacrifices associated with it redundant—his treatment of Matthew’s soteriology as a whole raises important issues. If Matthew does not distinguish Jesus’ death from other vicarious deaths, then why is it that he adds “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 and gives an

---

apocalyptic colouring to Jesus’ death (27:51–54)? What is the relation between Jesus’ interpretation of the Law (5:20; 19:16–23; 22:34–40) and his last judgement in Matthew’s soteriology (3:11–12; 25:31–46)? Why does Matthew closely link the various titles and salvific roles (judge, teacher, shepherd, healer, and helper), which he ascribes to Jesus, with “how Jesus saves”? What programmatic role does 1:21 play in Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ saving?

According to Kingsbury, Jesus saves his people from their sins through his atoning death on the cross (1:21; 20:28; 26:28).14 Therefore, “by virtue of the atonement accomplished” by Jesus, the temple and “the sacrificial system of Israel has been brought to an end”.15 Though not in explicitly soteriological terms, Kingsbury, however, emphasises the ethical—observing what Jesus commanded (cf. 13:23; 28:20): doing the will of God (7:12, 21; 25:31–40), producing good fruit (7:16–20; 12:33), and bringing forth good treasure (12:35)—and the future dimensions of salvation (5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23–24; 21:31; 25:34).16 He also makes reference to Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–12), who is the ruler of all (cf. 13:41–43; 16:28; 17:22–23; 20:17–19; 25:31–46).17 And, as the judge to come, Jesus’ second coming means “salvation and judgment (3:11–12)”.18 However, Kingsbury believes that Jesus’ roles as the “coming one” (3:11–12; 11:3; 21:9; cf. 23:39) and the judge (3:11–12) in Matthew’s Gospel are of the nature not of a primary, but “of an auxiliary christological title”.19

Kingsbury’s treatment of Matthean soteriology is open to question. Though Kingsbury describes the present and future dimensions of salvation which Jesus brings, he does not fully develop the theological connection between Jesus’ teaching of the Law

---

15 Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 76.
and his final judgement. If Jesus’ death brings the sacrificial cult associated with the
temple to an end, then how do we account for Matthew’s positive attitude towards the
temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27; cf. 21:23; 26:55)? Further, Kingsbury’s understanding
of forgiveness of sins in Matthew as something accomplished through Jesus’ death is
not compelling because it does not cohere with 9:2–8, where Jesus forgives the sins of
the paralytic (“your sins are forgiven”), the relation between human forgiveness and
divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–35), the relation between sin and sickness, the role
and the mission of the ecclesia, and the close association between Christology and
soteriology.

Similarly, Meier also argues that Jesus saves his people (1:21) through his
sacrificial death (26:28; 20:28).\textsuperscript{20} As a result, the temple sacrifices are rejected (8:11–12). According to Meier, Jesus’ observance of the commandments of Moses in 8:4 does
not show his acceptance of the entire Torah.\textsuperscript{21} The Son of Man in 20:28 is the Suffering
Servant of Isaiah 53:10–12, who gives his life as an offering for sin, who surrenders
himself to death and thereby takes away the sins of many.\textsuperscript{22} Matthew definitely sees
Jesus’ death as vicarious, expiatory, and atoning sacrifice.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, in Meier’s view,
in his description of John’s baptism, Matthew carefully avoids calling it a baptism “for
the forgiveness of sins” (3:6; cf. Mark 1:4)—the very words Matthew “appends to the
word over the cup”.\textsuperscript{24} In addition, Meier asserts, because the account of the healing of
the paralytic (9:2–8) focuses on “the dispute over Jesus’ authority”, in 9:6 Matthew
concentrates on Jesus’ authority to forgive sins, with forgiveness of sins and healing as

\textsuperscript{20} Meier, Vision, 143–44, 183–84; idem, Matthew (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier,
1983), 24, 229, 319.
\textsuperscript{21} Meier, Matthew, 83, 94.
\textsuperscript{22} Meier, Vision, 184; idem, Matthew, 319.
\textsuperscript{23} Meier, Vision, 184; idem, Matthew, 319.
\textsuperscript{24} Meier, Vision, 184; idem, Matthew, 24, 319.
“subordinate theme[s]”. In other words, for Meier, Jesus’ healing of the paralytic in Matthew (9:2–8) is christological not soteriological in nature as it focuses on Jesus’ authority, not on forgiveness of sins itself.

This is an unwarranted dismissal and reduction of the theme, because the picture of Jesus as a forgiver of sins is continued in his table fellowship with the tax collectors and sinners (9:9–13). Despite this reductionism, Meier can still rightly contend that “God wills that human and divine forgiveness be inextricably bound together—a corollary of the double command of love” (6:14–15; 22:34–40). Moreover, “God’s forgiving act precedes any initiative of ours (18:23–35)”; but one can lose it, by refusing to extend it to a brother. In other words, God’s forgiveness is conditioned by human forgiveness; whether it precedes or succeeds.

Meier maintains a theological continuity not only between Jesus’ authority to teach the Law and his authority to judge his people, but also between Jesus’ teachings of the Law and his final judgement (7:12, 24, 26). However, for Meier, Jesus’ words will be the decisive criterion for his last judgement because they are identical with “the will of the Father” (7:21); “Jesus is the criterion of judgment as well as the judge”. Therefore, Meier argues, it is the commitment to Jesus, not keeping all the commands of the Torah, not even keeping the love commandments, that makes one enter into eternal life (19:16–23; 22:34–40) because the person of Jesus is the touchstone for judgement

---

25 Meier, Matthew, 91.
26 Meier, Vision, 72.
27 Meier, Matthew, 63.
28 Meier, Matthew, 62; see also idem, Vision, 132–35.
29 Meier, Vision, 132–35.
31 Meier, Matthew, 75.
32 Meier, Matthew, 304.
Meier also finds a connection between the present and future dimensions of Jesus’ saving mission (16:27; 25:31–46).

For Meier, Jesus’ healings (chapters 8–9) also constitute his salvific mission (1:21). The Servant figure of Isaiah (Isa 53:4), which Matthew uses elsewhere in relation to Jesus’ death (20:28; cf. 26:28), is here applied to his healing activity during the public ministry (8:17). Further, Jesus’ reply to John (11:2–9) shows that Matthew understands “the deeds of the Christ” as messianic because it inaugurates the eschatological age, as proclaimed by Isaiah (Isa 35:3–6; 42:28; 61:1). The “Messianic works”, according to Meier, “include both the acts of Jesus in chapters 8 and 9 and the similar works for which the twelve apostles are empowered in chapter 10”. However, for Meier, it is “the preaching of good news to the poor” that is “the high point in Jesus’ messianic mission”, not the series of healings (cf. Isa 29:18–19; 35:5–6) or even raising of the dead (cf. Isa 25:8). And “from his baptism onward, Jesus the servant embraces a sinful, suffering, sick humanity, in order to save his people from their sins (1:21) and bear their illness (8:17).”

Meier’s construal of Matthean soteriology raises important issues. His argument that forgiveness of sins is accomplished only through Jesus’ expiating death is not consistent with his own contention that Jesus’ healings also fulfil 1:21 and his interpretation of 6:14–15 and 18:23–35—“God wills that human and divine forgiveness be inextricably bound together”.

---

34 Meier, Vision, 70–71,119; idem, Matthew, 88, 188.
35 Meier, Matthew, 85–86, 91.
36 Meier, Matthew, 85.
37 Meier, Vision, 75.
39 Meier, Vision, 69.
40 Meier, Matthew, 63.
authorising of the *ecclesia* to continue his mission (10:1–6; 28:18–20), and for the close relation between Christology and soteriology? Moreover, if Jesus’ saving mission begins with his baptism, as Meier argues, then how can Matthew limit Jesus’ saving, as envisioned in 1:21, to his death? What is the programmatic role of 1:21 in Matthew’s unpacking of Jesus’ saving? Meier’s understanding of Jesus’ attitude towards the Torah—“fulfilment” of the Law involves abrogation (5:21–48)—in respect of Jesus’ mission (1:21), is not compatible with 5:17–20, 23:2–3 and Jesus’ positive attitude towards the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27).

Harrington argues that Jesus saves by his passion, teaching, and healing.\(^\text{41}\) He relates forgiveness of sins and “how Jesus saves” in Matthew “more to the person of Jesus” than to any event in the person and life of Jesus.\(^\text{42}\) “Building on insights in the fourth Servant song (Isa 52:13–53:12),” Harrington notes that the phrase “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28, which echoes the Passover theme of liberation from slavery, “climaxes Matthew’s special emphasis on Jesus’ power to forgive of sins” (1:21; 5:23–24; 6:12, 14–15; 9:6; 18:21–35).\(^\text{43}\)

In the view of Harrington, John’s baptism presupposes not only “God’s willingness to forgive sins” (3:2, 6),\(^\text{44}\) but also God’s forgiveness of sins.\(^\text{45}\) Harrington underlines the close link between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness in Matthew (6:14–15; 16:19; 18:18).\(^\text{46}\) Further, Jesus’ healing of the paralytic (9:2–8) shows that forgiveness of sins is not rooted in any event but to the very person of Jesus; Jesus who has the power to heal has the power to forgive sins too.\(^\text{47}\) The fulfilment citation (Isa

---


\(^{43}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 368.

\(^{44}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 52.


\(^{46}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 94–95, 122, 125, 270.

53:4) in 8:17 associates Jesus’ healing activity with his passion. In effect, Jesus, the Suffering Servant, who takes away the sins of his people through his passion, saves his people through his healing too.\(^{48}\) This Matthew achieves by linking the Suffering Servant motif in 8:17 and 20:28. Moreover, Jesus’ “deeds” that are reflected in chapters 5–9 fit into his messianic mission (11:2–6).\(^{49}\) For Harrington, Jesus’ stilling of the storm (8:23–27) also constitutes his saving activity because the sea symbolises the powers of evil (Ps 107:23–30).\(^{50}\)

The present dimension of salvation is “glimpsed” in Jesus’ teachings and actions (4:17; 11:4–5; 12:12, 28; 13:31–32, 44–46);\(^{51}\) it is “not yet a full reality but very close to the point that it can be called inaugurated”.\(^{52}\) Nevertheless, Harrington argues, the thrust of Matthew’s soteriology is towards the future: the various rewards promised in the beatitudes (5:3–12), which are to be enjoyed in the future fullness of God’s kingdom; the parables in 13:1–52, which promise a far greater future; and the eschatological discourse in chapters 24–25, which offers a scenario for the full coming of God’s kingdom.\(^{53}\) In other words, Harrington notes, Jesus’ last judgement plays an important role in Matthew’s understanding of salvation:\(^{54}\) the parables of the weed and wheat (13:24–30, 36–43), and the dragnet (13:47–50); and the great judgement scene (25:31–46). It is, therefore, easy to understand why the ethical teachings of Jesus could be taken as imperatives and viewed as necessary for one’s salvation in Matthew.\(^{55}\)


\(^{50}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 123.


\(^{52}\) Harrington, *Matthew*, 72.


\(^{54}\) Harrington, “Matthew and Paul,” 22–23.

Harrington believes that Jesus’ ethical teachings are nothing but the interpretation of what the Torah truly means; the Torah remains in force (5:17–19). Jesus’ ethical teaching that is summed up in “righteousness” (5:20) involves fidelity to God’s will as revealed in the Torah and Jesus’ interpretation of it (7:12, 21). On the other hand, Harrington also asserts that, though Jesus’ teachings are firmly rooted within Judaism, “Matthew considered Jesus to represent the best in Judaism”.

In the story of the rich young man (19:16–22), Harrington argues, though keeping the commandments is sufficient “to enter into eternal life” (19:16–17), Matthew “seems to envision the possibility of salvation for Jews apart from the route of Christian discipleship”. This means, for Harrington, Jesus saves the Jews, and those who believe in Jesus, differently: Jesus saves the Jews by inviting them to keep the commandments of the Torah as in 19:16–17; and those who believe in Jesus are saved through full discipleship (19:16–30; 22:34–40).

Harrington gives more weight to the future dimension of salvation. This rightly highlights the salvific dimension of Jesus’ teaching and its ethical implications in relation to his last judgement. However, such an interpretation would give the impression that Matthew undermines the presence of the kingdom of heaven in Jesus’ life and ministry. In addition, Harrington’s understanding of Jesus’ last judgement and its basis is not necessarily correct because he misses out the theological connection between Jesus’ saving role as judge and as teacher. Harrington’s argument that the Matthean Jesus represents only the “best in Judaism” also raises some doubts. How can

---

57 Harrington, *Matthew*, 81, 84; idem, “Matthew and Paul,” 19.
Matthew’s Jesus represent only the “best” in Judaism, and maintain a very strong continuity with Judaism at the same time? Does that mean Jesus’ continuity with Judaism is only in terms of the “best”? What does the “best” then mean? Does “fulfilling the Law and the prophets” mean fulfilling only the “best” in the Law and the prophets?

According to Stanton, Matthew does emphasise forgiveness of sins through Jesus in 1:21 and 26:28. He argues that Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology are very much connected in Matthew. Therefore, in Stanton’s opinion, for Matthew, “how Jesus saves” his people through his preaching (4:16–17, 23; 12:20), teaching (chapters 5–7; 11:29), and healing (4:23; 9:35; chapters 8–9) is how Jesus’ disciples will continue his mission on earth (4:16; 10:5–6; 15:24). This means, according to Stanton, Jesus saves his people by his preaching, teaching and healing. There is also a strong indication that both Jesus’ disciples and Jesus will share the same fate (5:11; 10:18, 25; 23:34).

In Stanton’s view, the Matthean Jesus does not repudiate the Law and the prophets, but affirms their validity (5:17–19) and even tones down Mark’s radical traditions (cf. Matt 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23). Stanton argues that Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge is also given importance in Matthew (7:21–23; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31–46), but the basis of Jesus’ final judgement is one’s response to the needs of his disciples (10:11–15, 17–18; 40–42, 45; 25:32). Given the three different accounts of the final judgement in Matthew (7:21–23; 19:28; 25:31–46), Stanton assumes that Matthew might well have envisaged a number of different judgements:

---


judgement of the *ecclesia* (7:21–23), another for the Gentiles (25:31–46), over both of which the Son of Man presides, and the judgement of Israel by the disciples (19:28). 64

Stanton’s interpretation of Matthean salvation raises a number of issues. What is the role of 1:21 in Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ saving? What is the relation between Jesus’ role as the judge to come in John’s predictions (3:11–12) and his role as the teacher of the Law? Why is it that the basis of Jesus’ final judgement is limited to the hospitality extended to the disciples in general? What is the relation between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–35)? If Jesus’ death is not saving, then why does Matthew add “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28? Why does Matthew give an apocalyptic colouring to Jesus’ death (27:51–54)? Do John’s baptism (3:6) and his preaching (3:2) bring forgiveness?

According to Hare, Jesus saves his people (1:21) by his atoning death. The blood “poured out for many” is the sign of God’s end-time saving mission. 65 It is then plausible to construe Jesus’ death “as the central event” in God’s saving activity in history. 66 But, on the other hand, Hare also argues that God’s forgiveness is conditional; it expects the recipient to forgive first (6:14–15). 67 Matthew understands Jesus’ healings also as part of his salvific mission because he fulfils the messianic hopes and expectations in his healing (8:17; cf. Isa 53:4); it is God who is at work in Jesus’ healing activity (12:29). 68 Jesus himself confirms that his healings do constitute his saving mission (11:2–6). 69 In Hare’s view, the theme of “saving” in 27:42a (“he saved others”) also refers to Jesus’ healing activity because “the verb ‘save’ is often used in the miracle

---

66 Hare, *Matthew*, 329.
68 Hare, *Matthew*, 93, 100–1, 321.
69 Hare, *Matthew*, 121.
stories, as in 9:21–22”.⁷⁰ For Hare, Jesus’ forgiveness of the sins of the paralytic (9:6) and his table fellowship with the tax collectors and sinners also constitute his mission to the “lost” (15:24).⁷¹ Future dimension of salvation and Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge are also emphasised in Matthew (3:11–12; 7:21; 16:27; 25:31–46).⁷² But the last judgement in Matthew, so Hare asserts, is based on the “ethical behaviour” of his people, which “God prefers to . . . religious sacrifices”.⁷³

There are gaps in Hare’s interpretation of Matthew’s soteriology. On the one hand, Hare argues that Matthew’s Jesus replaces the Torah,⁷⁴ and, on the other hand, he claims that Matthew has Jesus uphold the Law.⁷⁵ Hare has a tendency to downplay the close connection between Christology and soteriology in Matthew. What is the role of 1:21 in Matthew’s unpacking of Jesus’ saving? How does limiting Jesus’ saving mission to his death reconcile with 6:14–15 and 18:23–25, where God’s forgiveness is envisaged as conditional? How does Hare’s argument that Jesus saves by his death account for 5:17–20, 19:16–23, 22:34–40, and Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic (9:5–6)? What is the basis of ethical behaviour and the last judgement in Matthew: Law or Jesus’ teachings? Hare’s treatment of how Jesus’ role as the judge to come links the present and future dimensions of the salvation which Jesus brings, is only cursory. Consequently, Hare even tends to depict Jesus as an advocate, as in John, not as the judge to come (7:21–12; cf. 3:11–12).⁷⁶

---

⁷⁰ Hare, Matthew, 321.
⁷¹ Hare, Matthew, 100–2.
⁷² Hare, Matthew, 197.
⁷³ Hare, Matthew, 226.
⁷⁴ Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew?,” 277.
⁷⁵ Hare, Matthew, 88-89.
⁷⁶ Hare, Matthew, 84.
In the view of Hagner, Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21) through his sacrificial death (20:28; 26:28). He argues that although it was possible to associate Jesus’ saving as promised in 1:21 with national-political liberation, Matthew and his community could not easily have made such an association after 70 C.E. Therefore, for Matthew, “the deliverance from sins is in a much more profound, moral sense and depends finally upon the pouring out of Jesus’ blood (26:28)”. Ps 130:8, which, Hagner believes, “probably is in Matthew’s mind”, “provides similar language and finds its fulfillment here”.

The phrase “poured out” is itself an allusion to sacrifices of atonement. But, for Hagner, Jesus’ sacrificial death does not abrogate the sacrifices associated with the temple (8:4) because Jesus fulfils the Law (5:17–20), which does not entail replacement. However, the followers of Jesus are not centred on the Torah but on Jesus (7:24–27; 10:32–33, 37–39). Therefore, one must have absolute commitment to Jesus “to enter into eternal life”; obeying the commandments of the Torah is not enough.

---

78 Hagner, Matthew, 1:19.
79 Hagner, Matthew, 1:19.
80 Hagner, Matthew, 2:773.
Hagner argues that God’s forgiveness is always prior (18:23–35). But, he also says that God’s forgiveness has a “causal relation” to human forgiveness; God’s forgiveness is “the result of” human forgiveness (6:14–15). There is no direct link to forgiveness of sins in John’s baptism (3:6). For Hagner, Jesus’ healing activity is also saving because it not only fulfils Isa 53:4, but also demonstrates the reality of forgiveness of sins. 27:42 also alludes to the salvific nature of Jesus’ healing mission because the word “save” is used in miracles (9:22–23). Similarly, in 11:2–6, Jesus himself includes his miracles within the scope of his messianic saving mission. Like miracles, Jesus’ table fellowship with the tax collectors and sinners (9:10–13) also reflects the scope of his saving mission. But, Hagner opines, for Matthew, miracles focus more on Christology—the authority of Jesus and, not soteriology. However, Jesus accomplishes his mission to save his people (1:21) on the cross.

In Matthew, Jesus’ teachings indicate both the present and future dimensions of the salvation which he brings (19:16–17). Hagner believes that Matthew highlights the future dimension of salvation and the role of Jesus as the eschatological judge (7:21; 13:24–30, 36–43; 16:27; 20:1–16; 22:1–14; 24: 3, 27, 37, 30, 39; 25:11). This is the motivation for ethical behaviour in Matthew (7:12; 19:28; 25:31). Matthew does stress the importance of “higher righteousness” as good deeds of love and mercy, which

85 Hagner, Matthew, 2:537–41.
86 Hagner, Matthew, 1:152.
87 Hagner, Matthew, 1:47.
88 Hagner, Matthew, 2:839.
89 Hagner, Matthew, 1:301.
90 Hagner, Matthew, 1:234.
91 Hagner, Matthew, 1:210.
92 Hagner, Matthew, 2:561.
summarise the Law and the prophets, but also as part of a larger context in which God acts graciously for the salvation of “his people”.  

Hagner’s understanding of “how Jesus saves” in Matthew raises a number of issues. If what is predicted in 1:21 is achieved only in Jesus’ death (26:28), then why does Matthew very closely link Christology and soteriology? How does such an atonement theory reconcile with Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic (9:2–8) and the relation between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:23–25)? How does it account for Jesus’ reference to his own teaching and healing as part of his messianic mission (11:2–6)? What role does 1:21 play in Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ saving?

According to Saldarini, Jesus saves his people “by his teaching and healing and preeminently by his death, which leads to his resurrection (chaps. 26–28) and the ultimate vindication of the just at the final judgment (25:31–46)”.

At the Last Supper Jesus used the cup of wine to symbolise his death and his (sacrificial) blood, “which will be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”. Matthew adds “for the forgiveness of sins” to Mark 14:24 (Matt 26:28), which “specifically fulfills the promise of Jesus’ name in Matt. 1:21” (“he will save his people from their sins”).

While being aware of the salvific nature of Jesus’ suffering and death, Saldarini argues that Jesus saves his people through his teaching and healing too. This is evident in Jesus’ reply to John’s question by referring to his healing and teaching as constitutive of his messianic mission (11:2–6). However, for Saldarini, the teaching of the Torah is Jesus’ primary role as the Messiah in Matthew; healing is “subordinate to and

---

95 Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 166.
96 Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 295 n. 121.
supportive of Jesus’ role as teacher”. 98 Jesus observes the Law carefully and his teaching of the Law is far from annulling or superseding the Law in favour of something new or replacing the old, but “fits comfortably” within the “acceptable parameters” of the legal debates within first-century Judaism. 99

After teaching, healing (chapters 8–9), which includes exorcism (4:24; 8:16) and providing leadership to the oppressed (9:36), is Jesus’ “next important” and “most frequent” messianic saving activity. 100 Jesus’ role as the healer is authenticated by Isa 53:4 (8:17). Like teaching, Jesus’ healings also bring help to the needy, and thus characterise his role as the Messiah. Jesus’ role as the judge to come is also fundamental to Matthew’s understanding of soteriology (3:11–12; 10:23; 13:41; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 39; 25:31) because Jesus’ death on the cross is not an end, but a fulfilment of that which was promised at the beginning (1:21). Saldarini rightly links the present and future dimensions of salvation, initiated and consummated in Jesus, through resurrection. In other words, Jesus the crucified is Jesus the risen; and, therefore, Jesus the risen is Jesus the judge to come. 101

Though Saldarini offers a finely nuanced treatment of Matthew’s soteriology which intensely reinforces the theological connection between Christology and soteriology, 102 he has a tendency to separate both not only by putting Jesus’ healing as subordinate to his teaching, but also by interpreting Jesus’ death as only “preeminently” soteriological. If Jesus’ death is only “preeminently” salvific, then why does Matthew insert “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 and give an apocalyptic colouring to Jesus’

98 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 182.
99 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 125–64.
100 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 168, 179–82.
death (27:51–54)? In what sense is Jesus’ healing “subordinate” to his teaching? Is Jesus’ teaching more salvifically effective than his healing?

As one would expect, Saldarini is sensitive to Matthew’s post-70 c.e. Jewish religious milieu. Nevertheless, Saldarini appears to discount the close association between sin and sickness in Matthew’s world by making Jesus’ healing “subordinate” to his teaching. Saldarini does not fully develop the theological connection between Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–12) and his role as the teacher, which explains the soteriological importance of ethics in Matthew. Moreover, Saldarini is silent on the close connection between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness in Matthew (6:14–15; 18:23–25).

Gundry contends that Jesus saves his people “by divine revelation (11:25–26), by God’s giving them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (13:11)” “because of their mental infantilism”. And, “because of their sins”, Jesus saves his people “by divine mercy (5:7) and generosity (19:30–20:16)”, and “by the shedding of his covenantal blood” on the cross (20:28; 26:28). “Ultimately, not John’s baptism of repentance but Jesus’ covenantal blood effects the forgiveness of sins” (1:21). Hence Matthew shifts “forgiveness of sins” from John’s baptism (3:6; cf. Mark 1:4) to the words of the institution (26:28). Besides, Jesus replaces the temple and its associated sacrificial cult, and the Torah. Gundry also argues that God’s forgiveness is

---

106 Gundry, Matthew, 43.
107 Gundry, Matthew, 43, 528; idem, “Salvation in Matthew,” 409.

Though Matthew assumes the close connection between sin and sickness, his accounts of healings focus more on Jesus’ authority to forgive sins (Christology), not on soteriology. Matthew’s citing of Isa 53:4 in 8:17 does not necessarily refer to the salvific nature of Jesus’ healing. Gundry claims that Jesus’ “healings anticipate the passion in that they begin to roll back the effects of the sins for which Jesus came to die” (8:17; cf. 27:52; Isa 53:4). He also underlines the future dimension of salvation (16:27; cf. 12:31–32), Jesus’ role as the judge (3:11–12; 25:31–46), and the final judgement based on one’s deeds (7:21; 25:31–46). But, Gundry believes that, in Matthew, good deeds (ethics) are positioned “in the context of the problems of the Matthean community” that are “not the result of their conflict with Judaism” and its leaders over the correct interpretation of the Torah, but because of “the mixed nature of the community” (Corpus Mixtum).

Gundry’s construal of Matthew’s soteriology raises important issues. How does Gundry’s argument that forgiveness of sins is “ultimately” accomplished by Jesus’ “covenantal blood” reconcile with Jesus’ reply to John concerning his messianic identity (11:2–6), the salvific sufficiency of the Law (19:16–23), Jesus’ forgiving the sins of the paralytic (9:2–8), and the relationship between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:23–25; cf. 5:23–24)? How does Jesus’ death, which replaces the temple sacrifices, account for the positive images of the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27)? What is the relation between Jesus’ role as the judge to come in John’s

---

109 Gundry, Matthew, 109, 375.
112 Gundry, Matthew, 150.
predictions (3:11–12) and its relation to Jesus’ teaching of the Torah? If sin against the Holy Spirit is not forgiven in this world (21:31–32), then does that mean the death of Jesus cannot effect forgiveness for all kinds of sins?

According to Senior, Jesus saves his people through his “teaching, healing, and, above all, in his death and resurrection”.115 Teaching and healing are “equally crucial” to Matthean salvation.116 Just as Jesus’ teachings fulfil the Law (5:17) so his healings also fulfil the prophecies (8:17; cf. Isa 53:4).117 Senior argues, “Matthew envelops Jesus’ as healer in the mantle of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant”.118 And “through his healings” Jesus not only removes the physical afflictions and illness, but also the sins of his people.119

Like healings and teachings, in Senior’s view, Jesus’ association with the tax collectors and sinners (9:9–13) is also part of God’s redemptive plan because Jesus is called to be the “physician” for the “sick” (9:12).120 This programmatic statement of Jesus’ mission echoes his God-given name “Jesus” (1:21) and the fulfilment of the messianic prophecy in 8:17 (cf. Isa 53:4). According to Senior, human forgiveness is not a condition or a prerequisite for divine forgiveness in Matthew; instead, God’s forgiveness demands that those who are forgiven of their sins must forgive another (18:23–35).121 Jesus’ feedings of the multitudes also have a significant place in Matthean soteriology for he positions “the ensemble of feeding stories” (14:13–21; 15:32–39) within a “time line that spans the whole of salvation history: Israel’s sacred

---

118 Senior, Matthew, 112.
119 Senior, Matthew, 112–13.
120 Senior, Matthew, 114.
121 Senior, Matthew, 144–45.
past; the narrative present of Jesus’ own ministry; the experience of the community to whom the Gospel was addressed; and the eschatological future gathering of God’s people”.

Senior believes that Matthew interprets Jesus’ death, which has been looming large in the mind of his audience almost from the birth narratives, as an expiation “for the forgiveness of sins” (20:28; 26:28), recalling the promise implied in 1:21. In Matthew’s understanding of salvation, Senior argues, Jesus’ “death and resurrection form the decisive turning point” because “the passion of Jesus was an eschatological event, bringing to an end the old age and ushering in the new (26:18). Therefore, in Senior’s view, those who are saved are in a conflict with the Roman imperial forces and the basis for such a position is at least couched in the Gospel, “if not yet moved to the center of its focus”.

According to Senior, “no other Gospel presents the salvific impact of Jesus’ passion in such explicit terms”. However, for Senior, soteriology is not an overriding theme in Matthew’s version of Jesus’ passion and resurrection (26:1–28:15). And, in the last judgement (7:21; 25:31–46), the Son of Man will judge his people based on their good deeds, rooted in the true sense of the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus (7:21–25; 21:28–31; 25:31–46): “perseverance in doing good deeds” or “doing the will of God as the criteria for inclusion” in the kingdom of heaven.

---

122 Senior, Matthew, 128.
123 Donald Senior, The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (Wilmington: Glazier, 1985), 166.
124 Senior, Matthew, 165–66.
125 Senior, Matthew, 167.
126 Senior, Matthew, 169.
128 Senior, Passion of Jesus, 167.
130 Senior, Matthew, 163.
Though Senior maintains a strong connection between Christology and soteriology throughout his interpretation of Jesus’ saving in Matthew, he does not fully develop the relation between the two: he does not consider soteriology as a dominant motif in the passion and resurrection story. Senior is sensitive to Matthew’s Jewish religious matrix. However, he is silent on the sufficiency of other means of accomplishing forgiveness of sins, such as the temple sacrifices. Further, Senior does not seem to give adequate emphasis to Jesus’ teaching and healing as he claims, because he believes that Jesus’ death is evidently surfacing right from the very beginning of the Gospel. He reads the Gospel from the vantage point of Jesus’ death (26:28). This is not tenable as it could imply that Matthew reduces Jesus’ life as a means of arriving at his death. Senior is right in saying that though salvation from the Romans is arguably implied in 1:21, it is not the focus of Matthew’s salvation yet.

In the view of Luomanen, Jesus saves his people (1:21) by healing the sick, preaching repentance, and interpreting the Law.\footnote{132} For Matthew, Luomanen observes, salvation offered through forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings is “not connected to his sacrificial death”.\footnote{133} Matthew understands Jesus’ mission in terms of the “deuteronomistic motive of a rejected prophet” and not as a redeemer who has come to give his life “as a ransom for many” (20:28).\footnote{134} Moreover, Luomanen claims, the word σῴζω refers to the saving from physical affliction (9:21–22; 27:40, 42, 49; cf. 8:25; 14:30) or to the eschatological salvation at the end of time (10:22; 24:23, 22; 16:25, 27; 8:25; 14:30).\footnote{135}

\footnote{133} Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 222, 224, 227–29.
\footnote{134} Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 226.
\footnote{135} Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 225.
In Matthew, Luomanen notes, “1:21 is the only place in Mt [Matthew] where the idea of saving sins occurs.\(^\text{136}\) And forgiveness of sins does not constitute a part of the disciples’ preaching either.\(^\text{137}\) Jesus offers forgiveness of sins to the tax collectors and sinners by having fellowship with them (9:9–13).\(^\text{138}\) In Luomanen’s view, “‘healing’ implies the forgiveness of sins, since diseases were usually regarded as punishment for past transgressions”.\(^\text{139}\) Given the special emphasis on the last judgement based on good deeds (7:21; 25:31–46), Luomanen asserts that there is “little room for forgiveness in the process of entering the final salvation”.\(^\text{140}\) Likewise, the idea that Jesus saves by forgiving sins in his blood is rather “isolated” in relation to other means of accomplishing forgiveness in Matthew’s Gospel.\(^\text{141}\) In other words, Luomanen argues, given the other interpretations “which do more justice to Matthew’s use of the verb σώζω elsewhere in his Gospel”, 1:21 does not “presuppose” Jesus’ sacrificial death.\(^\text{142}\)

Luomanen mounts further arguments to show that the idea of forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ atoning blood stands “isolated” in relation to “other convictions” of forgiveness within “Matthew’s symbolic universe”.\(^\text{143}\) In his description of the healing of the paralytic (9:2–8), Luomanen contends, Matthew has Jesus not only “legitimate his authority to forgive sins” (9:5–6), but also deliver the authority to forgive sins to the Matthean congregation (9:8).\(^\text{144}\) For Luomanen, “the logic of this legitimation” makes sense, “given the close connection between sickness and sin in ancient thought”.\(^\text{145}\) This is further reinforced in 10:1, “where Jesus transmits his authority to heal to the

\(^{136}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 225.

\(^{137}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 228–30.

\(^{138}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 226.

\(^{139}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 225.

\(^{140}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 228.

\(^{141}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 227.

\(^{142}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 223–27.

\(^{143}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221–27.

\(^{144}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221.

\(^{145}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221.
disciples”. And, Luomanen notes, the expulsion rules in 18:15–20 also suggest that the Matthean community had the authority to pronounce forgiveness of sins.\(^\text{147}\)

According to Luomanen, the motif of forgiveness of sins is not “transferred” from John’s baptism to “Christian baptism” (28:18–20) but from John’s baptism to the Eucharist.\(^\text{148}\) This suggests that Matthew did not mention forgiveness of sins in John’s preaching (3:2) and his baptism (3:6) because “this was not in line with his overall understanding of baptism as an act of repentance.” Luomanen argues that 26:28 is relevant in the everyday life of the community because, for Matthew, mutual forgiveness is so crucial and “the Eucharist is one occasion where it can be experienced”.\(^\text{150}\)

Therefore, Luomanen argues, it is not possible to detect any theological connection between the idea of Jesus’ atoning blood and other authorisations to forgive.\(^\text{151}\) In order to avoid contradictions, Matthew emphasises “the deuteronomistic appearance of Jesus’ ministry” and refrains “from developing the idea of atonement in the other parts of the gospel”.\(^\text{152}\) In Luomanen’s view, “although the passion predictions anticipate Jesus’ death, Matthew does not use them to highlight the atoning character of death so much as to picture Jesus’ exemplary humility and submission to God’s will”.\(^\text{153}\) This is to ascertain that Jesus saves not by his atoning death but by his exemplary humility and unswerving obedience to the will of God.\(^\text{154}\) According to Luomanen, for Matthew, “Jesus was not sent to die for his people but to heal their diseases, preach

\(^{146}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221.

\(^{147}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221–22.


\(^{149}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221.


\(^{151}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221–22, 224–27.

\(^{152}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 229–30.

\(^{153}\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 230.

repentance and lead them into eternal life through his authoritative interpretation and proclamation of the law”.

Furthermore, Luomanen claims, in Matthew, though “the most important religious functions formerly connected to the Temple are now attached to Jesus”, “Jesus’ attitude towards the temple is not openly hostile but, nevertheless, that of the master” (12:5–7). This is “suggestive of an attempt to incorporate the idea of Jesus’ atoning death into the framework of covenantal thought”. For Luomanen, it is unlikely that “Matthew’s ideas about the cause of the destruction of the temple, God’s presence to be found in someone who is ‘greater than the temple’ and forgiveness through his blood” would outrage Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries, because “in the post-70 situation several Jewish groups were at pains to reorient their religious practices and reinterpret their traditions in order to adjust themselves to life without the temple”. In effect, in Matthew, Luomanen argues, “the references to the covenant and forgiveness” of sins in 26:28 presupposes that “the celebration takes place in the sphere of the covenant and grants forgiveness of sins”, not forgiveness of sins achieved through Jesus’ atoning death.

Luomanen’s arguments raise a number of issues. Can the declaration of 1:21 regarding Jesus’ mission to “save his people from their sins” be as easily divorced from Jesus’ death as Luomanen would have it? Given Matthew’s enormous redactional freedom, which he exercises so freely, if Jesus’ death is not saving, then why does Matthew add “for the forgiveness of sins” in his account of the Last Supper (26:28)? Why does Matthew give an apocalyptic colouring to Jesus’ death? Does the covenantal

---

156 Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 228.
language in 26:28 mean that it is the covenant that offers forgiveness of sins, not Jesus’
death? If Jesus’ attitude towards the temple is that of the master, then how do we
account for the positive images of the temple (5:23–25; 8:4; 17:24–27)?

Does that mean Jesus is the Shekinah then? If so, would it not contradict the “authorisation
model” Christology in Matthew?

According to Carter, Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21) through his
preaching (4:17), teaching (chapters 5–7), healing (chapters 8–9), other works of power
(8:25; 14:30), death (20:28; 26:28), resurrection (28:1–10), and return (24:27–31;
26:64–66).

But 1:21 also includes freedom from the oppression of governing powers and deliverance from Roman bondage (2:16; 4:1–11; 14:1–12; 20:25–28; 27:11–26)
because the salvation which Jesus offers is not only religious but also political.

As a result, for Carter, Jesus’ saving presence (1:23; 18:20) and his activities offer not only
private, moral and religious freedom, but also social, economic, and political
freedom.

“The three intertexts—Ps 130, Joshua, and Isa 7–9—identify situations . . .

161 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 99, 533; idem, Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist
(rev. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004), 115, 142–43, 147, 177; idem, “‘To Save His People from
Their Sins’ (Matt 1:21): Rome’s Empire and Matthew’s Salvation as Sovereignty,” SBLSP 39 (2000):
379–401; idem, “Narrative/Literary Approaches to Matthean Theology: The ‘ Reign of the Heavens’ as an
Example (Mt 4:17–5:12);” JSNT 67 (1997): 3–27; idem, “Toward an Imperial-Critical Reading of
Matthew’s Gospel,” SBLSP 37 (1998): 296–324; idem, “Contested Claims: Roman Imperial Theology and
Societal Vision and Counter-Imperial Practice in Matthew 22.34–40,” in Biblical Interpretation in Early
London/New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 30–44; idem, “Matthew’s Gospel, Rome’s Empire, and the
Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31–32),” in Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu: methodische
Neuansätze zum Verstehen urchristlicher Parabeltexte (ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Gabriele Kern;
162 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 69–70; idem, Storyteller, 51, 53, 109–11; idem, Matthew and
Empire: Initial Explorations (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2001), 75–90.
163 Carter, Matthew and Empire, 77-79, 85–86.
164 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 71, 141, 200, 206, 210, 217, 221, 224, 345–47, 388; idem,
Storyteller, 115, 121–22, 144–45, 178, 192; idem, Matthew and Empire, 76, 79–80; idem, “Challenging
by Confirming, Renewing by Repeating: The Parables of ‘the Reign of the Heavens’ in Matthew 13 as
[and] circumstances under Rome’s rule . . . [and promise] God’s salvation through Jesus”.¹⁶⁵

By naming the child “Jesus” in salvific terms (1:21), Carter asserts, Matthew “sets up a fundamental perspective on all of Jesus’ subsequent actions and words”.¹⁶⁶ Matthew expects his audience to understand Jesus’ words and actions as fulfilling his saving mission (1:21). Jesus’ saving mission is not restricted to or rooted in any event in his life; instead, salvation, offered through forgiveness of sins, is rooted in the very person of Jesus (1:21).¹⁶⁷ Therefore, Carter notes, Matthew omits “for the forgiveness of sins” from his account of John’s baptism and adds it to 26:28.¹⁶⁸ In Carter’s opinion, God’s forgiveness offered through Jesus is not based on human forgiveness either (6:14–15); human forgiveness is what God’s forgiveness demands (18:21–35), not the condition for divine forgiveness.¹⁶⁹

According to Carter, 26:28 (“for the forgiveness of sins”) “refers only or primarily to individual, personal sins and the restoration of personal fellowship with God”.¹⁷⁰ “It refers also (primarily?) to the transformation of, or release from, social sins and to different patterns of social, economic, and political interaction”.¹⁷¹ Two aspects support Carter’s claim: in 26:28 Jesus speaks “about the impact of his death not just on individuals but also on a people . . . [which] includes relationships and social structures”; and the idea of “forgiveness” in 26:28 is “clarified by attention to the

¹⁶⁶ Carter, Storyteller, 110. See also idem, Matthew and Empire, 76, 86.
¹⁶⁸ Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 96.
¹⁶⁹ Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 370–75.
¹⁷⁰ Carter, Matthew and Empire, 88.
¹⁷¹ Carter, Matthew and Empire, 88.
The verb “poured out” “refers to blood from sacrifices (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34) as well as to the violent death of the righteous” (23:35).  

Carter argues that Jesus’ death, “a ransom for many” and a sacrifice to take away sins, “carries out in part” his saving mission predicted in 1:21. The release of the many from sins happens “in part” also through Jesus’ resurrection. The risen Christ, Son of Man, will return in power (16:27; 10:23; 13:41; 24:27–31), “preceded by distress on earth” (24:3–26), as the heavenly judge “to complete what is underway in his ministry”, saving people from their sins and thus establishing God’s empire (25:31–46). The Son of Man will judge his people (3:11–12; 7:21; 25:31–46) based on how well they met the needs of Jesus’ disciples (10:40–42; cf. 25:40). But this “welcoming action”, for Carter, is “only the beginning of a way of life” (7:17–18; 12:33–35), marked by “greater righteousness” (5:20), rooted in the Torah, though some parts pass away, which “counter injustice and break the yoke of oppression enacted by the wicked empires”.

Carter’s treatment of Matthean soteriology is important for it highlights the following: the “programmatic role” of 1:21 in Matthew’s unfolding of Jesus’ saving; and the importance of Jesus’ resurrection and his return in glory in Matthew’s understanding of salvation. However, Carter does not fully develop Jesus’ role as the

---

172 Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 88–89.
judge to come and its bearing on his interpretation of the Law. Consequently, he seems to miss out the link between Jesus the judge to come who teaches the Law, and Jesus the judge who will judge on the basis of his teachings in the last judgement.

Further, Carter’s understanding of the Law is also open to question. Does not the passing away of some parts of the Law contradict 5:17–19? Though Carter argues that Jesus’ instruction to observe the commandments of Moses complies with the traditions (5:17–48; 8:4), his attempt to limit forgiveness of sins to Jesus and his ministry seems to invalidate other means of accomplishing forgiveness of sins. For instance, Carter does not consider human forgiveness as a condition for divine forgiveness (6:14–15), rather human forgiveness is what divine forgiveness demands (18:21–35). How does it account for 18:35? Does that mean temple sacrifices cease to become a means of achieving forgiveness of sins?

According to Luz, Matthew presents the meaning of “Jesus” in the context of Jewish messianic hopes of salvation. But, in Luz’s view, the statement that Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (1:21) is uncommon as a Jewish messianic hope because in Jewish traditions the Messiah is supposed to annihilate (Pss. Sol 17:22–25; cf. Matt 3:11–12; 25:31–46) or judge (1En. 62:2; 69:27–29; cf. Matt 3:11–12; 25:31–46) the sinners. For Matthew, however, Luz argues, forgiveness of sins stands at the very centre of Jesus’ mission (das Zentrum der Sendung Jesu). Luz contends that Jesus’ healings and miracles showed that Jesus would “save” his people (1:21) in a “comprehensive sense” (umfassenden Sinn). He also underlines the saving power of Jesus’ death.

---

182 Luz, Matthäus, 1:148–49.
183 Luz, Matthäus, 4:116.
In Luz’s opinion, though Matthew has a special interest in forgiveness of sins that happens through Jesus, he does not seem to limit it to Jesus: John’s baptism assumes forgiveness (3:6); human forgiveness is a condition for divine forgiveness (6:14–15); and, God’s forgiveness can be lost through human unkindness because the former does not happen in isolation from human forgiving. Luz also argues that forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings (1:21) does not eliminate the final judgement (9:6) because the forgiveness sins which Jesus pronounces on earth will be “released” (gelöst) only in the final judgement (cf.16:19; 18:18). Luz believes that the last judgement plays an important role in Matthean soteriology (7:13–27; 10:32–33, 39–42; 13:47–53; 18:23–35). Jesus, the judge to come (3:11–12), will judge his people based on their behaviour (7:21; 25:31–46), which is otherwise known as “better righteousness” (5:20). For Matthew, Luz sees, “better righteousness” (5:20) which Jesus demands as a condition to enter into the kingdom of heaven, is not something that outweighs the salvific provisions or demands of the Torah (5:17–19, 21–48); it is, rather, true sense of the Torah in the sense of antithesis (5:21–48) and love commandment (19:16–30; 22:34–40).

Luz’s treatment of Matthean soteriology raises important issues. If forgiveness of sins is “released” (gelöst) only in the last judgement, what did Jesus achieve through his life and death then? Does that mean forgiveness of sins will be complete only in the last judgement? Does it mean salvation is not a present reality? If so, how does it reconcile with 4:17, 11:2–6 and 26:28? How does such an understanding of forgiveness of sins

---

186 Luz, Matthäus, 1:205.
188 Luz, Matthäus, 3:64–87.
189 Luz, Matthäus, 2:37.
190 Luz, Matthäus, 3:515–16.
account for Jesus’ healing, especially in 9:6? Why does Matthew link Jesus’ role as the teacher of the Law and his role as the judge to come?

Davies and Allison argue that Jesus saves his people through his teaching (4:23–24; chapters 5–7; 11:2–6), healing (4:23–24; chapters 8–9; 11:2–6; 27:42), delivering from physical danger (8:25; 14:30; 27:42), saving presence (1:23; 18:20; 28:20), and death (20:28; 26:28; cf. 27:42).\(^{193}\) This means, for Davies and Allison, “perhaps, then, Matthew thought that Jesus saved his people from their sins in a variety of ways”.\(^{194}\) Jesus’ healings (4:23–24; chapters 8–9) could be thought of as having saved people from their sins on two grounds: the link between sin and sickness in Matthew’s world (9:6 cf. 8:17; Isa 53:4);\(^ {195}\) and that Matthew puts “Jesus’ ministry and Isaiah’s oracles side by side” to show that Jesus’ healings fulfil the promises of salvation (8:17; 11:2–6; cf. Isa 53:3–5).\(^ {196}\) Jesus’ meal with the tax collectors and sinners is also salvific (9:10–13); “Jesus eats with sinners after he has forgiven sins”.\(^ {197}\)

Since it was Jesus’ mission to bring forgiveness of sins, Matthew omits “forgiveness of sins” from 3:6 and adds it to his account of the Last Supper (26:28).\(^ {198}\) In Matthew’s view, John only “prepared” people for the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, 6:14–15 and 18:23–25 focus on judgement and reconciliation, not forgiveness of sins (cf. 5:7; 23:6).\(^ {199}\) Jesus effects forgiveness of sins not only through his preaching and healing, but also through his self-sacrifice and death.\(^ {200}\) Jesus’ death is saving because it not only delivers “from slavery to sin”, but also “permits a new

---

relationship with God.” However, Davies and Allison note, Matthew must have had the atoning death of Jesus “in view”.

According to Davies and Allison, “Jesus is the judge of the last day who has come before the time to declare openly by what criterion he will separate the sheep from the goats” (7:21). Matthew theologically links Jesus’ role as the teacher of the Torah and his role as the judge to come (7:21; 25:31–46). Hence, Jesus’ teachings, which state the true sense of the Torah and do not seek to replace it (5:17–20; 8:4; 22:34–40), are also salvific because they not only constitute “the deeds of the Christ” (4:23–24; chapters 5–7; 11:2–6), but are also the criterion for the last judgement (7:21; 25:31–46).

Davies and Allison’s elucidation of Matthean soteriology is compelling in many respects: Jesus saves in many ways; Jesus the judge to come and Jesus the teacher are the same; and Jesus’ teaching of the Law is the basis of his last judgement. However, Davies and Allison limit salvation offered through forgiveness of sins to the person of Jesus (3:6), which raises a few issues: does limiting forgiveness of sins to Jesus mean Jesus, who upholds the Law, replaces other means of accomplishing forgiveness of sins such as the temple and the associated sacrificial cult; and how does it account for the positive images of the temple in 5:23–24; 8:4 and 17:24–27? Does limiting forgiveness of sins to Jesus mean God’s saving initiative in Jesus comes to an end with Jesus’ death? How does such an interpretation account for the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ecclesia as in 10:1, 5–6 and 28:18–20? Moreover, Davies

---

201 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:474.
203 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:713.
206 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240.
207 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:713.
and Allison do not see the close relation between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness as important to Matthean soteriology (5:7, 6:14–15; 18:21–35).

Nolland is of the view that “Matthew clearly intended Jesus’ death to be viewed as a saving event, as the saving event” because “the pouring out of Jesus’ blood in death” is the means of forgiveness of sins [emphasis original]. However, for Nolland, Jesus’ death, “the pattern of self-sacrificing service”, is the “continuation and culmination” of all his “efforts to reach his people”. Therefore, in Nolland’s opinion, Matthew understands Jesus’ teaching (chapters 5–7; 11:2–6), healing (chapters 8–9; 11:2–6) and eating with the tax collectors and sinners also as constitutive of 1:21.

In Nolland’s view, because John’s message in 3:2 (cf. Mark 1:4) is “the same message Matthew will attribute to Jesus in 4:17” (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”) and “the possibility of forgiveness is implicit in John’s call to repentance” (3:1–2) and his baptism (3:6), Matthew associates forgiveness of sins with John the Baptist. Forgiveness of sins is also related to human forgiveness (6:14–15; 12:31–32; 18:21–35); “the readiness to forgive is a necessary condition” for divine forgiveness, “but not a sufficient one”.

Nolland highlights Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge in Matthew (3:11–12; 10:23; 13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30, 39, 44; 25:31). And, Jesus will judge his people on the basis of their deeds of compassion. Matthew equates the deeds of compassion (25:31–46) with “doing the will of the heavenly Father” (7:21) and “abundant righteousness” (5:20). Doing the will of the Father or obedience to the Torah is not

---

208 Nolland, Matthew, 41.
209 Nolland, Matthew, 826, 1082.
211 Nolland, Matthew, 1081 n.135.
212 Nolland, Matthew, 294, 504–06, 753–62, 1082.
213 Nolland, Matthew, 294.
215 Nolland, Matthew, 340.

Though Nolland claims that Matthew does not drive a wedge between Jesus’ ministry and his death, his examination of Matthean soteriology does separate Jesus’ life and death: marking Jesus’ death as the saving event. How does such an interpretation reconcile with the close relation between Christology and soteriology, the positive images of the temple sacrifices (5:23–24; 8:4), other means of realising forgiveness of sins (3:6; 6:14–15; 18:21–35), and Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic (9:2–8)? How does it account for Jesus’ teaching and healing, which Nolland considers as constitutive of 1:21? Nolland’s argument that Jesus’ death is the “continuation and culmination” of his saving mission also raises a few doubts. If Jesus’ death is the “continuation” of his saving mission, then how does his death become the saving event? If Jesus’ death is the saving event, then what does it mean to say that though Jesus pronounces forgiveness of sins to the paralytic, its full effect will be only in heaven? Does that mean salvation is available only in the future? If so, what did Jesus achieve in his death?

According to Repschinski, “Jesus saves in his blood”. Matthew understands “Jesus’ life as one of a saving activity” (1:21), which Jesus accomplishes by his death, in which his blood will be “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28).

---

216 Nolland, Matthew, 224.
217 Nolland, Matthew, 233, 350, 387, 1082.
218 Nolland, Matthew, 382–83.
220 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 265.
Jesus’ death is the means of realising the salvation offered through forgiveness of sins. As a result, Repschinski argues, Matthew omits “forgiveness of sins” from 3:6 (cf. Mark 1:4) and adds it to his account of the Last Supper (26:26).\textsuperscript{221} John’s baptism in and of itself is not salvifically effective because the power to forgive sins “rests with the one coming after John” (3:11–12).\textsuperscript{222}

For Repschinski, the healing of the paralytic in 9:2–8 cannot be taken as an example for Jesus saving his people through his healing. “The paralytic experiences forgiveness of sins through Jesus, but it does not seem to be Jesus who actually forgives”;\textsuperscript{223} “Jesus does not speak of himself directly as having the power to forgive sins”.\textsuperscript{224} In Repschinski’s view, “Matthew, however, does not let Jesus formulate forgiveness of sins in the first person but chooses the passive voice” (9:2, 5).\textsuperscript{225} While Son of Man refers to Jesus, “the title carries with it also the association to Dan 7:13–14, which sets the power to forgive sins into relation with eschatological judgment”;\textsuperscript{226} which was already announced in John’s preaching (3:11–12). Similarly, in the parable of the wicked servant (18:21–35) it is God who forgives (18:35), though it is coming through Jesus.\textsuperscript{227} Therefore, Repschinski argues, the saving act of Jesus is confined to the cross.\textsuperscript{228}

In 26:28, Matthew closely links Jesus’ death to forgiveness of sins promised in 1:21.\textsuperscript{229} Thus, Repschinski asserts, “the prediction of 1:21 finally gains fulfilment” in 26:28 and “the theme of salvation [comes] to the fore”;\textsuperscript{230} salvation assumes “its

\textsuperscript{221} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 258, 260–61.
\textsuperscript{222} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 258.
\textsuperscript{223} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 259.
\textsuperscript{224} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 259.
\textsuperscript{225} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 259.
\textsuperscript{226} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 259.
\textsuperscript{227} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 260.
\textsuperscript{228} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 259–60.
\textsuperscript{229} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 260.
\textsuperscript{230} Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 263–64.
ultimate meaning in the cross”. Therefore, Repschinski opines, in Matthew, Jesus replaces the sacrificial cult by offering his own blood to be poured out for many; while upholding the Law, Jesus who is greater than the temple replaces the temple in his death.

Repschinski’s treatment of Matthean soteriology raises a number of important issues. Does “Jesus saves in his blood” mean Jesus’ saving comes to an end on the cross? How does it account for the close relation between sin and sickness in Matthew’s world, the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ecclesia, and the close connection between Christology and soteriology? How is it that Jesus who upholds the Law and the prophets (5:17-20) replaces the temple and the cultic sacrifices (cf. 5:23–24, 8:4; 17:24–27)? If Matthew omits “for the forgiveness of sins” in 3:6 because the power to forgive sins is the exclusive prerogative of Jesus, then why is it God not Jesus who forgives sins in 9:6? What about 6:14–15 and 18:21–35 where human forgiveness is construed as the condition for divine forgiveness? If Jesus saves in his blood, then why does Matthew connect Jesus’ saving role as the teacher of the Law and his role as the judge to come? Though Repschinski begins to read Matthew’s Gospel from the vantage point of 1:21, he appears to end up reading Matthew’s Gospel backwards.

231 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 264.
In the view of France, Jesus saves his people by his vicarious suffering and death (20:28; 26:28),\(^\text{234}\) which is the “culmination” of his saving mission (1:21).\(^\text{235}\) However, Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic during his public ministry and uniquely “shares” “God’s prerogative to forgive sins” (9:6).\(^\text{236}\) Likewise, France claims, Jesus fulfils his calling to save his people by accepting the tax collectors and sinners, even to the extent of having table fellowship with them (9:10–13).\(^\text{237}\) Matthew acknowledges other means of accomplishing forgiveness of sins too: “only the forgiving will be forgiven” (6:14–15).\(^\text{238}\) But, for France, human forgiveness in 18:21–35 is to be viewed as what God demands from a forgiven sinner, not a condition for God’s forgiveness.\(^\text{239}\) France believes that John’s baptism does not assume forgiveness of sins in Matthew (cf. Mark 1:4) because “Jesus, who will receive John’s baptism, has no need of forgiveness”.\(^\text{240}\)

According to France, Matthew upholds the Law and the prophets (5:17);\(^\text{241}\) but their role will no longer be the same because what they had promised and predicted have been fulfilled in Jesus. From now on it will be Jesus’ interpretation of the Law which would define one’s understanding of the Law. But Jesus’ command to observe the commandments of the Law should not be taken as an indication for Jesus’ commitment to the purity laws (8:4).\(^\text{242}\) Moreover, for France, obeying the commandments of the Law is only a “necessary condition for salvation”, not a “sufficient condition” [emphasis original] (19:16–23; 22:34–40).\(^\text{243}\) France also upholds

\(^{236}\) France, *Matthew*, 347.
\(^{238}\) France, *Matthew*, 252.
the future dimension of the salvation which Jesus brings (16:27; 25:31–46); Jesus’ last judgement is based on how one meets the needs of his disciples (25:40; cf. 10:32–33). 244

France’s interpretation of salvation in Matthew raises a few questions. If Jesus saves his people primarily through his death, then why does Matthew give so much importance to the interpretation of the Law and Jesus’ encounter with the Jewish leaders over it? Why does Matthew closely link Christology and soteriology? Why does Matthew link Jesus’ role as the judge to come and his role as the teacher of the Law? How does Jesus’ saving primarily through his death account for Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic (9:6), positive images of the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27), other means of realising forgiveness (6:14–15), and the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ecclesia? Should not Jesus’ healing also be constitutive of 1:21, given the close association between sin and sickness in Matthew’s Jewish world?

According to Gurtner, the word “σῴζω in Matthew’s gospel (1:21) can refer to a deliverance from physical danger (8:25), disease (9:21–22), or death (24:22)” 245 This suggests that Jesus saves his people “through various aspects of his ministry as well as through his death; otherwise Jesus’ ministry itself would be reduced to a means of arriving at his death”. 246 “Matthew’s use of σῴζω does, however, give us a glimpse of the unfolding progression of the significance of Jesus’ death”. 247 This is underlined by “Matthew’s abundance of blood language” (26:28). 248 In Gurtner’s view, “the ‘saving’ nature of Jesus’ death is underscored even on the cross (27:42)” 249 by “remaining on

---

244 France, Matthew, 957–60.
246 Gurtner, Torn Veil, 128.
247 Gurtner, Torn Veil, 128.
248 Gurtner, Torn Veil, 135.
249 Gurtner, Torn Veil, 137.
“the cross”, Jesus “fulfilled” his saving mission (1:21).\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 137.} “Forgiveness of ‘every sin’ was expected to be available at the eschaton (12:31), and now Jesus’ death occurs for the purpose of forgiveness of sins (26:28)”.\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 134.} For Gurtner, Jesus’ atoning death is compatible with Jesus’ positive attitude towards the Law (5:17–19; 8:4; 17:27; 23:3),\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 104–5, 115, 125.} the temple (17:24–27; 21:12–14),\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 112, 190.} and the cultic sacrifices associated with it (5:23–24; 8:4).\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 99, 103, 105, 108, 112, 121, 124–26, 137.}

Conversely, Gurtner contends that Matthew drops “for the forgiveness of sins” from his account of John’s baptism (3:6; cf. Mark 1:4) because it is “merely the confession of sins”;\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 134.} “it is not John’s baptism of repentance that is for the forgiveness of sins (Mark), but Jesus’ blood” (27:4, 24, 25; cf. 27:6, 8).\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 134.} Though the word σῴζω is associated with sickness in Matthew, “forgiveness of sins is in some way related to Jesus’ healing of a paralytic (9: 2, 5), and Jesus is said to have the authority for such forgiveness”.\footnote{Gurtner, Torn Veil, 134.}

While Gurtner’s basic thesis—“Jesus saves through various aspects of his ministry”—is compelling, his interpretation of the same, however, raises a number of issues. On the one hand, Gurtner says that Jesus’ salvific mission cannot be “reduced” to his death, but, on the other hand, he argues σῴζω gives us “a glimpse of the unfolding progression of the atoning significance of Jesus’ death”. It would give the impression that it was primarily the atoning death that is being unfolded in Jesus’ life and ministry, not salvation, offered in terms of forgiveness of sins, as if Jesus came only to die. How does such an interpretation account for the use of the word σوبة (cf. 1:21) elsewhere in
the Gospel, especially in the context of healing (9:21–22) and saving from danger (8:25), as Gurtner observes, Jesus’ own identification of his deeds as the deeds of the Messiah (11:2–6), and the close relation between “who Jesus is” and “how Jesus saves”? If Jesus saves in many ways, then why is it that Jesus’ forgiveness in 9:6 is only “in some way related to” the forgiveness of sins which he brings as predicted in 1:21? Gurtner seems to read the Gospel from the vantage point of 26:28, not 1:21, which apparently betrays his basic proposition.

According to Hasitschka, Matthew’s understanding of salvation is rooted in three assumptions, which he makes in his Gospel. First, “the interpretation of the name of Jesus” in salvific terms is “programmatic for Jesus’ entire public ministry” (1:21). Second, “the Matthaean interpretation of the name of Jesus before his birth” (1:21–23) and “the interpretation of the cup at the Last Supper” before his death (26:28) “frames the earthly ministry of Jesus and puts it in its entirety under the theme of the forgiveness of sins”. Third, the interpretation of the name of Jesus is augmented and intensified “by a second calling and interpretation of Jesus’ name” (1:23), which concludes that salvation, offered through forgiveness of sins, “through Jesus is at the same time the way into a new relationship with God which is marked by the experience that God is with us through the mediation of Jesus”.

In Hasitschka’s view, Jesus has the power to forgive sins “in the name of God, and like God” (9:2). This is evident in the account of the healing of the paralytic (9:1–8), which underscores the theme of salvation. As a result, Matthew drops “for

---

259 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 90, 92.
261 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 91.
262 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92.
263 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92.
264 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92.
the forgiveness of sins” from 3:6 and adds it to 26:28. In addition, though 6:14–15 and 18:21–35 place great significance on the “intimate connection between divine and human forgiveness”, they assume “depth” only in relation to 26:28; human forgiveness reflects the gift of forgiveness received from God through Jesus.

According to Hasitschka, Matthew, unlike in Mark, positions “for many” before “poured out” to highlight “the purpose and aim of the pouring out of Jesus’ blood”—the forgiveness of sins. In 26:26, Hasitschka argues, “the Matthaean Jesus intimates that his death is both a free giving up of himself and at the same time the expression of forgiveness coming from him and from God himself”. Together with 1:21 and 26:28, the ransom logion in 20:28 “adds to the understanding of Jesus’ death”. Matthew links the salvation which Jesus effects through his death to a future dimension of salvation by means of linking his words over the cup in 26:28 with 26:29 by using a connecting phrase—“but I tell you”; Jesus calls the future dimension of salvation “the kingdom of my Father” (26:29).

Hasitschka’s treatment of the role of 1:21 in Matthew’s unfolding of Jesus’ saving (1:21) and of how 1:21 and 26:28 soteriologically frame Jesus’ life and death is significant. However, in general, his interpretation of Matthean soteriology suffers. Hasitschka, on the one hand, makes 1:21 programmatic for Jesus’ entire life and ministry, but, on the other hand, limits forgiveness of sins to an event—the death of Jesus and the pouring out of his blood for many. His interpretation of 9:6 focuses on the “singular power” of Jesus to forgive sins (Christology), but disregards healing, a sign of

265 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92.
267 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 93.
268 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 94.
269 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 94.
the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings (soteriology); it, thus, separates Christology and soteriology.

If 1:21 is programmatic for Jesus’ entire life and ministry, why is it that Jesus’ preaching, teaching, and healing miracles are not salvific? How does it account for the close association between sin and sickness in Matthew’s Jewish world? Hasitschka highlights the future dimension of salvation, but does not really explain how the present and future dimensions of salvation are linked in Matthew, other than linking 26:28 to 26:29. Is there any continuity between Jesus’ role on earth and his role in the eschaton? What is the importance of Jesus’ teaching of the Law (5:17) in relation to the future dimension of salvation? How does the role of Jesus as the judge to come fit into Matthew’s scheme of salvation (3:11−12; 7:21; 25:31−46)? Does limiting forgiveness of sins to Jesus and his death replace the temple and the sacrificial cult associated with it? If so, how does it account for the positive images of the temple (5:23−24; 8:4; 17:24−27) in Matthew?

Draper argues that Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21) through the shedding of his blood (20:28; 26:28).273 Jesus’ blood is “the sacrificial means by which the forgiveness of sins is effected for those who repent in response” to Jesus.274 Hence, “John’s water baptism signified only repentance for the sin of Israel in the face of judgment and not forgiveness of sins which is what Jesus brings” (3:6).275 Nor does John the Baptist preach or promise forgiveness of sins (3:2), while Jesus preaches the good news of repentance with forgiveness (4:17).276 Similarly, the healing of the

274 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 13.
275 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 8.
276 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 9, 13.
paralytic (9:2–8) show “beforehand that Jesus does have the authority to forgive sins on earth.”

According to Draper, in Matthew’s Gospel, the titles such as “son of David” and “son of Abraham” (1:1) situate the salvation that Jesus offers through forgiveness of sins within God’s salvific deeds in the past in the history of Israel (1:1–17). The salvific significance of the above titles, which Matthew makes for Jesus, also shows that “to some extent . . . [soteriology] is inseparable from ‘christology’.” In Matthew, Draper asserts, the salvation which Jesus brings has a future dimension too: Jesus will judge his people based on righteousness in the end (5:43–48; 7:21; 19:19; 22:34–40; 25:31–46).

Draper’s description of Matthean soteriology poses many issues. The main weakness of his treatment is that he disregards the inseparable relation between Jesus’ life and death, the programmatic role of 1:21 in Matthew’s unfolding of Jesus’ saving, the relation between human forgiveness and God’s forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–35), the close association between sin and sickness in Matthew’s Jewish world, the soteriological importance of Jesus’ messianic mission to fulfil the Law (“I have come”—5:17), and the close link between Jesus’ saving role as teacher and his role as the judge to come (3:11–12; 7:21–24; 25:31–46). Moreover, Draper limits the theological connection between Christology and soteriology in Matthew to certain titles. Draper rightly argues that the salvation that Jesus brings is linked to God’s salvific deeds in the past in the life of the people of Israel. But Draper limits the discussion to certain titles and overlooks the importance of the genealogy, the typologies and

---

277 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 13.
278 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 2–3.
279 Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 2.
fulfilment citations in Matthew’s delineation of the soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past.

Loader argues that Jesus saves his people through teaching the Law as the judge to come, healing, helping, and sacrificial death. For Loader, Jesus’ life and death are theologically connected in Matthew’s understanding of salvation. According to Loader, Jesus’ divine authority (11:27a; 12:5; 28:18) and his role as the judge to come (3:10–12; 16:27; 7:21–23; 25:31–46) form the “primary background” for Matthew’s soteriology. This portrait of Jesus as the judge to come closely associates Jesus’ relation to the Law, the last judgement, and his saving mission; Jesus as John’s coming judge (3:11–12) will pronounce judgement on the basis of the Law. Jesus “has come” (5:17), therefore, “to save his people from their sins” (1:21) not by “abolishing” or replacing the Law, but by “fulfilling” the Law and the prophets (5:17), even to the finest detail (5:18; 23:23)—by fulfilling the messianic hopes and predictions, doing what is demanded by the Law (19:16–23; 22:34–40), and teaching the true sense of the Law. Therefore, the salvation which Jesus brings, as the Messiah of Israel, is not in conflict with the Torah or its provisions for forgiveness of sins through cultic practices, rather it “coheres with the authority of the Torah”, the “Torah remains in force”. Thus,

---


Jesus’ teaching of the Torah constitutes his messianic saving mission as predicted in 1:21.

Loader believes that Jesus’ teaching of the Torah is salvific because he will judge his people, as the eschatological judge, according to the Torah as expounded by him:288 Jesus “the judge to come announces in advance the basis of judgement”.289 “Jesus as judge and as the one who proclaims such judgement is, of necessity, also the one who declares the Law”.290 And, “in Matthew all are to be judged by one Law, by one judge”.291 Therefore, Loader observes, “Matthew equates keeping Jesus’ words (7:24), doing the will of the Father (7:21), bearing good fruit (7:17), and entering the narrow gate (7:13)” as salvific responses to Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah.292

For Loader, obedience to Jesus’ teaching of the Torah is “the primary criterion” of the final judgement.293 Matthew, thus, links the present and future dimensions of salvation by means of Jesus’ role as the judge to come and his last judgement. More significantly, Loader argues, Matthew’s account of Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge (3:10–12; 25:31–46; 16:27; 27:64) “effectively transforms his soteriology into a form of Judaism” according to which the being of God’s people is “to be matched by doing God’s will as set out in [the] Torah and expounded by Jesus”.294

In Loader’s view, for Matthew, Jesus’ salvific mission is linked not only to the future but also to God’s saving dealings with his people in the past. Matthew achieves this through the genealogy (1:1–16), the typology (Jesus-Moses, Jesus-Joseph, and

---

288 Loader, Law, 158, 197, 221, 226, 248.
290 Loader, Law, 260.
291 Loader, Law, 185.
292 Loader, Law, 186.
293 Loader, Law, 185.
Jesus-Israel typologies: chapters 1–2; 4:11), and the fulfilment citations. Matthew introduces this continuity between God’s saving dealings in the history of his people in the past, and Jesus’ saving mission in the present, by his initial reference to Jesus as “son of Abraham” and “Son of David” (1:1) and “through beginning the genealogy with Abraham”. In addition, the title “Son of David” (1:1) refers to Jesus as “the royal Davidic Messiah”, “promised in scripture and sent to Israel”. For Matthew, Jesus is an authentic Jew, who upholds the Law and the prophets (5:17–19), the Jew in whom not only would Israel’s messianic hopes find soteriological fulfilment but also the one in whom God’s salvific deeds continue.

For Matthew, Loader argues, Jesus’ “primary role” is “to save his people from their sins” (1:21). In Loader’s assessment, “Matthew does not, however, give the impression that he now limits such forgiveness to something achieved by Jesus’ death”. Though Matthew drops “for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4), “he still implies that this was the purpose of John’s baptism when he reports that people were baptised confessing their sins (3:6)”. This, for Loader, “surely implies that he [Matthew] still understands John’s baptism as bringing forgiveness of sins”. Matthew also shows that Jesus declared God’s forgiveness to the paralytic (9:2–5, 6), “the authority to forgive sins is delegated to the disciples (9:8)”, and God’s forgiveness depends on one’s forgiveness of others (6:14–15; 18:21–35; cf. Mark 11:25). Further, “Matthew regularly makes God’s forgiveness a model” for all those who follow

---

298 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 5.
303 Loader, Law, 249.
304 Loader, Law, 183, 249; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 6.
Jesus.\textsuperscript{305} And there is no “indication elsewhere in the gospel that for Matthew forgiveness of sins is based on Jesus’ sacrificial or vicarious death”, as in 26:28.\textsuperscript{306} Therefore, Loader argues, Matthew’s omission of Mark’s description of John’s baptism, as “for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4), in 3:6, and Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) to Mark’s account of the Last Supper (Mark 14:22) should not necessarily be treated as referring to atonement.\textsuperscript{307}

In view of the above evidences and indications, Loader argues that, for Matthew, though he acknowledges the connection between forgiveness of sins and Jesus’ sacrificial death, and gives it weight (26:28),\textsuperscript{308} “forgiveness seems primarily rooted in the attitude of God, not in an act of vicarious or sacrificial atonement”.\textsuperscript{309} Therefore, 26:28 does not replace other means of accomplishing forgiveness of sins.\textsuperscript{310}

Loader’s treatment of Matthean salvation is significant in many respects. His interpretation of Jesus’ role as the judge to come not only links the present and future dimensions of salvation in Matthew, but also explains why and how Jesus’ teaching of the Torah constitutes his saving mission (1:21). Loader also explains how Christology and soteriology are closely associated in Matthew. By highlighting Jesus’ affirmative attitude towards the Law, its eternal validity, and its role in Matthean soteriology, Loader rightly argues that Matthew shows a great amount of sensitivity and commitment towards his Jewish religious environment. Loader is correct in his argument that Jesus’ death does not necessarily refer to atonement, replacing the temple and cultic sacrifices, as that would have been outrageous for Matthew’s Jewish colleagues, a factor of which Matthew is very much aware. However, Loader seems to

\textsuperscript{305} Loader, \textit{Law}, 249.
\textsuperscript{306} Loader, \textit{Law}, 249.
\textsuperscript{309} Loader, \textit{Law}, 249.
limit Jesus’ role as the judge to come to his teaching of the Law. Consequently, he
overlooks the close relation Jesus’ role as the judge to come has with other salvific
roles, such as the shepherd (2:6; 25:31–46).

This review of some of the more important contributions of recent research raises
a number of critical issues, which perhaps best explain why there are still gaps in
various scholars’ treatments of Matthean soteriology, not only illustrate why a re-
examination of Matthew’s soteriology is required, but also show the need for a new
treatment of it. This is the contribution of the present research: it re-examines the theme
of salvation in Matthew; and offers a new treatment of Matthew’s soteriology.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD OF APPROACH

In our brief overview of recent research we noted that the theological positions of various scholars related to Matthew’s understanding of soteriology are varied and conflicting. The present study argues that such incoherence is primarily because the following aspects in Matthew’s Gospel were either not attended to, or received too little attention: the continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past; the continuity between the being of Jesus and the being of Israel; the continuity between “how Jesus saves” in the present and God’s saving patterns in the past; the continuity between the being of Jesus and the being of God; the continuity between Jesus’ life and his death; the continuity between Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles; and the continuity between the earthly mission of Jesus and the mission of the ecclesia.

One way of approaching the continuity of God’s saving actions in history has been the so-called approach of Heilsgeschichte or salvation history.¹ This approach emphasises that, for Matthew, though the history of God’s saving initiatives is divided into different stages, in which one stage “replaces” another,² “it is the one and the same God who is acting” continuously within time and space.³ At the same time, in salvation historians’ view, Matthew can also envisage the different ways in which God acts at various historical junctures and the disparate ways in which God’s people respond to

¹ For a convenient summary of salvation history in Matthew, see Donald Senior, What are they Saying about Matthew? (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1996), 38–50.
³ Meier, Vision, 30.
such divine initiatives. In the view of Meier, “difference within continuity, the various stages within the one divine economy: this is the basic insight on which any outline or pattern of salvation-history approach is built”.4

There have been mainly three major treatments of Matthew’s view of salvation history: missiological (Walker, Strecker, and Levine); christological (Kingsbury); and apocalyptic (Meier).5 First, according to Walker, Matthew’s salvation history is oriented around mission, which begins in 70 C.E.6 In Walker’s view, Matthew divides God’s scheme of salvation, which is a “history of God’s call” or “mission history” (Berufungsgeschichte),7 into three stages:8 (1) The pre-history of the Messiah (1:1–18). This stage embraces the history from the calling of Abraham to the birth of the Messiah. (2) The history of the call of Israel: Jesus’ saving mission is limited to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5; 15:24). This period continued through the ecclesia till the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. when Matthew’s ecclesia accepted the conclusive failure of the Jewish mission. (3) The call of the Gentiles (28:18–20: “make disciples of all nations”). This stage is indicated in the positive responses of the centurion (8:5–15) and the Canaanite woman (15:21–28) to Jesus’ saving mission. Matthew’s primary purpose, Walker argues, in constructing a three-stage salvation history is to provide “an aetiological explanation” of the post-70 C.E. Gentile mission.9

---

4 Meier, Vision, 30.
7 Walker, Heilsgeschichte, 10–11, 114–20, 145–49.
8 Walker, Heilsgeschichte, 115.
Following Conzelmann’s “tripartition” of salvation history in Luke, Strecker argues that Matthew deliberately distances himself from the “sacred past” of the “life of Jesus”. Along with the genealogy (1:1–17) and birth narratives, Strecker contends, the phrase “from that time” (Ἀπὸ τῶν) also reveals Matthew’s “historicising” interest, given that he adds it at the decisive (historical) junctures of the gospel story (4:17; 16:21; 26:16). Like Walker, Strecker also concludes, but based on different lines of demarcations, that, Matthew understands the history of salvation as divided into three epochs: (1) The time of the fathers and of the prophets. (2) The time of Jesus. (3) The time of the church.

According to Strecker, Matthew’s main objective in developing such a three-stage scheme of God’s saving history is to address the problem of eschatology and delayed Parousia. In Strecker’s view, the second stage (“The time of Jesus”) has been replaced by the third and final stage of salvation—the time of the church. Therefore, the epoch of Jesus’ life, though it is sacred and ideal, is not to be repeated.

Like Walker and Strecker, Levine also argues that Matthew divides his scheme of salvation history on the basis of mission. In Levine’s view, there are “two axes” in Matthew’s salvation history: one is “temporal” and the other “social”. The “temporal axis” refers to the chronological events: during his earthly ministry, Jesus upholds the priority of Israel and brings salvation first to the Jews (10:5–6; 15:24). After his

10 According to Conzelmann, Luke understands the ministry of Jesus as “die Mitte der Zeit”, which is preceded by the epoch of Israel (Luke 16:16), and followed by the epoch of the church. See, “Present and Future in the Synoptic Tradition,” JTC 5 (1968): 26–44, here 34.
12 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 86–123.
13 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 185–88; idem, “Geschichtsverständnis,” 65–66. According to Strecker, there is in the Gospel of Matthew a history of the middle of which is the time of Jesus as the time of the revelation unfolding in three eras (“eine in drei Epochen sich entfaltende Historie deren Mitte die Zeit Jesu als die Zeit der Offenbarung ist”): Gerechtigkeit, 334.
14 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 45–47.
15 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 122.
16 Levine, Social and Ethnic Dimensions.
exaltation, Jesus, however, removes the geographic and ethnic barriers and “extends”
the mission to the Gentiles (28:18–20). This extension, Levine argues, unlike Walker
and Strecker, does not, however, replace or invalidate the Jewish mission. The “social

Second, Kingsbury believes that Matthew’s understanding of the history of
salvation is “rooted” in Christology. Kingsbury proposes a “two-epoch” division of
God’s saving initiatives in history: (1) The time of Israel. This epoch is inaugurated by
the calling of Abraham (1:1–2). (2) The time of Jesus “in which the time of Israel finds
its fulfilment and which . . . extends from the beginning of the ministry of John and
Jesus (past) through the post-Easter time (present) to the coming consummation of the
the time of Jesus and “the time of the church” are formally “coalesced”, for “the time of
the church” is “subsumed” under “the last days” inaugurated by Jesus and John.

Third, Meier has engaged a Jewish apocalyptic perspective to understand the
salvation history in Matthew. Meier sees three periods: (1) The time of Israel. (2) The
time of Jesus. (3) The time of the church. Meier argues, unlike Walker and Strecker,
that it is the “death-resurrection” of Jesus that represents the “turning point” of history
(die Wende der Zeit), not the life of Jesus as such. This is reflected in Matthew’s
description of the apocalyptic events that surround the moment of Jesus’ death (27:51–
54). According to Meier, these verses, Matthew describes Jesus’ death “as the end of the

---

17 Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 37; idem, “The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel and His Concept of
22 In Meier’s view, Matthew treats Jesus’ death and his resurrection as basically one event. See
“Salvation-History”, 207.
OT cult”, as “the passing of the *heilsgeschichtliche* restrictions of Jesus’ public ministry, both as to territory and people (and as to correlative commands in the Law of Moses”, “as the earth-shaking beginning of the new aeon (bringing about the resurrection of the dead), and as the moment when the Gentiles first come to full faith in the Son of God”.23

But the *Heilsgeschichte* treatment of Matthew’s understanding of the continuity of God’s saving actions in history raises a number of issues. In itself the approach of *Heilsgeschichte* may impose an external, preconceived framework on the Gospel and in the process overlook the dynamics of the narrative. If it is the one and the same God who saves his people in history, as the salvation history approach assumes, then why are God’s salvific actions in the past “replaced” by Jesus’ saving in the present? Is it because Jesus’ saving is more sufficient and efficacious than God’s saving in the past? Does that mean God’s initiatives in the past were “less” saving? Does it mean the sufficiency and efficacy of God’s saving is not consistent? How does it account for God’s saving nature? How does it account for the sufficiency of God’s very being? If Jesus’ saving is more sufficient to the extent of replacing God’s saving in the past, then how does God become the source of salvation?

According to the salvation history method, God’s saving actions are continuous because it is the one and the same God who effects salvation in history. There is little or no continuity between various stages of salvation as one stage replaces another. Any one stage of God’s action in history is valid and sufficient until and unless it is replaced by a new stage of divine action. God’s new initiatives replace his own saving initiatives in the past. Therefore, the beginning of a new stage of salvation is or could be interpreted as the historical beginning of a “new” kind of salvation or a new repertoire

of salvation; each new stage needs a new beginning. This means, in a salvation historical approach, the continuity of God’s saving actions is soteriological (vertical) in nature, not historical and soteriological. That overlooks not only the historical (linear) continuity between God’s saving actions, but also the continuity between the historical dimension of God’s saving nature and the soteriological dimension of history.

Though they divide the different stages of the history of salvation on different grounds, the salvation historians, Kingsbury in particular, interpret Matthew’s soteriology primarily from the vantage point of Christology. They even synthesise theology and soteriology into Christology. For most of the salvation historians, except Levine, this would imply that Jesus’ saving replaces either some or all of the other means of salvation, or he declares them redundant. This could also entail that Jesus brings a new repertoire of salvation; Matthew’s soteriology rests entirely on Jesus. But that does not do justice to Matthew’s affirmative attitude towards “the Law and the prophets” (5:17–19), the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27), and the close connection he makes between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–35).

The christological reading of soteriology plays down the continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past, which Matthew makes largely by means of juxtaposing the genealogy and the birth of Jesus, the typologies, the fulfilment citations, and by the way he highlights or emphasises various titles and salvific roles of Jesus. It limits Matthew’s soteriology to something achieved by the person of Jesus. As a result, the salvation historians overlook how closely Matthew links “how Jesus saves” (soteriology) to the various titles and roles he attributes to Jesus (Christology), God’s saving patterns in the past, and other theological themes in the Gospel. More significantly, the salvation historians also miss the close link between Jesus’ teaching of the Torah and his final judgement.
The salvation historians’ underplaying of the continuity with the “prehistory” (the history encompassing Israel’s history from Abraham to Christ), would give the impression that Jesus’ severe polemical encounter with the Jewish leaders in Matthew indicates Jesus’ rejection of the people of Israel, and the annulment of the unique position of the historical Israel as the people of God. This is unlikely for two reasons: for Matthew, the Jewish leaders do not represent the whole of Judaism; and Matthew’s audience would have been familiar with the polemical conflicts among various Jewish groups, given the complexity and diversity of first-century Judaism.

This study, therefore, proposes a new method of approach to interpret Matthew’s understanding of soteriology—“the historical, theological and soteriological continuity”: first, the continuity between God’s saving through his messengers such as the prophets, kings, and judges in the past, and God’s saving in the present through Jesus the saviour; and second, the continuity between God’s saving in the present through Jesus the saviour and God’s final dealing with his people through Jesus, who will come as the eschatological judge and shepherd. This new method of approach will not only offer a coherent understanding of how Matthew makes his soteriology suit his post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment, but also make best sense of various other theological themes in the Gospel, such as the continuing validity and salvific sufficiency of the Law and the temple, God’s attitude towards the people of Israel, and their privileged status as God’s people.

“The historical, theological and soteriological continuity” method of approach argues that, unlike the salvation historians, who contend that it is through “historical periodisation” that Jesus’ activities assume soteriological importance, Matthew consciously connects the “life of Jesus” and his “sacred past” that began with the calling of Abraham (1:2). For Matthew, God is saving and hence he makes saving initiatives in
history to save his people. This makes God’s saving nature historical. And God’s people who live in history respond to God’s saving initiatives. This makes history soteriological. Therefore, the method of continuity argues, for Matthew, history is soteriological and God’s saving (soteriology) is historical. This means, for Matthew, God’s actions in history are continuous—both soteriologically and historically—not just as a soteriological continuity, as the salvation historians argue. This best explains why Matthew juxtaposes the genealogy (1:1–17) and the birth of Jesus (1:18–25), and why Matthew makes the being of Jesus continuous with God’s being (“Son of God) and the being of Israel at the same time (“son of Abraham” and “Son of David”). Jesus is depicted as the “climax” of the history of God’s saving in the genealogy. But, for Matthew, this does not mean Jesus’ saving replaces all that God initiated and instituted in the past; rather Jesus, by his divine authority, holds God’s saving in the past and in the present together. Moreover, for Matthew, the missions of John, Jesus, and Jesus’ disciples are continuous, not one replacing the other, for they all share the same message (3:2; 4:17; 10:5–6). In other words, for Matthew, God’s saving nature and history are continuous and therefore God’s saving actions are historically and soteriologically continuous.

Furthermore, the proposed method of “historical, theological and soteriological continuity” argues that God is an eternally continuous saving reality and, hence, the sufficiency of his saving is also eternally continuous. Then, for Matthew, the salvation which God effects in time and space will be sufficient and efficacious across the time periods. What God did in the past remains soteriologically valid in the present and will be the same in the future. Therefore, the salvation which Jesus brings means that God still intervenes in the life of his people to save them. It does not mean that God starts a “new” epoch in Jesus that is discontinuous with the past saving history, as the salvation
history method contends. Like God’s saving being, his saving deeds are also continuous—both historically and soteriologically.

Contrary to that of the salvation historians, the method of “historical, theological and soteriological continuity” argues that God’s saving in the past is not merely a “preparatory” stage for the salvation which Jesus brings. If the genealogy (1:1–18) represents only a “preparatory” period, then it would mean that salvation per se was “absent” in the past. If so, what God did in the life of the people of Israel in the past was either not salvific or not soteriologically efficacious. It would also imply that the Law and the prophets will be replaced once their “preparatory” function is over in the life and ministry of Jesus; Jesus will do so by fulfilling them. But this goes against the grain of 5:17 and the importance Matthew attaches to the Law in his Gospel, which is reflected in the five discourses (Chapters 5–7; 10; 13; 18; 24–25).

If God’s saving in the past through various means had only a “preparatory” role, then it would mean that the destruction of the temple is salvific, as its destruction signals the actualisation of its assigned role and the advent of salvation in Jesus, for which it has been preparing the people of Israel. But this is not consistent with the positive image of the temple in the Gospel (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27). Moreover, this would certainly offend Matthew’s hearers and his Jewish contemporaries. Therefore, the method of continuity in this study argues that it is not because the temple’s function was only “preparatory”, or Jesus’ atoning death replaces the temple that it is destroyed, but because of the disobedience of the Jewish leaders. This would make sense for Matthew’s hearers.

“The historical, theological and soteriological continuity” approach does not assume that salvation in Matthew begins with Jesus’ birth because God’s nature has always been saving. This is reflected in the genealogy. Moreover, for Matthew, there is
only one beginning as far as the history of God’s saving in the life of the people of Israel is concerned: the calling of Abraham (1:2). Each new stage does not need a new beginning, as the salvation history method assumes. The messianic hopes and promises, therefore, are not pointing to the beginning of a “new” epoch of salvation, as the salvation historians argue; instead, they entail that, as in the past, God will continue to save his people. The promises of salvation were deeply embedded in the salvific experiences of the people of Israel. Therefore, the messianic hopes entail that God’s saving will continue to be real and sufficient in the future too.

More significantly, as with the salvation historical approach, the method of “historical, theological and soteriological continuity” also argues that the continuity of God’s saving actions in history involves development or change of God’s action. For Matthew, Jesus’ saving is the climax of the history of God’s saving and the fulfilment of God’s saving promises in the past. But contrary to the salvation history method, the method of continuity argues that fulfilment of God’s promises does not entail abrogation or replacement of all that God initiated and instituted in the past for the salvation of his people, but an affirmation of their continuing validity and sufficiency in the historic present. Like the salvation history approach, the method of continuity also asserts that Jesus’ being is (ontologically) superior to all of God’s messengers in the past, as the exchange before Jesus’ baptism illustrates. But this does not invalidate God’s saving through his messengers in the past, as some salvation historians suggest, because Jesus’ being is continuous with the being and history of Israel too (“son of Abraham” and “Son of David”).

The method of continuity argues that in Jesus’ saving, Torah observance became more effective, because it is now observed according to its true sense, not because Jesus added anything new to the Torah. This involves development and newness, but, unlike
in the salvation history method, it does not entail abrogation or replacement of some
parts or all of the Torah; the Torah is still valid and sufficient. What God did in the past
through his messengers such as the kings, prophets, and judges for the salvation of his
people is merged and continued in Jesus. The merging of various salvific roles in Jesus
reflects significant development. But the method of continuity contends that this
merging of roles entails also affirmation of the validity and continuity of God’s saving
patterns in the past, not replacement of God’s saving in the past, as some salvation
historians contend. “How Jesus saves” in the present and how God saved his people in
the past are historically and soteriologically continuous. As with the salvation
historians, Meier in particular, the method of “historical, theological and soteriological
continuity” also believes that in Jesus’ death the eschaton breaks into history. This, too,
is a significant development in the history of God’s saving. But, contrary to that of the
salvation historical approach, the method of continuity argues that, while indicating a
new turn in the history of God’s saving, it affirms the continuity between the present
and future dimensions of Jesus’ saving. This also means God’s saving in the past,
present and future are brought together in Jesus’ ministry, especially in his death. This
explains why Matthew introduces an apocalyptic colouring in his account of Jesus’
death.

The method of continuity in this study follows a sequential treatment of the
Gospel. It does so for two reasons: how Matthew understands “how Jesus saves” is very
closely linked to how Matthew introduces, develops and concludes Jesus’ saving; and
salvation in Matthew is very closely associated with various other theological themes in
the Gospel such as the Law, the temple, and God’s attitude towards the people of Israel.
This offers a significant alternative to the approaches followed in previous studies
because it examines how the relevant material functions within its narrative context and
how the theme of salvation appears, disappears and reappears as the narrative unfolds. It avoids the danger of limiting Matthew’s understanding of salvation to certain obvious texts, where the theme of salvation overtly comes into question. That would not provide coherence and continuity. Some sections of the Gospel will deserve closer attention and detailed discussion because of their direct relation to the theme. However, we will treat them within the larger narrative context.

This sequential analysis also seeks to keep in mind Matthew’s Jewish hearers or community who, by and large, believed in Jesus, and had a good grasp of various salvific traditions in Judaism and how his account of Jesus’ saving would have made sense for them. The method enables one to have a closer and more coherent understanding of both how Matthew’s hearers might have sensed his depiction of Jesus’ saving and how Matthew might have intended to portray it.

Accordingly, in what follows, Chapter 4 will discuss Matthew’s initial depiction of Jesus’ salvific roles as teacher and judge, especially in chapters 1–7 but also elsewhere in the Gospel. Chapter 5 will delineate how Matthew depicts Jesus’ saving roles as healer and helper, especially in chapters 8–25 but also elsewhere in the Gospel. Chapter 6 will discuss how Matthew depicts Jesus’ death and resurrection, especially in chapters 26–28 as well as elsewhere in the Gospel. In chapter 7, by drawing conclusions from our discussions in Chapters 4–6, we will argue that Matthew understands salvation in continuity.

A note on translations of ancient sources is also in order. For biblical texts, unless otherwise indicated, the citations in English are from *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV). For the Pseudepigrapha, the translations of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1983–1985), edited by James H. Charlesworth, is utilised. For Qumran documents, the translation by Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in
*English* (2004), is followed. And for the works of Philo, the translation by C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (1997), is used.
CHAPTER 4

THE SAVIOUR AS TEACHER AND JUDGE:
MATTHEW’S INITIAL DEPICTION OF JESUS’ SAVIFIC ROLES IN CHAPTERS 1–7

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew offers a theological-contextual understanding of God’s saving initiative in Jesus. In this respect, Matthew’s account of Jesus’ saving is a theological response to the historical and soteriological questions, challenges, and concerns of post-70 C.E. Judaism. Arguably, this best explains the distinctions and variations in Matthew’s version of the story of Jesus, the various titles and salvific roles which Matthew attributes to Jesus, and how and why he links Jesus’ saving to various other theological themes and issues in the Gospel narrative. How Matthew introduces and unfolds Jesus’ status and his salvific roles reflects how Matthew unpacks his understanding of salvation. This chapter, therefore, seeks to unravel how Matthew theologically and contextually depicts or situates Jesus and his saving roles — teacher and judge—especially in chapters 1–7 but also elsewhere in the Gospel.

4.2. GENEALOGY, FULFILMENT CITATIONS, AND TYPOLOGIES:

AFFIRMATION OF HISTORICAL AND SOTERIOLOGICAL CONTINUITY

Mark begins his Gospel with Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ”: 1:1), possibly as a title or as the beginning of a sentence which then goes on immediately to bring a mixed citation in Isaiah’s name, referring to John the Baptist (1:2–4). But Matthew replaces Mark 1:1 and begins his Gospel with the
genealogy of Jesus (1:1–17). Matthew then goes on to introduce two whole chapters of additional elucidations, before coming to John. In his opening words, Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυίδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ (“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”:1:1), Matthew supplements Mark’s “Jesus Christ” with “Son of David” and “son of Abraham”. Such an evocative beginning not only provides the readers with an opening into the narrative, but also introduces the theological and soteriological presuppositions for understanding the text.

4.2.1. Genealogy

For Matthew, the genealogy (1:1–17) is more than a mere “introduction” to his Gospel. The understanding of the history of Israel and the theological and soteriological premises which Matthew unfolds in the genealogy either identify or foreshadow the major theological themes and soteriological emphases to follow. Scholars have construed the understanding of the history of Israel unfurled in the genealogy (1:1–17) from different vantage points. According to Carter, Matthew views the history of Israel in a “christological” perspective in that the coming of Jesus is “the decisive event”, for it signals “the dawning of the new age”. In the view of Kennedy, the genealogy is “teleological”, for it “recapitulates” Israel’s history in such a way that it points to the

---

1 The Jews considered the genealogical tables as important historical documents for they used them to ensure family purity (Gen 5:1–31; 11:10–32; 1 Chr 5:1, 7; 7:5; 26:31; 2 Chr 31:16). We see similar patterns in Ezra 8:1 and Neh 7:5 as well.


3 Mayordomo-Marin, Den Anfang hören, 204. Mayordomo-Marin speaks of beginnings and ends as a frame that allows the reader “die Perspektive des Textes einzunehmen und am Ende wieder aus ihr herauszutreten.”

4 Carter, Matthew and Empire, 60; idem, Matthew and the Margins, 65.
fulfilment Jesus brings and “the climactic and definitive” nature of its fulfilment. In the same way, Luz also assumes that the genealogy underscores the divine saving plans that lead the history of Israel to Jesus. This is analogous to the Heilsgeschichte position, particularly Kingsbury’s view, that the genealogy represents a “preparatory” period.

But the “christological” and “teleological” readings of the genealogy raise some issues (1:1–17). Does the christological and teleological interpretation of the “preparatory” nature of the history of Israel mean that for Matthew the arrival of Jesus marks the beginning of a new “epoch” of salvation? If so, does that mean what God had done and instituted in the past to save his people lacked salvific sufficiency? These are important questions for understanding Matthew’s theological intentions behind beginning his story of Jesus’ saving with the genealogy.

For Matthew, the genealogy (1:1–17) suggests rather an uninterrupted history of God’s saving initiatives in the life of the people of Israel, which began with the calling of Abraham (1:2), and continued up to and including the coming of Jesus the saviour (1:18–25). And all that God instituted and initiated in the past to save his people was salvifically sufficient and efficacious. Further, because God is saving, God’s saving dealings with his people (must) continue in history. This is why Matthew commences his account of the “good news” of salvation with God’s saving interventions in the history of Israel (1:1–17). Thus, as Alkier rightly suggests, the genealogy functions for

---

8 The contents of the genealogy (1:1–17) are mainly drawn from 1 Chr 2–3 and Ruth 4:18–22.
the reader as an *Aufruf zur Erinnerung*, summoning the reader to locate Jesus’ saving in continuity with the history of God’s saving initiatives sketched in these opening lines.  

The structure of the genealogy also indicates Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity. It is normal to assume that Jesus comes at the “climax” of what is depicted as three groups of “fourteen generations” or as the “culmination” (τελος) of that history which originated with Abraham. But, for Matthew, it does not mean the divine saving initiatives in the history of Israel were mere “preparatory events” nor are they replaced by Jesus’ saving, as the salvation historians argue. Rather, it means Jesus’ saving affirms and fulfils God’s salvific plans and promises, which, thus, shows that God still saves his people as he did in the past. As Loader correctly observes, this would have made sense to Matthew’s Jewish audience who would have unreservedly shared “such numerological presuppositions and . . . [interpreted] them theologically as reflecting divine intent” and saving plans for his people.

By beginning the genealogy with Abraham (1:2), Matthew further reinforces the continuity not only between Jesus and God’s people, but also between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past. In Luke, on the other hand, the point of departure is Adam (3:38). For Matthew, Abraham serves as the initiation of the history of God’s saving because it is with Abraham that God made his foundational covenant (Gen 12:15). Furthermore, in contrast with Luke and 1 Chronicles, the omission of all names prior to Abraham leads to the identification of Jesus as the one who saves Jews—“king of the Jews” (2:2)—which (re)“assures” Matthew’s hearers that Jesus’ saving is continuous.

---


11 The genealogy which follows 1:1 covers the period from Abraham to the Messiah. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:158.

with God’s saving dealings with the people of Israel and “caught up” in God’s ever continuing saving activity for them.

However, Matthew’s introduction of the four women (1:3, 5–6)—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba—into the genealogy of Jesus raises some questions vis-à-vis continuity.¹³ Scholars have argued that the presence of four women in Matthew’s genealogy indicates soteriological discontinuity as it entails inclusion of the Gentiles.¹⁴ According to Loader, those who know that Jesus sanctioned the inclusion of the Gentiles only after his exaltation (28:18–20; cf. 10:5–6; 15:24) could have seen the inclusion of the women as “the legitimation foreshadowed in the genealogy”.¹⁵ However, for Loader, this is only an uncertain possibility compared with the much more likely explanation that Matthew is dealing with slander against Mary.¹⁶ In France’s view, “the four ‘foreign’ women prepare the reader for the coming of non-Israelites to follow Israel’s Messiah which will be foreshadowed in the homage of the magi in 2:1–12”.¹⁷

But Sim, Runesson, and Johnson dismiss the relevance of the four women being Gentile because Rahab, Ruth, and Tamar were seen as “converts” to Judaism (Tamar: b. Soṭah 10a; Rahab: Mekhilta Exod 18:1; Ruth: Midrash Ruth 1:16–17), not as non-Jews.¹⁸ And, more significantly, Runesson notes, because ethnicity is so crucial to

---

¹³ Senior, Matthew, 89; Meier, Vision, 54–55; idem, Matthew, 4–5.
¹⁵ Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 8.
¹⁷ France, Matthew, 37.
“conversion”, these proselytes would have definitely “accommodate[ed] Jewish law and land within their identity”. It is therefore, Sim argues, “inaccurate to label them merely as Gentiles; they were Gentiles who had renounced their ‘pagan’ status by converting to Judaism. Thus, unless we accept that the Gentiles in Matthew’s ecclesia were likewise proselytes, it is difficult to see how they would have identified with these women”. But this is likely only if Matthew’s Gentile mission entailed conversion to (Christian) Judaism. What, then, is the objective of Matthew in including the four “contentious” women in the genealogy?

In the view of Davies and Allison, and Loader, by including the four women into his genealogy, perhaps Matthew intends to counter any possible allegations regarding Mary’s virginal conception (1:18–25), as with “the allegations that the tomb was empty because the disciples stole the body of Jesus (27:62–66; 28:11–15)”. According to Meier, “the irregularity” of the four women is “holy irregularity” in the history of salvation history, so he calls this a “footnote” to the miraculous conception in 1:18–25. But Brown rejects this argument on the grounds that God used the four women to save his people despite negative rumours and reports made about them. Similarly, Luz, France, and Gundry also argue that the “irregularity” of these four women is

---

21 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:220; Loader, Law, 154; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 7. Matthew does not report any such allegation about Mary in his gospel, but we find the occurrence of such allegations and slanders in later literature (Origen, Cels. 1:28, 32; Tertullian, Spect. 30).
23 Meier, Vision, 54.
diverse while Mary is depicted differently. Therefore, it is not compelling that Matthew includes these four “embarrassing” mothers to defend Mary’s virginal conception.

According to Johnson, Matthew includes the four women into his genealogy because in Jewish traditions Tamar, Ruth, and Rahab were regarded as “heroines”. This is compelling for various reasons. The inclusion of the four women in Matthew’s genealogy is certainly not unparalleled in Jewish heritage. 1 Chronicles includes Tamar (1 Chr 2:4) and Bathsheba (1 Chr 3:5) in the genealogy. But, as Kennedy argues, their inclusion has nothing to do with their illicit sexual behaviour or being foreign. Also the case with Tamar and Ruth in Ruth 4 is that they are in fact presented positively. This shows, as Hays rightly points out, that they are considered in the Old Testament “not by their doubtful reputations but by their tenacious fidelity”. Therefore, we may argue that Matthew introduces the four women into the genealogy because they were heroines despite having been Gentiles or in doubtful circumstances. But, for Matthew, there is more to it: if the four women in the genealogy can be regarded as heroines despite having been in doubtful circumstances, then so can Mary.

According to Johnson, the effect of the inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba in the genealogy (1 Chr 2:4; 3:5) on the purity of Davidic lineage was already a controversial issue among various groups within first-century Judaism. The Pharisees defended the reputation of the four women. By including the four women in his genealogy, Matthew not only participates in first century Jewish theological debates,

---

25 Luz, Matthäus, 134–35; France, Matthew, 37. According to Gundry, these four women “prefigure Mary”, though “they make odd choices for such a role”, See Matthew, 15.
26 Luz, Matthäus, 134–35; France, Matthew, 37. According to Gundry, these four women “prefigure Mary”, though “they make odd choices for such a role”, See Matthew, 15.
27 Kennedy, Recapitulation of Israel, 71, 86–7. However, Kennedy acknowledges that “the ‘irregularity’ of the stories, which is mirrored by the “irregularity” of Mary and Joseph’s situation (Matt 1:16, 18–25) could possibly a subsidiary component.
29 Johnson, Biblical Genealogies, 176–79.
but also legitimises Jesus’ ancestry. Moreover, Israel’s history would have been “disrupted” had these women not seen it as their task to participate in God’s saving dealings with his people. This means Matthew adds the four women to his genealogy to prove that there cannot be any “discontinuity” in God’s salvific dealings with his people.

In conclusion: Matthew situates Jesus’ saving in continuity with God’s saving dealings in the history of Israel. What God brought into being through the calling of Abraham is preserved and continued in history by God’s saving initiatives through the kings, judges, and prophets. Matthew adds the four women into his genealogy not just because 1 Chronicles has (some of) them or there was controversy about them in Davidic ancestry or they were “converts” to Judaism, but (primarily) because Matthew regards them as heroines despite having been in contentious circumstances. And God’s saving initiative in Jesus not only fulfils God’s promises of salvation, but also continues what he had initiated with Abraham; Jesus’ saving is, thus, a continuation of God’s saving in the past.

4.2.2. Fulfilment Citations

Matthew employs the fulfilment citations to “ground” God’s continuing saving activity.30 As Hays fittingly argues, these passages not only “frame Israel’s Scripture as a predictive text pointing to events in the life of Jesus” [emphasis original], but also “validate” the claims about the status of Jesus, which Matthew makes for Jesus, by “grounding” them in Israel’s Scriptures.31 This means, for Matthew, whatever happened in the life of Jesus was “intended to happen”, which genuinely situates him within the


messianic hopes of the people of Israel, something which would be valued by those holding Jewish scriptures in high esteem. For Matthew, the purpose of fulfilment citations is, therefore, both “historical” (to situate Jesus’ saving in history) and “theological”. Clearly then, Matthew uses the fulfilment quotations to portray Jesus as the fulfilment of God’s saving plans and promises. This entails continuity.

4.2.3 Typologies

Matthew primarily uses three typologies—Joseph–Joseph, Jesus–Israel, and Jesus–Moses—to further reinforce the continuity not only between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past, but also between Jesus’ being and God’s people, which Matthew has previously accomplished through the use of the genealogy and fulfilment citations. Despite the variations in reasons and situations, the dream of Joseph (Matt 1:18–25) and his flight to Egypt (Matt 2:13–23) arouse the memory of Joseph the dreamer and his journey to Egypt (Gen 39:2; 46:2–7). Likewise, Joseph’s time in Egypt and then the return from Egypt evoke memories of Israel’s return from the bondage of Pharaoh (exodus). In Loader’s view, the “typological matching [also] connects Herod’s slaughter of the children [Matt 2:13–19] with the killing of the first born in Egypt [Exod 2:22].

---

33 According to Overman, these citations emphasise the Matthean community’s claim in the context of competition from formative Judaism. See Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 67.
34 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 49–85.
and through the allusion to Balaam’s prophecy of the star with Balak’s designs against Israel [Numbers 22–24].\(^{38}\)

Perhaps the most predominant typological matching must be Jesus and Moses: attacks on male children (Exodus 1; Matt 2:16–18); conflict with rulers (Exodus 2; Matt 2:1–12); exile and God’s protection (Exod 2:15; Matt 2:13–14); the return from Egypt after the tyrant’s death (Exod 2:23; 4:19; Matt 2:19–20); and the fact that both save people (Exodus 5–7; Matt 1:21).\(^{39}\) Matthean “scribal attempt” to typologically connect Jesus with Moses continues in 5:1, where Matthew places Jesus’ teaching of the Law on the mountain.\(^{40}\)

The typological identification of Jesus with Israel that we have seen in the infancy narratives continues in the account of Jesus’ confrontation with the devil in the wilderness in 4:1–11, which Matthew has taken from Q with a few changes (cf. Luke 4:1–13).\(^{41}\) Like Israel, Jesus, God’s Son (cf. 2:15), is also led into the wilderness. But, in contrast with Israel, Israel’s Messiah does not fail in the desert. He triumphs over the temptation with the words of the Torah. Matthew has Jesus cite Deut 8:3b LXX, 6:16 and 6:13 (cf. Matt 5:17) respectively as against Satan’s demand for a spectacular miracle and signs. According to Luz, Jesus’ response to Satan in the form of a citation


\(^{41}\) Israel typology does not seem to be the key to the entire text, except the first temptation. See, Luz, Matthäus, 1:224.
from the Scripture shows Matthew’s commitment to the Torah.42 Thus, for Matthew, as Loader correctly argues, Jesus “truly represents Israel and fulfils its Torah”.43

To summarise: these typologies and “tapestry of allusions” not only reinforce Jesus’ identity as Israel’s Messiah, but also situate his saving within Israel’s salvific memories and theological heritage. The God who revealed his saving plans to Joseph the dreamer is the one who revealed his saving plans to Joseph. The God who liberated his people from the brickyards of Pharaoh through Moses is the one who saves his people from the yoke of sin through Jesus. The God who gave the Torah to his people to have and to be in a saving relationship with him forever is the one who gave the authority to Jesus to interpret the Torah correctly and to uphold its eternal salvific sufficiency and efficacy. But this does not mean that “how Jesus saves” in the present is the “reenactment” of how God saved his people in the past; instead, it means God still saves; God will not abandon his people, for their being and existence reflect his ever continuing saving being and nature. This makes sense in a historical and theological matrix where such continuity and identity matter. It suggests a strong post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment, wherein Matthew’s hearers and Jewish people at large were longing for such a reinforcement in relation to their being and historical existence as God’s people.

4.3. THE STATUS OF JESUS THE SAVIOUR

The continuity between Jesus’ being or status as the Messiah of Israel and the being of Israel as God’s people, and the continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving initiatives in the past—which Matthew achieves through the use of the genealogy, fulfilment citations, and typologies—entail the continuity between “how Jesus saves”

42 Luz, Matthäus, 1:225.
43 Loader, Law, 159.
and God’s saving institutions or patterns (kings, judges, prophets, shepherds, and teachers) in the history of Israel. For Matthew, therefore, Jesus’ being or status as the saviour and his saving roles are continuous with God’s saving nature and his saving patterns in history since the calling of Abraham. This means, “who Jesus is” (Christology) and “how Jesus saves” (soteriology) are inseparably linked in Matthew. That necessitates a detailed discussion on Matthew’s description of Jesus’ status/being as the saviour, to which we shall turn now.

4.3.1. Christ

Matthew begins his account of the “good news” of salvation which “Jesus” brings (1:21; 4:17; cf. 3:2) by developing Mark 1:1 (Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [νῦν θεοῦ]). “Jesus”, which Matthew takes to mean “saviour” (“Yahweh is salvation”), not its actual etymology, but the popular one, is a personal name in Matthew (1:1, 21), the etymology of which thus explains Jesus’ saving mission (1:21). “Jesus Christ” is also used as a personal name (1:18; 16:21), but in 1:17 “Christ” appears as a title (= Messiah) by itself and indicates that “Christ” has messianic content, which reflects God’s promise of salvation. This is confirmed by its use elsewhere (e.g. 2:4; 16:16, 20; 22:42; 24:5, 23; 26:63, 68) and by its association already in 1:1 with “son of David” and with royal messianism in the genealogy and the “king of the Jews” motif in 2:2 (cf. 27:29). Matthew thus “names” God’s continuing saving initiatives and the fulfilment of his saving promises in the present “Jesus”.

---

44 Cf. Kingsbury, Matthew, 84–85.
45 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:155.
46 Nolland, Matthew, 72.
4.3.2. Son of David

As in Mark and Luke, Matthew also ascribes the messianic title υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ to Jesus (9:27; 15:22; 20:30; cf. Mark 10:47–49; Luke 18:38). For Matthew, Jesus is the royal Davidic Messiah, which he illustrates in a number of ways. It is from the house of David (Isa 11:10 [“sprout of Jesse”]; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12 “shoot (of David)”; cf. 4 Ezra 12:32; 4QpIsa a frags 7-10:22; John 7:42) that the eschatological Messiah must come to save his people.\(^{47}\) Besides, he will fulfil the saving promises made in 2 Sam 7 (cf. 1 Chr 17:11, 14; Isa 9:6–7; 11:1; Jer 23:5; 30:9).\(^ {48}\) Matthew links these two traditions—royal and eschatological—to Jesus by supplementing Mark’s “Jesus Christ” with υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ (1:1, 16–17) and tracing Jesus back to David in the genealogy. Thus, Matthew presents Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah, which, as Konradt rightly argues, corrects Mark’s depreciation of the royal Davidic messiahship of Jesus.\(^ {49}\)

Matthew also shows that Jesus’ saving is continuous with God’s saving in the history of Israel through institutions such as kingship, which is epitomised by King David who was the divinely elected and anointed king of Israel (1:1; cf. Isa 11:10; Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8). In Matthew’s version of the genealogy, only David is given the title “the king” (cf. 1:16). Thus, Jesus is presented as genuinely belonging to the royal family and an authentic descendant of King David. For Matthew, “Jesus was not a disembodied

---


\(^ {48}\) In the Talmud, we find it in the phrase “the Son of David comes” (cf. TJ. *Ta’an* 4:8, 68d).

bearer of a divine message” of salvation; rather, he was an “authentic Jew”, the Jew who would fulfill Israel’s messianic hopes and in whom God will continue to save his people. As the royal Davidic Messiah, therefore, it was Jesus’ historical mission to continue God’s saving schemes and to fulfill his saving promises (1:21).

To present Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah, Matthew artificially divides the genealogy, which highlights David as “the king”, into three groups of fourteen generations. According to France, the “three fourteen is six sevens, and a sequence of six sevens points to the coming of the seventh of seven”—Jesus. This is not convincing. Matthew attributes unparalleled theological significance to the Davidic ancestry of Jesus, which, in the view of Davies and Allison, reflects an ongoing debate with the Jewish leaders, who were waiting for the coming of ben Dāwid. Matthew uses the title Ἰού Δαυίδ nine times (1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31: 21:9, 15) as opposed to three in Mark and none in Q. Additionally, the title Ἰού Δαυίδ and its nuances are very prominent in Matthew especially in chapters 1–2: note in 1:1 and 1:20, the repeated mention of David (1:6, 17), and the importance of the city of David, Bethlehem (2:1–8, 16). Therefore, the name David must be the key not only to Matthew’s soteriology, but also to Jesus’ status/being as the saviour. Given such an extensive emphasis on David in Matthew, it is likely that the origin of the fourteen generations pattern is based on the numerical value of David’s name in Hebrew (dwd).

This reading is supported by the recognition that David’s name is the fourteenth in the

50 Hare, Matthew, 6.
51 Hare, Matthew, 6.
53 France, Matthew, 31–32. See also Hagner, Matthew, 1:6–7.
55 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:163–65. In Hebrew, the name “David” has three consonants (dwd), and their numerical value is fourteen: d+w+d=4+6+4=14.
list of ancestors. Matthew employs this pattern to show that Jesus’ saving is historically and theologically continuous with God’s ever-continuing saving intent.

The unequalled weight on Davidic association in Matthew was not just part of pressing Jesus’ status as the royal Davidic Messiah. It is possible that the Jews may have disputed the Davidic lineage of Jesus on the grounds that Joseph was not the father of Jesus (1:16). But, for Matthew, the story of virginal conception (1:18–25), which makes clear that Jesus is the “Son of God”, reinforces the claim that he is the υἱοὶ Δαυὶδ through his legal and social father, Joseph, and, thus, the Messiah of Israel. Just as David was the divinely anointed and appointed as king, so is Jesus the divinely chosen and prepared Messiah, Son of David, king. Thus, the Davidic lineage of Jesus, despite its alleged discontinuity with David, makes Jesus’ saving continuous with God’s saving through the house of David.

By closely associating the title υἱοὶ Δαυὶδ with βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, Matthew further underscores the status of Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah (1:1, 16–17; cf. 1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:16). When the magi query concerning the birth of the “king of the Jews” (2:1-12; cf. 27:29), Herod, the chief priests, and the scribes tell them that the βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων must be born in Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David, an appropriate place for the birth of the Messiah (cf. Tg. Mic 5:1), who will “govern my [the] people of Israel” (2:6). Here, Matthew combines Mic 5:2 and 2 Sam 5:2.

According to Davies and Allison, Matthew makes such a combination to emphasise Davidic Christology, for 2 Sam 5:2 (“It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel”) is addressed to David (cf. Ps 78:70–71). In addition, the people of Israel regarded Moses as a shepherd (Isa 63:11). Matthew, thus, underlines the saviour’s identity as “Son of David”.

---

The star which the magi saw in the East symbolises the arrival of the saviour (1:21), Jesus, and God’s continuing saving (cf. Ps 113:3), which, for Matthew, is the “good news”. The classic passage which is used to support God’s promise of his continuing saving is Num 24:17: “a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel”. In T. Jud. 24:1, it is applied to the Davidic Messiah (“there shall arise for you a Star from Jacob in peace”), which is a mixture of eschatological hopes based on Num 24:17, Mal 4:2, Ps 45:5, and Isa 53:9. The various targumim on Num 24:17 insert “king” or “anointed one”. Already in the LXX a messianic interpretation is presupposed: “a scepter” (MT) becomes “a man”. According to the Rabbinic and Christian sources, the same interpretation lies behind the change of Simeon ben Kosiba’s name, who was proclaimed the Messiah, to “Bar Kokhba” (Aramaic “son of the Star”).

For some scholars—Carter, Gundry, Bauer, and Weaver—as the “king of the Jews”, Jesus’ royal Davidic Messiah is a “direct challenge” to King Herod and Rome’s claims of sovereignty. Davies and Allison seemingly rule out such a view. They contend that, because Jesus’ primary role is to “save his people from their sins” (1:21), the character of Jesus’ saving is not political, but “religious and moral”.

---

57 Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 170–73.
58 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 2. The covenanters of Qumran understood Num 24:17 to mean the expected Levitical Messiah (CD 7:18–26). And in T. Levi 18:2–3, it is said of a priestly Messiah (And then the Lord will raise up a new priest”).
61 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
shares a similar view: “to assert that an anti-imperial stance is fundamental to
Matthew’s purpose seems to strain the evidence of the gospel narrative itself.” But the
positions of Davies and Allison, and Senior seem to be too negative, given that heaven’s
reign would ultimately be understood as ending Rome’s imperial claims. Furthermore,
God’s saving dealings with his people in the past entail political deliverance too (e.g.
Exodus, and the Jericho conquest). Therefore, because “how Jesus saves” in the present
is a continuation of how God saved his people in the past, it is not implausible that there
would have been such a political view in Matthew’s mind. If so, Matthew surely would
have intended at least an implied critique of the Herodians in the birth narrative.
Matthew does this in very close relation to other theological themes such as “judge”

In Matthew, Jesus is not represented as a conquering earthly king (cf. 2:2; 27:11–
37, 42), but as a humble king (21:5; cf. 11:29; 12:17–21). He will be crucified (27:11,
29, 37; cf. Mark 15:2, 9, 18, 32). According to Loader, Matthew achieves this by
describing Jesus as “facing mortal danger as ‘King of the Jews’ ” (chapter 2). Thus
Matthew links Jesus’ kingship with his crucifixion, whereas Mark portrays Jesus as
crucified as the “king of the Jews”. This does not entail discontinuity between Jesus’
roles as Messiah and judge, for the same humble and crucified Jesus will come in power
to judge the world. To be the saviour of Israel and judge at the end of the world, Jesus
must be the Messiah. However, for many Jews, the depiction of the Messiah, to whose
roles belonged that of exercising judgement, as lowly and enduring crucifixion, would

---

64 For Stanton, Matthew’s portrait of Jesus as the harmless and humble Davidic Messiah becomes
65 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 2.
67 See Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 2.
have been a contradiction which they would have found unacceptable, even though Matthew merges the two in his depiction of Jesus’ eschatological roles (25:31–46).68

Further, in Matthew, the status of Jesus the saviour as “Son of David” is very closely related to his saving role also as the healer.69 [We shall return to the details in Chapter 5]. In the Old Testament, with one exception (2 Sam 13:1), “Son of David” refers to Solomon. Moreover, in Jewish traditions, Solomon was considered as a healer and exorcist (Josephus, Ant. 8:42–49; b. Git. 68a–b; Apoc. Adam 7:13; cf. Wis 7:17–22).70 Some contemporary references to Solomon like Testament of Solomon connect Solomon with exorcisms. “Solomon” appears in the magical papyri (e.g. PGM 3.3040), and “Son of David” is a name of power on incantation bowls.71 In Josephus’s accounts, Solomonic exorcistic abilities are combined with his role as healer (A.J. 8.45).72 This perhaps best explains why “Matthew, who unlike Luke (3:31) traces the royal line [of Jesus] through Solomon (1:6), [and] tends to associate “Son of David” with healings and exorcisms (9:27: 12:23; 15:22–23; 20:30–31)”.73 Notably, David himself was associated with exorcistic and healing abilities (1 Sam 16:14–23; Josephus, A.J. 6.166, 168; 11QPsX, 2–11) and this would have encouraged Matthew to use “Son of David” in the context of healing and exorcism (9:27; 12:23; 15:22–23; 20:30–31).74 However,  

---

69 According to Baxter, Matthew’s warrant for connecting Jesus’ healing activity to the “Son of David” title is the Davidic shepherd of Ezek 34. See Wayne Baxter, Israel’s Only Shepherd: Matthew’s Shepherd Motif and His Social Setting (LNTS 391; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 37.
74 Loader, “Son of David,” 570–85. For a detailed discussion on the possible association between “Son of David” and Solomonic healing figure, see Dennis C. Duling, “Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son
in chapter 11:2–6 and 21:15, the two strands of messianism—kingly and healing—come together. This reinforces not only Matthew’s initial claim that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel but also the continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving dealings in the past.

The soteriological continuity in Matthew is further evident in the relation between Jesus’ status as the “Son of David” and his salvific role as the shepherd. Resembling King David, Jesus, Son of David, is not only the “king of the Jews”, but also the shepherd of Israel (2:6; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70–71). In addition, Moses was also remembered as the shepherd of Israel (Isa 63:11). In first-century Judaism, the Messiah who comes forth from the lineage of David to “shepherd” the people of Israel is the one who will “judge” the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 34:4–10; Mic 5:1–9; Pss. Sol 17; 4 Ezra 13:34–50; 2 Bar. 77–86), an anticipation which Matthew also seems to uphold (cf. 19:28). These two role definitions of Jesus—judge (3:11–12; 19:28) and shepherd (2:6 cf. 9:36; 15:24)—merge in 25:32, where Jesus is depicted as an eschatological shepherd. However, the same eschatological shepherd will be rejected and struck down by the Jewish leaders (26:31; cf. Zech 12:10). It implies that Jesus’ earthly roles are continuous not only with God’s saving in the past—through the kings, the judges, and the shepherds—but also with his eschatological role as the judge.


In conclusion: Matthew presents the status of Jesus the saviour as the royal Davidic Messiah in a number of ways: supplementing Mark’s “Jesus Christ” with “Son of David”; tracing Jesus’ genealogy to David through Solomon; using the legend of Herod and the magi; employing the pattern of fourteen generations; and astrological motifs. Jesus, the royal Davidic Messiah, fulfils God’s plans to save his people through the house of David and hence his saving is continuous not only with how God saved his people in the past, but also with how God will save his people in the future.

Furthermore, in Matthew, as with David, the various saving roles of the Messiah—king, shepherd, healer, and judge—merge in Jesus. This means Jesus saves in many ways.

It is also likely that Matthew’s deliberate expansion of Mark 1:1, using what in many instances were pre-existing salvific traditions of Judaism, may have been necessary in a context where his audience would have understood Jesus’ saving in continuity. This shows how Matthew’s positive attitude towards his Jewish heritage informs/shapes his soteriology and its close relation to Christology. This perhaps is a contextual-theological response to the post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment.

4.3.3. Son of Abraham

For Matthew, the salvation which Jesus brings (cf. 1:21) is an affirmation and continuation of what God had initiated with Abraham. This Matthew achieves by supplementing Mark’s “Jesus Christ” with ηἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ (1:1; cf. Mark 1:1), which is not a messianic title, and by beginning the genealogy with Abraham (1:2), unlike Luke (3:38). Luz deems it as “unusual” because every Jew is a son of Abraham (3:9; Luke 3:8; cf. T. Levi 8:15). Matthew, thus, links Jesus’ status as the Messiah of Israel and his

---

77 Charette explores more fully the significance of “Son of Abraham” in Matthew as a whole, with special reference to 3:7–10 and 8:11–12. See The Theme of Recompense in Matthew’s Gospel (JSNTS 79; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 66–72.
78 Luz, Matthäus, 1:119.

According to Wilk, Davies and Allison, Bauer, Meier, Carter, and Kraus, Matthew traces Jesus’ lineage to Abraham to emphasise the inclusion and salvation of the Gentiles,79 which therefore entails “discontinuity within continuity”. These scholars see the legitimisation in the inclusion of the four “foreign women” in the Matthean genealogy (1:3, 5, 6), the astrological imagery of the star (2:2, 7, 10), and the coming of the magi (2:1–12). According to Gen 12:3 (cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), Abraham, who himself was a Gentile by birth, the first proselyte (b. Hag. 3a), was to be “the father of many nations” (Gen 17:5; cf. 44:19; 1 Macc 12:19–21) and all would be blessed in him. This scriptural basis, in Konradt’s view, legitimises the inclusion of the Gentiles in Jesus’ mission.80

Further, in the view of Kraus, Matthew’s identifying of Jesus as “son of Abraham”, together with 1:23, serves as an inclusion with 28:16–20.81 Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, from 1:1, is sent to all the “nations” (Gen 1:18; 22:18). Jesus, therefore, by including the Gentiles, fulfils the saving promises made to Abraham.82 But

---

82 Paul uses this tradition extensively to validate his mission to the Gentiles mission; for Paul, Abraham is the role model and true father of “all” who have faith, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:26–29).
the positions of Konradt and Kraus, in relation to 1:1–17, are not very compelling. [We shall discuss the issue of the non-physical sonship of Abraham (3:9) later in this Chapter (section 4.6)].

It is perhaps more likely that the primary objective of emphasising Abrahamic descent of Jesus, though every Jew is a son of Abraham, is to soteriologically reinforce Jesus’ historical belonging to the people of Israel and more specifically to the royal line of that people. As Loader rightly comments, Matthew achieves this by using the terms in 1:1—“Christ”, “son of Abraham”, and “Son of David”—“nationally” in the context following 1:1. 83 This continuity is further strengthened in the genealogy which suggests that Jesus descends from Abraham, but through David. Moreover, as with his disciples (10:5–6), the immediate focus of Jesus’ salvific mission is “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24; cf. 1:21, 23), not “all the nations” (cf. 8:11; 28:18–20).

However, because “how Jesus saves” is continuous with how God saved his people in the past, as the “son of Abraham”, Jesus’ saving does include the Gentiles. 84 But for Matthew, Jesus removes the ethnic boundaries only after his exaltation (28:18–20). 85 Such a pattern of soteriology, however, is not inconsistent with Matthew’s concept of continuity and other theological themes in the Gospel: Jesus, while being the judge to come (3:11–12; 25:31–46), suffers on earth; though he is the eschatological king (25:31–46), Matthew depicts Jesus as a humble king (21:5). For Matthew, therefore, there is no contradiction between the immediate focus of Jesus’ and his disciples’ saving mission (15:24; 10:5–6) and Jesus’ last command to “make disciples of all nations” (28:18–20); instead, it constitutes a saving continuum.

84 Loader, Law, 158.
85 Hagner, Matthew, 1:11, 50; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 171.
To summarise: for Matthew, Jesus’ physical being is continuous with what God had brought into being through the calling of Abraham (Israel). This Matthew achieves by his initial reference to Abraham (1:1) and by tracing the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham (1:2). Matthew, thus, makes a contextual-theological response to the questions concerning the historical continuity of Abrahamic descent in the post-temple destruction period. This means Matthew’s understanding of soteriology is defined and unfolded in relation to his affirmative attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

4.3.4. The Virginal Conception, Son of God, Emmanuel, and Other Christological Claims

Though Jesus is the “Son of David” through his legal and social father, Joseph, son of David (1:20), the account of Mary’s virginal conception (1:18–25), which serves as an interpretation on the last link of the genealogy, is standing somewhat in tension with Matthew’s use of the genealogy to show that Jesus is a descendant of David. The final link that leads to Jesus does not really fit into the pattern of father begetting son (1:16). But, as we have seen earlier, for Matthew, the story of the virginal conception (1:18–25) does not entail any discontinuity because it reinforces the claim in 1:16 that Jesus is the Υἱὸς Δαυὶδ through his legal and social father, Joseph.

For Matthew, Joseph’s dreams and God’s miraculous intervention in the birth of Jesus (1:18–25) make Jesus’ being and his saving continuous with God’s being and his saving in the history of Israel. Matthew fortifies this continuity further by positioning the account of the virginal conception (1:18–25) immediately after the genealogy (1:2–17). Furthermore, the claim of a miraculous conception in 1:18–25 is not unparalleled in
the Jewish traditions of the time, as 2 Enoch demonstrates in relation to the birth of Melchizedek (2 En. 71:1–23).  

Additionally, the miraculous conception serves to make a claim regarding the status/being of Jesus the saviour, often expressed in his designation as “Son of God”, though it does not occur in the immediate context here, and of God as his Father (e.g. 7:21; 10:32; 12:50; 16:17). While all the children of Abraham may be designated God’s children (Sir 4:10 [Hebrew]; Matt 5:9) and kings and, the Messiah, therefore, could bear that title (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; Isa 9:6; 4Q174), Matthew grounds it in more than just Jesus’ status as the Messiah but also in his miraculous creation by God through the Spirit. At decisive moments God reveals that Jesus is his beloved son (3:17; 17:5), and, in turn, Jesus acknowledges the significance of his father (by) disclosing this saving relationship to his disciples (11:25–27; 16:16–17).

For Matthew, Jesus’ status/being as the “Son of God” is clearly more than just being an Israelite, a Messiah, and the “Son of David”. According to Loader, “the miraculous conception serves to background further the unmediated heavenly acclamation . . . ‘This is my beloved Son’ (3:17)”. This extra christological content—Jesus as the miraculously conceived “Son of God” and as Emmanuel which prefigures Jesus’ identification with the Shekinah and Sophia—is likely to have been contentious with the fellow Jews (9:6). However, such a claim would have been possibly tolerable for most Jews as there is “no direct identification” with God involved. This shows that Matthew’s understanding of salvation is sensitive to his Jewish heritage.

---

86 Richter finds some connection between 1 Enoch and Matthean birth narratives also; see, Enoch and the Gospel of Matthew (PTMS; Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2012), 127–93.

87 Matthew does use this title twenty three times, eleven of them redactionally (4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63, etc.). See Kingsbury, Matthew, 42.

The use of the “Emmanuel” prophecy (Isa 7:14) in 1:23 also indicates that, for Matthew, Jesus’ birth is the fulfilment of what God had promised in the past for the salvation of his people. The name “Emmanuel” implies “God with us” through Jesus. According to Meier, Matthew translates Emmanuel “so as to stress its force: Jesus is God with us. How he is God with us will be explained in 2:15: he is God’s son” [emphasis original].  

Similarly, Gundry suggests that Jesus will save his people from their sins, “not merely in behalf of God, but as God”. But Meier and Gundry are not persuasive because “God with us” in 1:23 and 28:20, which form an inclusio, do not claim that Jesus is God, but as one who is “authorised” by God (cf. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). This, according to Nolland, “is not necessarily to argue for a lower christology in Matthew”, rather it means that it is the unfolding of the story of the continuity between God’s being and Jesus’ being that will clarify how God is salvifically present in Jesus.

Luz, on the other hand, contends that “Emmanuel” probably implies that God will be present with his people in the “form” (“Gestalt”) of Jesus. For Hare, “it focuses not on Jesus’ essence but on his function in the divine plan of salvation” [emphasis original]. But such an artificial separation of Jesus’ status/being and his saving into “form”/“essence” and “function” imports a Hellenistic Judaism which is foreign to Matthew. For Matthew, “who Jesus is” (Jesus’ being) and “how Jesus saves” (Jesus’ saving) are inseparably linked. Therefore, “Emmanuel” implies that the God who saved his people in the past is now actively present in Jesus and his saving (1:23; cf. 18:20; 26:29).

---

89 Meier, Vision, 54.
90 Gundry, Matthew, 25.
91 Nolland, Matthew, 102 n. 84.
92 Luz, Matthäus, 1:150.
93 Hare, Matthew, 12.
The promise that God will “dwell” with “his people” in the future (“in messianic times”) to save them, as he saved his people in the past with his presence (Num 23:21; Deut 2:7), is a major eschatological hope (Isa 43:5; Ezek 34:30; 37:27; Zech 2:10-12; 8:3; 11QT 29:7–10; Jub. 1:17, 26). Therefore, Jesus by being “Emmanuel” (1:23; 18:20; 28:20) fulfils those saving promises of God in the present, and it will be so in the future (18:20; 28:20), and, thus, Jesus continues God’s saving both in the present and in the future. How God is salvifically present with his people through Jesus the saviour (“God with us”—1:23; 18:20; 28:20) is very much in continuity with how God was present in the midst of his people through the Shekinah, which is well attested in rabbinic literature (m. ’Abot 3:2–3). This Matthew achieves by juxtaposing Jesus’ primary role to “save his people from their sins” (1:21) and the fulfilment of Isa 7:14 in 1:23.

In the view of Repschinski, Jesus’ identification with the Shekinah entails “replacing” the temple (12:6), which is believed to be the symbol of God’s saving presence with his people (Ezek 37:26–27). He has two reasons: forgiveness of sins which was hitherto associated with the temple, is now being effected by Jesus, who is “God with us”; and the physical destruction of the temple. But Repschinski’s position is not compelling, given the strong affirmation of continuity in the genealogy, its close relation to 1:21 and 1:23, and Jesus’ positive attitude towards the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27). [We shall return later in this chapter to the details regarding Jesus’ attitude towards the temple (section 4.8.1.3)].

Furthermore, according to Carter, the Emmanuel prophecy was “originally addressed to King Ahaz of Judah . . . who was threatened by the greater northern

94 Nolland, Matthew, 102 n. 86.
95 Repschinski, “Re-Imagining the Presence of God,” 37–49; idem, “He Will Save His Save people,” 265.
powers of Syria and Israel (Isa 7:1–2; cf. 2 Kgs 16”).

96 God offers King Ahaz and the people of Judah a sign, the birth of Emmanuel, which signifies that God will continue to save his people through the “king’s Davidic line”. In Hamilton’s opinion, Matthew respects the historical context of the Emmanuel prophecy in Isa 7:14, claiming in Jesus a “typological rather than a predictive fulfillment” of Isa 7:14 [emphasis original].

97 Thus, Matthew, by upholding the continuity of David’s lineage, responds to the temple destruction with “God with us”. It means that God has not abandoned his people; instead, it promises God’s continuous saving presence with his people despite the destruction of the temple.

The intensified accent on God’s active saving presence in Jesus (1:23; cf. 1:21) is further reinforced in 18:20: Jesus promises to be with his disciples when they gather together, as the Shekinah is assured when one or two gather together to study the Torah (m. Ḥag. 3:2–3).

99 One might argue with Bornkamm and Meier that 18:20 entails Jesus replacing the Shekinah, but this would have been offensive for most Jews in Matthew’s time as it involves Jesus abolishing what God did and instituted in the past for the salvation of his people. On the contrary, France contends that “what makes . . . [18:20] remarkable by comparison is that the one present is not the more abstract concepts of the law or the Shekinah, but the human figure of Jesus”.

100 Therefore, Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries would not have found Jesus’ extraordinary claim in

---

96 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 71. See also Hagner, Matthew, 1:20.
97 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 71; Hagner, Matthew, 1:20.
99 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 369. See David D. Kupp, Matthew’s Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God’s People in the First Gospel (SNTSM 90; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 192–6, for the discussion of how 1:23 and 18:20 relate to m. Ḥag. 3:2–3. According to Jewish tradition, the God who was present with “his people” in the past (Num 23:21; Deut 2:7) will be “with” his people again in the messianic times as well (Isa 43:5; Ezek 34:30; Jb 1:17, 26).
101 France, Matthew, 699.
18:20 outrageous. Similarly, Nolland argues that 18:20 does not really carry the reasons for the intensity of Jewish provocation because its focus is not on “the physical presence of Jesus but the group gathered in his name, because to such a group his abiding presence is promised”.\footnote{102 Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 751.}

The positions of France and Nolland are not convincing; Jesus’ startling claim in 18:20 would have offended Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries, as Bornkamm and Meier argue, but on different grounds. The surprising claim in 18:20 unveils a high Christology which would have gone far too far for most Jews, given their theological sensitivity, who might otherwise have tolerated, even if not willingly, the authorisation model (28:18–20). “Emmanuel” signals, therefore, as Loader correctly notes, not just the saving presence of God through Jesus’ coming “deeds” (cf. 11:2–5), which is natural to any of God’s agents, “but an implicit claim, which, while falling short of a claim to be God with us, comes from a Jewish perspective perilously close to being blasphemous, a claim of identity with divine emanation”.\footnote{103 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 5. Similarly Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 19–26, 365–72, 593–98; Carter, \textit{Matthew and the Margins}, 34–35.} This coheres with “the high priest’s charge at the Jewish trial” (26:65).\footnote{104 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 5.} Matthew’s contemporary Jews would have possibly not tolerated this identification of Jesus with the Shekinah.\footnote{105 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 21.} However, Matthew and his community might have continued to insist on their belonging to Judaism, while most Jews would have rejected such a claim.\footnote{106 On the contrary, Stanton argues that 1:23, 18:20 and 28:20 imply separation from Judaism, though indirectly, see \textit{Gospel for a New People}, 189.}

The status of Jesus the saviour as the miraculously conceived Son of God is further soteriologically matched by “the appropriation of Wisdom’s persona by Jesus in Matthew (11:28–30; cf. Sir 51:23–26; 23:34–35; Luke 11:49–51)”.\footnote{107 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 5.} Matthew alters
“wisdom is vindicated by all her children” (Luke 7:35) to “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (11:19), so as to closely link “who Jesus is” to “how he saves”. The mighty deeds of Jesus prove the right of his claim, which is the claim of the divine Sophia (11:2, 19, 20). The fact that 11:2 and 11:19 speak of “deeds” (ἔργα) while 11:20 speaks of “mighty works” (δυνάμεις) does not weaken the connection Matthew intends to make. According to Loader, “restricting “deeds” to miracles would fit 11:20–24 and 11:2–5, but not 11:25–27, nor the image of John in Matthew; for he performs no miracles”. Therefore, for Matthew, as Loader correctly argues, Jesus’ ἔργα include “both miracles and other actions”, suggestive of God’s continuing saving intervention in the present. If this is true, then, for Matthew, “deeds of the Christ”, “deeds of Wisdom” and “mighty works” mean “deeds of Jesus”.

But such an appropriation of Wisdom’s persona by Jesus in Matthew does raise some critical issues: does Matthew identify Jesus with Wisdom; does Matthew believe that Jesus is the Torah or Wisdom incarnate; and how does appropriation of Wisdom’s persona by Jesus fit into Matthew’s soteriology? According to Luz, Matthew never identifies Jesus directly with Wisdom; he only “presupposes” their identity. In the view of Stanton and Johnson, it is not possible for Matthew’s readers to identify Jesus as the incarnation of female Wisdom immediately after a dramatic verse in which he presents himself as Son of the Father. Dunn suggests that Matthew identified only the

108 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 102.
109 Loader, Law, 199.
111 Luz, Matthäus, 2:189. Kingsbury, in his discussion of Matthean Christology, does not include Wisdom as even a minor christological title: Matthew, 40–127.
exalted Jesus with Wisdom. While conceding such identification, Davies and Allison, and Pregeant contend that Matthew does not emphasise this identification because it does not illumine the major Matthean theme; Matthew employs the story of Wisdom primarily to interpret the plot of the story of Jesus. But these positions are unlikely; Matthew does identify Jesus with Wisdom (Suggs, Saldarini, Loader, and Hamerton-Kelly).

In order to identify Jesus with Wisdom, Matthew has deliberately changed the saying about “wisdom’s children” in Luke (7:35) into one about “wisdom’s deeds” (11:19). Additionally, Matthew revises another Q passage resulting in the transfer of a saying of Wisdom into the mouth of Jesus (23:34; cf. Luke 11:49). At 23:34 the shift from “Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles” (Luke 11:49) to “Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes” clearly assigns to Jesus the role of commissioning prophets—a function which belongs to no figure in pre-Christian Judaism except Wisdom and God . . . If Luke is closer to the saying in Q, then Matthew identifies Jesus with Wisdom, and, thus, legitimises Jesus’ saving through teaching and prophetic proclamation.

---

118 Wisdom Christology for Q is a Son of Man Christology and Son of Man is even subordinated to Wisdom. See Suggs, *Wisdom*, 58.
119 Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 183–84; Hamerton-Kelly, *Wisdom*, 70–71. Cf. Davies and Allison critique this position: Jesus’ identification with Wisdom in 23:34 could not be known without knowledge of Q; it is unlikely that “Matthew would have permitted such an allegedly key christological fact to be obscured to all save those nurtured on Q”; see *Matthew*, 2:295. But Davies and Allison do not seem to be compelling because they tend to undercut the very reasons Matthew might have had in
Suggs goes even further to the extent of saying that Jesus is Wisdom incarnate— which Felix, Betz, and Deutsch also share. But such a supposition is problematic because Matthew suppresses a clear reference to Wisdom in favour of having Jesus as the authoritative speaker in the narrative—as Saldarini, Sandt, and Pregeant rightly argue. Furthermore, as Loader and Sandt correctly note, the identification of Jesus with σοφία remains only “at the level of occasional imagery, rather than of fundamental theology”, which best explains its absence in Matthew. Moreover, “the identification of Jesus with the hypostatized Sophia” is not consistent either with the authorisation pattern of Christology in Matthew (28:18–20) or how Matthew identifies Jesus with the Shekinah: Jesus does not replace the temple or its saving functions. All these imply that, for Matthew, Jesus’ identification with Wisdom, though it would have been plausibly intolerable for the Jews, is still continuous with God’s saving in the past, as reflected in Wisdom traditions.

Would Matthew have also seen in Jesus’ saving words an allusion to Wisdom associated with the Torah? It is likely that Matthew’s Wisdom allusions and imagery in 11:28–30 appear to be related to the metaphors used in Sirach 6 and 51:23–27, in which people are encouraged to come near and take upon themselves the yoke of Wisdom, redacting the Wisdom passages. According to Deutsch, Matthew has transformed a traditional symbol, “Lady Wisdom”, so that the two terms conjoined by the metaphor are no longer “Woman” and “Wisdom” but “Jesus” and “Wisdom”: Celia Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew: Transformation of a Symbol,” NT 32 (1990): 13–47. See also Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:292–93, 295.


125 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2: 272; Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 21.
associated in Sirach with the Law, “to find tranquillity.”\textsuperscript{126} The passages refer to “the call of the prophet in Isa 55:1–3 and of wisdom in Prov 1:20–23; 8:1–36; Sir 24:19–22”.\textsuperscript{127} For Suggs and Felix, this means Jesus is the “embodiment of the Torah”.\textsuperscript{128} But this is doubtful because, as with 5:17–20, Jesus’ appeal in 11:28–30\textsuperscript{129} is not a plea on behalf of the written Torah, but an appeal to submit to his teaching, the true exposition of God’s will envisaged in the Torah. Matthew, thus, carefully avoids any potential allusion to Jesus as the Torah incarnate,\textsuperscript{130} which otherwise would have been outrageous for the Jews.

To conclude: Matthew reinforces the continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past by using Joseph’s dream and God’s intervention (1:18–25), citing the Emmanuel prophecy (1:23; cf. Isa 7:14), and by putting the virginal conception and the genealogy alongside. But the miraculous conception serves to make a new claim regarding Jesus’ status, which is often expressed as “son of God”. The new claim—divine sonship—adds an extra christological content to Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ status/being because of its identification with the Shekinah and Wisdom. For Matthew, Jesus’ status as the “Son of God” is clearly more than just being an Israelite. However, for Matthew, this new/extra christological content is continuous with God’s saving in the past as it does not replace the temple and the Torah. How God is


\textsuperscript{127} Loader, \textit{Law}, 199.


\textsuperscript{129} According to Carter, in 11:28–30 Jesus is not talking about the “yoke of the Law” as interpreted by the Pharisees; rather, he is talking about the yoke of the Roman political system; see, \textit{Matthew and Empire}, 108–29.

salvifically present with his people through Jesus the saviour (1:23; 18:20; 28:20; m. 'Abot 3:2–3) is continuous with how God was present in the midst of his people through the Shekinah in the past. So, for Matthew, Jesus saves, as Jews thought the Torah and Wisdom were saving—so it seems.

4.4. JESUS SAVES FROM SINS (1:21)

For Matthew, the role of Jesus is to “save his people from their sins” (1:21). Therefore, the angel of the Lord instructs Joseph to name his son “Jesus” (1:21). The interpretation of the name of “Jesus” given by the angel to Joseph (1:18–25) is very typical of Jewish heritage (1 Sam 25:25: “for as his name is, so is he”; cf. b. Soṭah 34b). Matthew clearly associates the verb “save” (σῴζω) with “Jesus” in other places (8:25; 9:21–22). Additionally, “he” (αὐτὸς) right after “Jesus” emphatically states that Jesus is the one who saves. Thus, as Davies and Allison correctly observe, “the saving character of Jesus (cf. 8:25; 9:21–22; 14:30; 27:42) is aptly evoked by his name”.

It was a common Jewish hope that the Messiah will be the saviour of his people. This messianic expectation informs the christological statement in 1:21, which speaks of Jesus’ name. The statement, however, that “he will save his people from their sins” is uncommon, as Jewish hope for the forgiveness of sins is the prerogative of God alone in the Old Testament. Perhaps Ps 130:8 (“It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities”) is the only reference in the Old Testament that is “verbally closest to Mt 1:21”. In Jewish soteriological traditions, “the need for forgiveness of sins was, of

---

131 Novakovic, Messiah, 63 n. 203.
132 Hagner, Matthew, 1:19; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:209–10; Carter, Matthew and Empire, 76, 81.
133 Hagner, Matthew, 1:19; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
134 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:209. See also Novakovic, Messiah, 63.
135 Luz, Matthäus, 1:149.
136 Nolland, Matthew, 99 n. 63. In Hagner’s view, Matthew “may be giving a targumic rendering of” Ps 130:8. Matthew, 1:19. See also Carter, Matthew and Empire, 83–84; Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 91. For a detailed discussion on the assumption that Matt 1:21 adapts Ps 130:8 see Novakovic,
course, clearly recognised” (Jer 31:34: “for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more”).

According to the Jewish texts, the Messiah normally brings extinction of sinners (Pss. Sol. 17:22–25) or judgement (1En. 10:21–22; 62:2; 69:27–29; T. Levi 18:9), not forgiveness of sins. In the view of Davies and Allison, and Nolland, although forgiveness of sins is God’s prerogative (Ps 130:8), “the final victory over sin and iniquity was sometimes in Judaism linked to an angelic or human leaders”: T. Levi 18:9 (priestly Messiah); 11QMelch 2:6–8 (heavenly Melchizedek); 1 En. 10:20–22 (Michael the archangel); Tg. Isa 53:4, 6–7 (the Messiah). Not only does this reflect Matthew’s special interest in the forgiveness of sins that happens through Jesus (cf. 9:8; 26:28), but also serves to guide the readers very effectively towards an understanding of Jesus’ life as one of saving activity. Thus, by closely linking the very name and future mission of the child, Matthew brings his theological agenda—Jesus saves from sins—to the very fore at the beginning of the Gospel itself.

The interpretation of the name of Jesus in 1:21 corresponds quite closely to the wording of the LXX of Isa 7:14, which is quoted in 1:23. The name “Jesus” is not mentioned in the quotation from Isa 7:14 (cf. 1:23). But, as Hagner correctly notes, the second part of 1:21 provides the reason for the name “Jesus” (γὰρ). That is, on the one hand, Matthew carefully reworks the predominant messianic hopes and prophecies to establish his understanding of salvation which happens through Jesus. And, on the other hand, he retains the messianic prophecy by citing Isa 7:14 in 1:23. Thus, for

\begin{quote}
Messiah, 64–67, 72–73. According to Novakovic, “the idea of salvation presupposes divine forgiveness, but should not be identified with it” (72).
\end{quote}

137 Nolland, Matthew, 99.
138 Luz, Matthäus, 1:149 n. 53; Nolland, Matthew, 99.
139 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210; Nolland, Matthew, 99.
140 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 91; France, Matthew, 53.
141 Hagner, Matthew, 1:19.
Matthew, the name “Jesus” fittingly points to the intent of his messianic and salvific mission (cf. 8:25; 9:21–22; 14:30; 27:42).

In Luke we do not find any soteriological or etymological correlation between Jesus’ name and his mission (1:31). Nor do we see such association in Mark either. Luke, perhaps, as before with John’s name (Luke 1:13), is more concerned with the role of God in giving the name and the obedience of the parents to the command than its etymology. On the other hand, there are subtle hints that Luke considers this meaning to be of significance (“God my Saviour”—1:47; “Saviour”—2:11; also 1:71, 74, 77).

In contrast Matthew defines Jesus’ birth, naming and commissioning in salvific terms (1:21), so that as the name is used in the Gospel, the audience may recall this commissioning and evaluate his actions and words in relation to it (cf. 27:42). In other words, as Runesson rightly argues, “the rest of the narrative can, arguably, be said to expand on how this [1:21] was done, and why”. Therefore, 1:21 exercises a “primacy effect” whereby what constitutes Matthew’s understanding of salvation, “shapes its [his] audience’s expectations, understandings, and questions” throughout the Gospel.

Accordingly, it is clear that the interpretation of the name of Jesus given by the angel to Joseph in a dream (1:21) is “programmatic” for the entire life and ministry of Jesus.

But, whom does he save? What does λαὸν αὐτοῦ entail? One might argue that “his people” means “church” which includes Jews and Gentiles (Davies and Allison, and Hagner) or “my church” as in 16:18 (Novakovic, and Meier) or church which includes the Gentiles (France) or “new entity which includes Jews” (Repschinski, 142

143 Carter, Matthew and Empire, 76.
144 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 91.
145 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210; Hagner, Matthew, 1:20.
146 Novakovic, Messiah, 65–66; Meier, Vision, 54 n. 17.
147 France, Matthew, 53.
Carter, and Cousland)\textsuperscript{148} or does not refer to Israel (Frankemölle)\textsuperscript{149} or Israel and the Matthean community (Tagawa).\textsuperscript{150}

It is more likely that, for Matthew, λαὸς αὐτοῦ, the object of Jesus’ saving activity, refers to the whole historic people of Israel (1:21; 2:6; 4:16, 23) “possibly in a theological sense” (Saldarini, Luz, Fitzmyer, Nolland, Draper, and Sim).\textsuperscript{151} And, “his”, as Nolland fittingly notes, “points to Jesus’ own embeddedness within this people: the people to whom he belongs”.\textsuperscript{152} It is also argued that 1:21 is a free citation of LXX Ps 129:8 (cf. Ps 130:8) which reads “It is he [the Lord] who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities” and that it refers to Israel.\textsuperscript{153} And, in many passages, “people”, according to Saldarini, is a “political term for Jews ruled by Jewish leaders” (2:4; 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1).\textsuperscript{154} Thus, Matthew evidently indicates that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah, as he had already done in the genealogy and will do again in 2:2 as well. Jesus’ physical belonging, rooted in Israel through Abrahamic and Davidic descent, and the object of his salvific mission, the people of Israel, entail the historical and theological continuity between the two. This means Matthew still thinks of his community as Jewish.

Though for Matthew salvation is now inclusive of all peoples (28:18–20), the historic people of Israel is the primary target of Jesus’ saving according to 1:21 and its


\textsuperscript{149} H. Frankemölle, \textit{λαὸς, EWNT}, 2:846.

\textsuperscript{150} According to Tagawa, “people” refers to Israel and the Matthean community which assumes that both are separate entities. See, “People and Community in the Gospel of Matthew,” \textit{NTS} 16 (1969–70): 149–62, here 159.


\textsuperscript{152} Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 98.

\textsuperscript{153} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 1:210; Kingsbury, \textit{Matthew}, 85; Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 1:20; Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 22–23; Novakovic, \textit{Messiah}, 66–67, 72. However, for Novakovic, “even though the expectation of salvation in Ps 130:8 (129:8 LXX) . . . is preceded by a petition for forgiveness, it should not be identified with it” (66–67).

\textsuperscript{154} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 32.
focus during his ministry, hence the limiting of both his own and his disciples’ mission
to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and his insistence that they not enter Gentile
territory (15:24; 10:5–6).

The interpretation of Jesus’ name in salvific terms as in 1:21 however raises a
number of other issues as noted already in Chapter 1, not least: what saving from sins
really means, how it is done, and how it relates to other saving acts of Jesus. We shall
return to these in Chapter 6.

To conclude: Matthew interprets Jesus’ birth, naming, and commissioning in
soteriological terms (1:21). Since Jesus’ name evokes his saving mission (1:21),
whenever the name “Jesus” is mentioned the audience may recall this commissioning
and will gauge his “words” and “deeds” accordingly (cf. 27:42); 1:21 is “programmatic”
for Jesus’ entire ministry. For Matthew, the theme of salvation is however much bigger
than just whatever 1:21 means. Therefore, we cannot really assess “how Jesus saves”
and what 1:21 means, and more broadly what salvation means in Matthew, until we hear
what Matthew goes on to say.

4.5. JOHN-JESUS-ECCLESIA IN CONTINUITY

For Matthew, John the Baptist’s mission does not bring to an end God’s saving dealings
with his people in the past, nor does it entail the beginning of the story of God’s saving
in history (cf. Mark 1:1–3). Instead, John’s mission is a continuation of what God began
with the calling of Abraham (1:2). Matthew identifies John the Baptist with Elijah (3:4;
11:14; 17:10–13; cf. 1 Kgs 19:3–18; 2 Kgs 2:1–12), and uses Isaianic prophecy (Isa
40:3) in 3:3, which indicates that the coming of John is the fulfilment of the Old
Testament prophecy. This makes John’s mission (3:3, 11–12; 11:10, 14; 17:11–13; cf.

John’s preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (3:2), is about God’s saving in the present history, entrance to which requires bearing good fruits of repentance (3:10). These prerequisites are widely attested in Jewish sources. This means, for Matthew, God is not introducing some “new criterion” in John to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, John’s warnings and message of judgement are continuous with the prophetic admonition that “the day of the Lord” will be a day of punishment (Amos 5:18). This is further reinforced in Matthew’s extensive use of the Old Testament images and metaphors in John’s preaching, which makes sense for Matthew’s hearers who regard Jewish prophetic traditions as salvific: “winnowing fork” (cf. Isa 30:23; 4 Ezra 4:30); “threshed grain” (cf. Job 39:12; Isa 25:10); worthless “chaff” (cf. Ps 1:4; Isa 17:13); “unquenchable fire” (cf. Isa 34:10; Jer 7:20). Thus, Matthew clearly locates John the Baptist, his message and mission, in such a way that it would match not only with how God saved his people in the past through the prophets, but also with the theological sensitivity of his Jewish addressees. This shows how Matthew’s Jewish religious environment informs his soteriology.

According to Matthew’s Gospel, John’s mission is continuous with God’s saving in the past since the calling of Abraham and is continued in Jesus. In Matthew, as Loader rightly argues, the account of John the Baptist (3:1–12)—unlike in Mark, where it “belongs to the beginning of the story [of salvation], as the final climax of scriptural prediction”—indicates the “continuing story” of the fulfilment of God’s saving plans in the Scripture (Isa 40:3).\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 157.} As in Mark (1:3) and Luke (3:4–6), Matthew has John come
as predicted in Isa 40:3 (Matt 3:3). The fulfilment of scripture puts John on side with God’s initiatives” in the past “and so with Jesus”. John prepares the “way” (of righteousness) in that he goes before Jesus, the coming one. And Jesus “fulfils” John’s way of (all) righteousness (3:15). Moreover, as Elijah (11:14; 17:11–13), whose task it is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons (Mal 4:6; cf. Luke 1:15), John calls for repentance (3:8; cf. 3:10; 11:16–19). And Jesus also calls for repentance (4:17). This entails continuity between John’s mission and Jesus’ saving. However, as Loader rightly contends, this does not mean that Matthew (ontologically) “equates their status” (being), as the conversation between Jesus and John the Baptist demonstrates (3:14–15).

For Matthew, according to Loader, this continuity is “so strong that John effectively preaches the same message” as that of Jesus the saviour (3:2; 4:17). This Matthew achieves, in Loader’s view, by modifying Mark 1:15 (“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news”) and by using the same form in 3:2 of John, and as in 4:17 of Jesus (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”). As with repentance and the “good news” of God’s continuing saving in the present, we see Jesus also preaching the themes of good fruit, bad fruit, and fruitlessness, which were crucial to John’s message (7:16–20; 12:33; 13:8, 26; 21:19, 41, 43). In 7:19 (“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”) Matthew has Jesus repeat John’s words verbatim (minus the

---

157 Luz, Matthäus, 1:203.
158 Loader, Law, 157.
159 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11. See also Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:289.
161 Loader, Law, 157; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 10.
162 France, Matthew, 98.
“therefore”; cf. 3:10).\(^{163}\) Both John and Jesus preach the message of judgement (3:10–12; 7:19; cf. 7:23; 25:31–46).

Moreover, the Matthean Jesus praises John for his role as God’s messenger (11:7–15) and for the severity of his message (11:7). Also, John’s disciples return to John with the message from Jesus and eventually come back to Jesus himself (14:1–12). Thus, compared to Mark, Matthew brings Jesus and John together more closely (3:1–2, 15; 11:2–3, 18–19; 14:2, 12; 21:32–22:14).\(^{164}\) More significantly, John introduced Jesus to the people of Israel as the judge to come (3:11–12). But the basis of judgement (3:7–12) is the same as in John’s preaching; John’s way of righteousness (21:32) is the basis of the kingdom because he prepared the way for Jesus who fulfilled all righteousness (3:15) and taught the righteousness of the Torah (5:20).

Not only the preaching and the message, but also the fate and rejection of the two are set in “parallel and continuity” in Matthew.\(^{165}\) They suffer the same fate, have the same opponents and are executed as criminals (14:1–12; 10:17; 17:9–13; 23:34). John and Jesus faced the same charges—John was accused of demon possession for his austere asceticism (3:1–6; 9:14; 11:18), Jesus for casting out demons (9:34; 12:22–24); and, both were accused of being welcomed by the tax collectors and sinners (9:10–11; 11:19). According to Davies and Allison, one can find the extent of continuity in Matthew’s paralleling of John and Jesus also:\(^{166}\) both were “introduced in the similar fashion” (cf. 3:1; 3:13); both were regarded by the people as prophets (11:9; 14:5; 21:11, 26, 46); both were “buried by their own disciples” (14:12; 27:57–61); both acted with the authority from heaven (21:31–32); both appealed “to the same generation to repent” (11:16–19); and both were “opposed by the Pharisees and Sadducees” (cf. 3:7–

\(^{163}\) Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11.
\(^{164}\) Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11.
\(^{165}\) Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 10.
\(^{166}\) Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:289–90.
10 with 12:34 and 23:33). This soteriological continuity signifies an ongoing connection, not just a thing of the past.

In Matthew, as with John’s identification with Elijah (3:11; 11:14; 17:13), while being more than a prophet (12:38–41), Jesus is also presented in relation to Elijah (17:4–5; cf. 11:10–14; 21:11, 46 cf. 26:68), which further reinforces the continuity between Jesus and John. Like Elijah, both Jesus and John pronounced judgement on the people, with threats of judgement to come (11:21–24; 23:13–29) and offered them promises of blessings from God (5:3–11; 13:16–17). As Saldarini correctly notes, in Matthew, the rejection of Jesus and John by his own townsfolk (13:54–58) is explained by a proverb (“Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house”). John’s identification with Elijah and Jesus’ affirmative attitude towards Elijah reinforce the continuity between John and Jesus, and the continuity their respective missions have with God’s ever-continuing dealing with his people.

Despite the strong continuity between John and Jesus, they had differences over fasting (cf. 9:14; 11:18) and messianic expectations (3:10–12; cf. 11:2–6). John apparently agreed with the Pharisees over the understanding of fasting (cf.9:14). But, because Jesus practised fasting (4:1–11) and taught how to observe it correctly (6:16–18), which indicate his positive attitude towards fasting, these differences cannot be taken as an evidence for the discontinuity between the two. Similarly, there is no contradiction between John’s prediction that Jesus is the judge to come (3:10–12) and Jesus’ role as teacher and healer (chapters 5–9); Jesus indeed will come in his glory as the judge to come (7:21; 25:31–46). [The problem of a sense of discontinuity which John had with Jesus in the Q tradition which Matthew uses in 11:2–6, will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 (section 5.2)]. Moreover, given the complexity of first-century

---

167 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 185.
168 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 185–86.
Judaism, such theological differences are not surprising or unusual in Matthew’s time.

Therefore, the differences between John and Jesus do not imply discontinuity, but entail continuity not only between the two but also with Judaism.

One might also argue that Matthew drops Mark’s designation of John’s baptism for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 1:4) and joins it to the consecration of the Last Supper (Matt 26:28) to show that John’s baptism is not continuous with Jesus’ saving because it is not the former but Jesus’ death that brings forgiveness. But this is not persuasive. “John’s baptism does involve forgiveness of sins”, “given that the replacement in Mt. 3:1 [sic] is the same message [3:2] Matthew will attribute to Jesus in 4:17, and given that the possibility of forgiveness is implicit in John’s call to repentance”. Moreover, as Loader rightly argues, by “equating” the message of John and Jesus, Matthew, contrary to Mark, makes “John more like Jesus, and conversely, Jesus more like John.” Thus, for Matthew, because forgiveness of sins does not begin with Jesus, nor is it limited to Jesus (6:14–15; 9:12; 18:21–35), John’s baptism brings forgiveness, as with his ministry, and is, therefore, continuous with Jesus’ saving mission.

As with the continuity between John and Jesus, Matthew makes Jesus’ disciples (ecclesia) also historically and soteriologically continuous not only with the mission(s)

---

169 Does John’s baptism replace circumcision? We shall return to Matthew’s attitude towards circumcision in detail later in this chapter (section 4.8.3).
172 Nolland, Matthew, 1081 n. 135.
of John and Jesus, but also with God’s saving dealing(s) in the past. This Matthew achieves primarily by shortening Mark 1:15 (“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news”) to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” and ascribing the same utterance “in identical form in 3:2 of John, 4:17 of Jesus, and also 10:7 of the preaching of the disciples”. 174

Jesus’ calling and commissioning of his disciples (ecclesia) is to continue his saving activity (1:21; 15:24; cf. 10:5–6; 16:16; 18:18; 28:18–20), which is a continuation of what God began with Abraham and continued till John. According to Luz, there is no separation between Jesus and his disciples on whom 5:20 is imposed and who have been charged to keep all of Jesus’ commandments (28:20). 175 In fact, in Luz’s view, it reinforces the continuity between Jesus and his disciples. 176 Therefore, it is likely that, the call of all the three to repentance assumes forgiveness of sins (cf. 1:21), which constitutes a continuum. In other words, for Matthew, the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings (1:21) does not end with his mission, but will be continued through Jesus’ disciples in history (9:12; 16:16–18; chapter 18). 177

In Matthew—as with the mission, preaching and message (3:2; 4:17)—the fate and rejection of the disciples also make them continuous with John and Jesus. They suffer the same fate and have the same opponents (3:9; 14:1–2; 10:17; 17:9–13: 23:34). Like John (3:1–6; 9:14; 11:18) and Jesus (9:34; 12:22–24), Jesus’ disciples also face false accusation (5:11–12; 10:18; cf. 10:14–15). The John–Jesus–ecclesia continuity vis-à-vis rejection is later evident in the parable of the two sons (21:28–32), the parable of the wicked tenants (21:33–46; cf. Mark 12:1–12) and the parable of the wedding

175 Luz, Matthäus, 1:213.
176 Luz, Matthäus, 1:213.
177 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 6; Hagner, Matthew, 47. Cf. Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:292, 300–301; Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 258; idem, Nicht Aufzulösen, 74; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 96; Meier, Vision, 184; Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 9.
feast (22:1–14; cf. Luke 14:16–24). As Loader correctly observes, Matthew supplements Mark’s single parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1–12) with the parable of the two sons (21:28–32) and the parable of the wedding feast (22:1–14), creating three not only to reflect on responses to John, Jesus, and Jesus’ disciples (ecclesia), but also to reinforce the continuity among them. Thus, as Loader fittingly concludes, Matthew sets John, Jesus, and Jesus’ disciples (ecclesia) in historical and soteriological continuity: rejection of John, who came “in the way of righteousness” (the parable of the two sons: 21:28–32); rejection of Jesus (the parable of the wicked tenants: 21:33–46); and rejection of Jesus’ disciples (the parable of the wedding feast: 22:1–14).

In conclusion: Matthew sets John, Jesus, and the disciples in continuity. This means God’s saving in Jesus is a continuation of what God initiated with Abraham and continued till John. And the disciples’ mission is to continue Jesus’ saving till God completes his saving initiative in Jesus in the coming of Jesus as the judge. Furthermore, this continuity also indicates that not all the Jewish groups have rejected Jesus and his disciples, which is not surprising, given the complexity/diversity of the first-century Judaism. This justifies Matthew’s alternating between exhortations to endure unjust suffering (5:10–12) and the attacks on the Jewish leaders (23:13–36). Matthew has Jesus attack the Jewish leaders for they rejected God’s saving in Jesus in favour of his understanding of Israel’s call through Jesus. This shows how closely Matthew’s attitude towards his Jewish heritage is linked to his soteriology.

180 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 10. According to Oppong-Kumi, all three parables make use of “invitational motifs” to highlight the choice that the message of the kingdom presents to his hearers. See Peter Yaw Oppong-Kumi, Matthean Sets of Parables (WUNT 2/340; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).
4.6. DESCRIPTION OF JESUS’ SALVIFIC ROLE AS THE JUDGE TO COME

It is in the large context of the historical and soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past, and the close relation between “how Jesus saves” and the other theological themes in the Gospel that Matthew has John the Baptist introduce Jesus as the coming judge (3:11–12). Matthew achieves this by supplementing his Markan source (1:7–8), where John predicts Jesus’ coming as the coming of the powerful one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7–8), with the material from the Q text (cf. Luke 3:7–9), showing John identifying Jesus as the coming judge.\(^{181}\) This is further to Jesus’ role as the Messiah who saves his people from their sins in 1:21; for Jesus’ authority as the judge (11:27a; 28:18; 26:64) implies also the authority to forgive sins (9:2–8; 12:5).

While using Q material, Matthew makes two significant redactional changes in his account of John’s baptism and his identification of Jesus as the coming judge, which indicate his Jewish religious environment and theological agenda. For Matthew, Jesus’ salvific role as the judge to come is very closely linked to John’s severe confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew achieves this by juxtaposing John’s critique of the Jewish leaders (3:7–10) and the theme of judgement (3:11–12; cf. 1 En. 69:27–29; 2 Bar. 72–74). In Luke, by contrast, John’s prediction of Jesus as the mightier one appears in the context of people’s queries concerning John’s identity (3:15–16). More significantly, unlike in Luke, where the addressees are multitudes (Luke 3:7a), Matthew makes the Pharisees and Sadducees his primary audience (3:7a), to whom Jesus is introduced as the judge to come.

In Matthew, while Jesus’ role as the judge to come points to his eschatological function(s), it has a definite soteriological bearing on his earthly saving roles. This may

---

\(^{181}\) Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11.
be understood primarily in close association with John’s austere criticism of the Jewish leaders (3:7–12). This best explains the sudden appearance of the Jewish leaders in 5:20, where the issue is the true meaning and correct observance of the Law, and is consistent with Jesus’ severe polemic against “the Pharisees and the scribes” in chapter 23. Thus, Matthew links Jesus’ eschatological role as the judge, to his earthly role as the teacher of the Law. This means Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles are historically and soteriologically continuous. That has major implications for Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves” and his attitude towards the Torah and his Jewish heritage.

John’s “ingenious quip” that God can generate sons of Abraham from stones (3:9) does not entail discontinuity, as some scholars argue, as it does not imply vilification of Abrahamic descent or the “Jewish ethnic dynamic” (cf. 1:1) or the historical and soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past. There is not the slightest hint that the children of Abraham are replaced either. Matthew does include the Gentiles in Jesus’ saving, given Matthew’s beginning of God’s saving with Abraham and continuity as to the nature of God’s saving, but, most likely, only after

---

182 According to Sim, though Matthew “sets the Jewish leaders in opposition to Jesus”, “he does not blur absolutely the differences between them” (22:23–33); see Christian Judaism, 118. This position is convincing. Cf. In the view of Overman, “the Jewish leadership is summed up and converges in the fixed Matthean formula, ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’”; Matthew’s Gospel, 142.

183 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:158, 308–309; Luz, Matthäus, 1:206; Hagner, Matthew, 50; France, Matthew, 111; Kennedy, Recapitulation of Israel, 84; Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 68; Saldivari, Christian-Jewish Community, 171. Saldivari opines: “the manipulation of membership among the sons of Abraham is matched by the genealogical manipulation of membership among the sons of David” (Christian-Jewish Community, 288 n. 26). According to Kraus, 3:9 has probably already the “nations” in mind: “Ekklesiologie,” 206. See also Konradt, Israel, 286–341; Wilk, Jesus, 84. But Kraus then later comments that though 3:9 might point towards the inclusion of the Gentiles, it will not prove reliable as evidence for the explicit self-conception of the community as the “children of Abraham” (“Ekklesiologie,” 208). According to Davies and Allison, “Matthew, we may think, believed that God had in fact raised up from the Gentiles new children to Abraham and that Jesus as the ‘son of Abraham’ had brought them their salvation” (Matthew, 1:158). In Kazmierski’s view, 3:9 originally arose among charismatic Jewish preachers who had been rejected and were defending themselves against their opponents. See “The Stone of Abraham: John the Baptist and the End of the Torah (Matt 3:7–10 pars. Luke 3:7–9),” Biblica 68 (1987): 22–40. Kraus also suggests that the inclusion of the Gentiles finds further explicit reinforcement in 8:11 (“many will come from east and west and eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven”). See “Ekklesiologie,” 206. See also Wilk, Jesus, 84.

Then, what does 3:9 imply? Matthew may have chosen “stones” to form the image because of the evocative closeness between the words “children” or rather “sons” (ובנ) and “stones” (אבן) in Hebrew (Nolland). One might also appeal to Isa 51:1–2 (“Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug”), where Abraham is a “lifeless the rock” (Gen 17:17; 18:10–14) from which God had brought Israel into being (Nolland, and Davies and Allison). This is also likely. Either way, as Nolland rightly contends, “the promise to Abraham stands.”

The Jewish leaders understood the calling of Abraham as a closed salvific event of the past, to which they, on the one hand, link their privileged identity and descent, and, on the other hand, limit God’s saving in history. So they believed that their salvation just flows from a once and for all saving event of the past (cf. “we have Abraham as our father”), to which Matthew disagrees. Matthew, on the contrary, understands the calling of Abraham as the beginning of God’s saving in history, not as a closed saving event; the sufficiency and efficacy of God’s saving is defined and qualified by its continuity. Therefore, while being in continuity with God’s saving in the past, God’s people in the present are saved from their sins by participating and believing in God’s saving through Jesus, who is the Messiah of Israel. The phrase “God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (3:9c) not only means the sufficiency of God’s saving in the past, but also its continuity, now, in Jesus, and the inseparable relation between the two.

By their unwillingness to accept the continuity of God’s saving and the sufficiency and efficacy of God’s saving in Jesus in the present, the Jewish leaders, like

184 Nolland, Matthew, 144–45.
185 Nolland, Matthew, 144; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:308–9.
186 Nolland, Matthew, 145.
the “brood of vipers”, invite judgement on themselves and their version of Judaism. Unlike in Q, where the image of vipers’ offspring refers to the multitudes listening to John the Baptist (cf. Luke 3:7a), Matthew applies it specifically to the Jewish leaders (3:7–of the Pharisees and Sadducees; 12:34–of the Pharisees; 23:33–of the scribes and the Pharisees). Matthew has Jesus use this image to invert the Jewish leaders’ claim of Abrahamic descent. Therefore, for Matthew, the image of vipers’ parricide, according to Davies and Allison, “stands over against” the “self-designation” of the Jewish leaders, especially that of the Pharisees, as “children of Abraham”, which separates “visible Israel”, represented by the Jewish leaders, and the people of God. Nolland correctly notes, “what is being denied is not privilege but immunity from God’s outrage at the abuse of privilege”. Thus, Knowles argues, Matthew utilises the “brood of vipers” image to situate Jesus’ role as the judge to come within the intra-Jewish polemic of his time, contending that his hearers are truer heirs of the patriarchs and prophets than are the Jewish leaders.

According to Loader, “the effect in Matthew of the baptism of Jesus and the divine declaration of Jesus as God’s beloved son” (3:17; cf. 12:18; 17:5), drawing upon Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1, is a divine confirmation “of whom John spoke and, more specifically in Matthew, therefore as the judge to come” (cf. 12:18–21; 25:31–46). This again is a heavenly attestation but of the continuing nature of God’s saving. In Barber’s view, Matthew’s account of Jesus’ baptism seems to evoke Davidic and

---

187 The graphical phrase (3:7; cf. Wis 2:24), “brood of vipers”, is symbolic of evil and destructiveness (12:34; 23:33; cf. Ps 58:4). According to a widespread tradition in the ancient Mediterranean world (attested in Herodotus, Aelian, Pliny and other writers), vipers kill their mothers during their birth, hence were associated with parricide.

188 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:304.

189 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:308.

190 Nolland, Matthew, 144.


192 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11.
Solomonic traditions. When “Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him [David] in the presence of his brothers . . . the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David” (1 Sam 16:13). Solomon, the son of David, was led to river Gihon on the day of his anointing (1 Kgs 1:38–40). Both Davidic and Solomonic traditions merge in the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (3:16). The heavenly identification of Jesus as God’s son supports the Davidic allusions because, as Barber, Collins, and Vermes observe, “the language of divine sonship” is linked to “the royal son of David and the eschatological Davidide” (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:27; 2Q252 V, 3–4; 4Q174:1–2, 21; 1Q28a 2:11–12; 4Q 369).

This is further reinforced in 12:18–21, where Matthew cites Isa 42:1–4, which shows that Jesus has been “chosen” (12:18) to fulfil God’s saving promises in the past, and, thus, to continue God’s saving in history. The reference to “my beloved” in 12:18 gives a neat cross-reference to Son of God epiphanies at the baptism and the transfiguration (3:17; 17:5). Jesus is “beloved” to God because he “fulfils all righteousness” (3:15), as envisioned in the Torah (cf. 5:17–20). This means Jesus upholds the soteriological sufficiency of what God did and said in the past and fulfils God’s saving plans and promises for his people in the present.

Matt 12:18–21 is also important for understanding Matthew’s Christology and soteriology as it recalls John’s prediction of Jesus’ role as the judge to come: “he will proclaim justice/judgement (κρίσιν) to the Gentiles” (12:18). And “judgement” is a more likely translation for κρίσιν (Sim, Luz, Hare, Loader, France, and Davies and

---

194 Barber, “Davidic Temple Builder,” 938.
not justice, as Hagner, Gundry, and Fiedler argue, given that Matthew may be thinking of Jesus as the judge of all nations (cf. 12:41–42; 25:31–46), as Loader rightly contends. Moreover, as Sim correctly notes, “the theme of judgement is prominent in the immediate context” of the Gospel (11:20–24; 12:36, 38–42). The divine witness at Jesus’ baptism in 3:17, as with 17:5, and the Isaianic citation in 12:18–21 (Isa 42:1–4) have the effect of bringing together Matthew’s depiction about Jesus’ status as “Son of God” and his eschatological role as the judge. Therefore, Jesus’ saving “takes on a [much] broader meaning” which includes forgiveness in Jesus’ role definition as the judge to come (3:10–12).

According to Loader, Matthew’s juxtaposition of John’s identification of Jesus as the judge to come (3:10–12) and the heavenly attestation of Jesus’ divine sonship (3:17) “has the effect of filling the title Son of God” with meaning which points to Jesus’ role as the judge to come. This extra content explains why Jesus does not match John’s prediction (11:2–6; cf. 3:10–12). John preached the coming of the one who would judge (3:11), whereas Jesus speaks of mercy and compassion (11:28–30; 12:7; cf. 12:19–20); Jesus preferred to teach, heal and exorcise (11:2–6). Further, in 12:19–20, Matthew depicts Jesus as humble, meek and lowly one who will “not break a bruise reed or quench a smoldering wick” (cf. 21:5). And, in Fiedler’s view, “by defending the disciples [12:1–8] and healing the sick man [12:9–14], the Matthean Jesus exemplifies

197 Sim, Christian Judaism, 221; Luz, Matthäus, 2:247–48; Hare, Matthew, 136; Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 12; France, Matthew, 467 n. 5; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:325.
198 According to Hagner, Gundry and Fiedler, Matthew’s emphasis on discipling the Gentiles requires that κρίσιν be taken positively as “justice” instead of negatively as “judgement”: Hagner, Matthew, 338; Gundry, Matthew, 229; Peter Fiedler, “‘The Servant of the Lord’: Israel (Isaiah 42:1–4) and Jesus (Matthew 12:18–21),” CQ 55 (1997): 119–29, here 124.
199 Loader, Law, 207; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 12. According to Loader, 12:18–21 “reaffirms” Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–12), “yet also underlining his gentleness and vulnerability” (Law, 207).
200 Sim, Christian Judaism, 221.
201 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11.
what he has announced in 11:28–30”. We can add here Matthew’s use of Isa 53:4 in 8:17, because, for Matthew, as with various other aspects of his ministry, Jesus’ healing ministry also illustrates his humility and compassion. While functioning “as commentary on a conflict with Pharisees”, as Broadhead observes, “Matthew’s use of Hos 6:6 in 12:7” also augments Jesus’ compassionate approach towards tired people. This implies that, for Matthew, Jesus does not comply with the “judgemental figure” of the Messiah as he depicted in 3:10–12 (cf. 11:1–6; 12:18–20).

As Loader rightly argues, the Matthean “Jesus brings the predictions of John to fulfilment in two stages”. During his earthly ministry Jesus fulfils the Isaianic prophecies about the messianic figure (11:5; cf. Isa 29:18–19; 35:5–10; 42:1–4; 61:1). Additionally, the use of Isaianic citation in 12:18–21 (Isa 42:1–4), while recalling Jesus’ compassion proclaimed in 11:28–30, shows that the humble Messiah will deal gently with the weak and the vulnerable up until when he returns to judge the world, and thus fulfil what God had promised for the salvation of his people. Hence, for Matthew, Jesus’ explanation of “the deeds of the Christ” (11:2) in 11:5 (cf. Matt 5–9) and the fulfilment citation in 12:18–21 (Isa 42:1–4) “put Jesus’ ministry and Isaiah’s oracles side by side”. This is different from what John is portrayed as believing would happen. Jesus does exercise a role as judge in the present but more as John does, with warnings, also does other things not expected by John. And, in the future Jesus will come as the eschatological judge as John predicted (3:10–12; cf. 25:31–46).

---

204 Fiedler, “The Servant of the Lord,” 122.
205 Edwin K. Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity (WUNT 266; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 152.
207 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:241.
208 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11–12.
209 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:243.
In Matthew, Jesus’ messianic function on earth as teacher and healer (chapters 5–9), and his eschatological role as judge (3:10–12) are separated (25:34, 40; 26:64); “on earth he is the Messiah; in the end he will come as judge in fulfilment of John’s predictions”. This is easily understandable for Matthew’s Jewish audience who greatly valued Isaianic prophecies and are familiar with the traditional Jewish expectations of the Messiah as the judge to come, as reflected in John’s prophecy. This shows not only the close relation between Christology and soteriology in Matthew, but also how Christology and soteriology are linked to Matthew’s attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

Unlike in Luke, Matthew positions Jesus’ role as the judge to come in relation to John’s criticism of the Pharisees and Sadducees. This defines how Matthew portrays Jesus’ saving ministry in which a vital feature is the teaching of the Law (chapters 5–7). In the view of Loader, Jesus is the judge, “not just the one who brings liberation and its promise, as in Mark . . . who in an act of God’s grace declares the basis of judgement in the present and calls to repentance so that people will be saved from their sins”. And, as with his role as the eschatological judge, Jesus’ authority to teach the Law is also linked to his messianic identity (1:21; cf. 2:6), his divine sonship (3:17; 17:5 cf. 7:28–29), and his special relationship to God (11:25–30). The status/being of Jesus and judgement “belong together well with the baptism imagery”, because John identified Jesus as the judge to come. Therefore, in Loader’s assessment, κρίσις in 12:18 and 12:20 “can encompass both judgement and justice as the criterion for judgement”. For Matthew, Jesus’ role as the one who pronounces judgement in the end, and as the one makes known God’s justice in the present by teaching the true sense of the Torah

---

210 Loader, Law, 197.
211 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 12.
212 Loader, Law, 206.
213 Loader, Law, 206.
are continuous. It is in this view that Matthew understands the connection between Jesus saving mission (cf. 1:21) and his teaching of the Law. In other words, Jesus’ role as the teacher of the Torah is continuous with other messianic claims and roles Matthew ascribes to Jesus.

Consequently, those who reject Jesus and his teaching of the Torah reject not only his messianic identity and authority, but also God’s saving plans for his people, which God had prophesied through his prophets, now being fulfilled through Jesus. More significantly, Matthew’s reconfigured description of Jesus’ role takes his significance beyond Jewish messianic hopes, which Jesus does fulfil, to the role of the eschatological judge, especially as the one who interprets the Torah as the basis for the last judgement, which is a very strong element of continuity. Thus, like Jesus’ messianic identity and titles, his authority as the teacher and the authority of his teaching become the benchmark not only of Matthew’s position within Judaism, but also of Matthew’s understanding of soteriology and its inseparable relation to Christology.

The continuity between Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles is further evident in 25:32, where the role definitions of Jesus—judge (3:11–12; 19:28) and shepherd (2:6 cf. 9:36; 15:24) merge: Jesus the teacher is also the one who pronounces judgement, which coheres with John’s prediction of Jesus (3:10) and Jesus’ words in 7:19; and the one who shepherds his sheep on earth (2:6; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78: 70–71) is one who will judge his sheep in the end, which we have discussed in detail earlier in this chapter [See section (4.3.2)]. For Matthew, Jesus’ saving activity does not end on the cross, rather it continues on earth even after his exaltation, but through his disciples (10:5–6; 28:18–20), which include the Gentiles, given that God is a saving continuum and his promise(s) to Abraham has not been fulfilled yet (Gen 12).

214 Loader, Law, 206.
To sum up: in Matthew, John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the judge to come (3:11–12), which broadens Jesus’ primary role as the saviour (1:21). Jesus is more than being the Messiah of Israel. This extra christological content, already indicated in 1:18–25, is further reinforced by the heavenly confirmation at Jesus’ baptism (3:17). But, for Matthew, Jesus’ eschatological role as the coming judge is continuous with his earthly roles such as shepherd and teacher, which Matthew has already fortified by linking Jesus to David (cf. Ezek 34:4–10; Mic 5:1–9) and Moses (cf. Isa 63:11). John the Baptist, however, failed to understand this link, which best explains 11:2–6 (cf. 12:18–21). However, Jesus fulfils John’s predictions in 25:31–46, when he comes as the eschatological shepherd.

4.7. THE SAVIOUR AS TEACHER AND JUDGE IN MATTHEW 5–7: PROMISE, LAW, AND CONTINUITY

Matthew situates Jesus’ saving role as teacher and his teaching or interpretation of the Law (chapters 5–7) in the context of 1:1–4:11: the historical and soteriological continuity (1:2–16); John’s identification of Jesus as the judge to come (3:11–12); the heavenly attestation of Jesus’ divine sonship (3:17); and the appearance of the Jewish leaders (3:7). Jesus, Son of God, as the coming judge (3:11–12) and as the one who pronounces such judgement (7:21–24; 25:31–46) is, inevitably, also the one who teaches and interprets the Law to his people (chapters 5–7), whom he wants to save from their sins (1:21). And, because Jesus is judge and teacher, the judgement will be based on his teaching and interpretation of the Torah. So, for Matthew, it was Jesus’ messianic saving mission to “fulfil”, and not to abrogate, the Torah (5:17) before he assumes the saving role of eschatological judge as Son of Man (16:27; 25:31–46).

---

215 Loader, Law, 260.
Like Mark (1:22), Matthew also highlights Jesus’ authority as teacher and the crowds’ positive response to Jesus’ teaching: “the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (7:28–29). In Mark, the reaction of the crowd is to Jesus’ teaching in the synagogue after his healing of the demoniac. Moreover, Mark does not describe the content of Jesus’ teaching.²¹⁶ On the other hand, Matthew has the crowds respond to Jesus’ teaching of the Torah (chapters 5–7). More significantly, unlike in Mark, where the contrast is between Jesus and the scribes, Matthew compares the teaching of Jesus and that of the scribes. That explains Matthew’s delicate change from “the scribes” to “their scribes”; for Matthew, “Jesus is the scribe _par excellence_”.²¹⁷ This shows contours of his post-70 C.E. theological programme to legitimise his community and their teaching of the Torah against the attack of the Jewish leaders who rejected them.

The use of the mountain motif (5:1) further reinforces the continuity between God’s saving dealings in the past, especially the giving of the Law through Moses, and Jesus’ saving role as teacher. Matthean usage of “went up to the mountain” (5:1; cf. Luke 6:17), which is Markan in origin (3:13), “intentionally evokes” the Mosaic ascent of Sinai (cf. Exod 19:3; Deut 1:24; 5:5; 10:1).²¹⁸ The God of Israel who gave the Law to his people through Moses is “with us” (cf. 1:23) now in Jesus to save his people from their sins of not being committed to the Law and the saving relationship, directly speaking and interpreting the true sense of the same Law to the people of Israel. So, Jesus is not teaching a “new” Law (cf. Mark 1:27).

²¹⁶ Loader, _Law_, 186.
²¹⁷ Loader, _Law_, 186; idem, “Attitude to Judaism and the Law,” 356.
His “sitting” reminds us of the posture of a Jewish teacher (Ezek 8:1; Matt 13:1; 23:2; m. 'Abot 1:4; 3:2, 6). Normally, it is kings who “sit” on the throne to exercise power and to rule (1 Kgs 1:13, 46; 2:12, 19; Matt 27:19; cf. 20:21, 23). By contrast, according to 1 En. 25:3 (“This tall mountain . . . whose summit resembles the throne of God is (indeed) his throne on which the Holy and Great . . . will sit when he descends to visit the earth in goodness”), God will “sit” on a mountain summit when he rules the world in the end. “So does Jesus in 19:28; 25:31”.\(^{219}\) By inserting the “mountain” motif and the “sitting” posture of Jesus (5:1), Matthew has, thus, identified Jesus as a Jewish teacher, who will “judge” the world in the end. Matthew reinforces the link between Jesus’ role as teacher and the authority of his teachings (7:28–29). This sets the background for the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7).

4.7.1. Salvation in Beatitudes (5:3–12): Promise, Reward, and Continuity

The Beatitudes in Matthew (5:3–12; cf. Luke 6:20–23) entail Jesus’ declaration of the “good news” of salvation in terms of promise and reward. In light of John’s identification of Jesus as the coming judge (3:11–12) and the proclamation of judgement, one might expect some “new” teachings about repentance and forgiveness of sins, but Jesus begins his teachings by (re)assuring and promising salvation to all those who had genuinely responded to God’s saving initiative(s) in history which began with Abraham and continued through his children. For Matthew, Jesus’ message of “good news” is not the promise of a “new” kind of salvation, but an affirmation of the continuing sufficiency and efficacy of God’s saving promises.

Matthew made the term οἱ πτωχοὶ in 5:3 more soteriologically precise by inserting τῷ πνεύματι (cf. Luke 6:20b). For Matthew, “the poor in spirit” refers not only to the “harassed and helpless” (9:36; cf. 10:5–6; 15:24) because of the Jewish leaders, but also to the righteous, who do the will of God, as interpreted by Jesus. If so, the salvation which Jesus promises (kingdom of heaven) to those who respond to his saving entails freedom from the Jewish leaders too. So, since Jesus’ saving is the fulfilment of God’s salvific promises, what Jesus promises in 5:3 is what God promised in the past. This implies continuity.

Similarly, in the second Beatitude (5:4; cf. Luke 6:21) we have even more striking continuity between Jesus’ promise of salvation and God’s saving promises through the prophets. This Matthew achieves by echoing the injunctions and promises of Isaiah 61 and the Psalms (Isa 61:1–2; Ps 24:4; 37:11; 42:3), which serves as the background for many traits in the Beatitudes (“mourning” and “poor in spirit”). For Matthew, “mourning” (πνεῦμα), on the one hand, implies a “passive” state (Meier), which means a cry for salvation, given their “harassed and helpless” state (cf. 9:36), and, on the other hand, an “active” response to the “good news” of salvation and the call for repentance in 4:17 and 4:23. As with “the poor in spirit”, those who are “mourning” are also “promised” what God promised to reward (Ps 12:5; 14:6; 22:24; 37:14; Isa 10:2; 26:6, 61:1–2; Pss. Sol. 5:2, 11). This indicates that God continues to save, but now in Jesus.

---

220 According to Broer, Matthew makes such a redactional insertion because “the poor” are almost always “poor in spirit”. We find a similar concept in the combination of the passages in Isaiah referring to the poor (Isa 61:1) and contrite in spirit (Isa 57:15; 66:2). See Ingo Broer, Die Seligpreisungen der Bergpredigt (BBB 61; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1986), 71.
221 Hagner, Matthew, 1:92.
222 In IQM 14:7, the community describes itself, the “sons of light”, as those who are “poor in spirit”.
223 Meier, Vision, 63. He separates beatitudes into passive aspect (the poor, the mourning, the meek, the hungry, and the persecuted) and their active aspect (the merciful, the single-hearted, and the peacemakers).
Jesus’ promise of salvation to the “meek” (πραΰς) in 5:5 is a citation of Ps 37:11 (“But the meek shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity”). This means the salvation which Jesus offers in 5:5 (“they shall inherit the earth”) is not a “new” kind of salvation, but an affirmation of the continuing sufficiency of God’s saving promises (Ps 37:11). Salvation for the meek is not unknown to Matthew; Jesus himself (11:29; 21:5), like Moses (Num 12:3), is called “πραΰς”. According to France, Matthew understands salvation as envisaged in 5:5 in “nonterritorial” ways. Davies and Allison also support this idea: they argue that Matthew does away with nationalistic hopes in 5:3–12 because, except 27:45, “the unqualified γῆ appears in Matthew to refer not to Palestine but to the earth” (5:13, 18, 35; 6:10, 19; 9:6; 11:25; 12:42; 16:19; 18:18–19; 23:9; 24:30; 28:28). But it is doubtful whether one can interpret beatitudes, and 5:5 in particular, without relating it to the Land of Israel, given that Matthew positions Jesus’ saving (1:18–25) in the context of Jewish nationalist messianic hopes (1:1–18), as Loader correctly notes.

Moreover, we cannot undermine Matthew’s emphasis on the continuity between the people of Israel and Jesus the saviour, which is inseparably linked to the “land”. It is consistent with 4Q171 3:10–11, where it is mentioned that the “the congregation of the Poor, who [shall possess] the whole world as an inheritance. They shall possess the High Mountain of Israel [for ever], and shall enjoy [everlasting] delights in His

---

224 In the LXX πραΰς usually translates Hebrew עָנָו, especially when it is understood in the sense of an ethical behaviour.
225 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:449; Allison, *New Moses*, 180–82. According to Allison, 5:5 alludes to the “meek” Moses, who nonetheless was denied his inheritance of the land. But this is not compelling.
Sanctuary”. Therefore, it is likely that Matthew understands salvation which is promised in 5:5, in both territorial and non-territorial ways. Thus, in 5:5, Matthew makes Jesus’ “promise” and “reward” of salvation for the meek not only continuous with the divine saving promises in the past, but also link closely to the identity of the people of Israel, which is rooted in their understanding of Land as the gift of salvation (Gen 17:8).

Jesus brings salvation (“satisfaction”) to “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (5:6; cf. 6:33; Isa 55:1; Amos 8:11). But what is righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)? As Davies and Allison correctly argue, δικαιοσύνη is not “God’s gift” or “divine vindication” because there is no “direct correspondence between character and reward” in most of the Beatitudes: “the meek are not given meekness” (5:5); “the pure in heart are not given purity” (5:8). Rather it is a “human behaviour” (Luz) or an ethical disposition (Davies and Allison) rooted in the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus; it is Jesus who interpreted the entire divine will more comprehensively. Πᾶσα δικαιοσύνη (“all righteousness”—3:15), which Jesus fulfilled by his receiving of John’s baptism, points in this direction; it is not a special righteousness to be fulfilled only by Jesus, but a continuation of all that is righteous; all that is righteous is divine and the divine is a continuum. Therefore, the “promise” and “reward” of salvation in 5:6 is continuous not only with the Law and the prophets, but also with God’s righteous initiatives to save his people, both in the past and in the present.

In 5:7, Matthew has Jesus promise “mercy” for those who are in need of “mercy” and will reward the “merciful” (behaviour) with “mercy”. Being “merciful” is salvific.

---


231 Luz, Matthäus, 1:284. Similarly, Senior, Matthew, 104.

232 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:453.

not only because God is “merciful” (cf. 5:43–48; Luke 6:27–36) but also because it can “cause” divine mercy (cf. 6:14–15; 18:21–35). And, because “mercy” causes divine mercy, salvation offered through forgiveness of sins (1:21) is not understood as something achieved by Jesus. For Matthew, therefore, “mercy” is a “fundamental demand” (cf. 9:13; 12:7; 23:23), which Jesus placed at the centre of his teaching (5:43–48; 9:13; 12:7; 18:21–35; 23:23; 25:31–46). In much of this, as Davies and Allison correctly note, “there is strict continuty with the OT and Jewish tradition”.234 This means the salvation which Jesus promises in 5:7 is the fulfilment and continuation of what God had promised in the past.

As with the other Beatitudes, Jesus’ promise of salvation to the “pure in heart” (5:8) is also not something historically new; it is a Jewish expression that comes from the Old Testament (Ps 24:3–4). Nolland argues that “the prospect of seeing God is also held out in Ps 11:7 (‘the upright’), 17:5 (‘in righteousness’), Job 19:26–27 (Job’s own confident expectation), and it is longed for in Ps 42:3”.235 For Matthew, seeing God is salvation, which Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries might have regarded as impossible, given their post-70 c.e. setting. But, for Matthew, despite the physical destruction of the temple, God’s people who are “pure in heart” can still “see” God, but in Jesus (1:23; 18:20; cf. 28:18–20), who is “God with us” (1:23).236

This is consistent with Isa 35:5: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened”. In the rabbinic literature to see God means “to see the Shekinah” and is referred to as a reward for “those walk righteously and speak uprightly” (Lev. Rab. 23:13; cf. Ps 17:15; Isa 33:15). “Shekinah” is not only used as a substitute term for the Divine Name, but also as a technical term for the divine presence in the midst of his people. Therefore,

---

234 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:454.
235 Nolland, Matthew, 205.
236 Nolland, Matthew, 205.
purity of heart is salvific in so far as one identifies God’s continuing saving presence in
Jesus, which means, for Matthew, salvation (seeing God) is not confined to any one
particular historical event in the life of Jesus. This makes sense for Matthew’s hearers
so long as it does not entail abolition of the temple and the Torah.237

In the seventh beatitude (5:9), Jesus promises salvation (divine sonship) to those
who actively attempt (human behaviour) to make peace (cf. 2 En. 52:11–15), which is
characteristic of God’s people (Ps 34:14). In 5:44–45 also, divine sonship is promised;
there too, as in 5:10–12, the subject is persecution and enemies. According to Hagner,
such a relationship between divine sonship and peace making would have been a
critique of the zealots, who hoped to bring about the kingdom of God on earth through
violence and militarism, and to demonstrate that they are the true sons of God.238 For
Matthew, making peace is possible with only those who are “mourning” (5:4), “hungry
and thirsty for righteousness” (5:5), “meek” (5:5; cf. 11:19; 21:5), merciful (5:7) and
“pure in heart” (5:8), which is not unlikely in Jewish traditions (Isa 62:11; Zech 9:9).
Luz argues that Matthew’s hearers would probably understand it primarily in terms of
3:13–4:11.239 For Matthew, making peace is salvific in two ways: it promises and
rewards a saving relationship (divine sonship); and God continues to intervene in
history through his people, who are already in such a saving relationship, to make peace
(Ps 34:24).

Jesus promises salvation (kingdom of heaven) for those who are persecuted “for
righteousness’ sake” in 5:10 (cf. 5:6). According to Carter, the persecution is mainly
from the hands of the Roman imperial forces.240 But 5:10 cannot include Rome because,
for Matthew, it is mainly the Jewish leaders who are persecuting his community (10:17;

237 Luz, Matthäus, 1:285.
238 Hagner, Matthew, 1:94.
239 Luz, Matthäus, 1:285–86.
240 Carter, Matthew, 136–37.
23:34). Additionally, Matthew puts persecution “for righteousness’ sake” (5:10) and persecution for Jesus’ sake (“on my account”—5:11) side by side. This means persecution “for righteousness’ sake” and for Jesus’ sake are not different because it is Jesus who “fulfils” (5:17) everything that is righteous (3:15) not only by interpreting the true sense of the Law (5:21–48), but also by being obedient to it (3:15). Therefore, following Jesus means doing the righteousness of the Torah. This indicates the close relationship between “righteousness” and the “kingdom of heaven” in Matthean soteriology (5:10), which is further amplified elsewhere (5:20). It is likely, therefore, that Matthew’s hearers would regard their persecution, which is not a thing of the past, as Hare argues, but a present reality (Davies and Allison), as caused by their commitment to Jesus and the Torah (Hare).

Furthermore, the persecution of the righteous (Wis 1:16–5:23; 2 Bar. 52:4–5) and the prophets (2 Chr 36:16; Neh 9:26)—notably in the case of Jeremiah (Jer 20:10; 26:10–29; 36–38) and his contemporaries (Jer 26:20–23; cf. 1 Kgs 18:4; 19:1–13; Amos 7:10–12)—is not unknown in Matthew’s theological location (21:34–36; 23:29–36; cf. 13:57; 17:12; 22:6). The phrase “the prophets who came before you” (5:12) suggests that Matthew links, perhaps as in Q (cf. 6:23; 11:49; 13:34), his community’s persecution with how the Jewish leaders responded to God’s saving initiatives in the past through the prophets (cf. 10:17; 23:34). Matthew, thus, makes Jesus’ saving...

---

243 Hare, *Matthew*, 42, 131.
continuous not only with God’s saving in the past, but also with his disciples’ saving mission.

For Matthew, the Beatitudes (5:3–12) illustrate a life in accordance with the will of God, as outlined in the Torah. Matthew uses the metaphors like “salt” (cf. Mark 9:49–50; Luke 14:34–35) and “light” (cf. Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16) to qualify such life. It demonstrates God’s saving presence by deeds of goodness (5:13–16), and, thus, effects God’s saving. Like the “salt” and “light”, which, by their proactive goodness, “bring good to the world”, a life committed to the true sense of the Law brings God’s salvific goodness to the world.247 According to Loader, “the imagery of being light to the world strongly reflects Israel’s self-understanding (Isa 49:6; cf. Rom 2:19) and, juxtaposed to ‘the city set on a hill’, evokes the imagery of Israel and Zion”.248 He also rightly argues that Matthew’s juxtaposition of his understanding of Jesus’ attitude towards the Law in 5:17–20 and the imagery of the “hill” in 5:13-16 show that “Matthew has in mind the eschatological hope that the peoples will be drawn to Zion and from Zion’s hill God’s Law would be proclaimed (Isa 2:2–5), just as in 5:1–2 he is probably evoking the image of Moses and Sinai”.249

Matthew is laying claim to these images not only to define the identity/being of his community, but also to declare their function/mission as “salt” and “light” to the world, which reinforces their historical and soteriological continuity with the calling of Israel as the light to the world (Isa 49:6), which began with Abraham (1:2). This means, for Matthew, that like Israel, his community also has been called to faithfully fulfil the

righteousness of the Torah, which fits those who live as 5:21–7:12 will detail,\textsuperscript{250} and, thus, participate in God’s ever-continuing saving, which is happening now in Jesus.

To conclude: Jesus’ teaching in 5:3–12 is not just about entering into a saving relationship with God but also about how to be in such a saving relationship. The “good news” of salvation which Jesus brings is a “promise”, on the one hand, and a “reward”, on the other: “promise” for those who are in “need” of God’s salvation, and “reward” for those who practise (behaviour) the righteousness of the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus. If salvation is a “promise” and a “reward”, then, for Matthew, the salvation which Jesus promises and rewards, because it is continuous with what God had promised to reward earlier, does not question the sufficiency of other existing institutions of salvation such as the temple and the Torah. Moreover, if salvation is a “reward”, as promised by Jesus, then Jesus’ saving (1:21) continues even after his historical life, which means Matthew understands salvation in continuity.

4.7.2. Salvation, Law, and Continuity (5:17–48)

Matthew 5:17–48, in Loader’s opinion, “flows coherently from what precedes, especially if an allusion to Zion typology evokes the image of Torah instruction going forth from Zion”.\textsuperscript{251} Also, “the link with ‘good works’ in 5:16 provides the thread of continuity” (Nolland)\textsuperscript{252} with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount for the reason that “the ‘good works’ of 5.16 are to be identified with the acts commanded in 5.17–7.12” (Davies and Allison).\textsuperscript{253} 5:17–48 is not the beginning of a “new” divine saving teaching,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{250} Cf. According to Broer, Matthew does not believe that a literal fulfilment of the demands of the Sermon on the Mount is possible; see “Die Weisung der Bergpredigt und die Verantwortung der Christen,” in Er stieg auf den Berg . . . und lehrte sie (Mt 5,1f.): Exegetische und receptionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Bergpredigt (ed. Hans-Ulrich Weidemann; SB 226; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2012), 11–24.
  \item \textsuperscript{251} Loader, \textit{Law}, 165.
  \item \textsuperscript{252} Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 216.
  \item \textsuperscript{253} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 1:479. According to Boris Paschke, καλὰ ἔργα (“good works”) in 5:16 serve as identifying characteristics of those listening to Jesus: See \textit{Particularism and Universalism in}
but a continuation of what has been already happening since 4:17. Therefore, we need to
treat 5:17–48 with due regard to what has emerged in the Gospel thus far, in particular,
the strong claims of historical and soteriological continuity and Jesus’ role as the judge
to come.

One might argue that 5:17–20 entails soteriological discontinuity because it
reflects the Matthean Jesus’ negative attitude towards the Law and the prophets: it
means the Torah is either subordinated to the law of Jesus (Kilpatrick) or
replaced/abrogated (Bornkamm, Hare, Hübner, Meier, France, and Strecker) or even
reduced to the law of love (Clark, and Schweizer) or some parts were set aside
(Foster, and Carter). For some scholars the Law and Jesus’ teachings are
discontinuous because Jesus brought a “new” messianic law (Davies) or the Law was
brought to an end either during Jesus’ ministry (Banks) or by his death (Meier) or
in his person as the Torah incarnate (Suggs). According to Giesen and France, it is
the “new” kind of righteousness which Jesus brings that causes discontinuity. But
increasingly others argue that the more natural reading of 5:17–20 suggests continuity
between the Torah and the teachings of Jesus, rightly so, as, otherwise, it would run

the Sermon on the Mount: A Narrative-Critical Analysis of Matthew 5–7 in the Light of Matthew’s View

253 Bornkamm, “Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose,’” 88, 92; Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of
Matthew,” 277; Hans Hübner, Das Gesetz in der synoptischen Tradition: Studien zur These einer
progressiven Qumranisierung und Judaisierung (2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986);
Meier, Matthew, 46–47; France, Matthew, 179, 186; Strecker, Gerechtigkeit. According to France, in the
light of 11:13, with each fulfilment the Law passes away (186).

Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (NTD 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 64.


William D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or Age to Come (SBLMS 8; Philadelphia: SBL, 1952).

Robert Banks, Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition (STTSMS 28; Cambridge:


Heinz Giesen, Christliches Handeln: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung zum δικαιοσύνη-
Begriff im Matthäus-Evangelium (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982), 143–46; France, Matthew, 187; Cf.
Foster, Community, 197–98.
against the grain of 5:17 and Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity which he accomplishes in chapters 1–4.

In the opening statement in 5:17 Matthew reinforces his understanding of salvation in continuity by positioning Jesus and his teachings in relation to “the law and the prophets.” According to Banks, the strong negative in the introductory phrase in 5:17, ἡ νομίσητε ὅτι ἐλθὼν καταλύσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας, operates rhetorically “to strengthen the positive aspect of the following statement”, οὐκ ἐλθὼν καταλύσαι ἄλλα πληρῶσαι. Also, as Meier argues, the usage of the negative imperative strengthens the positive force of the statement.

This is the opposite of an alternative view known to Matthew, so contends Betz: “somebody” “thinks” that Jesus “came to abolish the law and the prophets”. According to Sim, 5:17 is a response to “the view that Jesus had abolished the law and not that he claimed to do so”.

In Sim’s view, such a claim would have been made by Pauline churches, not the scribes and the Pharisees. But it is more likely that 5:17–19 would have been a polemical rejoinder to Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries who dismiss Jesus’ understanding of the Law as a “new” teaching seeking to overturn the

---


264 On the significance of the imperative in this context, see Meier, *Law and History*, 65–68.


266 Sim, *Christian Judaism*, 207.

salvific sufficiency of the Law of Moses, which accounts for the appearance of the Jewish leaders in 3:7 and 5:20 (Overman, Stanton, Davies and Allison, Beare, and Hagner). It could also have been a response to the Christians who think like the Jewish leaders. But, for Matthew, Jesus stated categorically that he came not to abolish, but to fulfil “the law and the prophets”. This must, then, inform the sense of the word πληρόω, which means to “fulfil”, in the affirmative statement: “I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (5:17). The chosen sense must also illumine what is coming in 5:21–48.

In 5:17 Jesus is not simply (re)affirming “the status quo” of the Law and the prophets but going back to the roots of what it means to be in a saving relationship with God (cf. 5:21–48). Moreover, as Schnelle rightly argues, Jesus’ teachings and what “the law and the prophets” demand are not opposite because the authority of Jesus holds them together (cf. 28:18–20). Such a framework clearly dismisses many of the proposed senses of the word πληρόω in 5:17: to add to the Law (cf. b. Šabb. 116a–b: “I did not come to destroy the Law of Moses nor did I come to add to the Law of Moses”); to replace the Law (Bornkamm, Hare, Hübner, Meier, France, and Strecker); to make valid or bring into effect (Daube); to execute or do (Schlatter); bring new righteousness, which is the new spirit of love: love is fulfilling the Law (Giesen).

For Matthew, “fulfilment” of “the law and the prophets” is christological and soteriological. Matthew uses πληροῦω, and not τηρέω or ποιέω, because fulfilling “the

---


law and the prophets” is very closely connected to Jesus’ saving mission (ἦλθον—5:17) and hence “fulfil” is a christological verb (Luz). Further, it is God’s will to save to his people, which Jesus does by fulfilling God’s saving plans and continuing his saving patterns laid down in the Law and the prophets. It makes the ministry of Jesus, as Loader rightly qualifies, “the climax of history and the fulfilment of scripture, including the Law”. However, in the view of Davies and Allison, this does not imply that “the law and the prophets” have lost their “imperatival force” (5:17). “Fulfilment” of the Law and the prophets only means affirmation (Loader, and Barth) and intensification of what they mean (Snodgrass, and Hagner), “bringing out its original intention and meaning” (Sim), and not the end (France) or abrogation (Foster, Meier, and Carter) or transcending (Banks) or reduction (Schweizer) or abrogation or replacement of the Law in any sense. This would have made sense for Matthew’s hearers since this is what they would have expected of the one who is the judge to come.

Though a broad “gamut of translations” is possible for πληρῶσαι, “fulfil” is particularly appropriate for various reasons. Matthew uses the verb πληρῶ elsewhere almost consistently to prove that the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus; Matthew inserts “and the prophets” in 5:17, which implies that the author is

275 Luz, Matthäus, 1:314.
276 Loader, Law, 197. See also Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 161–62.
277 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2: 256–57.
281 France, Matthew, 179, 186.
282 Foster, Community, 94–95, 121, 141, 147, 211; Meier, Vision, 63–66. Similarly Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 141–42.
283 Banks, Jesus, 210.
284 Schweizer, Matthäus, 64.
286 Loader, Law, 166; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:484, 486–87.
thinking also of prophecy; the reference to the prophesies of the Torah (11:13), which means the Torah could be fulfilled just as the prophets could because Moses was considered as a prophet (Deut 18:15, 18); and, “until all that must happen has happened” in 5:18 shows Matthew’s concern with prophecy. But the emphasis in 5:17 is “more in line with 3:15”, πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δίκαιον. The focus of the fulfilment language (πληρῶσαι) in 5:17 and the programmatic statement in 5:17–20, as Nolland and Loader fittingly contend, is on Jesus causing God’s will to be done, which makes Jesus’ teaching salvific. This also reflects how closely Matthew links his depiction of Jesus’ saving role as teacher to his positive attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

By not only giving “the authoritative and definitive exegesis of the law” (Sim), but also by upholding the saving sufficiency of the entire Torah, even to the details and tiniest minutiae (5:18), with “a new depth of insight into what the Law requires” (Nolland), Jesus saves by “causing” God’s will to be done; doing the will of God, envisaged in the Law and the prophets, as interpreted by Jesus, is salvation (cf. 1:21). Some scholars argue that the Torah will remain sufficient only till it is fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry (Banks) or till the death and resurrection of Jesus because, as the apocalyptic events show (27:51–54), Jesus’ death and resurrection will bring about a change of eras (Meier, and Hamerton-Kelly), or “until everything (ordered in the Law) will be done”

287 Loader, Law, 166–67; Nolland, Matthew, 218–19; France, Matthew, 183.
288 Loader, Law, 168; Nolland, Matthew, 219.
289 Sim, Christian Judaism, 124.
290 Huub van de Sandt, “Law and Ethics in Matthew’s Antitheses and James’s Letter: A Reorientation of Halakah in Line with the Jewish Two Ways 3:1–6,” in Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings (ed. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen Zangenberg; SBLSS 45; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2008), 361–77, here 327.
291 Nolland, Matthew, 219.
This is very unlikely as Jesus did not come to abolish the Law at the time of his ministry (5:18b; cf. 24:34–35).

The two temporal clauses in 5:18, ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανός καὶ ή γῆ, and ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται, affirm that not one jot or tittle will pass from the Law, until is done. The second “until clause”, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται, refers to “the logical consummation” of what is being said in the Torah. The word γένηται is used here with the same meaning as that of πληρώσαι, which means doing what is intended and accomplishing what is prophesied. This means ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται may include references to Jesus’ saving not only at the end-time, but also in the present, so that it is not simply repeating the first “until clause” about heaven and earth passing away. For Matthew, considering the emphasis on the obedience to the commandments in 5:16 and 5:17 and in 5:19–20, the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, will continue to be soteriologically efficacious and sufficient because the God who gave the Torah is also the one who brings out its true sense through Jesus. The temporal clauses, therefore, heighten not “who Jesus is”, as Deines argues, but the importance and eternal saving sufficiency of the Torah (cf. 5:17), which is crucial for Matthew’s Jewish hearers.

According to Loader, “the point of the instruction for Matthew is that he wants his community to know that it [the salvific sufficiency of the Torah] is still in force and will

---


295 Loader, Law, 169.

296 Loader, Law, 169.


300 Luz, Matthäus, 1:315; Loader, Law, 169; Barth, “Law,” 65; Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 143–44; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 8; Nolland, Matthew, 220; Konradt, “Rezeption,” 131–58, 132–35. According to Betz, “the Torah will not simply pass out of existence, but will be replaced by salvation itself, which, after all, is its content”: Essays on the Sermon on the Mount (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 184.
be until eternity”.\footnote{Loader, Law, 169.} To be more precise, in Sim’s view, the Torah will be in force until the Parousia of Jesus (eschaton), when the judgement will be carried out on the basis of Jesus’ teaching of the Torah, and thus bring a new “order” or “world”.\footnote{David C. Sim, The Meaning of παλιγγενεσία in Matthew 19:28,” JSNT 50 (1993): 3–12, here 9; idem, Christian Judaism, 125–26; idem, “Matthew, Paul and the Origin and Nature of the Gentile Mission,” 386–88; idem, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 26; idem, “Social Setting of the Matthean Community,” 273; idem, “Matthew’s Use of Mark: Did Matthew Intend to Supplement or to Replace His Primary Source?,” NTS 57 (2011): 176–92, here 181; Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 176; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:490, 495; Roger Mohrlang, Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives (SNTSMS 48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9; Hagner, Matthew, 1:107; Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, 183–84.} 302 Thus, 5:18 affirms the following: the time limit for the saving adequacy and continuity of the Torah is Parousia; the Torah is sufficient and continuous in its entirety; the Torah is fulfilled in the life of Jesus, and continues to be saving, but as interpreted by Jesus (Repschinski).\footnote{Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 5. For a detailed discussion and argument for the continuing validity of the Law, see idem, Nicht Aufzulösen, 80–91.} Matthew envisages the salvific efficacy and continuity of the entire Law in 5:18 which, according to Loader, “finds confirmation also in 5:20 and in the antitheses which give a radical interpretation of the demands of Torah”.\footnote{Loader, “Jesus and the Law,” 2745.} In other words, for Matthew, 5:17–19 serve as a theological response to the Jewish indictment that his community set aside some parts of the Torah, like Jesus, and to the (Jewish) Christian believers who are disturbed at the Jewish charges.\footnote{Cf. for Sim, 5:17–20 is a response to the Pauline churches: See Christian Judaism, 207–8.} This shows that Matthew closely ties his understanding of “how Jesus saves” with his relation to the Judaism of his time.

Matthew further reinforces the salvific sufficiency and continuity of the entire Torah in 5:19. One might argue that Matthew identifies the phrase τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων with either the smallest of the Ten Commandments (Schlatter)\footnote{Schlatter, Matthäus.} or the apostolic decree (Schweizer)\footnote{Schweizer, Matthäus.} or the cultic law (Strecke)\footnote{Strecke} or the individual
commandments of Jesus, not the Torah (Banks, and Menninger). But these interpretations are not compelling because the above interpretations go against the crux of 5:17–18 on the following grounds: both “relax” in 5:19 and “abolish” in 5:17 can mean annulment of a commandment; the word “commandments” is used only in relation to laws in the Hebrew Scriptures (15:3; 19:17; 22:36, 38, 40); and, Jesus makes these statements in the context of his discussion on the Law. Additionally, as Davies and Allison rightly argue, “the least of these commandments’ adverts back to 5.18 and therefore to the commandments of the Mosaic Torah, not ahead to 5.21ff. and the words of Jesus”.  

Besides, as Luz and Nolland note, it matches the spirit of 23:23—obedience to the entire Law while distinguishing the priorities within it. It is more likely, as in 5:18, that this would also have been a response to the Jewish accusation that Matthew “relaxes” the commandments of the Torah, like Jesus. God’s demands in the Torah, irrespective of their status—“greater” or lesser”, “heavy” or “lighter”—are equally and eternally sufficient to initiate and sustain a saving relationship with God. Therefore, we may assume that 5:19 refers to the commandments of the written Torah and “fulfilling” it constitutes Jesus’ saving mission (1:21). Thus it is evident that Matthew champions the continuing salvific sufficiency of the entire Torah (cf. 5:17–19) which indicates a Jewish audience who believe that doing as God demands in the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, is saving.

308 Strecker, Bergpredigt, 60.
309 Banks, Law, 223, 238–40; Menninger, Israel, 112.
310 Luz, Matthäus, 1:316.
312 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:496.
313 Luz, Matthäus, 316–17; Nolland, Matthew, 221.
314 France, Evangelist and Teacher, 195.
Matthew suggests “righteousness” as an “interpretative key” that summarises Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah (5:20). According to Deines, the righteousness which Jesus proposes in 5:20 (“Jesus-righteousness”) is rooted in him not in the Torah. But it is unlikely as this does not account for both the programmatic statement in 5:17–19 and the appearance of the Pharisees and scribes in 5:20. For Foster, the righteousness which Matthew has Jesus propose in 5:20 is “not a difference of degree, but issues forth in a whole new pattern of discipleship which must be based on allegiance to Jesus and recognition of his status as the supreme source of authority within the community”. This is also doubtful because it does not explain the context where Matthew refers to δικαιοσύνη such as 5:20 where the presence of the Jewish leaders is significant.

According to Menninger, it is not two levels of righteousness that is contrasted in 5:20, but two different systems: obedience to Jesus’ Law and obedience to the Old Testament Law. However, this is also doubtful.

As Przybylski and Repschinski rightly argue, for Matthew, δικαιοσύνη is not a “gift of God”, as Deines argues, rather it refers to the righteousness which the Torah requires. In addition, περισσεύω in 5:20 “does not appear in the passive voice”. Further, “a direct reference to δικαιοσύνη is missing altogether” (Repschinski) in 13:12 and 25:29, which Deines uses to support his argument that for Matthew δικαιοσύνη means God’s gift. Moreover, the mention of the scribes and the Pharisees further confirms that “righteousness” is not referred to as God’s gift here. As Foster

---

315 Deines, Gerechtigkeit, 137–81, 188–223.
316 Foster, Community, 209.
317 Menninger, Israel, 113–14.
318 Przybylski, Righteousness in Matthew, 78–99, 114; Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 6. But, unlike Przybylski, Repschinski is of the view that δικαιοσύνη in Matthew is “perhaps akin to a Pauline understanding of righteousness” (6), which is not likely.
319 Deines, Gerechtigkeit, 413–34.
322 Cf. Deines, Gerechtigkeit, 448.
argues, it “calls into question” not only “the pattern of behaviour” of the Jewish leaders, but also “their way of observing the Torah”. Therefore, as Hays and Blanton rightly argue, the “righteousness” which Jesus proposes in 5:20 “exceeds” the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, but not the righteousness of the Torah because the Torah is still sufficient in its entirety and will continue to be so till eternity, but as understood by Jesus. This reinforces soteriological continuity.

This assumes that the scribes and the Pharisees too have righteousness, which is rooted in the Torah (Sim, Hays, Repschinski, and van de Sandt), but not “enough righteousness to enter the kingdom” (Runesson). Therefore, 5:20 means keeping the Torah better than the scribes and the Pharisees do, which best explains the use of the “comparative πλεῖον” (Repschinski). Moreover, the “concept of righteousness is tied up with observance of the law and not its annulment” (1:18–25; cf. Luke 1:6 cf. CD 4:7).

In 5:20 Jesus is not going “beyond the Law”, as Repschinski contends, nor suggesting a new Torah, but shows how the saving adequacy of the Torah is to be understood. In other words, what Jesus says is what the Torah requires, which the

---

323 Foster, Community, 201.
328 Sim, Christian Judaism, 130. Similarly, Loader, Law, 172–73; Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, 190; Luz, Matthäus, 1:240; Harrington, Matthew, 81.
329 Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 7. According to Repschinski, Jesus’ teaching of “greater righteousness” “takes the Torah as its point of departure without ever contradicting it, but it also goes far beyond the Law by illustrating the kind of moral teaching the Matthean Jesus demands of his disciples” (8). This means “the greater righteousness does not just demand fulfillment of the Law, it demands discipleship as the prerequisite of such fulfillment” (18). Davies and Allison identify these points as the purpose of antithesis: Matthew, 3:508–9.
scribes and the Pharisees have missed. It is consistent with the inner obedience envisaged in the Torah (e.g. Exod 20:17), but qualified with compassion and mercy (22:37–40; Hos 6:6 cf. 1:18–25). Thus, Matthew not only refutes a possible misunderstanding of the Law, but also delivers a framework for interpreting it correctly. As Loader rightly notes, a “group affirming Torah like Matthew’s thus belongs within Judaism”. This shows how closely Matthew links Jesus’ saving role as teacher, as with Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ other saving roles, to his affirmative attitude towards his Jewish heritage and the Torah.

Matthew 5:17–20, which introduces antitheses, thus, strongly negates the view that Jesus came to “abolish” the Law. It functions as an overriding soteriological framework for understanding not only the antitheses to come (5:21–48), but also Jesus’ teachings and interpretation of the Law elsewhere. Therefore, the antitheses (5:21–48) are “not antithetical to the [written] Torah”, “but antithetical to the way it has been heard and interpreted”. But Meier and Foster argue that the first, second, and sixth antitheses (murder, adultery, and love of neighbour) “simply radicalize the Law”,

---

332 There are scholars who argue that the traditional name “antithesis” is a “misnomer” because 5:21–48 does not stand in contradiction to commands from the Old Testament. See Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 10; Bachmann, “Antithese gegenüber der Bibel,” 71–96; Amy-Jill Levine, The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus (New York: HarperOne, 2006), 47; cf. Fiedler, Matthäusevangelium, 130.
while the third, fourth and fifth (divorce, oaths, and retaliation) “actually abrogate the Law in the act of radicalizing it”.\textsuperscript{335} For Deines, the Torah is not revoked, but is “made superfluous” in the teaching of Jesus.\textsuperscript{336} Both positions, however, are not persuasive. Davies and Allison argue that Jesus not only interprets the old law, but also introduces a messianic or eschatological Torah, in his capacity as the Messiah, which demands even more than the written law without contradicting it.\textsuperscript{337} This is also not compelling because, as we have seen earlier, “fulfil” does not entail “to add to”, even if what is being added to does not contradict what is being said in the Torah, nor “extending”, as Levine contends;\textsuperscript{338} it only affirms what Matthew’s Jesus claims that the Torah means and requires; nothing less and nothing more.

In Matthew, Davies and Allison argue, “δὲ, unlike ἀλλὰ, does not always signal a strong antithesis or contrast [cf. 1:19; 16:18]. Besides ‘but’, the particle can also mean ‘and yet’ or even ‘and’; and the continuative function of δὲ is well attested’ (cf. 6:29; 8:10–11; 12:5–6).\textsuperscript{339} Also, the use of divine passive (ἐρρέθη; 5:21) affirms that the Matthean Jesus does not contradict what God’s saving demands.\textsuperscript{340} Furthermore, Matthew has Jesus citing the commandments of the Torah “as they are being heard, i.e. interpreted”.\textsuperscript{341} Hence, Jesus is not making any claim, whatsoever, that he is citing the Torah as it is.\textsuperscript{342}

\textsuperscript{335} Meier, Vision, 261–62; Foster, Community, 95–143.
\textsuperscript{336} Deines, “Law,” 64–5.
\textsuperscript{337} Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:486–7, 508–9, 565. See also, Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount, 107–8, 183–90; Allison, New Moses, 184–90.
\textsuperscript{338} According to Levine, antithesis does not mean Jesus opposing the Torah, but extending it: The Misunderstood Jew, 47.
\textsuperscript{339} Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:507.
\textsuperscript{340} Luz, Matthäus, 1:332; Nolland, Matthew, 229; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:511. See also Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 7.
\textsuperscript{341} Loader, Law, 172. See also Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 7.
\textsuperscript{342} In the view of Repschinski, 5:27, 31, 38 are “direct quotations from the Law”: “Moral Teaching,” 7.
In other words, Jesus is only “intensifying” the proper meaning and true saving sense of the Torah, and not giving a “second opinion” regarding what the Torah requires to be saved or to be in a saving relationship with God. According to Matthew, Jesus interprets the Torah in the way it should be or should have been interpreted, and, hence, Jesus’ interpretation cannot be at variance with the saving demands of the Torah or with the God of Israel who gave the Torah. This shows that the antithesis is not the contrast between Jesus’ teachings and the Torah itself, as Repschinski suggests, but between how it was being interpreted and how it should be interpreted. In addition, the dispute with the scribes and the Pharisees is not over the sufficiency of the Torah, but concerning how to observe the Torah correctly. It means the antitheses need to be interpreted in a way that makes best sense of the appearance of Jewish leaders in 3:7 and 5:20 and Jesus’ savage critique of them (chapter 23). Thus, by making Jesus’ saving teachings continuous with the Torah and with his Jewish heritage, Matthew reinforces his understanding of salvation in continuity.

The meaning of the righteousness of the Torah (5:20) is explained further in 5:21–48. From condemning murder (5:21–26) and adultery (5:27–30), Matthew has Jesus “going beyond” the hitherto “heard” interpretation of the commandment (cf. 5:21c; 27b), to the root cause of the problem (anger and lust), to censure the attitude behind such actions that disrupt the continuing saving relationship with God. Likewise, Matthew limits the grounds for divorce to sexual immorality (5:31–32; 19:3–9) and

---

345 According to Repschinski, “Jesus confronts the issue of the Law directly, not some interpretation of it”: “Moral Teaching,” 7. However, Repschinski held an opposite view before: Nicht Aufzulosen, 91–94.
346 Both anger and murder belong together in Jewish traditions (Sir 22:24; T. Dan 1:7–8).
347 Loader, Law, 173. See also Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, 218–19.
advocates loving perfectly (5:43–48). The “Torah remains in force” and Jesus’ saving remains consistently in continuity with the written Torah and what it demands (cf. 5:17–19), which is fundamental for Matthew’s Jewish hearers.

In contrast, Meier and Foster argue that the prohibition of oaths (5:33–37) and of the law of retaliation (5:38–42), has the effect of revoking the Torah. Meier argues that oaths are objectionable because “they infringe on God’s right to be God”, which means they are to be revoked. For Hare, “it is the reckless use of oaths that is condemned”. Similarly, Strecker considers that the effect of 5:37 is that Matthew’s Jesus has not removed oaths altogether. These proposals would indicate that when Jesus rules out the Torah provisions for oaths and vows, he not only establishes his authority over that of the Torah, but also rescinds other definite commandments of the Law. This would mean that what the Torah requires and what Jesus demands in relation to salvation are discontinuous. But this is unlikely. What, then, does Matthew imply in 5:33–42?

Matthew has Jesus uphold the Torah “by making it even stricter” and shorter, which would not have been surprising for Matthew’s Jewish hearers. According to Josephus and Philo, the Essenes have avoided oaths to show their love for God (J.W. 2.135; Omnis Prob. 84). Jesus’ teaching regarding oaths was not uncommon in Jewish traditions (Exod 20:7; Lev 19:12; Num 30: 3–15; Deut 23:21–23; Ps 50:14; cf. 11QTemple 53–54). Additionally, the name of God is protected from being profaned in

349 Loader, “Attitude to Judaism and the Law,” 356; see also, idem, Law, 169.
350 Meier, Vision, 257–60; Foster, Community, 113–22.
351 Meier, Vision, 259.
352 Hare, Matthew, 54–55.
353 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 84. He points to the similar formulation in 2 En. 49:10. See also Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:535–36; cf. 1:538.
354 Loader, Law, 176.
the process of swearing (Exod 20:7, 23:1; Deut 5:11, 20; Lev 19:12). In Greek, Luz argues, the repetition of “yes” or “no” is a strong affirmation, not a substitute oath formula. Swearing by Jerusalem is supposed to be an abuse (5:34–35) because it is a “holy city” and the city of David, which indicates Matthew’s respect for Jerusalem, like any other Jew. Matthew’s Jesus is declaring all the paraphernalia connected with oaths as redundant and proposes an “alternative praxis” of saying “yes” or “no” (5:37). Moreover, if one happens to make an oath, it must be kept. So, as Loader rightly argues, “enhancing the Torah’s strictness or refusing to do what it permits is not abrogation”, but only enhances the soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s demands in the Torah. And, such a theological stance would certainly position Matthew and his audience within the Jewish discussions of the time. This again indicates the connection between Matthew’s understanding of salvation and his attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

For Meier and Foster, the antithesis on retaliation (5:38–42) is a clear example of revocation. Deines argues that the teachings of Jesus make the laws of retaliation “superfluous”. But it is more likely that, as with the interpretation of oaths and vows, Jesus’ position on the principle of equivalent retaliation (5:38–42) is continuous with

356 Luz, Matthäus, 1:377.
357 Loader, Law, 176.
360 Meier, Vision, 260–61; Foster, Community, 122–29. For Foster, 5:38–42 reflects Jesus’ “supersessionary attitude” towards the Torah.
what the Torah requires. According to Carter, the issue of violent resistance against Rome was a burning issue, particularly after the demolition of the temple. But Matthew has Jesus openly negate such violent measures (vv. 39b–42), as I have argued elsewhere. And, more significantly, as Runesson rightly points out, Matthew thus outlines “what proper behaviour should be”, according to the will of God as envisaged in the Law, and, therefore, reinforces his community’s Jewish/ethnic identity, given that “ethnicity and law are intertwined” in Matthew. Like in the previous five antitheses, Matthew has Jesus interpret the Torah strictly here too.

For Matthew, the antitheses can mean refusing to do what the Torah permits (cf. 5:21–48), but not what the Torah commands. That “Jesus turns restriction into prohibition” in these two instances is consistent with other Jewish traditions, such as we find in the Temple Scroll, which in its insistence on keeping the Torah turns the restriction of polygamy into “prohibition of polygamy altogether for the king” (57:15–18). While any such strict interpretation, Loader argues, “does imply negation of some details, but this is quite different from suspending Torah by a rival authority”. This draws our attention to the fact that other strict observers of the Torah like the author of the Temple Scroll had no compunction in interpreting it in a way that at one level set some things aside but saw this not as setting the Torah aside but upholding it. Thus, Matthew checks people from abusing the true sense of the Torah in the name of being committed to the commandments of the Torah.

---

In conclusion: by placing the “programmatic” statement in 5:17–20 just before the antitheses (5:21–48), Matthew not only removes the “ambiguity”, but also shows that any interpretation of the antitheses as abrogation of the Law is contrary to his agenda. This puts Jesus’ teachings of the Torah elsewhere in the right perspective. Accordingly, Jesus’ teaching in 5:21–48 means keeping the Law in its “deepest sense” and, therefore, it is the application of God’s saving demands, not abrogation of the Torah. What is “contrasting” in Jesus’ saving teaching, therefore, is its consistent drive for complete and radical obedience to God’s commands, and its reaching not to the level of action but to the root dispositions that lead to the action. Thus, “Matthew’s Jesus is defending, normatively, a strict interpretation of the Mosaic law, which exclusively belongs to the Jewish people according to most variants of first-century Judaism” (Runesson). These claims would have been an attempt not to set the Torah aside but to define how it should be interpreted, a stance which would have provoked the synagogue authorities.

4.7.3. Jewish Piety (6:1–18)

The theological and soteriological continuity between Jesus’ teachings and what the Torah requires is further evident in Matthew’s affirmative attitude towards the salvific sufficiency of the religious practices central to Jewish identity such as fasting (4:2; 6:16–18), almsgiving (6:2–14; cf. Deut 15:11; Prov: 25:21–22; Sir 3:30; Tob 1:3), prayer (6:5–15), oaths (5:33–34), and tithes (23:23–24). The combination of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer, along with righteousness, appear very commonly in Jewish sources.

---

368 Sim, *Christian Judaism*, 129.
371 In the words of Levine, Jesus in fact “extends prohibitions regarding action to prohibition regarding thought”: *The Misunderstood Jew*, 47.
(Tob 12:8: “Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness”).

In the view of Syreeni, Matthew is proposing a Christian piety over against Jewish piety here. But this is not convincing. As Sim correctly observes, it is clear from 6:1–18 that both Matthew and his opponents “share in common a number of religious practices, such as almsgiving, praying and fasting”. What is being criticised is not the practice or its efficacy, but the way it is observed (6.2) and how it is/was made soteriologically ineffective. This is a savage critique of the misuse and abuse of Jewish piety, condemning the “hankering for public approval”, and a cautioning against false piety (6:3–4, 6, 9–14, 17–18). According to Luz, unlike in Matthew 23, it is the attitude behind the religious practices of the Jewish leaders that is criticised in 6:1–18, not the deeds of piety as such. It also contrasts “proper righteousness” of the Torah (5:20) and the abuse of religious practices by the Pharisees and the scribes (cf. 5:20; chapter 23). Those who practise piety with “pure intentions” (Broadhead) and in accordance with the righteousness of the Torah are promised a reward (6:1, 4, 6, 18) which they will receive before God (2 Macc 12:41; cf. Rom 2:16), who knows people’s hearts and minds (Ps 90:8; 2 Bar. 83:3), in the last judgement (7:21; 25:31–46), which is based on the teachings of Jesus, who is the judge to come (3:11–12).

But there is more to the Lord’s Prayer, especially the relationship between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness in 6:14–15 (cf. 18:21–35). Scholars have argued that there is no soteriological link between the two. According to Carter, human forgiveness

374 Sim, Christian Judaism, 122.  
375 Luz, Matthäus, 1:423.  
376 According to Broadhead, “the followers of Jesus are called to pure intentions and a consistent focus on God (6.1, 3–4, 6, 17–18; 23.8–12)”. See Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 147.
is what God’s forgiveness demands, not the criterion for divine forgiveness. Human forgiveness is only a response to God’s forgiveness, so argues Keener. Davies and Allison are of the view that 6:14–15 “focuses on the judgment and reconciliation”, not the forgiveness of sins (cf. 5:7; 23:6). For Van Aarde, though “it supposes forgiveness” from sins, the emphasis of 6:14–15 is on “monetary debt”. According to Margaret Davies, the petition in 6:14–15 asks for forgiveness at the eschatological judgement. This means the petition provides “an incentive for people to act mercifully in the present”. On the other hand, Nolland considers human forgiveness as “a necessary condition” for God’s forgiveness, but the former is not “sufficient” enough to effect the latter. But these interpretations are not persuasive.

It is more probable that Matthew closely links human forgiveness and divine forgiveness in 6:14–15. According to Runesson, the divine-human saving relationship is “dependent on the effectiveness of inter-human forgiveness”; “God will not cancel a person’s debts if that person is not cancelling what others owe him or her” (6:14–15; 18:21–35). For Matthew, therefore, “inter-human forgiveness” is a “necessary condition” for divine forgiveness (5:7, 45; 6:14–15; 18:25). God’s forgiveness is the result of human forgiveness. This also means God’s forgiveness can be lost or

---

377 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 370; idem, Storyteller, 169–70.
380 Andries G. Van Aarde, “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, the Davidic Messiah, as Political Saviour in Matthew’s History,” in Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology (ed. Jan G. van der Watt; NovTSup 121; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2005), 7–31 here 16.
381 Margaret Davies, Matthew (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 60.
382 Nolland, Matthew, 294, 504–6, 753–62, 1082.
385 Meier, Matthew, 62; idem, Vision, 132–35; Beare, Matthew, 177–78; Patte, Matthew, 89;
Harrington, Matthew, 94–95, 122, 125, 270; Hare, Matthew, 69, 215; Gundry, Matthew, 109, 375; Luz, Matthäus, 1:459; 2:28–29, 37–38; France, Matthew, 252; Craig A. Evans, Matthew (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147, 336–38.
386 Hagner, Matthew, 1:152.
387 Meier, Matthew, 62; idem, Vision, 132–35.
revoked by refusing to forgive others, which is soteriologically consistent with the “righteousness” of the Torah (5:20). Such a soteriological link is natural to Judaism (Sir 28:2–5; m. Yoma 8:9). This shows that Matthew’s understanding of salvation is thoroughly Jewish in approach.

In Runesson’s view, the close relationship between “inter-human forgiveness” and divine forgiveness “works well within the system of the sacrificial cult in the temple, and is independent of Jesus as far as the effectiveness of the cult itself is concerned; only when humans reconcile will God respond to sacrificial gifts (Matt 5:23–24)”.

For Runesson, “this means, by implication, that humans can, potentially, bind others in their debt, since debt can be removed only by the victim”. In Matthew, therefore, it is “inter-human forgiveness” and “reconciliation” (5:23–24) that make a sacrifice for divine forgiveness effective; only a reconciled person can bring sacrificial gifts to God in the temple, “without defiling the altar” (5:23–24). This shows that, as with many Jews, as Runesson rightly argues, Matthew could also hold together more than one “mechanism” that can bring about forgiveness so long as their “aim is to purify the people from the defilement resulting from sin”. Therefore, it is likely that Matthew does not limit salvation to something achieved by Jesus.

Clearly then: in 6:1–18, Matthew is not proposing some “new” rules for a “new” kind of salvation that Jesus brings. Rather, Jesus is affirming the continuing sufficiency of the religious practices such as prayer, tithes, and almsgiving, which the Torah requires of his people to be in a saving relationship with God. Jesus interpreted these...
religious practices with authority (cf. 7:28–29) that they might effect repentance and forgiveness, and, thus, their continuing salvific sufficiency may be upheld. The Jewish leaders, on the other hand, made prayers, almsgiving, and tithes ineffective with their corrupt intentions and hypocrisy. Matthew has Jesus closely link human forgiveness and divine forgiveness (6:14–15; cf. 18:21–35). This indicates that Jesus’ saving does not repeal or replace how God effected saving in the history of Israel. And, more significantly, forgiveness as forgiveness of sins is here as in Judaism an ongoing thing rooted in one’s relation to God shedding light on 1:21 and its meaning.

4.7.4. Salvation: Law, Judgement, and Continuity (7:1–27)

The continuity between Jesus’ saving role on earth as teacher and his eschatological role as the judge to come (3:11–12; cf. 25:31–46) is further underlined in 7:1–27. For Matthew, κρίνετε in 7:1–2 means condemning or pronouncing eschatological judgement rather than making “ethical judgements”.

Matthew does this by using the same verb (κρίνετε) in the context of final judgement in 19:28 too, as Carter correctly reasons. This means Jesus is the coming judge (3:11–12) and, hence, the authority to pronounce judgement belongs to him (7:23; 25:31–46). Moreover, Jesus will judge his people on the basis of his own teaching concerning God’s will as reflected in the Law and the prophets.

Matthew achieves such a soteriological link between Jesus pronouncing the final judgement and his teaching by mentioning “the law and the prophets” in 7:12 and in 5:17, which, thus, form an inclusio. Therefore, the disciples must not assume God’s role as judge and pronounce judgement (cf. 5:43–48; 6:12, 14–15) because Jesus is the

---

394 Davies and Allison, 1:668; Nolland, Matthew, 318; France, Matthew, 274; Hagner, Matthew, 1:169; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 180–81.
395 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 181.
396 Loader, Law, 184.
only “perfect” (cf. 5:48) judge (cf. 13:36–43, 47–50). This is consistent with John’s prediction of Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–13 cf. 13:30). However, it is possible that the command μὴ κρίνετε (7:1) may in part be intended to be a critique of the Pharisees, who condemn and judge others (9:10–13; 11:19; 12:1–8).

Giesen is of the view, however, that the Golden Rule in 7:12 (“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets”) replaces the Law or excludes some parts of the Torah. This is not plausible, given Matthew’s affirmative attitude towards the entirety and eternity of the Torah in 5:17–20. In addition, Matthew is not using 7:12 as an “exclusive” summary, reducing the entire Law and the prophets (Loader), nor does he set up a contrast between an “ethics of mercy” indicated in the Love Command or the Golden Rule and an “ethics of obedience” embodied in the Torah (Theissen). Instead, Matthew identifies 7:12 as an “inclusive” summary not only underlying all the requirements and provisions of the Law and prophets (Loader), but also serves as a way to interpret (Sim) and observe/enact the Law (Kollmann), even though it has no application to ceremonial and cultic laws (Loader). Moreover, such attempts to abridge the Law and the prophets are not unusual among Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries. That means Matthew’s “inclusive”

---

397 Giesen, Christliches, 143–46.
398 Loader, Law, 184.
400 Loader, Law, 184.
403 Loader, Law, 184.
404 For more examples see Daube, Rabbinic Judaism, 63–66.
summary of the Law and the prophets (7:12; cf. 22:34–40) sits well with first-century Judaism.

This makes best sense also of Matthew’s use of the two contrasting ways: “narrow path” and “broad path” (7:13–14; cf. Deut 11:26; Jer 21:8); “wise” and “foolish” (7:24–27); “good” and “the wicked” (7:17–18). Jesus’ “wise” and “good” teachings bear much fruit and lead to life. This Matthew achieves, as Loader fittingly argues, by paralleling “keeping Jesus’ words (7:24), doing the will of the Father (7:21), bearing good fruit (7:17), and entering through the narrow gate (7:13”). In Broadhead’s view, the two contrasting ways in 7:13–14 reflect “the Jewish paranesis” of the *Two Ways Tradition*. The two contrasting ways reflect the struggle of a community to consolidate not only its religious and theological frontiers, but also their understanding of “how Jesus saves”, which is how all the Jewish groups operated in the first century. This shows how thoroughly Matthew’s attitude towards his Jewish heritage informs his soteriology.

While Luke prefers ἀδικία (13:27), Matthew defines the criterion that will be decisive in the final judgement as ἀνομία (7:23). In Sim’s view, the word ἀνομία refers to the Law-free Christians and recalls Pauline passages (Rom 10:9–10; 1 Cor 12:3) because “it picks up and elaborates the earlier anti-Pauline sentiments of 5:17–19”. But it is more likely that this implies the bad fruit the Pharisees and the scribes bear (cf. 5:20, 48) because they fail to understand and do the will of God according to the true sense of the Torah (22:40; cf. 7:12). It is not the Torah as people have heard and

---

406 Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, 159.
understood it, as interpreted by the Jewish leaders, that saves, but the Torah as interpreted by Jesus.

To sum up: for Matthew, Jesus’ saving is a continuation of what it means to be saved and to be in a saving relationship with God according to the Torah. Thus, Jesus’ teaching of the Torah is part of his saving (1:21). And this saving belongs to his role as future judge, since he, the judge, teaches on what basis the judgement will be given.

4.8. TEACHER AND JUDGE: PROMISE, LAW, AND CONTINUITY ELSEWHERE IN MATTHEW

As we have seen in chapters 1–7, the continuity between Jesus’ earthly role as teacher and his eschatological role as judge shows how closely Matthew links his soteriology to his affirmative attitude towards the Law and the prophets, and to “who Jesus is” (Christology). This is reinforced in the rest of the Gospel too, which is evident, in particular, in the controversies and conflict stories (9:2–8 [this we shall discuss in chapter 5 as it appears in the context of healing]; 12:1–14; 15:1–20; 17:24–27; 19:3–9; 21:14–17; 21:23–22:46; 25:1–30), Jesus’ teaching/discourses (chapters 10, 13, 18; 19:16–22; 20:1–16; 21:28–44; 22:1–16; 23:1–39; 24–25), and Jesus’ last commandment (28:18–20).

4.8.1. Controversies and Conflict Stories

The conflict stories (9:2–8; 12:1–14; 15:1–20; 17:24–27; 19:3–9; 21:14–17; 21:23–22:46; 25:1–30) show that the Jewish leaders, whom Jesus unequivocally rejected, constantly debated and disputed with Jesus over issues concerning the Law. Because of their engagement in the legal debates of late first-century Judaism, Matthew’s hearers were familiar with such hostility and austere polemic among various Jewish groups. This means Jesus’ conflicts with the Jewish leaders were not surprising for Matthew’s
audience as the dispute was not over whether to uphold the Law or not, but what the Torah means and how the Torah must be obeyed to be in the saving relationship with God.  

Additionally, contrary to some scholars—Overman, Van Tilborg, and Hummel—who hold various Jewish groups together, overlooking the extent of diversity in first-century Judaism, the majority of scholars rightly argue that Matthew carefully separates the positive response of the crowd (9:33; 12:23; 21:8–10, 15, 46; 22:33) and the negative response of the manipulative Jewish leaders (26:47, 55; 27:15–26) to prove that the leaders do not represent the whole of Judaism. Hence, the blatant dismissal of the Jewish leaders does not entail rejection of Judaism or the saving efficacy of the Torah. This is the larger framework of the controversies and conflict stories in Matthew’s Gospel.

4.8.1.1. Sabbath Laws

Compared to Mark and Luke, Matthew shows a greater amount of sensitivity towards the observance of the Sabbath throughout his Gospel. This is very evident in the story  

---

409 See Overman, Matthew’s Gospel, 19–23, 141–47.
of the disciples’ plucking of the grain on the Sabbath (12:1–8; cf. Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5). In order to “appease an obvious criticism”, Matthew inserts “his disciples were hungry” (12:1), which in Mark is only implied (2:23), as the reason for plucking; thus giving them a reason to defend their action (Saldarini, Hill, Kilpatrick, and Barth). As Sim, Luz, and Saldarini correctly suggest, the alleged transgression of the Sabbath law is not deliberate, but is in response to human need. For Jesus, according to Saldarini, human need is the “principle for interpreting Sabbath law, a principle which will be legitimated through the citation of Hos. 6:6” in 12:7. As in 9:13, Matthew uses Hos 6:6 in 12:7 “as commentary on a conflict with Pharisees” (Broadhead) to show that “the Pharisees fail to obey the law correctly because of their lack of mercy” (Sim). This is consistent with Matthew’s position in 23:23 that “mercy” is a weightier matter of the Law. Thus, Matthew proves that Jesus’ disciples did not transgress the Sabbath laws wantonly (Luz, and Saldarini).

According to Saldarini, by citing 1 Sam 21:1–6—about David taking loaves, meant specifically for the priests from the sanctuary at Nob (cf. Lev 24:5–9; Exod 25:30; 40:23), to feed himself and his people—“Matthew draws a parallel between the hunger of David and his men and that of Jesus’ disciples”. Both broke the priestly

---

on Matthew’s use of Mark, see Sim, “Matthew’s use of Mark,” 176–92. According to Sim, Matthew “wrote his own Gospel to replace the inadequate Marcan account” (176).


414 For a more detailed redactional analysis, see Repschinski, Controversy, 94–107.


418 Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 152.

419 Sim, Christian Judaism, 128.

regulations out of human need. But David was “justified” in his behaviour. This means, according to Sim, that though “the sabbath law is valid and must be obeyed . . . it can be overridden in special circumstances”, 421 but only in so far as it does not “come into conflict with the “weightier” matters of the Law.” 422 This does not imply abrogation of the Sabbath (cf. 5:17–19), 423 rather it puts the understanding of the Sabbath into the correct perspective, 424 which sits well with first century Jewish legal debate concerning Sabbath observance.

Matthew has added one more argument to defend Jesus’ interpretation of the Sabbath—the work of the priests in the temple (12:5–6). 425 Even though work is not permitted on the Sabbath, priests are allowed to perform sacrifices (Lev 24:8; Num 28:9–10) and they are guiltless. That means the temple practice “takes precedence over sabbath observance” 426 or even surpass the Sabbath requirements; “it is lawful to break the sabbath and remain guiltless” (Sim). 427 For Matthew, as Luz rightly argues, if the priests are allowed to transgress the Sabbath requirements because of the temple sacrifices, then, by all means, the disciples also must be allowed to break the Sabbath laws because of human need, given that God “desire[s] mercy and not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6; cf. Isa 58:6–7). 428 Of course, for Matthew, mercy does not substitute for the cultic institutions; rather, it is the centre of doing God’s will, which is very much a Jewish religious notion.

421 Sim, Christian Judaism, 137. See also, idem “The Social Setting of the Matthean Community,” 273; idem, “Rise and Fall,” 484.
422 Sim, “The Social Setting of the Matthean Community,” 273; idem, “Rise and Fall,” 484.
424 Sim, Christian Judaism, 137; Overman, Matthew’s Gospel, 81–82; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:313; Hummel, Auseinandersetzung, 40,45.
425 It is likely, according to Saldarini, that Matthew is aware that his excessive criticism of the Pharisees concerning Sabbath observance on the basis of 1 Sam 21:1–6, which does not pertain to the Sabbath, is weak: Christian-Jewish Community, 129.
426 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:314.
427 Sim, Christin Judaism, 136.
428 Luz, Matthäus, 2:231.
Matthew makes an important christological claim in 12:6 (“something greater than the temple is here”) in relation to Jesus’ authority to interpret the Sabbath law. According to Deines, 12:6 refers to the abrogation of the Sabbath. But this position is not compelling. As Loader rightly observes, Jesus’ claim of authority in 12:6 comes “immediately before Matthew’s second allusion to Hosea 6:6” in 12:7. Since “Matthew is responsible for these additions”, in Loader’s view, both 12:6 and 12:7 “should be taken closely together”. Then Loader argues: “something greater is happening here than the temple, ie. what happens in the temple”. Therefore, for Matthew, according to Luz, mercy is greater than the temple and sacrifice. This, however, does not mean Matthew has Jesus consider his authority and saving as invalidating the role of the temple nor does it call into question the authority and sufficiency of the Law. Instead, it indicates Jesus’ divine authority to bring out the correct sense of the Sabbath law. Matthew however highlights Jesus’ authority (Loader) and his “status and position as God’s Messiah” (Runesson) in 12:6, without “[reducing] the significance of the temple” (Runesson). As Loader correctly argues, “this is also the implication of the way Matthew has rewritten Mark 2:27–28, to preserve only the christological claim, which he then presents as the ground rather than the conclusion for what precedes: ‘For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (12:8; cf. Mark 2:27–28). But Matthew has Jesus use his divine authority to declare what is

---

430 Loader, Law, 202.
431 Loader, Law, 202.
432 Loader, Law, 202.
433 Luz, Matthäus, 2:231.
434 Loader, Law, 202.
436 Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 116 n. 76.
437 Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 116 n. 76.
438 Loader, Law, 202.
appropriate on the Sabbath, and thus uphold the continuing sufficiency and efficacy of the Law.  

Further evidence for the continuity between Jesus’ teaching and the Torah in relation to the Sabbath can be found in 24:20, where Matthew adds to Mark (13:18) the detail that the disciples should pray that their flight should not only be not in winter, but also “nor on a Sabbath”. However, “nor on a Sabbath” has been variously explained. France and Gundry argue that it will be hard to flee on the Sabbath as the gates will be shut and provisions unattainable. This is not convincing because one could easily flee for a day without provisions. Also, 24:16 implies distance from cities. For others—Tuckett, Barth, Banks, and Stanton—it may be because the Matthean community feared that flight on the Sabbath would offend their Jewish adversaries and provoke their hostility further. This position is implausible because it is very unlikely that Matthew feared that any such flight would worsen the hostility of their enemies more because Matthew’s relation to the Jewish leaders is already exceedingly polemical and aggressive. Matthew is not interested in saving the relation either. Is it because it would expose the identity of the Matthean community—as Meier, and Carter argue? That is very improbable because Jewish persecution has nothing to do with 24:15–19, which is the immediate context. Is it because God rests on the Sabbath, so contends Bammel? It is not that the divine assistance which is referred to in 24:12 is not likely

to come as God rests on the Sabbath, because Matthew has Jesus heal people on the Sabbath (cf. 12:10).

It is more likely that Matthew inserts “nor on a Sabbath” because his community, like Jesus and his disciples, faithfully and strictly observed the Sabbath (5:17–19; 23:23), but as interpreted by Jesus. Such an insertion “may indicate memory of what happened at the time of flight” during the Jewish war in 70 C.E. But, considering the escalating hostility with the Jewish leaders in the immediate aftermath of the Jewish war, “it may now be seen as relevant for any future flight” (cf. 10:17; 23:34). Thus, Matthew’s position on what is allowed on the Sabbath during the war marks him out as a serious participant in the Jewish debate of his time (1 Macc 2:31–41; Num. Rab. 23:1).

Thus, Matthew keeps Jesus’ teaching of the Sabbath in continuity with what the Torah requires of “his people” concerning the true observance of the Sabbath. For Matthew, observance of the Sabbath and keeping the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, are saving. This indicates not only the continuity between Jesus’ salvific teachings and what the Torah requires of his people to be in a saving relationship with God, but also the close link between Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves” and his affirmative attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

4.8.1.2. Purity Laws

The continuity between Jesus’ saving teachings and the provisions of the Torah is further evident in Matthew’s thoroughgoing theological sensitivity towards the Jewish


446 Loader, Law, 246.

purity laws, especially in his account of Jesus’ encounter with the Jewish leaders on the washing of hands (15:1–20; cf. Mark 7:1–23). According to Loader, for Matthew, unlike Mark (7:3–4), there is no need to explain the cultic importance of the rite of hand washing to his Jewish audience because it is assumed that to be in a saving relationship with God one must keep the cultic barriers set by the purification rites in the Torah (cf. Exod 30:19–21; Lev 15:11). However, to avoid any confusion concerning whether Matthew’s Jesus abrogates the purity laws, he transforms the apparent abrogation of the Jewish dietary laws in Mark to anti-Pharisaism so as to confine the dispute to a single issue: the validity of the traditions of the elders “concerning the necessity for washing of hands prior to eating”. This is consistent with the Matthean Jesus’ attack on the Jewish leaders’ abuse of purity laws elsewhere in chapter 23, where Jesus attacks the Jewish leaders’ preoccupation with ritual purity and neglect of moral purity. [To this we shall return later in this Chapter (section 4.8.2.6)].

Matthew omits the sweeping conclusion drawn by Mark that Jesus “declared all foods clean” (15:17–18; cf. Mark 7:19b), which “effectively abolishes” the Jewish

---

448 Like Mark (1:44), Matthew also upholds Mosaic purity laws (8:4). And, as in Luke (7:1–10), the Matthean Jesus does not enter the house of the centurion (8:5–13). But the same Matthean Jesus enters the house of Peter’s mother-in-law, a Jew, as in Mark (8:14; Mark 1:30). Contrary to Luke (7:3), it is the centurion who asks for help from Jesus, a Jew, in Matthew, not the elders of the Jews (8:5). As in Mark, Jesus’ claim that the ruler’s daughter is not dead, but sleeps (9:24 cf. Mark 5:39), might be seen as a conscious theological endeavour to avoid the danger of corpse impurity. Furthermore, as opposed to the Pharisees, who, according to Matthew, give importance only to ritual nuances of cultic purity, Matthean Jesus gives primary importance to moral purity without neglecting its ritual expressions (23:23–26 cf. 15:11, 17–20). Likewise, contrary to Mark, Matthew has a Canaanite woman coming out of the Gentile region to meet Jesus who is a Jew (15:24; Mark 7:24).

However, Jesus’ physical contact with the leper (8:3), the woman with a flow of blood (9:20), his presence in Gentile territory (8:28–34), and table fellowship with sinners (9:10–11) are passed over without any comment about the purity issues involved. Silence does not imply abrogation. This sets the framework for understanding Jesus’ conflict with the Jewish leaders over the washing of hands (15:1–20; cf. Mark 7:1–23) in Matthew.

449 Loader, Law, 213.


purity laws. For many scholars, Matthew’s omission is only “stylistic” and therefore the Matthean Jesus, too, renders invalid the Jewish and dietary laws. But this interpretation is problematic as it betrays the Matthean Jesus’ programmatic statement on his positive attitude towards the Law and the prophets in 5:17–19. Moreover, had Matthew followed Mark’s liberal attitude towards the Jewish dietary and purity laws, then he would have definitely included Mark’s statement to that effect. This shows that Matthew’s Jesus is concerned with ritual purity, but ranks it as of secondary importance compared with moral purity as in 23:25–26. [To this we shall return later in this Chapter (section 4.8.2.6)]. This means, as Sim rightly argues, Matthew’s refusal to follow Mark in having declared all foods clean is deliberate. Therefore, as is more likely, we must assume that Matthew’s Jesus was not willing to pronounce that unclean foods cannot defile, which means Jesus accepted the traditional cultic distinction between clean and unclean food, and would have avoided foods that were prohibited.

Furthermore, unlike in Mark (6:32–44; 8:1–10), where the food laws are rejected (Mark 7:19b), the food purity is further affirmed in the Matthean feeding accounts of

---

452 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:531, 535; Loader, Law, 214–15; Sim, Christian Judaism, 133.
454 Gundry, Matthew, 305–6; Meier, Vision, 101–2; France, Matthew, 234; Beare, Matthew, 338; Segal, “Matthew’s Jewish Voice,” 7.
455 Sim takes Matthew’s omission of Mark 7:19b as an evidence to show that “Matthew specifically composed his Gospel to render Mark redundant” (“Matthew’s Use of Mark,” 183), which he does by “rejudaising” Mark (“Matthew’s Use of Mark,” 181). In Sim’s view, Matthew intended to “replace”, not to supplement, Mark because it was written from a Pauline perspective. See Sim, “Matthew’s Use of Mark,” 176–92; idem, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 14.
457 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 159.
458 So correctly, Mohrlang, Matthew and Paul, 11; Gnanka, Matthäus, 2:27; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 141; Hagner, Matthew, 2:433; Overman, Church and Community, 226; Sim, Christian Judaism, 134; idem, “Matthew’s Use of Mark,” 181; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:537–38.
(14:13–21; 15:30–38). The feeding accounts not only celebrate the fulfilment of Israel’s messianic/soteriological hopes, but also function as a vindication of Jesus’ messianic identity and his teaching. As Loader correctly notes, Mark uses the feeding accounts “symbolically” to celebrate the inclusion of Jews and Gentiles. In contrast, Matthew treats both feedings as of Jews, not of Gentiles, and reworks Mark 7 to remove the abrogation. The Matthean Jesus, therefore, not only “fulfils” all the Jewish purity and dietary laws, but also affirms its close relation to the saving relationship between God and “his people” (15:19; cf. 23:25–26). Thus, Matthew’s restriction of the debate vis-à-vis purity laws to the single issue of Pharisaic hand washing shows that this subject was still a matter of conflict between Matthew and his Jewish rivals. This implies that Matthew’s relation to his Jewish heritage was very much alive when the Gospel was written and, therefore, understandably, it would have had a significant bearing on his understanding of salvation.

Moreover, by separating the παράδοσις of the elders (15:2) and the παράδοσις of the Pharisees (“your tradition”—15:3), Matthew shows that Jesus’ rejection of the Pharisaic traditions and practices such as hand washing (15:2) is not a complete disrespect towards the παράδοσις of the elders and the saving requirements of the Torah. Likewise, he omits the Markan reference to the fact that it was practised by “all the Jews” (Mark 7:3), which shows his interest “to reduce the weight of Jewish support for it.” Matthew also drops Mark 7:13—“and many such things you do” (cf. 15:3)—to show that Jesus is opposing only the traditions that are not supported by God’s demands in the Torah (15:2, 3, 6; cf. Exod 30:19–21; Lev 15:11; Deut 21:6) and the

460 Loader, Law, 214–15.
463 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 135.
Pharisaic attempt to supplement the Law with such παράδοσις (e.g. Korban: 15:3), not the tradition of the elders as a whole. According to Repschinski, “the Pharisees and scribes have opposed themselves to God by elevating their own traditions to an authority where they oppose the Law of God”. 464

Nevertheless, Matthew’s theological deviation from human traditions is not surprising to his Jewish audience as they are familiar with similar positions taken by the Sadducees (Josephus, Ant. 13.6, 297–298). This again shows the connection between Matthew’s relation to his Jewish heritage and his soteriology.

4.8.1.3. Temple

Matthew’s positive attitude towards the temple (5:23–24; 17:24–27; 21:13–14, 23; 23:37–39; 26:55) further reinforces the continuity between God’s saving in the past and Jesus’ saving. Repschinski, however, argues that according to Matthew the temple will become “unnecessary and superfluous” in the eschatological future because it is Jesus who brings salvation. 465 Moreover, “Jesus is greater than the temple” (cf. 12:6). 466 And, “when Jesus is present to his people again, the temple will have ceased to be the place of worship”. 467 He also argues that “God himself has ended the temple’s efficaciousness. The temple is no longer needed. The expiating sacrifices of the temple are subsumed in the ministry of Jesus . . .”. 468 According to Repschinski, Matthew explains the destruction of the temple in terms of Christology; 469 the fate of the temple is decided in the fate of Jesus. For Luz, Jesus’ exodus from the temple entails rejection of its role in God’s saving initiatives in history. 470 Stanton, too, but in general terms,

464 Repschinski, Controversy, 161.
465 Repschinski, “Re-imagining the Presence of God,” 49.
466 Repschinski, “Re-imagining the Presence of God,” 49.
467 Repschinski, “Re-imagining the Presence of God,” 45–49.
469 According to Runesson, for Matthew, “the destruction of the temple is not punishment for Jesus’ death”: “Impact of Ethnic Ethnicity,” 16 n. 66.
470 Luz, Theology of the Gospel of Matthew, 14; idem, Matthäus, 1:88–89.
opines that Matthew maintains a negative attitude towards the temple (23:38 cf. 23:21).\footnote{Stanton, \textit{Gospel for a New People}, 126–31, 158–61, 192–206.} But these propositions are not compelling.

Matthew makes careful redactional changes and insertions to express his strong theological dissent from the “blunt Markan comments” in respect of the salvific role and importance of the temple (Mark 11–13; 14:58).\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 229–31.} As Loader correctly argues, for Mark (11:11–13:37), “the temple [and what it represents] stands under God’s judgement and has been replaced by the community of prayer and faith” (11:22–25).\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 104. For Loader’s treatment on the theme of the temple in Mark 11:1–13:37, see \textit{Law}, 95–117.} According to Mark, the primary reason for Jesus’ savage critique of the temple authorities and his condemnation of the temple as such would have been the abuse of the latter by the former. Therefore, for Mark, “the temple expulsion” in 11:15–17 indicates “a symbolic act of judgement” against the Jewish leaders who have abused and misused the temple (Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11).\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 105}

The Markan account of the widow’s offering in 12:41–44 further explains how the temple authorities had abused the temple and made it “a den of robbers” (Mark 11:17). In Loader’s view, Mark adds 12:41–44 to provide “another justification for the judgement which is to come, announced already in 12:40, but made specific in Mark 13”.\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 103.} He also rightly notes, “Mark holds out no hope for a reformed temple and so is not here urging devotion to the temple”\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 103.} nor is he “interested in cleansing the Jerusalem temple; it is too late for that and, in any case, it is only a temple ‘made with hands’ ”.\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 107.} For Mark, the salvific role and function of the temple is no longer valid.\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 103.} Therefore, for Mark, the temple will be replaced by “a community of prayer and faith”
(Mark 11:22–25). For Mark, however, as Loader rightly argues, unlike the Qumran community (4QFlor 1), the community of faith does not envisage “a community without the temple in the hope of an eschatological temple”. On the contrary, for Mark, the “community of faith and prayer” (Mark 11:22–25) represents a new temple replacing the old but “made without hands” (Mark 14:58) “of which the beloved son will become the cornerstone”. This possibly best explains why Mark juxtaposes the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–24) and the temple expulsion (Mark 11:15–19).

Unlike in Mark, Matthew juxtaposes Jesus’ temple expulsion (21:12–13) and people’s identification of Jesus as the prophet (21:11; cf. 13:53–58). For Matthew, Jesus’ fierce critique of the abuses in the temple (21:13) is a “prophetic act”, not a disparagement of the temple or the cult. In Gurtner’s view, it is rooted in Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer 7:11). This will be further evident in the crowd’s identification of Jesus as a prophet (21:46) and similarly in 23:34–36, where Matthew makes “Jesus’ rejection and death” continuous with “Israel’s rejection of the prophets”. Further, as Loader notes, “Matthew has removed the structural interlocking of the cursing of the fig tree with the temple expulsion” (21:12–13, 18–22). This means, for Matthew, Jesus’ cursing of the fig tree only means cursing of the Jewish leaders who defiled the temple (21:23–27, 28–32; 23:38; 24:2), not replacement or abrogation of the temple or the cult or the Torah which mediate God’s saving in the past. By contrast for Mark, the

---

479 Loader, Law, 104.
480 Loader, Law, 104.
481 Loader, Law, 104.
482 Loader, Law, 229.
483 Loader, Law, 231.
486 Loader, Law, 230.
cursing of the fig tree is “a commentary” on the temple expulsion (Mark 11:11–14), which means the temple is no longer the locus of salvation. Therefore, for Matthew, as Loader argues, neither the temple expulsion nor the cursing of the fig tree functions “any longer as implicit criticism of the temple, nor supports the notion that the community of faith is a new temple, as in Mark”.

Further, while following Mark 13 carefully, Matthew makes important redactional variations in his account of Jesus’ prediction of the temple in 24:1–2. Unlike Mark, who disparages the old temple and portrays the new community of faith and prayer as its natural and inevitable replacement (Mark 11:22–25), Matthew, by juxtaposing Jesus’ savage critique of the Jewish leaders in chapter 23 and his prediction of the destruction of the temple in 24:1–2, “portray[s] the temple’s destruction as judgement upon its leaders, removing any implied disparagement of the system itself”. Hence, for Matthew, Jesus’ exodus from the temple does not entail its rejection (24:1–2), though it may be true for Mark 13:1–3. It may be a prelude to Matthew’s softening of Mark’s narration of Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple (Mark 14:58) in 26:60–61, which is, as is more likely, to balance 12:6 (“something greater than the temple is here”). However, the destruction of the temple is part of the judgement against the Jewish leaders. The matter is complicated by the fact that Matthew writes after the temple has been destroyed.

In addition, as Loader notes, Matthew omits Markan antithesis between a temple “made with hands” and “not made with hands” (Mark 14:58) to avoid any implied

---

488 Loader, Law, 230. See also William R. Telford, The Barren Temple and the Withered Fig Tree (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980).
489 Loader, Law, 231.
490 Loader, Law, 231.
491 Cf. Luz, Theology of the Gospel of Matthew, 14; idem, Matthäus, 1:88–89.
critique of the temple (26:61). So, in Matthew, the temple “not made with hands” (ἐκκλησία) does not replace the temple “made with hands” as in Mark. For Matthew, ἐκκλησία indicates God’s continued saving presence with his people, not replacement or annulment of the temple. Perhaps this is why Matthew has Jesus institute ἐκκλησία during his earthly ministry, not after his resurrection (16:16). Besides, Matthew omits “another” from Mark 14:58 because, for him, “it is one and the same temple that is taken down and then built up” (26:61). More significantly, Matthew alters Mark’s “I will destroy” (Mark 14:58) to “I am able to destroy” (26:61) to confirm that Jesus has no intent to abolish the salvific functions of the temple or to destroy it. Thus, Matthew clearly affirms the continued soteriological importance of the temple.

Jesus’ willingness to pay the temple tax is another example of his commitment to the temple (17:24–27). In Matthew’s time tax was, in any case, no longer directed to the temple, but as the fiscus judaicus to the temple of Jupiter in Rome (Josephus, J.W. 7.218). So, Matthew has Jesus affirm his freedom not to pay the temple tax, not because he replaces the temple cult or because of any “priestly claim”. Rather, as Davies and Allison rightly point out, Jesus’ argument is grounded in the freedom of

---

492 Loader, Law, 250.
493 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:526.
494 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:526. According to Hagner, perhaps “Matthew’s δύναμις, “I am able,” is regarded as more truthful than Mark’s “I will destroy” (Mark 14:58)”: Matthew, 2:798. In Nolland’s view, for Matthew, “I am able to destroy” language can echo “the sentiment of Je. 7.12, 14–15, where, over against a misplaced confidence in the indestructibility of the Jerusalem temple, God threatens the destruction of the temple”: Matthew, 1126.
496 But, there was no unified understanding of tax in Judaism. See Jacob Liver, “The Half- Shekel Offering in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature,” HTR 56 (1963): 173–98; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 143. According to Hummel, Matthew’s traditions reflect a community which had distanced itself from the temple, but suggest that the tax is still being raised for God (17:15–16), which is not likely: Auseinandersetzung, 104.
Israel as the sons of God. This affirms the Matthean Jesus’ ethnic identity (Jewish identity) and his theological belonging to God’s family—Israel. On the other hand, Matthew has Jesus uphold the importance of paying the temple tax in order to ensure that others do not get the false impression that Jesus and his disciples have rejected the temple and its cult (cf. 5:23–24; 23:37–39). Thus, Matthew locates Jesus’ strategic advice to pay the temple tax within first century Jewish legal debates. This indicates that Matthew still identifies his community as Jewish and, therefore, it has its defining influence on his understanding of salvation.

Matthew judiciously changes Mark’s version of the temple curtain splitting to avoid the possible critique of the temple (27:51). In Mark, as Loader correctly observes, “the rending of the curtain immediately precedes the centurion’s acclamation and symbolises judgement and replacement of the old temple made with hands” (Mark 15:38). Moreover, Mark deliberately juxtaposes Jesus’ “messiahship and the temple motif” in his account of the Jewish trial (14:62) and the slander at the cross (15:29) to show that “the new temple is to be the work of God’s anointed Son of David”. Thus, as Loader correctly observes, Mark interprets the splitting of the temple curtain from the vantage point of Christology: the splitting of the temple curtain is “a divine portent foreshadowing God’s judgement on temple and the temple authorities for their rejection of Jesus”. But, in Matthew, the splitting of the curtain happens at the beginning and follows earthquakes and the resurrection of the dead (27:51–53), and, seeing this, the centurion makes the confession (27:54). So the Matthean account (27:51–54) disagrees

---

500 Luz, Matthäus, 2:534; Nolland, Matthew, 726; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:744–45. Richard Bauckham argues that there was room for opposition to this tax as it was instituted by Moses: “The Coin in the Fish’s Mouth,” in The Miracles of Jesus (ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 219–52, here 230.
501 Nolland, Matthew, 726; Luz, Matthäus, 2:532–35; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:746.
502 Loader, Law, 251.
503 Loader, Law, 119.
504 Loader, Law, 120. See also Brown, Death of the Messiah, 1102.
with Mark’s understanding of the splitting of the curtain as the end of the saving role of the temple.\textsuperscript{505}

Therefore, the destruction of the temple is not a sign of God abandoning the role of the temple in his saving dealings with his people because of its defilement, as Runesson argues,\textsuperscript{506} nor of Jesus’ replacing the temple and the saving sufficiency of the cultic practices associated with it, but a sign of God’s judgement on the Jewish leaders. This however does not entail judgement on, or rejection of, Judaism/Israel, given that the Jewish leaders do not represent Judaism in its entirety. That sits well with the extent of diversity and complexity within first-century Judaism. In this, Matthew’s narrative is quite akin to other Jewish writings of the time.\textsuperscript{507}

\textbf{4.8.1.4. Marriage and Divorce}

The continuity between Jesus’ salvific teachings and what the Torah requires of his people to be, and to remain, in a saving relationship with God is further evident in Matthew’s version of Jesus’ attitude towards marriage (19:3–9; cf. 5:31–32). This Matthew achieves by refashioning the Markan account (19:3–12; cf. Mark 10:2–12). In order to make his account a stark encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees, and not between Jesus and the Torah, Matthew adds κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν (“for any cause”) to the Pharisees’ question about the permissibility in Mark 10:2 (19:3).\textsuperscript{508} This means Jesus is being asked to give his interpretation of what the Torah demands concerning marriage.


\textsuperscript{506} For Runesson, the defilement of the temple leads to God abandoning the temple. This happens in two steps: first, Jesus leaves the temple and declares it desolate (23:38–42); second, God “departs from the Holy of Holies at the moment Jesus dies (27:51)”. See “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 174–75. But he takes a somewhat different position elsewhere: “the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple . . . does not affect the holiness of, or respect for, the temple itself.” See Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 116.

\textsuperscript{507} \textit{T. Levi} 10:3 states: “And you shall act lawlessly in Israel, with the result that Jerusalem cannot bear the presence of your wickedness, but the curtain of the temple will be torn, so that it will no longer conceal your shameful behaviour.”

For Matthew, on the basis of Jesus’ teaching, marriage is indissoluble, except in the case of πορνεία (μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία 509—19:3, 9; cf. 5:32), which most likely means extramarital sexual intercourse, 510 not acts of prostitution 511 or premarital intercourse 512 or incestuous relations, 513 as some scholars argue. This means marriage must be dissolved only in the case of πορνεία, 514 because it is an abomination and it pollutes what God had initiated with the land of Israel through Abraham (Lev 18:25, 28; 19:29; Deut 24:4; Hos 4:2–3; Jer 3:1–3, 9), 515 which sits well with the Jewish debate of his time (Jub 33:9; T. Reu. 3:15; 1Qap Gen 20:15; and Philo, Abr. 98). 516 Matthew seems to think, similar to Jewish traditions, in cultic ritual terms: adultery and unchastity are a defilement that destroys not only marriage, but also one’s saving relationship with God. Moreover, according to Jewish conviction continuing it would contradict what God’s commandment wants of his people to remain in a saving relationship with him (1Qap Gen 20:15; m. Soṭah 5:1).

509 According to Instone-Brewer, the failure to meet provisions of Exod 21:10 (“If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife”) would also be considered as a genuine ground for divorce: Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 152–63, 184. But such a wide range of exception is very unlikely in Matthew. See Loader, New Testament on Sexuality, 244–45.

510 It is likely that ‘erwat dabar includes adultery because the practice of death penalty ceased to be carried out for offences such as adultery. This is reflected in the choice of the word πορνεία rather than μοῖχε ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ. See Loader, New Testament on Sexuality, 240–53; Betz, Essays on the Sermon on the Mount, 250. Instone-Brewer notes that capital punishment was not practised after 30 C.E. (b. Sanh. 151; b. Sanh. 41b): Divorce, 126, 156. Cf. Philo, Ios 44; Josephus, Ap. Ap 2.25; m. Sanh 7.2, 6.4, 7.3.


515 Luz, Matthäus, 1:364.

In his response to the question of the Pharisees about the legitimacy of divorce, Matthew has Jesus point first to the texts of Genesis as the foundation of marriage (Gen 1:27; 2:24; cf. CD 4.20). This Matthew achieves by reversing Mark’s order, who has Jesus begin his response to the Pharisees with the question “What did Moses command” (Mark 10:3) which might be interpreted as Jesus citing Moses only to contradict the Torah. Unlike in Mark, Matthew has the Pharisees ask the question about Moses, “thus removing any implied disparagement” of the Torah.

In 5:32 Matthew is alluding to the reasons for divorce in Deut 24:1–4. But this does not mean 5:32 is an exposition of Deuteronomy 24 because such a reading is “in tension with 19:8–9, where Matthew sets Jesus’ teaching (in much the same terms as 5:32) in contrast to what Moses allowed and where it does not read as an affirmation of Deuteronomy 24 when it is interpreted very strictly”. According to Nolland, Matthew would have been aware of such a tension between 5:31–32. Loader, therefore, rightly says that 19:9, as in 5:32, is more likely “a statement which stands in contrast to what Matthew believed Deuteronomy 24 allowed”. This means Jesus is not engaging in the interpretation of the עֶרְוַ֣תַדָבָָ֔ר of Deut 24:1 (“shame of a matter”), and advocate a Shammai position, as some scholars assume, but stating something over against it. This is not to be understood as revoking the Torah, but as upholding it more rigorously, as Foster rightly claims.

---

517 Loader, Law, 225.
518 Loader, Law, 225.
519 Instone-Brewer, Divorce, 156; Foster, Community, 109.
520 Loader, New Testament on Sexuality, 246; cf. Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:530, 3:8–9; Instone-Brewer, Divorce, 152–59; Loader, Law, 225; France, Matthew, 209.
521 Nolland, Matthew, 774–75.
524 Instone-Brewer, Divorce, 152–59; Loader, Law, 225; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:530; France, Matthew, 209; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 147–51. However, Loader changed his position later: See New Testament on Sexuality, 245–46.
525 Loader, New Testament on Sexuality, 245; cf. idem, Law, 225. According Loader, the use of adversative δὲ implies that Matthew neither espouses the Shammaite exposition of Deut 24:1 nor is he...
Thus, Matthew shows that Jesus did not defy Moses’ Law, rather he expounds Deut 24:1 to bring out Moses’ rationale for divorce (19:8). According to Matthew, Jesus sets his teaching over what Deut 24:1 allowed, without claiming a rival interpretation of it. In doing so, Jesus would not, however, be understood as abrogating the Torah, but as upholding it more rigorously so as to uphold the salvific sufficiency of the demands of the Torah. Moses did not command divorce, he permitted it and that too because of “the hardness of heart” (19:7–8; cf. Mark 10:3–4; Deut 24:1–4); and “to prohibit what he permitted is by no means the same as to permit what is prohibited”. So, marriage is unbreakable, except in the case of πορνεία (19:3, 9; cf. Mark 10:2); divorce by itself is adultery, unless it is for πορνεία. In short, Jesus’ radicalisation of the prohibition of divorce and adultery in Matthew is consistent with his adherence to and promotion of the Law, and, hence, there is soteriological continuity between Jesus’ teachings and the Torah. This shows the connection between Matthew’s relation to his Jewish heritage and his understanding of “how Jesus saves”.

4.8.1.5. The Greatest Commandment

Unlike Mark (12:34) and Luke (10:28), Matthew presents the pericope concerning the greatest commandment (22:34–40) as an encounter with an argumentative Pharisee.

This makes the conflict a debate between Jesus and the Pharisees over the true sense of suggesting a rival exposition. See “Matthew’s Handling of Sexuality,” 571–73; idem, New Testament on Sexuality, 245, 279–80. Similarly Phillip Sigal, The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew (Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2007), 111–12. Hübner argues that Matthew is stricter than Shammai, Gesetz, 52–53. 526 Meier, on the one hand, argues that Jesus’ prohibition of divorce is not an indication of Jesus abrogating the Torah (Marginal Jew, 4.126), and, on the other hand, believes that Jesus did forbid what the Torah allowed (Marginal Jew, 4.113).

527 Foster, Community, 109, 113.
the Law, which, otherwise, would have been possibly regarded as Jesus’ conflict with the Law. Matthew has Jesus respond to the question on the “greatest commandment” by quoting Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18. Matthew’s Jesus cites the Shema in an unusual form. Mark (12:30) and Luke (10:27) have four human faculties (καρδία, ψυχή, διανοία, and ἰσχύος). Matthew has only three faculties (καρδία, ψυχή, and διανοία). According to Strecker and Tuckett, this indicates a “misrepresentation” of a “fixed” liturgical text, and, hence, should reflect the discontinuity between Jesus’ teaching and the Torah. But this argument is not convincing.

In the view of Foster, Mark is citing essentially LXX while Matthew is closer to Hebrew in introducing the three human faculties with ἐν + dative (cf. MT) and closer to both LXX and MT in having three terms. He also argues that Matthew would have used ἐν under the influence of the Q version of Shema (cf. Luke 10:27). For Foster, “the text forms of the LXX and the Synoptic Gospels provide evidence that the Greek form of Deut 6:5 had not become standardized by the first century C.E.” This means, Foster argues, the Matthean version of the Shema given in 22:37 seems “to draw on a knowledge of the biblical text and not only upon the Markan and Q sources”. And, more significantly, as Foster rightly contends, because “there is no explicit reference to the liturgical use of the Shema prior to the reference in m. Ber. 1:1–4”, the lack of correspondence between the three elements in Matthew and the form of MT does not

536 Foster, “Why did Matthew Get the Shema Wrong?,” 314.
538 Foster, “Why did Matthew Get the Shema Wrong?,” 332.
539 Foster, “Why did Matthew Get the Shema Wrong?,” 332.
540 Foster, “Why did Matthew Get the Shema Wrong?,” 332. The final redactional form may be dated around the beginning of third century.
entail contradiction. Therefore, it is very likely that Matt 22:37 does not entail discontinuity, but reveals the opposite—continuity.

The Law “hangs” on two central commandments: love of God (Deut 6:5) and love of neighbour (Lev 19:18). Both cannot be equated (Luz), because “it is not a matter of priority on a list, but of weight bearing” (Hays) [emphasis original]. Therefore, everything else finds its ultimate and “non-restrictive coherence” in these two commandments (7:12; 22:33–40), as Konradt persuasively proposes. It does not annul the salvific sufficiency and efficacy of the Law, as Schweizer and Donaldson argue, but upholds the entire Law (Sim, and Snodgrass) and its interpretation is intensified and shaped on the basis of this guiding principle (5:18–19, 23–24; 12:7, 11–14: 15:15–20; 23:23–26). This is not reductionism to love as the heart and essence of the Law (5:43–48; 7:12; 12:1–8, 9–14), but determines how the Law is to be practised and interpreted correctly (22:34–40). Moreover, as Sim observes, “the principle of summarising the entire law under a fundamental statement is thoroughly Jewish” and it is well attested in rabbinic literature (b. Šabb 31a). Therefore, Jesus’ summarising of the Law would have been possibly tolerable for Matthew’s rival Jewish leaders, as for

541 Foster, “Why did Matthew Get the Shema Wrong?,” 332.
548 Sim, Christian Judaism, 127.
Jesus’ adversaries, because it is not only consistent with the Law (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18), but also upholds the prophets (5:17; 7:12).

To summarise: for Matthew, Jesus’ role as teacher and his interpretation of the Torah, as with his other salvific roles, also constitute his saving (1:21). The God who gave the Torah to his people through Moses in the past is the one who saves his people in the present through Jesus and his teachings. This makes “how Jesus saves” in the present continuous with how God saved his people in the past. And, because Jesus, the judge to come, will judge “his people” in the end on the basis of his teachings, Jesus’ role as teacher is continuous with his eschatological role as judge. That means keeping the Torah is saving in so far as it is observed according to its true sense, as interpreted by Jesus, which, according to Matthew, the Jewish leaders did not accept because of their ignorance of “the law and the prophets”. This best illuminates the role of conflicts and controversies in Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves”.

4.8.2. Discourses/Teachings, Kingdom Parables, and the Judgement Scenes

As is evident from our investigation thus far, Matthew understands Jesus’ saving mission (1:21) in continuity. Jesus’ earthly role as teacher and his eschatological role as judge are soteriologically continuous. Matthew achieves this by linking Jesus’ teachings with the criteria for the final judgement. Furthermore, what Jesus does and teaches to save his people is the fulfilment and affirmation of the Torah and of what God had promised his people through his prophets and messengers. This Matthew reinforces not only in chapters 1–7, but elsewhere as well, especially in Jesus’ discourses/teachings, kingdom parables, and the judgement scenes, to which we shall turn now.

---

549 Konradt, Israel, 386–93.
4.8.2.1. The Second Discourse: The Commissioning of the Disciples (Matthew 10)

Jesus’ discourse to the “twelve disciples” in chapter 10 is, in fact, God’s saving response in Jesus to “the lost sheep of the house Israel” (9:36–37; 15:24; cf. Num 27:17; 2 Chr 18:16). For Matthew, Jesus’ saving mission (1:21) also entails shepherding “his people” (15:24; 26:31; cf. 1:21; Zech 13:7). This is the fulfilment of God’s saving promises concerning a true shepherd, who will save his sheep, which means “the people of Israel” (9:1), from the treacherous shepherds of Israel (Isa 53:6; Jer 23:1–4; Ezek 34:5–6; Exod 34:2–4; 2 Bar. 77:13—“the shepherds of Israel have perished”). Given the background of the Old Testament image of sheep without a shepherd, it is likely that Matthew intends a severe criticism of the Jewish leaders in 9:36 (cf. Num 27:17; Ezek 34:5). For Jesus’ conflict with the Jewish leaders, especially on matters concerning the correct meaning and observance of the Law, and the last commandment (28:18–20; cf. 10:5–6), had salvific implications and so was also part of God’s continuing saving response to Israel’s lostness (9:36; cf.15:24). Both 10:5–6 and 15:24 are God’s saving responses to 9:36. This entails the continuity between Jesus’ mission and the mission of the disciples.

For Matthew, Jesus’ saving is not limited to his earthly roles and functions, but continued through his disciples on earth till Jesus’ second coming as the eschatological judge. Matthew has Jesus invite his disciples to shepherd the people of Israel who are like sheep without a shepherd now (9:37; 10:6). This has parallels in rabbinic literature (m. ‘Abot 2:15). It means the mission of the twelve is Jesus’ saving response to the plight of his people (10:1), as reflected in 9:36.\(^550\) Moreover, it is the continuation of the mission of Jesus as Jesus himself is the shepherd of the people of Israel (15:24; cf. 2:6). Matthew achieves this continuity by moving “like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36)

from its place in Mark (6:34) and locating it just before Jesus’ commissioning of his
disciples. They link up well with Jesus’ command to his disciples in 10:6: “Go rather to
the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (cf. 9:33; 15:24). Thus, Matthew identifies his
community’s mission as mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, which is an
extension and continuation of the mission of Jesus (1:21; 15:24), who is the Messiah
and the shepherd of Israel.

Unlike Mark (6:8–11) and Q (cf. Luke 10:4–12), Matthew inserts “the lost sheep
of the house of Israel” (10:6) to limit the mission of the twelve to only the Jews and
avoid the Gentile regions (10:5–6; cf. 9:37; 15:24). The twelve disciples correspond to
the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). This does not replace Israel, but is symbolic of what
Israel represents. It is, therefore, not an ecclesiastical dignity, but a functional
responsibility, as Schuyler Brown rightly puts it. The calling of the Twelve (10:1–3)
does not imply replacing Judaism, but only reinforces 1:21. This shows how
intrinsically Matthew associates his understanding of Jesus’ saving and the mission of
the disciples with his positive attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

But limiting the mission of Jesus and his disciples to “the lost sheep of the house
of Israel” as in 10:5–6 (cf. 15:24) does raise a critical issue: is it eternal or temporary?

There have been different responses to this issue: restriction is valid only for Jesus
during his lifetime (Strecker), the mission to the Jews came to an end with the death
of Jesus (Park, Hare, and Harrington); 10:5–6 and 15:24 are closed only in principle

551 Dorothy Jean Weaver, Matthew’s Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis (JSNTSS
38, Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 84.
552 Schuyler Brown, “The Mission to Israel in Matthew’s Central Section (Mt 9:35–11:1),”
ZNWKK 69 (1978): 73–90, here 76.
553 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 147–48.
554 Eung Chun Park, The Mission Discourse in Matthew’s Interpretation (WUZNT 2/81;
Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 186; Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, “ ‘Make Disciples of
All Nations’ (Mt 28:19),” CBQ 37 (1975): 359–69; Hare, Theme of Jewish Persecution, 104–5, 146–62.
(Meier);\textsuperscript{555} 28:18–20 marks the end of 10:5–6 (Clark, Tagawa, and Kingsbury);\textsuperscript{556} 10:5–6 belongs to the past community (Stanton);\textsuperscript{557} the mission to the Jews means conversion (Gundry);\textsuperscript{558} the sayings in 10:5–6 and 15:24 are “strategically placed in the ministry of Jesus and his first disciples so that they may be superseded by a special Mathean [sic] focus: the risen Jesus inaugurates a new mission and a new form of discipleship” (Broadhead);\textsuperscript{559} it is not normative for Matthew’s contemporary situation as 10:5–6 must be balanced against the second half of the gospel which rejects 10:5–6 and 15:24 (Foster);\textsuperscript{560} 10:5–6 does not essentially mean that the Matthean community held this belief anymore, but it was their basic conviction (Segal);\textsuperscript{561} and, 10:5–6 and 15:24 are not valid anymore because it was a failure (Luz).\textsuperscript{562} But these interpretations are not compelling.

Though Matthew has Jesus limit the mission of the twelve only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5–6; cf. 15:24), he “removes” the barriers and “expands” the mission to “all the nations” after his exaltation (28:18–20). [To this we shall return later in this Chapter (section 4.8.3)]. According to Matthew, this means 10:5–6 and 15:24 applied only until Jesus’ exaltation. For Matthew, this, however, does entail discontinuity because the mission to Israel has not been replaced, but only expanded.

\textsuperscript{555} Meier, Vision, 210–7; idem, “Gentiles,” 94–102; idem, Matthew, 30.
\textsuperscript{556} Clark, “Gentile Bias,” 165–72; Tagawa, “People and Community,” 160; Kingsbury, Matthew, 154.
\textsuperscript{557} Stanton, Gospel for a New People, 330–31, 379.
\textsuperscript{558} Gundry “Evaluation,” 64.
\textsuperscript{559} Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 147. According to Broadhead, 10:5–6 and 15:24 “counter in an explicit way the primary purpose of this [Matthew’s] gospel, which is the initiation and sponsoring of the mission to the Gentiles (28.16–20) [147]”. Cf. But he argues elsewhere that 28:16–20 makes Jesus’ mission to the Jews valid for the nations of the earth. See Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 143.
\textsuperscript{560} Paul Foster, “Q, Jewish Christianity, and Matthew’s Gospel” (paper presented at the 66th General Meeting of the SNTS, Annandale-on-Hudson, 2–8 June 2011), 1–29, here 20; idem, Community, 248, 252–53, 259.
\textsuperscript{561} Segal, “Matthew’s Jewish Voice,” 6.
For Matthew, therefore, the mission to Israel is still open and valid.\textsuperscript{563} “Flogging” in 10:17 and 23:34 implies that the Matthean community is still present in the synagogues, not as silent listeners, but as a community engaging in a mission campaign to the Jews (cf. 1:21; 10:5–6; 15:24).\textsuperscript{564} This means Matthew is still hopeful of saving the people of Israel from the false Jewish leaders and must be still therefore engaged in mission to Israel.

4.8.2.2. The Third Discourse (Matthew 13)

In chapters 11 and 12 it has become already apparent that not everyone, especially the Jewish leaders, will respond positively to God’s continuing saving initiative in Jesus (11:16; 12:22–30). This sets the background of Jesus’ third discourse (chapter 13). For Matthew, accepting the authority of Jesus and his saving teachings (13:11, 51), which “many prophets and righteous people longed to see” (13:17), means not only remaining in a saving relationship with God, which he had initiated with/through the calling of Abraham (1:2), but also believing in God’s continuing salvific dealings with his people in history, and happening now in Jesus.\textsuperscript{565} This discernment makes the Matthean community “lawful” and soteriologically continuous with God’s saving in the past and in Jesus. On the other hand, the Jewish leaders are “unlawful” and “guilty” because of their failure to discern the fulfilment of the Law and the saving promises of God in Jesus.

This separation is reflected in the parable of the wheat and weeds (13:24–30), the mustard seed (13:31–32), and the leaven and the dragnet (13:33). The positive usage of the term “scribe” (13:52), as in 8:19 (cf. 7:29), reflects Matthew’s concern to portray the


\textsuperscript{564} Konradt, “Matthäus im Kontext,” 4.

\textsuperscript{565} Loader, Law, 208.
importance of the Torah for his community. Matthew’s understanding of salvation is thus linked to the sufficiency/efficacy of the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, and to his legal engagement with the Jewish leaders of his time.

4.8.2.3 The Fourth Discourse (Matthew 18): The Parable of the Wicked Servant (18:21–35)
The parable of the wicked servant narrated in 18:21–35 (cf. 6:14–15) is part of Jesus’ fourth discourse (chapter 18) and deals with the theme of the ability of the community to exercise forgiveness. But there is more to it, given that 18:21–35 reiterate the theme of forgiveness which is already present in 1:21 and 6:14–15. There are scholars who limit the discussion on 18:21–35 to discipline and community life, which means such scholars do not find any soteriological nuances in the parable of the wicked servant. This is, however, not a persuasive proposition, given that, for Matthew, human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are “inextricably linked” (6:14–15).

The parable clearly concludes with the saying that, just like the king, God will also not forgive the sins of all who cannot forgive the sins of a fellow community member. This means human forgiveness is a necessary condition for God’s forgiveness (5:7, 45; 6:14–15; 18:25), because the former is very closely linked to the latter; God’s forgiveness is made “contingent” on human forgiveness (Anderson).

---


568 Since we have argued the relationship between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness in detail in our discussion on 6:14–15 (section 4.7.3), we will not go into all the details and alternatives here.


570 Hagner, Matthew, 1:152; idem, “Law,” 369.

571 Gary A. Anderson, Sin: A History (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009), 33. For Brown, on the contrary, God’s forgiveness of the servant has “connection” to that servant’s forgiveness of
Therefore, God’s forgiveness can even be lost\textsuperscript{572} or repealed\textsuperscript{573} by refusing to forgive others. Here it is God who forgives, not Jesus, which entails continuity between God’s forgiveness and the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings (cf. 9:2, 5, 6). If human forgiveness “causes” God’s forgiveness in that sense, then the forgiveness of sins which God brings through Jesus (1:21) cannot be limited to Jesus’ life and death. This makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers. Thus, Matthew makes Jesus’ saving continuous with God’s saving patterns in the past. This certainly illustrates the integral connection between Matthew’s understanding of salvation and his attitude towards his Jewish heritage and the Torah.

4.8.2.4. The Rich Young Man (19:16–22)

The close relation between salvation (“eternal life”/kingdom of God)\textsuperscript{574} and the Law is clearly reflected further in Jesus’ encounter with the rich young man (19:16–22; cf. Mark 10:17–22). According to Harrington, while there is soteriological continuity between Jesus’ teachings and God’s demands in the Torah, in 19:16–22 Matthew “seems to envision the possibility of salvation for Jews apart from the route of Christian discipleship.”\textsuperscript{575} Jesus saves the Jews and those who believe in Jesus differently: Jesus saves the Jews by inviting them to keep the commandments of the Torah; and those who believe in Jesus are saved through full discipleship (19:16–30; 22:34–40).\textsuperscript{576} This is not plausible. For Meier, “the one thing lacking is total commitment to the person of Jesus”, which transcends all the commandments of the Torah.\textsuperscript{577} France and Repschinski argue

\textsuperscript{572} Meier, \textit{Matthew}, 62; idem, \textit{Vision}, 132–5.
\textsuperscript{573} Beare, \textit{Matthew}, 177-8.
\textsuperscript{574} Harrington, \textit{Matthew}, 281.
\textsuperscript{576} Meier, \textit{Vision}, 139–40.
that to keep the commandments of the Torah is a “necessary condition” for, or a way to, salvation, but it is not “sufficient”, as the antitheses seem to suggest; “the keeping of the commandments is here only a first element in the search of salvation”. These propositions are not tenable as they do not account for the role and importance of 1:21 and 5:17–19 in Matthew’s soteriology. Moreover, these scholars—Harrington, Meier, and France—do not take into account the amount of redactional changes Matthew makes in his narrative (19:16–22; cf. Mark 10:17–22).

In Matthew, τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; (Mark 10:18) has become τί με ἐρωτάς περὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; (19:17). This is followed by εἰς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθὸς (19:17b), which perhaps is an allusion to the Shema of Deut 6:4. In Nolland’s view, for Matthew, the affirmation of the oneness of God in the Shema (Deut 6:4: “The Lord our God is one Lord”) invites people to keep the commandments of God (Deut 6:6: “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart”). “If one wants to know about the good that leads to life, then the Shema invites one to go back to the Ten Commandments as given by God himself”. In other words, as Davies and Allison correctly suggest, “one need not ask about ‘the good’ because the good is clear and can be known: God has revealed his commandments”; the Torah is defined as ἀγαθὸς (m. ’Abot 6:2–3; b. Ber. 28b) because it contains the will of the Good One. By his extensive editing, Matthew has his form of question reinforce the thrust of 5:17–19: Jesus takes all the commandments as salvific because they all reveal the will of God. Thus, for

---

578 France, Matthew, 773; Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 4, 6.
580 France, Matthew, 733.
581 Nolland, Matthew, 789; Hagner, Matthew, 2:557; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:42; France, Matthew, 732; Meier, Matthew, 219.
582 Nolland, Matthew, 789. See also Hagner, Matthew, 2:557; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:42.
583 Nolland, Matthew, 789.
584 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:42.
Matthew, Jesus is not “adding” anything that is good, as Luz rightly argues, nor suggesting any “good that is different from that commended already by the commandments”, says Nolland.

Furthermore, by expanding Mark’s τὰς ἐντολὰς οἶδας· (Mark 10:19a) to εἰ δὲ θέλεις εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν, τήρησον τὰς ἐντολὰς. (Matt 19:17), Matthew makes the thrust of Mark’s words more explicit and direct: observance of the Torah brings “eternal life” (salvation), which again reinforces the message of 5:17–20. Matthew adds ποιας (commandments) in v.18. According to Davies and Allison, this might imply that not all parts of the Torah can bring salvation. But, Matthew has Jesus dismiss such an understanding. He cites the Decalogue and Lev 19:18. The Decalogue represents the entire Torah whereas Lev 19:18 indicates the Torah in nutshell. Thus 16:19, in the view of Davies and Allison, does not refer to “isolated texts but to parts that stood for the whole” (cf. 5:18–19).

Matthew makes changes in the Markan form of the commandments too (19:18–19; cf. Mark 10:19). He begins by inserting the “neuter singular definite article [τὸ], but fails to continue with this form”, which, however, according to Gundry, is to set off “the quoted commandments as a kind of catechism”. Contrary to Mark’s aorist subjunctive prohibition, Matthew uses “imperatival future with οὐ” and prefers “the future for the shorter commandments (as in LXX)”. This, according to Gundry,

---

585 Luz, Matthäus, 3:122.
586 Nolland, Matthew, 790.
587 Nolland, Matthew, 790.
588 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:45.
589 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:45.
590 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:45.
591 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:45.
592 Nolland, Matthew, 790.
593 Gundry, Matthew, 386.
594 Gundry, Matthew, 386.
595 Nolland, Matthew, 790. See also Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 144; Luz, Matthäus, 3:122.
“conforms to 5:21 and the Hebrew and Septuagintal texts of Exod 20:13–16 . . . [and] 
Deut 5:17–20”.\footnote{Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 386. See also Luz, \textit{Matthäus}, 3:122; France, \textit{Matthew}, 733.} As in Luke 18:20, Matthew has dropped μὴ ἀποστερήσῃς (Mark 10:19), apparently an interpretation of “You shall not covet” (Exod 21:10; Deut 5:21), because it is not part of the Ten Commandments.\footnote{Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 790; Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 3:44.} However, Matthew adds “you shall love your neighbour as yourself”, which is also not part of the Ten Commandments, but found in Lev 19:18, because he regards it as “great” commandment (22:39; cf. 5:43–48).\footnote{Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 790.} Moreover, it agrees with Jesus’ attitude towards the Law elsewhere and compassion or mercy in the conflict stories (9:9–13; 12:1–8; cf. Hos 6:6), the golden rule (7:12) and the Beatitudes (5:9). All these changes which Matthew made show his desire to put Jesus’ teachings in conformity and continuity with the Torah (cf. 5:17). Thus, as Loader fittingly argues, Matthew brings “Jesus and the Torah, represented here [19:16-23] by the decalogue, into close association”,\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 226.} which entails soteriological continuity. And for Mark, saving also means at least keeping the Ten Commandments as interpreted by Jesus, but not the total commitment to the Torah as in Matthew.

The other remarkable change is Matthew’s identification of the man as νεανίσκος (19:20), which he links to his introduction of words: εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι (19:21). According to Loader, “the two are playfully related since the word “perfect, τέλειος, also means ‘mature’, ‘grown up’ ”.\footnote{Repschinski, “Moral Teaching,” 3.} This means νεανίσκος is an indication for a “not fully determined way of life”.\footnote{Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 791.} This means only keeping the Torah can make one τέλειος, not as the Jewish leaders define it, but as Jesus does. This Matthew achieves, by removing the “lack” language from Jesus’ lips in Mark 10:21,\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 226.} which aims to ensure that Matthew has Jesus refer not to the insufficiency of the Law, but the deficiency of
the young man’s understanding of the Torah, which made his observance of the Law salvifically ineffective.

Therefore, the radical nature of the commandments of Jesus is not to be understood as supererogatory observance of the Law but as revelatory of the Law’s true meaning as intended by God. Jesus does not ask for any additional conditions for being τέλειος but the full expression of what it means to “keep the commandments”. So, for Matthew, following Jesus and obeying God’s demands in the Torah are one and the same act. In other words, the salvation which Jesus brings and the forgiveness of sins which the observance of the Torah effects are continuous, because it is the same God who saves “his people” through Jesus and the Torah, which means the salvation which Jesus brings is not confined to the person of Jesus nor is it limited to his life and death.

4.8.2.5. The Parables of the Kingdom and Judgement Scenes (21:23–22:46)

The parables and controversies in 21:23–22:46 reinforce Jesus’ authority to teach the Torah, his eschatological role as judge, and the continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past. For Matthew, “who Jesus is” (Christology) is closely linked to “what Jesus says” (soteriology), which Matthew achieves by inserting “teaching” in 21:23 (cf. Mark 11:27). “The chief priests and the elders” failed to understand such a connection for they did not realise that Jesus’ authority lies in salvific continuity; their failure to believe in Jesus’ teachings is their failure to believe in God’s continuing saving activity. So they enquire of Jesus’ authority (21:23).

Matthew begins his response to the question of authority with the parable of two sons in 21:28–32. While “the chief priests and the elders”, who knew what was needful,
like the first son in the parable (21:28–32), did not do the will of God (21:31; cf. 7:21), the tax collectors and the prostitutes respond to John’s “way of righteousness” (21:31–32; cf. LXX Job 24:13; 1 En. 82:4; Jub. 1:20; 23:26), which is the basis of the kingdom because he prepares the way for Jesus who fulfilled “all righteousness” (cf. 3:15). Most likely, it was Matthew who altered “the order of the sons in order to privilege the second son”, which indicates his concern “to depict the rejection and replacement of the Jewish leadership”, as Foster rightly contends. For Matthew, those who believe in God’s saving initiative in Jesus and his disciples will remain in the saving relationship with God which began with the calling of Abraham (1:21).

The parable of the wicked tenants (21:33–46; cf. Mark 12:1–11), which describes in symbolic terms the rejection and persecution of God’s messengers—first the prophets, then John and Jesus, and finally Jesus’ disciples—further augments the close connection between Matthew’s understanding of soteriology, Christology, and his attitude towards his Jewish heritage. Many scholars, however, have used the Matthean conclusion to the parable in 21:43 (“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it”: RSV) to argue that Jesus as the coming judge (3:11–12) will take the kingdom away from Israel (vineyard) and will give it to a “nation” producing fruit, that is, Matthew’s community or ἐκκλησία (16:18; 18:18) in general.

According to Meier, Gnilka and Menninger, Jesus the judge will hand over the kingdom to a “third race”, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, yet made up of both, which

---

entails discontinuity and a “tragic break”. For France, “the vineyard, which is Israel, is not itself destroyed, but rather given a new lease of life, embodied now in a new ‘nation’ . . . [which] is neither Israel nor the Gentiles, but a new entity, drawn from both, which is characterized not by ethnic origin but by faith in Jesus”. Similarly, for Carter and Gundry, the “nation” is not categorised by its ethnicity, but by its ethical nature (“bearing fruit”). Foster suggests that 21:43 sees “Christian communities as the replacement for Israel as well as being the authentic inheritors of the Kingdom”. In the same way, Strecker also does not limit έθνει too narrowly either to the Matthean community or the ἐκκλησία in general. But for Hagner, though the privileges of Israel are set aside, the ἐκκλησία (cf. 16:18) still consists of the Jews (28:19). There are problems, however, in reading 21:43 in this fashion, given that the context is the dispute with the Jewish leaders, who do not represent the entirety of Judaism, and the redactional insertions and changes Matthew makes in his version of Mark 12:1–11.

According to Matthew, as in Mark, the vineyard’s owner will give the vineyard to “other vineyard keepers” (21:41; Mark 12:9). But, because Mark uses “others” to describe the people to whom the vineyard owner will hand over his vineyard (12:9), the (ethnic) identity of the “vineyard keepers” is not very clear in Mark. Matthew removes this ambiguity in two ways: Matthew qualifies the “vineyard keepers” with “who will give him the fruit in its seasons” (21:41); and, he alters “others” in Mark 12:9 to “other

---

608 Meier, Vision, 150–51; idem, Matthew, 244–45; idem, Meier, “Nations or Gentiles,” 94–102; Gnildka, Matthäus, 2:230; Menninger, Israel, 152; cf. Foster, Community, 232. Foster only partially agrees to the idea of “third race”.
609 France, Matthew, 817.
610 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 429; Gundry, Matthew, 430.
611 Foster, Community, 234.
612 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 33.
613 Hagner, Matthew, 2:623.
614 Loader, Law, 232.
tenants” (21:41, 43).\textsuperscript{615} For Matthew, “other tenants” mean tenants who are already in
the vineyard, not “new tenants” (cf. 10:5–6; 15:24). These differences in Matthew
assume that the vineyard (Israel), though it has been badly managed, can be given to
“other tenants” (leaders) who will make it bear fruit (21:41). Those who have lost their
tenancy, the wicked tenants (Jewish leaders),\textsuperscript{616} are not faithful either to the vineyard
(Israel) or to the owner (God). Therefore, because it indicates rejection of the corrupt
Jewish leadership, and not the people,\textsuperscript{617} the rejection of the wicked tenants shows that
the vineyard owner had not abandoned his vineyard, rather he wants to save it from his
unfaithful tenants.

That the parable of the vineyard is a savage critique of the Jewish leaders (wicked
tenants), and not of Israel (vineyard), can be further corroborated by Isa 5:1–7, where
the people of Israel are compared to the vineyard.\textsuperscript{618} “The vineyard is the house of Israel
and the vines are the men of Judah (Isa. 5:7)”.\textsuperscript{619} Since the vineyard is unfruitful, God
will destroy the vineyard. In Isaiah it is the vines (the people of Judah) who are fruitless,
and, hence, the whole vineyard (Israel) is destroyed; in Matthew, on the contrary, the
vineyard (Israel) and the vines (people) are fruitful, but the wicked tenants (Jewish
leaders) “rob” the vineyard (cf. 21:13).\textsuperscript{620}

“The vineyard, Israel, remains the same”,\textsuperscript{621} it is not replaced, but the disobedient
tenants are punished; God has not abandoned his people; God still acts in history, but

\textsuperscript{615} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 60–63; Sim, \textit{Christian Judaism}, 148–49; Overman,
\textsuperscript{616} Sim, \textit{Christian Judaism}, 149.
\textsuperscript{618} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 61; Sim, \textit{Christian Judaism}, 149. For a detailed
discussion on the points of contact between the parable of vineyard and Isa 5, see Steven M. Bryan, \textit{Jesus
and Israel’s Traditions of Judgement and Restoration} (SNTSMS 117; Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2002), 54 n. 18; Wilhelms J. C. Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5, 1–7 in the Parable of the Tenants
\textsuperscript{619} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 61.
According to Davies and Allison, kingdom of God is given to church (642).
\textsuperscript{621} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 60.
now in Jesus to save his people (vineyard) from the corrupt leaders (wicked tenants), to whom the vineyard (Israel) had been handed over previously to make it bear fruit. For Matthew, this entails continuity between Jesus’ mission and God’s saving in the past, and the continuity between the ἐκκλησία and Israel. In other words, Matthew’s soteriology is a contextual-theological response to the post-70 C.E. questions concerning the identity and continuity of the people of Israel as God’s people.

In Loader’s view, Matthew has John and Jesus consistently using the “bearing fruit” imagery as a metaphor for doing what the Torah demands (3:8–10; 7:15–20; 12:33).622 The relation between “ποιεῖν (‘do/make/produce’) and καρπος (‘fruit’) in the plural are used elsewhere in 7:17–18” (Nolland),623 where the former means doing the will of God, as interpreted by Jesus, and the latter means the fruit of the kingdom of God. Therefore, “bearing fruit” here means responding to God’s saving initiative in history through Jesus and doing what the Torah requires; both are one and the same act. Doing what God demands in the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, who is the judge to come, is salvation. Therefore, rejection of Jesus and his teachings invites judgement.

Matthew correlates the image of the rejected stone and the change in vineyard keepers (21:42–43; cf. Ps 118:22). It symbolically tells of Israel’s rejection of God’s messengers, the prophets, and finally of the Son of God himself and his disciples.624 For Matthew, it is not the “new tenants”, but the “rejected tenants” who will take over as keepers of the vineyard (cf. 16:16–19).625 And, they will constitute a “nation” (21:43), which echoes the promises made to Abraham (Gen 12:2). Matthew uses the phrase “nations that bear fruit” to refer to his community, which belongs to Judaism. If Matthew uses the word ἔθνεα in a very limited sense here, then it must be the same way...

622 Loader, Law, 233.
623 Nolland, Matthew, 879.
624 Stanton, Gospel for a New People, 152; Loader, Law, 233.
625 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 60.
Matthew refers to the Jewish nation as well. Neither is it a contrast between Israel and the Gentiles, but between the Jewish leaders and Jesus’ disciples. So, ἔθνει cannot be a description for the Matthean community taking the place of Israel, but refers to “another set of people”.

In short, the Matthean community, who still belong to the vineyard, though rejected like a stone, will replace the fraudulent Jewish leadership, but not Judaism. But it does not mean replacing Jewish leadership with another set of leadership, as Sim argues, because, for Matthew, as Loader rightly suggests, authority is given to the whole community, not to a few (chapter 18). However, Matthew’s Jewish rivals would not have possibly tolerated such a claim, which must have resulted in conflicts. This reflects Matthew’s positive relation to his Jewish heritage and his plight within the first-century Judaism at the same time.

The parable of the wedding guests (22:1–14; cf. Luke 14:16–24), which forms part of Jesus’ response to the question of the chief priests and elders of the people concerning his authority (21:23), also shows how Matthew unfolds Jesus’ saving in continuity. Many scholars have interpreted this parable as an indication of the rejection of Jesus by Israel and the acceptance of him by the Gentiles. But this is not compelling. The description of the king’s son’s wedding “recalls the sending of the beloved son” in the parable of the vineyard (21:33–46). Matthew’s Jewish audience may have understood the king as God (cf. 5:35) on the basis of their background in 18:23, after 21:37–38, “son” as Jesus (2:15; 3:17; 9:15; 11:27; 16:16; 17:5; 20:18;

626 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 60.
627 Loader, Law, 233; Sim, Christian Judaism, 149; Luz, Matthew, 3:43; Overman, Church and Community, 303–4; Kraus, “Ekklesiologie,” 195–239.
628 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 63.
629 Loader, Law, 233.
630 Meier, Vision, 152–53; idem, Matthew, 246–49.
631 Loader, Law, 234; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 63.
632 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:198; Meier, Vision, 152. See also Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 63.
and, the marriage feast as symbolic of God’s covenant relationship with “his people” (Jer 2:2–23; 3:1–10; Ezek 16:8–63). In 22:1–14, it is not the son who announces wedding invitations.634

Therefore, we may see that the messengers, who announce God’s initiatives to save his covenantal relationship (marriage banquet), refer to the prophets and the missionaries whom the Jewish leaders had rejected and killed.635 This is further evident in 23:34–36, where Matthew “merges” the killing of the messengers of the kingdom in the “past history” of Israel and “its coming history” of the rejection and killing of John, Jesus and his disciples (cf. 10:17), which invited God’s (king’s) judgement (cf. 22:7).636 The God who initiated the covenantal relationship (marriage feast) is the one who sends his messengers to announce the good news (feast) to “his people” in his kingdom (Israel) and the one who pronounces judgement.

Then the king sends his messengers to invite people on the streets (21:10), which Matthew would have identified as his own community.637 Scholars like Gnilka, Gundry, and Schweizer consider this parable as one of the primary references for discontinuity and inclusion of the Gentiles.638 Loader also contends that Matthew may have included the Gentiles here, though “that is not the primary focus”.639 But these positions are doubtful, given how Matthew links this parable to the parable of the vineyard. As France rightly observes, people “on the street” do not mean inclusion of the Gentiles

---

634 Loader, Law, 234.
635 Loader, Law, 234; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 63–64; Levine, Social and Ethnic Dimensions, 213.
636 Loader, Law, 234.
637 Loader, Law, 234.
638 Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:239; Schweizer, Matthäus, 275; Gundry, Matthew, 438.
639 Loader, Law, 234.
because they are “from the king’s own city”, and so probably refers to “the ordinary people and the despised within Israel” (cf. 9:11–13, 36).  

For Matthew, the original invitees (Jewish leaders) have been replaced by “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (cf. 9:36), not by the people of a “different ethnicity”, who have responded to the “good news”. Moreover, in 22:11–14, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” are warned about “appropriate dress”, which, as Loader fittingly suggests, means “living according to the Torah” (7:21–23), as interpreted by Jesus. Thus, by linking the sufferings of his community within first-century Judaism to the fate of the prophets, Matthew shows that God’s saving in Jesus continues through his disciples, which makes God’s saving through his messengers in the past and the mission of the disciples a saving continuum.

4.8.2.6. Jesus’ Critique of the Scribes and the Pharisees (23:1–39)

Jesus’ savage critique of the Jewish leaders reaches its climax in chapter 23, which contains significant statements having substantial bearing on Matthew’s understanding of how Jesus fulfils “the law and the prophets” (5:17–20). This Matthew accomplishes primarily by upholding the authority attached to the seat of Moses and the teaching authority of “the scribes and the Pharisees” who sit on Moses’ seat (23:2). But, according to Strecker, 23:2 is only a relic which Matthew no longer takes seriously.

For Banks and Garland, it is no more than just a rhetorical ploy to set up the contrast that follows. In the view of Hagner, Matthew has accepted the authority of the seat of

---

641 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 436. According to Carter, the street people represent a lower class within Israel (436).
642 Loader, Law, 234.
643 Matthew has taken a brief Markan denunciation of the scribes (Mark 12:37–40) and expanded it into a major polemic against the integrity and authenticity of the scribes and Pharisees, using Q material (Luke 11:37–52).
644 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 16, 138.
Moses, but only “in principle”. Powell, on the other hand, argues that “Jesus’ statement that the scribes and the Pharisees ‘sit of Moses’ seat’ is not intended as an endorsement of their authority to teach or interpret the law”. These arguments are not compelling because they do not account for 5:17–20 and Jesus’ polemical encounter with the scribes and the Pharisees over the interpretation and true sense of the Law. What does 23:2–3 mean then?

It means, as Barth and Loader rightly suggest, Matthew has Jesus accept the authority of “the scribes and the Pharisees” to teach the Law. But, given the larger context of Jesus’ response to the question regarding his authority (21:23) and the theme of judgement (21:33–22:46), there is more to it. Matthew addresses three issues here: the authority of the seat of Moses; the authority of “the scribes and the Pharisees” to teach the Torah; and, the authority of their teaching. Matthew has Jesus clearly uphold the authority of the seat of Moses, which is a saving institution. Those who sit on it, therefore, will obviously have the authority to teach the Torah. This means, because they sit on Moses’ seat (23:2), “the scribes and the Pharisees” have the authority to teach the Torah (23:3).

But this does not necessarily mean that Matthew has Jesus support or agree with the teaching of “the scribes and the Pharisees” in its entirety, or uphold their authority as teachers in their own capacity (cf. 7:28–29), or the authority of their teachings. Apart from 23:3, Jesus rejects the teachings of “the scribes and the Pharisees”, which make the Torah void (cf. 15:7), because they are not consistent with the righteousness of the

---

646 Hagner, Matthew, 2:659.
647 Mark Allan Powell, “Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2–7),” JBL 114 (1995): 419–35, here 435. In Powell’s view, the scribes and the Pharisees have the power not only to “keep” the Torah, but also to “control” “accessibility to Torah” (435); but they do not have the authority to teach (7:29) the Torah (431, 435). “They are the ones who possess copies of the Torah and are able to read them. They are the ones who know and are able to tell others what Moses said” (431). Therefore, Powell argues, “Jesus’ disciples must listen to the scribes and the Pharisees when they speak the words of Moses, but in their work of interpreting the law the disciples are not to do as the scribes and Pharisees do” (435).
648 Barth, “Law,” 80; Loader, Law, 238.
Torah (cf. 5:20). In 23:3, Jesus accepts the teachings of “the scribes and the Pharisees” (Broadhead), because they are referred to in close connection with the seat of Moses and its authority (23:2), which, otherwise, would have been considered as an abrogation of the Torah. Matthew used the particle οὖν to link the seat of Moses and the teaching of “the scribes and the Pharisees”: “the scribes and the Pharisees” sit on Moses’ seat (23:2), therefore, one should do what they teach (23:3), which means the emphasis is on 23:2.

Alternatively, as Loader and Garland suggest, 23:2–3 could also mean Matthew is acknowledging the public administrative role of those who sit on Moses’ seat. It is also possible that, as Runesson observes, the language of 23:2–3 “reflects a common institutional setting in which authority is agreed upon”. If so, then 23:2–3 contrasts their public and private life, which best explains 23:25–28. Moreover, this must allude to a current experience of Matthew’s community (cf. 10:17; 23:34), not applying it to the past, as Brooks suggests. The aorist tense in ἐκάθισαν (23:2), therefore, does not mean that “the scribes and the Pharisees” ‘sat’ in the past because it “contradicts the present tense” in 23:3.

Thus, being extremely sensitive to his Jewish audience’s high regard for the Law of Moses and the seat of Moses, by judiciously distinguishing attitudes towards his

---

649 Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 147.
650 Nolland, Matthew, 923; Luz, Matthäus, 3:302.
651 Loader, Law, 239; Garland, Matthew, 23, 42–43. According to Powell, such administrative role indicates the social position of the scribes and the Pharisees “as people who control accessibility to Torah” (See “Do and Keep What Moses Says,” 431)
652 Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew,” 469. However, Runesson goes even further to the extent of arguing that the community behind the Gospel of Matthew are “the radical Pharisaic Christ believers” (471). See also idem, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 95–132.
655 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:268–69; Nolland, Matthew, 923; cf. Luz, Matthäus, 3:299.
Jewish heritage and the Jewish leaders, Matthew averts the potential accusation that his community does not respect Moses’ seat and the Law of Moses. This identifies Matthew’s hearers as being committed to the saving institutions of Judaism. Matthew’s admiration is towards the seat of Moses and its authority (23:2), not necessarily for those who sit on it and the authority of their teachings (23:3).

The Matthean Jesus’ attack on “the scribes and the Pharisees” is contained in the seven woe oracles (23:13–33). While the first two woes (23:13–14, 15) reflect how the Pharisees and the scribes misuse their authority, the next three woes (23:16–26) attack their interpretation of the Torah—concerning oaths, tithes and purity—for they evade God’s will (23:16–22). The woe in 23:23 charges “the scribes and the Pharisees” with giving excessive importance to the lesser commands of tithing to the extent of including even spices (cf. Deut 14:23) and too little importance to what Jesus regarded as “the weightier matters of the Law” such as “justice, mercy and faith” (cf. Mic 6:8). This distinction within the component parts of the Law is thoroughly Jewish as it recalls the distinction between the light and heavy commandments in the later rabbinic literature (cf. m. Abot 2:1).

In Sim’s view, Matthew “relativises the law” in 23:23; “some commandments are more important than others”. For Sim, this does not entail that the ritual practices of...
the Torah are not important; “For Matthew these too [ritual practices in the Torah] must be obeyed except when doing so leads to the abrogation of a weightier law.”

This means, when the Jewish leaders are critiqued in terms of the Law, “it is because they do not do enough” [emphasis original] (Runesson) as they do not observe the Law in its entirety (23:24). In contrast, Jesus does counsel compliance with tithing, but subordinates it to “the weightier matters of the law”. As Painter rightly notes, they do not focus on “the one rather than the other, but in addition to the other”. Jesus’ double love command serves as the interpretative key here that distinguishes between the greater and the lesser commands (23:23; cf. 22:34–40).

Thus, as Hays argues, “Matthew’s Jesus offers a hermeneutical refocusing of the Law in terms of justice, mercy, and faith, but he takes care to specify that these virtues neither replace nor pre-empt the demand for meticulous observance of Torah’s commandments” (23:23).

The fifth woe (23:25–26; cf. Luke 11:39–41) adds to the charge that “the scribes and the Pharisees” always disregard the most imperative thing and celebrate the less important thing; specifically, they clean the outside of the cup and plate, but leave the inside dirty. Consequently, as Davies and Allison rightly put it, they appear to be righteous outside, but full of extortion and self-indulgence inside, which is typified in the sixth woe (23:27–28). It is not that Matthew rejects external or ritual purity, but that he ranks them as secondary compared with internal or “moral” purity (cf. 15:11, 17–

---

663 Sim, “Rise and Fall,” 484.
667 Painter, “Matthew,” 76.
668 Sim, “Rise and Fall,” 484.
670 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:296.
In Runesson’s view, “Matthew’s Jesus refers to ritual purity in order to draw attention to the more important and more devastating effects of moral purity”. The seventh woe (23:29–32) condemns “the scribes and the Pharisees” for they “murdered” all the divine saving initiatives in the past (23:31, 34–36). Therefore, it is certain that they cannot discern what Jesus does and says, which best explains the reason why Jesus and his disciples (the Matthean community/ecclesia) are rejected and persecuted in Judaism.

Matthew completes the circle of seven woes in 23:33, where Jesus addresses “the scribes and the Pharisees” as “brood of vipers” (23:33), which evokes John the Baptist’s severe criticism of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (cf. 3:7; 12:34). Perhaps, in Loader’s view, Matthew is intentionally linking Jesus to John the Baptist as he did in 21:23–22:14, where Matthew sets the rejections of John, Jesus and Jesus’ disciples in continuity. Moreover, Matthew connects the rejection of God’s messengers to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (23:34–39). Matthew believes that the destruction of the temple is God’s judgement on the Jewish leaders (23:37–39; cf. Jer 2:30) and is not because of the essential insufficiency of the temple cult to effect forgiveness of sins (cf. 8:4; 5:23–24; 21:13, 14, 23; 26:55). Nor does the prediction of the destruction of the temple mean that Jesus is against the temple, since “its destruction is rooted within Jewish tradition resonating with the language of Jeremiah”. Therefore, for Matthew,

---

671 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 160–61. For a detailed discussion on purity in Matthew, see idem, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 144–80. Runesson interprets the Matthean Jesus’ attitude towards purity in terms of ritual purity and moral purity. He argues: “The purity regulations that protect the holy can be divided into two related categories, ritual and moral purity, the latter being the overall concern of the Matthean Jesus, but not to the exclusion of the former” (174).

672 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 161.

673 Loader, Law, 242.

674 Loader, Law, 242.


Jesus’ mission to bring forgiveness of sins (1:21) does not replace the temple and its salvific functions (cf. 5:17–20).

4.8.2.7. The Fifth Discourse (Matthew 24–25)

The fifth and final of the set of Jesus’ major discourses in Matthew (24:3–25:46), which takes its cue from the disciples’ question in 24:3, is about the future, with emphasis especially on Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge and the theme of judgement. Matthew’s version of the predictions appears to reflect not only the experience of persecution (24:9–14) and great tribulation (24:4–8, 15–22), but also the knowledge of the activities of the messianic and prophetic claimants in the end-time (24:23–25). And from 24:26 the focus is on the coming of Jesus as judge in a number of parables (24:26 – 25:30). Effectively they depict Jesus’ role as judge who warns his people of the kinds of behaviours which will bring judgement and indicating those that will bring reward or salvation.

The theme of Jesus as the judge to come reaches a climax in the final depiction of judgement (25:31–46) and reveals that as judge Jesus is concerned with acts of compassion. For Matthew, while being the divine compassionate shepherd who saves the “harassed and confused” sheep on earth (2:6; 9:36; 15:24; cf. Ezek 34; 2 Sam 5:2), Jesus is also the eschatological shepherd who separates the sheep and goats. Here, Jesus’ role as the shepherd of Israel (cf. 2:6; 2 Sam 5:2) merges with his role as the judge to come, as John the Baptist predicted (cf. 3:10–12). The God who initiated a saving dealing with “his people” through Jesus (1:21) is the one who gave Jesus all the authority (28:18–20) to judge the same people in the end time. God’s saving in Jesus is

---

not limited to his earthly roles and functions, rather it continues through his *ecclesia* (28:18–20; cf. 16:16; 18:18) till God completes his saving dealings with the last judgement of Jesus.

As with the relationship between Jesus’ role on earth and in the end times, the relationship between Jesus’ teaching of the Torah and the criterion of the last judgement also makes Matthew’s understanding of salvation a continuum (25:31–46). “All the nations” will be judged on the basis of their behaviour and good works, including their response to the believers and Jesus’ disciples in need—hungry, sick, imprisoned, and thirsty (cf. 7:21–23; 22:34–40). This messianic criterion, as Runesson rightly argues, is “in accordance with the Abrahamic principle of blessing and cursing in Gen. 12.3”.

This means, as Hays rightly points out, like other parables of judgement in Matt 24–25, 25:31–46 not only “warrants for obedience to God . . . [but] also define significant ethical norms having to do primarily with just and merciful treatment of others” [emphasis original]. This fits with the obedience of the Torah, because showing acts of kindness and compassion constitutes the righteousness of the Torah (cf. 22:34–40; Hos 6:6). And righteousness in Matthew means doing the will of God, as envisaged in Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah (7:21–23; cf. 3:15). And the will of God is for humankind to love God and love the neighbour in need, which is the summary of the Law and the prophets (22:34–40; cf. Deut 6:5). Therefore, the “just”/“righteous” (δίκαιοι; 25:37, 46) are indeed, according to Matthew’s usage, those who do the will of

---


God, as construed by Jesus, by showing mercy to the needy/neighbor (9:13; 12:7; cf. Hos 6:6).

According to Harrington, since, in 24:3, Matthew has been describing Jesus’ words to his disciples, there is “separate judgments for Jews and Gentiles” in the final judgement.\textsuperscript{681} This is not likely, however, because all the other four discourses of Jesus (chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18) also end with judgement, which means the judgement scene in 25:31–46 is not to be taken in isolation as if it recommends a different criterion for the last judgement. According to 25:31–46, Jesus will judge “all the nations”, the Jews and the Gentiles alike,\textsuperscript{682} on the basis of Jesus’ teaching of the Torah (25:35–40; cf. 28:18–20).\textsuperscript{683} Perhaps the judgement scene assumes that Matthew’s community has already embraced the commission to reach out to the Gentiles, such that it can envisage judgement as including both Jews and Gentiles in their response to the mission of the \textit{ecclesia} and its agents. In short, because Jesus’ role as teacher, and his role as the judge to come, are continuous, Jesus’ teaching and the criteria by which he will judge his people are also continuous, which means Jesus’ teaching is salvific (1:21).

\textbf{4.8.3. The Last Commandment of Jesus (28:18–20)}

While the last commandment of Jesus (28:18–20) is a resounding response to the question of “the chief priests and the elders” to Jesus concerning his authority (21:23), it further reinforces continuity: the continuity between the authority of Jesus and the authority of the \textit{ecclesia}; and, the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the \textit{ecclesia}. The authority statement of Jesus as in 28:18b not only indicates Jesus’ exalted status and universal lordship, but also his newly acquired authority to do

\textsuperscript{681} Harrington, \textit{Matthew}, 359; see also idem, “Polemical Parables,” 292.
\textsuperscript{682} Cf. According to Runesson, “all the nations” refers to non-Jews, excluding Jews. This is unlikely. See “Impact of Ethnic Identity,” 13.
\textsuperscript{683} Loader, \textit{Law}, 248.
something much wider, as Broadhead correctly argues. For Matthew, however, Jesus’ newly acquired authority is continuous with the authority Jesus had exercised in his teaching (7:29; 11:27), forgiving sins (9:6, 8), and healing (chapters 8–9) and the authority Jesus granted to his disciples (10:1) to continue his mission on earth till he returns to judge the world (25:31–46), as John prophesied (3:11–12).

In 28:19 (“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”) the exalted Jesus “expands” or “opens up” the mission. The limits of mission to Israel (cf. 10:5–6; 15:24) have “fallen away” or “lifted” and thus the mission to Israel becomes a “universal mission”. The implication in 28:18–20 is that “the mission to Gentiles is an expansion rather than a replacement of the mission to Israel” for various reasons: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη includes both the Jews and the Gentiles because its meaning corresponds

---

684 According to Broadhead, “Jesus, whose earthly task was teaching the way of the Kingdom of God, has now been given authority over heaven and earth.” [emphasis not original]. See, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 143.


686 Harrington, Matthew, 416.

687 For Broadhead, 28:18–20 is “more of a prescriptive image than a descriptive reality”, which means for the Matthean community “it is a blueprint for the future”: “What Light does Matthew’s Use of Mark in Relation to Discipleship and Ecclesiology Throw on Matthew’s Theological Location” (paper presented at the 68th General Meeting of the SNTS, Perth, 23–27 July 2013), 1–29, here 18.


690 Loader, Law, 252.
to its use in 24:9, 14 and 25:32; and the persecution of Jesus’ disciples as in 10:23 assumes that mission to Israel is still valid and open. The extension of the mission to include the Gentiles is not a parting from what God introduced with the calling of Abraham (1:2), but its definitive fulfilment and correct expression. However, in Matthew’s view, the mission to Israel definitely failed, but has not been abandoned.

If Matthew understands Jesus’ saving and his teaching in continuity, how should we interpret Matthew’s silence about circumcision (3:1–7; 28:19–20)? Scholars like Meier have argued that the Great Commission effectively replaces circumcision because it is baptism, not circumcision, which initiates all nations into the people of God (28:19). This view, however, suffers from a number of issues. As Sim rightly contends, Matthew’s programmatic statement on Jesus’ affirmative attitude towards the Law and the prophets in 5:17–19, which demands obedience to the entire Torah, “must include the definitive ritual of circumcision”. In Sim’s view, though “Matthew can assume the necessity of circumcision on the basis 5:17–19, the same does not apply to . . . baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. Moreover, the rite of baptism was not mentioned during Jesus’ earthly ministry, but is “depicted as an

---

693 Konradt, Israel, 349–78, 386–93.
694 Circumcision is one of the “identity markers” of Judaism (Gen 17:9–14 cf. Josephus, Ant 13.257–58, 318). It was mandatory because the circumcised were identified as “sons of the covenant” (Jub. 15:26, 33–34), as distinct from “sons of destruction” (Jub. 15:26 cf. 1IQH 18:20; 2:7, 18). However, Jews have not been ardent in observant of all the customs and practice at all junctures of history. See also John J. Collins, Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenist Diaspora (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 163–68, 211–18; John J. Collins, “A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century,” in “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, ‘Others’ in Late Antiquity (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernst S. Frerichs; Chicago: Scholars, 1985), 174–77.
innovation of the risen Christ”.698 This perhaps best explains why Matthew gives special attention to baptism in 28:18–20. If Matthew is so particular about the Sabbath and purity laws, it is only sensible to assume that Matthew would have enforced circumcision for the Gentiles.699

Furthermore, as Sim correctly observes, ethnicity is “part and parcel of Matthean Christianity and the Gospel which represented it”700 because it is closely linked to their election as the people of God, of which circumcision was an important sign.701 According to Davies and Allison, Saldarini, and Runesson, circumcision would not have been a controversial matter in the community.702 If so, there would have been a defence for or against it. Therefore, as Loader correctly contends, silence argues for rather than against circumcision (cf. 5:17–20);703 “Matthew and his [Jewish] opponents agree on the importance of circumcision”.704

This raises an important question: does Matthew make circumcision mandatory for both the Jews and the Gentiles? Saldarini is of the view that Matthew’s community may have welcomed the Gentiles without circumcision.705 In Saldarini’s opinion, circumcision cannot be treated “as a sine qua non of being Jew” as “there is ample evidence that the sharp boundary between Jew and gentile found in talmudic literature

---

700 Sim, “Christianity and Ethnicity,” 195.
701 Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 156–60. However, Saldarini also states that “some [Gentiles] may have been circumcised, and some not” (160).
702 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:685, 703, 721–22; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 156; Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 104 n. 30.
703 Loader, Law, 253.
was much more fuzzy in the first century than it was to become later”.  

On the contrary, Sim argues that while the Jewish converts need only baptism to be initiated into Matthew’s community, the Gentile converts need both rituals—circumcision and baptism: circumcision is for an “initial conversion to Judaism” and baptism for “further initiation” into Matthew’s community.  

Sim’s position is more likely for various reasons: first and foremost, the risen Jesus’ command to teach all that he commanded (28:20) includes the command to observe the entire Law till the Parousia; Matthew’s Jesus does not suggest different ways of salvation for the Jews and the Gentiles; Jesus’ teaching of the Torah will be the criterion for his judgement of the Jews and the Gentiles; and we can find “ready parallel with the contemporary Qumran community”, where the rules governing the initiation process (1QS 6:13–23) of the Gentile converts (CD 14:4–6) do not mention circumcision, but it is assumed.  

However, the argument that circumcision is applicable to the Gentile converts, which, in Sim’s view, shows Matthew’s anti-Pauline polemic, should not be overestimated, given the lack of more direct indications and evidence.

Jesus’ command, “teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (28:20), provides further clear directions and the theological framework for interpreting the issues in 28:19. As Davies and Allison rightly suggest, the Matthean phrase “ἐνετειλάμην is a constative aorist” and, therefore, it refers to all of Jesus’ teachings.

---

710 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:686.
i.e., how to correctly observe the Torah (Sim, and Runesson). An important part of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew is that every part of the Torah remains valid until the eschaton (5:17–19). Jesus’ teaching is not a “new” teaching but the fulfilment of God’s will and his saving plans for his people envisioned in “the law and the prophets”. And, more significantly, Jesus’ teaching of the Torah will be the criterion for his last judgement. This means, as Sim observes, even the Gentiles too must obey the commandments of the Torah but as interpreted by Jesus. Therefore, the Matthean community must observe everything Jesus commanded/taught (cf. 5:17–20), including the command to expand the Jewish mission (10:5–7; cf. 28:19–20). Jesus entrusts the redefined and expanded mission (28:19–20) with the Matthean community (ecclesia), and assures them of his eternal presence (28:20b; cf. 1:23; 18:20), which is a continuation of his earthly presence (cf. 1:23).

4.9. THE SAVIOUR AS TEACHER AND JUDGE: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

From the preceding discussion on Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ salvific role as teacher and judge especially in chapters 1–7 but also in the rest of the Gospel, it is clear that Matthew understands God’s saving initiative in Jesus (1:21) in continuity with God’s saving in the past. For Matthew, since God’s saving dealings in the life of the people of Israel indicate the continuity between history and God’s ever-continuing saving nature, which makes history salvific and salvation historical, the history of God’s saving does not begin with Jesus but with the calling of Abraham (1:2). Matthew begins his Gospel, therefore, by soteriologically and historically linking not only Jesus’ saving and God’s salvific dealings with his people in the past, but also Jesus’ being/status as the Messiah

---

711 Sim, Christian Judaism, 246–47; idem, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 26; Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 176.
713 Sim, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 26; idem, “The Social Setting of the Matthean Community,” 279.
of Israel and the being/status of Israel as God’s people. This Matthew achieves by using the genealogy (1:2–17), the fulfilment citations, the typologies, supplementing Jesus with the titles “Son of David” and “son of Abraham” (1:1), beginning the genealogy with Abraham (1:2), and juxtaposing the genealogy and Jesus’ birth (1:2–25).

The continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past is further evident in Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves”, which he describes not only by ascribing various salvific roles to Jesus, but also by unpacking them in historical and soteriological continuity with “how God saved” his people in the past. This explains Matthew’s extensive use of the messianic title “Son of David” and his description of Jesus as the royal Davidic Messiah. Thus Matthew makes the various saving roles of Jesus continuous with the various roles associated with David—king, judge, shepherd, and healer. This means, for Matthew, that Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21) in many ways.

The account of the virgin birth, Joseph’s dreams, God’s miraculous intervention (1:18–25) and the heavenly attestation of Jesus’ identity as Son of God (3:17; 17:5) indicate that Matthew understands Jesus as more than just a Jew. Matthew reinforces it further by identifying Jesus with the Shekinah (cf. 1:23; 18:20; cf. 28:19–20) and Wisdom (11:19, 28–30). The miraculous conception (1:18–25) serves to make a claim regarding the status/being of Jesus the saviour, often expressed in his designation as “Son of God”. Jesus’ status/being as “Son of God” is continuous with God’s saving being. And how God’s saving being is actively present in Jesus (1:23; 18:20; 28:20) and his “deeds” (11:2–5) is continuous with how God was present in the midst of his people in the past. This extra christological content, however, would have been outrageous for most Jews. But for Matthew, such a charge is misplaced because Jesus is not identified as God (cf. 1:23; 28:18–20) nor does he replace the temple or the Torah.
Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in continuity also as the continuity between Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles. John’s prediction of Jesus’ role as the coming judge in the context of confronting the Jewish leaders (3:7–12) explains the saving role of Jesus as teacher. As the teacher with authority (7:28–29)—which is linked to his messianic identity (1:21; cf. 2:6), divine sonship (3:17; 17:5 cf. 7:28–29), and special relationship to God (11:25–30)—Jesus will teach his people the true sense and righteousness of the Law (5:21–48), and thus he will save his people by declaring in advance the basis of his final judgement. Therefore, Jesus the coming judge is not introducing some new teachings as the basis of salvation, but teaching what the Torah requires his people to have and to be, in a saving relationship with God (5:17–19). This means keeping the Torah is saving (cf. 5:20; 19:16–23), but as interpreted by Jesus. In addition, Jesus the shepherd of Israel, who has been sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24; cf. 10:5–6), is also the one who will separate his sheep like a shepherd into righteous and cursed on the basis of their behaviour and “good works”, as outlined in the Torah (cf. 5:16; 7:21–23; 22:34–40). Therefore, Matthew’s description of Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles are historically and soteriologically continuous (25:31–46).

For Matthew, God’s saving initiative in Jesus (1:21) must continue in history, even after Jesus’ earthly ministry. This explains why Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in continuity also as the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ἐκκλησία, as indicated in John-Jesus-ecclesia continuity, and reinforced further in 10:5–6 and 21:23–22:46. For Matthew, the last command to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19) entails expansion of the mission to Israel because it removes the barriers, and the ultimate fulfilment and rightful expression of what God began with Abraham (1:2).
Thus, we may conclude that Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in continuity as (1) the continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the life of the people of Israel, (2) the continuity between Jesus’ being/status as the Messiah of Israel and the being of Israel as God’s people, (3) the continuity between “how Jesus saves” in the present and “how God saved” his people in the past, (4) the continuity between Jesus’ being/status as the “Son of God” and God’s saving being, (5) the continuity between Jesus’ earthly saving roles and his eschatological roles, and (6) the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ἐκκλησία.

Though continuity is very strong in Matthew’s soteriology, one might still raise a few issues. If Jesus’ saving is only a continuation of God’s saving in the past, then does it not deny any sense of development or change in God’s action or initiatives, such as the Heilsgeschichte scholars would argue? In what sense does Jesus bring anything new? If Jesus just tweaks what is, why is he hailed as the climax and fulfilment of God’s saving promises, as Messiah?

For Matthew, Jesus is more than just the Messiah of Israel, because his status/being is (ontologically) continuous with God’s saving being (1:18–25; 3:17; 17:5). This means Jesus’ status/being is (ontologically) superior to all of God’s messengers in the past, as the exchange before Jesus’ baptism illustrates (3:14–15). Therefore, all that God did and said in the past for the salvation of his people through his messengers—kings, judges, shepherds, and prophets—is now fulfilled in Jesus. This explains the merging of various salvific roles and functions in Jesus (e.g. 2:6; 11:2–5; 25:31–46). And God had predicted through his prophets such a merging of various salvific roles in the eschaton (Isa 35:5–6; 61), which, at the climax of the history of God’s saving dealings with his people, is fulfilled in Jesus (11:2–5; 25:31–46), the Messiah of Israel, and reflects the eschatological fulfilment of the Jewish messianic
hopes. Moreover, because it is a continuation of Jesus’ saving, all these salvific roles and functions continue to merge also in the mission of the ἐκκλησία (10:8–9).

Therefore, for Matthew, the eschatological nature of the merging of various salvific roles in Jesus’ saving is not only a significant development in the history of God’s saving, but also a change of God’s action. This, however, does not entail discontinuity or Jesus replacing all that God did in the past to save his people through kings, judges, shepherds and prophets; instead they are affirmed, held together, and continued. This explains why, for Matthew, Jesus is the climax and the fulfilment of God’s saving plans and promises.

More significantly, for Matthew, in Jesus’ saving, God’s saving in the past is not only affirmed and continued, but also held in continuity with God’s saving in the future. As the judge to come, Jesus declares in advance the basis of his final judgement, by bringing out the true sense and definitive meaning of the will of God envisaged in the Law and the prophets. And, because of his authority (cf. 28:28) and special relationship with God (11:25–30), Jesus’ teaching of the righteousness of the Torah is enough to enable people to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20; cf. 11:28–30). Therefore, for Matthew, in Jesus’ salvific teaching, Torah observance has become more salvifically effective, not because Jesus added anything new to the Torah, but because the Torah is now observed according to the true sense of what God requires of his people to be in and to have a saving relationship with him, which God began with Abraham, that is, with more intensity and clarity. It is in this sense that Matthew understands the “newness” which Jesus brings in his saving and teaching. This means the basis or the repertoire of salvation is still the same both in the present and in the future, as in the past.
In short, Matthew’s description of Jesus’ salvific role as teacher and judge shows that Jesus “embodies” God’s ever-continuing saving nature. The various salvific functions/roles exercised by God’s messengers such as kings, judges and prophets in the past are now merged in Jesus the saviour, who, while drawing various strands of Jewish messianic hopes together, is the eschatological fulfilment of what the prophets had promised and predicted regarding God’s saving plans in the future. And the keeping of the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus, is more saving both now and in the future not only because Jesus fulfils the Law and the prophets by giving them a definitive exposition, but also because, as the judge, Jesus will judge his people according to his teaching of the Law. Thus, for Matthew, Jesus, because of his continuity with God’s saving being, holds God’s saving in the past and God’s dealing with his people in the future in continuity. This is the eschatological fulfilment of God’s saving plans and promises for his people. As the “Son of God”, Jesus and his saving “embody” the historical nature of God’s saving and the salvific nature of history. This is not just tweaking what is, but a significant development and climax in the history of God’s saving dealings with his people. As is very likely, this would have been Matthew’s theological-contextual response to the questions of post-70 C.E. Judaism concerning whether God still saves his people and the identity/status of Israel as God’s people.

However, Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ salvific roles as teacher and judge does not exhaust his understanding of God’s saving in Jesus. For Matthew, Jesus’ saving also entails his feeding, healing, exorcism and saving from danger, which show the soteriological connection between 1:21 and Jesus’ “deeds”. To this we shall turn now in the next Chapter.
CHAPTER 5

THE SAVIOUR AS HEALER AND HELPER:
MATTHEW’S DEPICTION OF JESUS’ SALVIFIC ROLES IN CHAPTERS 8–25

5.1: INTRODUCTION

Having investigated Matthew’s description of Jesus’ salvific roles as teacher and judge in the preceding Chapter, we now turn to how Matthew portrays Jesus’ saving as healer and helper, especially in chapters 8–25 but also elsewhere in the Gospel. The introductory pericope to Jesus’ mission (cf. 1:21) in 4:23–25, which forms an inclusio with 9:35, has focused intensely on his teaching and healing, which characterise his role as the Messiah of Israel. While chapters 5–7 bring an account of Jesus’ teaching, chapters 8–9 give an account of his deeds. Matthew’s description of “how Jesus saves” his people through his healing and helping in chapters 8–9 provides the narrative basis for his depiction of Jesus as saviour through his miraculous “deeds” in 11:2–6. This Chapter, therefore, seeks to study how Matthew unfolds his understanding of salvation through his depiction of Jesus’ salvific roles as healer and helper.

5.2: SUPPLEMENTING JOHN THE BAPTIST’S ROLE DESCRIPTION OF JESUS AS THE JUDGE TO COME (11:2–5)

For Matthew, Jesus’ saving (cf. 1:21) is not only a continuation of God’s saving in the past, but also the eschatological fulfilment of what God’s prophets and messengers, including John the Baptist, had promised and prophesied in that past in relation to God’s continuing saving plans for his people. But Jesus’ “deeds” as summarised in 4:23 and 9:35 (cf. 11:4–5), and in more detail in 4:24–25 and 8:16–17—which identify Jesus as
healer and helper\textsuperscript{1}—do not match John’s description of the deeds of the coming judge, and so of Jesus (3:10–12; cf. 7:21–23; 25:31–46). The narrative portrays John as perplexed by Jesus’ behaviour. They have different understandings of what “the one who is to come” was meant to do. This is important for our understanding of Jesus and his identity as Messiah/Saviour. But how does this discrepancy cohere with Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity, especially the continuity between Jesus’ saving and John’s mission?

In response to John the Baptist’s query (11:2–3) whether he is the “Christ”, Matthew has Jesus refer to his “deeds” in 4:23–11:2 as τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (11:4–5), because they not only belong to the time of salvation (4:17; cf. 3:2; 10:7), but also effect salvation in the present (cf. 1:21; 9:2, 5–6, 8). One should, therefore, translate ὁ Χριστός, which is a Matthean addition to Q (cf. Luke 7:18), as “of the Messiah”.\textsuperscript{2} As Luz rightly observes, Matthew understands the titular usage of ὁ Χριστός not only in the sense of “Israel’s Messiah”, but also as parallel to “Son of David” (1:1).\textsuperscript{3} Therefore, as with the “Son of David” Christology, Matthew unpacks ὁ Χριστός to be in close connection with various soteriological roles which he ascribes to Jesus.

Some Matthean scholars—Gundry, Evans, Hasitschka, Keener, Repschinski, and Draper—argue that Jesus’ “deeds” as in 4:23–11:2 reflect only his authority as the Messiah of Israel and do not effect salvation.\textsuperscript{4} This is not plausible because Matthew

\textsuperscript{1} According to Gundry, given that in 23:3 Matthew contrasts “words” and “deeds”, ἔργα “refers to the deeds of Jesus as distinct from his words, or teaching”: Matthew, 204. Most Matthean scholars, on the other hand, argue that “the deeds of the Christ” refer back to Jesus’ “words” in chapters 5–7 and miracles in chapters 8–9 because the “deeds” are being defined in 11:4 as what has been “heard” and “seen”, and being described in 11:5 as “healing” and “preaching”. Moreover, Jesus’ ministry is described as teaching and proclaiming in 11:1. See Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240; France, Matthew, 423; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 250; Meier, Matthew, 119–20; Hagner, Matthew, 1:300; Luz, Matthäus, 2:167; Nolland, Matthew, 347 n.1, 450; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 179–80; Hare, Matthew, 121.

\textsuperscript{2} Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240 n. 16.

\textsuperscript{3} Luz, Matthäus, 2:167.

understands Jesus’ “being” (Christology) and his “doing” (soteriology) in continuity. For Matthew, Jesus’ “deeds” (4:23–11:2) are christological and soteriological in nature at the same time: Jesus’ “deeds” are christological as he refers to them in his reply to John’s question concerning his identity; they are soteriological in nature not only because Jesus’ primary role is saving, but also because they reflect God’s saving being; and Matthew understands Christology in close relation to the various saving roles he ascribes to Jesus. The juxtaposition of the role of the Messiah and Isaianic prophecy is well attested in the “Messianic Apocalypse”, as Novakovic and Nolland correctly observe, where the expected works of the Messiah include healing, freeing of prisoners, and raising of the dead (4Q521 2.1–12: “He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent . . . For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor”).

Since “the deeds of the Christ” (4:23–11:2) are soteriological and christological in nature at the same time, they can be seen as consistent with Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–12; cf. 7:21–23; 25:31–46). As Loader rightly argues, Matthew adapts “the predictions of John to fulfilment in two stages”. During his earthly ministry, by “manifesting the miracles of healing” and helping, Jesus fulfils the Jewish eschatological hopes and promises which were “predicted for the messianic age” (Isa 29:18; 35:5–6; 61:1–2), and “in the future he will come as judge” (7:21–23; 25:31–46). Matthew omits the reference to judgement in Isaiah 35 and 61:1–2, as Hagner

---

5 Novakovic, Messiah, 169–79; Nolland, Matthew, 450.
6 In 4Q521 2.1–12, though we find a reference to the Messiah at the beginning of the fragment (“[the heavens and the earth will listen to the Messiah”), the deeds are depicted as deeds of the Lord (“For the Lord will consider the pious . . . His spirit will hover and will renew the faithful . . . He will glorify the pious”). This means it is the Lord who fulfils the expectations, not the Messiah. See Nolland, Matthew, 450; Loader, Law, 197 n. 140.
7 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 11–12; idem, Law, 197.
8 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 12; idem, Law, 197. For further discussion see Deines, Gerechtigkeit, 469–500; Novakovic, Messiah, 152–83.
9 Loader, “Matthew 1–4,” 12; idem, Law, 197.
rightly notes,\textsuperscript{10} to show that Jesus fulfils John’s prophecy only in the future. Jesus is the Messiah of Isaianic prophecy (Isaianic Messiah) on earth, and in the end-time he will come as the judge of John’s predictions. This, however, does not entail discontinuity between Isaianic Messiah and John’s identification of Jesus as the judge to come; Jesus comes already as the judge to come, not to judge but to teach and warn about the basis of his final judgement—and he already engages in other saving activity.

While supplementing John’s role description of Jesus as the coming judge with Jesus’ healing and helping (chapters 8–9), Matthew makes Jesus’ “deeds” (11:2) continuous not only with God’s saving in the past, but also with God’s saving promises to the people of Israel as to how he will continue to save them in the future. To achieve this, as Saldarini, notes, Matthew defines Jesus’ deeds in 4:23–11:2 as “the deeds of the Christ” and “enumerates them by paraphrasing” several Isaianic prophecies, which look forward to God’s future saving of his people (Isa 26:19; 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1).\textsuperscript{11} The Isaianic quotation in 8:17 (“He took our infirmities and bore our diseases”––Isa 53:4) also authenticates the christological and soteriological nature of Jesus’ activity (4:23–11:2). And it is striking that Isaiah 53 is being used in this way whereas traditionally people think of it as the key text about salvation from sins. Thus, as Davies and Allison correctly contend, Matthew puts “Jesus’ ministry and Isaiah’s oracles side by side”.\textsuperscript{12} This situates Jesus’ saving “deeds” within Israel’s theological and soteriological traditions.\textsuperscript{13}

Matthew links “the deeds of the Christ” (11:2) to the similar works for which the twelve disciples are commissioned and empowered (10:5–8)—as Davies and Allison,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 1:301.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Saldarini, \textit{Christian-Jewish Community}, 179–80.
\item \textsuperscript{13} For details regarding various kinds of expectations associated with the messianic figure, see Overman, \textit{Church and Community}, 163–64.
\end{itemize}
and Meier rightly suggest. Matthew does it primarily by positioning the material on the mission of the disciples (chapter 10) immediately after the summary of Jesus’ saving activity (4:23–9:35; cf. 15:24) and before John’s question regarding Jesus’ identity (11:2–6). Moreover, Matthew makes 11:2 “a closure (4:23–11:2)” so as to include the “deeds” of the Twelve (10:5–8), “which borrows phrases from Isaiah 35:5–6; 42:18; 61:1”, in “the deeds of the Christ” (4:23–9:35; 11:4–5; cf. 15:24).

However, given that John’s question is about the one to come whom John predicted—not in messianic terms, strictly speaking, but as the judge to come—there is more to the inclusion of chapter 10 in “the deeds of the Christ” (11:2). Perhaps Matthew wanted to link John’s query (11:2–3) to the questions regarding the validity and sufficiency of the mission of the Matthean community, which would have been possibly raised by his Jewish contemporaries, and use Jesus’ reply to endorse the validity and sufficiency of the saving mission of his community. This is possible because, as Luz rightly notes, unlike Luke 7:21, Matthew has John’s disciples does not immediately witness Jesus’ miraculous “deeds”. Therefore, as Luz fittingly observes, Matthew is possibly thinking more of his Jewish opponents’ questions pertaining to the validity of the saving mission of his community than of the actual historical situation of John’s disciples.

To conclude: though Jesus’ “deeds” (11:4–5) do not match John’s prediction of Jesus as the coming judge, they still fit into Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity. As the Messiah of Israel, Jesus’ “deeds” are the eschatological fulfilment of what God had promised, through his messenger Isaiah, in the messianic era (11:4–5; cf.

---

14 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240; Meier, Matthew, 119–20; idem, Vision, 75.
15 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240.
16 Meier, Vision, 75.
17 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:240. Similarly, Meier, Vision, 75.
18 Luz, Matthäus, 2:168.
19 Luz, Matthäus, 2:168.
Isa 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1). And, as the judge to come, Jesus declares the basis of his final judgement and will judge his people in the end, as John predicted (3:11–12; 7:21–23; 25:31–46). By linking chapter 10 to “the deeds of the Christ” (11:2), Matthew makes the mission of the Twelve (10:5–8) and Jesus’ saving (4:23–9:35) historically and soteriologically continuous. Thus Matthew shows that Jesus saves his people through his healing and helping as promised in 1:21 (cf. 11:4–5). This makes a detailed discussion on Jesus’ miracles—healing and helping—crucial for our understanding of salvation in Matthew’s Gospel, to which we shall turn now.

5.3. **THE SAVIOUR AS HEALER AND HELPER IN THE PRESENT OF HIS MINISTRY**

In chapters 8–25 Matthew depicts Jesus as healer and helper. Such a role description, however, raises a number of issues, given the focus of our proposed research—salvation in continuity. How does Matthew understand Jesus’ healing and helping in relation to the miracles that happened in the history of Israel—continuous or discontinuous? If they are continuous, then does that mean Jesus’ miracles are mere repetition or reenactment of the miracles in the past? If they are different, then how does that fit into Matthew’s motif of salvation in continuity? How does Matthew make his account of Jesus’ healing and helping sensitive to his Jewish religious environment? The following section will address these issues as they have a defining bearing on Matthew’s soteriology.

5.3.1. **Healings**

As in the other Synoptic Gospels, one of the most frequent salvific activities of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel is healing. However, Matthew presents Jesus’ healings in such a way that they match his soteriological motifs. In this section we shall discuss how Matthew
unfolds his understanding of “how Jesus saves” through his description of Jesus’ healings.

5.3.1.1. Leper Cleansed (8:1–4)

In the story of the leper’s healing in 8:1–4 (cf. Mark 1:40–45), while upholding the entire Torah and purity laws (8:4), Matthew shows that Jesus saves in many ways, which include healing. With leprosy being seen as God’s punishment for sin (Lev 14:34; Deut 24:8–9; 2 Chr 26:16–21; Num 12:10; 2 Kgs 5:25–27; 15:4–5), the leper asks Jesus if he is “willing” to save him (8:2) not only from the consequences of sins but also from God’s judgement for sin. According to Luz, the expression ἐὰν θέλῃς (8:2) is christological; the leper assumes the “authority” of Jesus (cf. 7:28–29) to bring healing; “what Jesus wills he is able to do (cf. Job 42:2; Isa 5:11).” Jesus responds to the leper’s plea by healing him, which shows not only his willingness to heal, but also his authority to save from sins.

The saying in 11:5 (“lepers are cleansed”) makes the healing of the leper the fulfilment of what God had promised in the past (Isa 35:5–6; 61:1). So 8:1–4 stands soteriologically very close to 11:5 as fulfilment of prophecy. Additionally, how Jesus effects salvation in the present by healing the leper is continuous with how God saved the lepers in the past: the story of Miriam’s seven-day leprosy (Numbers 12); and Elisha’s healing of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1–14). The salvation which Jesus effects in the

---


21 In the Old Testament and later Jewish tradition leprosy was often regarded as “the visitation of divine judgement”: See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:11; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:198; Hare, *Matthew*, 89. Cf. Carter, on the other hand, argue that the scene in 8:1–4 does not indicate that leprosy, and illness in general, is a divine punishment: *Matthew and the Margins*, 199.


present is not a “new” kind of salvation but the continuation and fulfilment of God’s saving plans, patterns and promises in the past.

But there is more to 8:1–4. God’s saving of the lepers does not end with Jesus’ mission, but continues in history. And, for Matthew, God does this through Jesus’ disciples. Matthew achieves this by adding to Jesus’ instructions to missionaries the command to heal lepers (10:8; cf. Mark 6:12). This makes Jesus’ healing of the leper in the present continuous with God’s continuing saving in history through Jesus’ disciples.

5.3.1.2. Centurion’s Servant (8:5–13)

The healing narrative in 8:5–13 (cf. Luke 7:1–10) entails Jesus’ encounter with a Gentile centurion. Therefore, scholars have often interpreted the story as another instance where Matthew prepares the readers both for the rejection of Israel and an affirmation that the Gentiles have taken over from the Jews as members of the kingdom. But such a reading cannot be supported by the immediate context nor by the Gospel as a whole.

Unlike in Luke (7:3), where it is the “elders of the Jews” who approach Jesus on behalf of the centurion, Matthew has the centurion himself making the request to Jesus for healing his paralysed servant (8:5–6). In addition, after Jesus’ response in 8:7 (ἐγὼ ἐλθὼν θεραπεύσω αὐτόν), which, though it may be translated as a statement (“I will come and heal him”), most likely poses a question (“Am I to come and heal him?”), the centurion addresses Jesus a second time in which he declares himself unworthy to receive Jesus under his roof.

---

25 Strecker, Gerechtigkeit, 99–101; Trilling, Israel, 88–90; Luz, Matthäus, 2:15–16; Senior, Matthew, 112; Meier, Matthew, 84; Gundry, Matthew, 145–46; France, Matthew, 316. See Hummel, Auseinandersetzung, 146–63, for a critique of this position.

26 Gundry, Matthew, 142–43; Hagner, Matthew, 1:200–201.

27 Uwe Wegner, Der Hauptmann von Kafarnaum (Mt 7,28a; 8,5–10,13 par Lk 7,1–10). ein Beitrag zur Q-Forschung (WUNT 2/14; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985), 375–80; Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:301; Luz, Matthäus, 2:14; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:21–22. Cf. According to Loader, ἐγὼ ἐλθὼν θεραπεύσω αὐτόν may be translated either as a question or as a statement: Law, 188–89.
It is sometimes suggested by scholars that the centurion’s sense of unworthiness could be either political (Carter)\textsuperscript{28} or moral (Rengstorf)\textsuperscript{29} or a sign of humility (Harrington).\textsuperscript{30} But these propositions are not satisfactory as they do not account for the immediate context where Matthew has Jesus uphold the Law and purity (8:4). Therefore, as Runesson correctly argues, it is more likely that the centurion’s comment in 8:8 (“I am not worthy to have you come under my roof”), shows that Matthew still keeps the Jew-Gentile ethnic distinction intact.\textsuperscript{31} This prepares the readers for 10:5–6 and 15:24.\textsuperscript{32} For Matthew, the centurion is aware of the impropriety of Jesus, a Jew, visiting his Gentile home.\textsuperscript{33}

More significantly, as Loader rightly observes, “while Matthew does not portray him [the centurion] as following Jesus, he is a model of true faith”.\textsuperscript{34} Therefore, in France’s view, “the remarkable ‘faith’ of this centurion, then, is to be understood not in the Pauline sense of a soteriological commitment”, but as acknowledging the authority of Jesus to heal.\textsuperscript{35} In other words, as Nolland rightly notes, “Jesus is not saying that he has failed to find faith in Israel, but he is saying that he has not found faith on the level of the centurion’s”.\textsuperscript{36} It is in this sense that the centurion has exceeded anything that

\textsuperscript{28} For Carter, the centurion, a representative of the Roman imperial power, is subordinating himself to Jesus’ much greater power: \textit{Matthew and the Margins}, 202.

\textsuperscript{29} According to Rengstorf, the centurion feels some sense of personal unworthiness at a moral and spiritual level, because he recognised Jesus as “Lord”. See K. H. Rengstorf, “ἱκανος,” in vol. 3 (Θ–Κ) of the \textit{Theological Dictionary of the New Testament} (ed. Gerhard Kittel; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 293–96, here 294. This is also doubtful because, for Matthew, as in Luke, he was essentially a good man (8:9–10; cf. Luke 7:2–5).

\textsuperscript{30} In the view of Harrington, the centurion’s comment is a gesture of humility: \textit{Matthew}, 114. But he reads the story in isolation from its Jewish context.

\textsuperscript{31} Runesson, “Impact of Ethnic Identity,” 8, 10.


\textsuperscript{33} Loader, \textit{Law}, 188.

\textsuperscript{34} Loader, \textit{Law}, 189.

\textsuperscript{35} France, \textit{Matthew}, 315.

\textsuperscript{36} Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 356.
Jesus has thus far experienced in his mission to the Jews.\(^{37}\) The kind of faith that is in view is one that responds to and recognises God’s continuing saving in Jesus.

This means, as Schuyler Brown correctly observes, Matthew clearly does not want to confuse the Gentiles coming to Jesus, with the mission to the Gentiles.\(^{38}\) The healing of the centurion’s servant in 8:5–13, therefore, while indicating Jesus’ mercy and compassion to the Gentiles, is not an “aberration” as Sim argues,\(^{39}\) or an “incidental” event as Sim observes elsewhere,\(^{40}\) but “prefigures” the inclusion of the Gentiles, as Loader rightly argues.\(^{41}\) The mission to the Gentiles however occurs only after Easter.\(^{42}\) In short, Jesus’ exclusive call to go to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:25; cf. 10:5–6) will not lose its cogency, until it is reversed in 28:18-20.

The centurion’s words in 8:8–9 (“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it”) are important for Matthew’s understanding of Christology and soteriology. For Nolland, in 8:8–9, “the christological motivation is less emphatic but also certainly present”.\(^{43}\) This is not probable as Jesus’ authority to heal is continuous with his status as “Son of God”. In the view of Hare, the centurion’s words attribute a “special authority” to Jesus, “the authority to issue commands on God’s behalf”.\(^{44}\) This is consistent with the

\(^{39}\) Sim, *Christian Judaism*, 224.
\(^{41}\) Loader, *Law*, 189.
\(^{44}\) Hare, *Matthew*, 91.
authorisation model Christology in Matthew (cf. 1:23; 28:28–20), which does not equate Jesus with God.

According to France, “it would be pedantic to use . . . [8:8–9] as the basis for a christological argument . . . [because] the point of comparison is in the issuing of effective commands”.45 While this is plausible, there is more to it: the centurion in fact affirms the sufficiency and efficacy of Jesus’ word(s) and its power to heal (cf. 7:28–29), as Luz and Hagner rightly contend.46 This best explains why the centurion addresses Jesus as “Lord” (8:8). Therefore, it is likely that, by likening his own exercise of authority to that of Jesus’ (8:9), the centurion acknowledges Jesus’ authority to heal. This shows how closely Matthew links Christology with soteriology.

Matthew has Jesus now link the contrast between the centurion’s faith and its lack in Israel, to the eschatological banquet (8:11–12). Jesus predicts the gathering of many “from east and west” into the kingdom and the exclusion of “the heirs of the kingdom” (8:11–12).47 According to Hagner, and Davies and Allison, the references concerning the coming of “many from east and west” (Isa 43:5; Ps 107:3; Bar 4:37) refer to “the return of diaspora Jews”.48 For Levine, the contrast is between elite Jews and other Jews.49 In the view of Gundry and Meier, exclusion of “the heirs of the kingdom” means rejection of Judaism.50 These suggestions are doubtful as they do not seem to take into account Matthew’s Jewish context against which he contrasts the Gentile’s faith and the unfaith of Israel.

Therefore, as most Matthean scholars rightly contend, the contrast between the inclusion of many “from east and west” and the exclusion of “the heirs of the kingdom”

45 France, Matthew, 315.
46 Luz, Matthäus, 2:14; Hagner, Matthew, 1:204.
47 Loader, Law, 189.
48 Hagner, Matthew, 1:205; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:25–29.
50 Gundry, Matthew, 145–46; Meier, Matthew, 84.
in its Matthean context reads most naturally as the inclusion of the Gentiles in the eschatological gathering and restoration of Israel (Isa 2:3; 19:18–25; 66:18–21; Jer 3:17). According to Saldarini, “the quoting of Isa. 8:23–9:1 in Matt. 4:15–16 and of LXX Isa. 42:1–4 and 11:10 in Matt. 12:18–21 . . . also suggest a context of the restoration of Israel”. 8:11 foreshadows the inclusion of the Gentiles, not in the present but in the eschaton. The point is: the Jews who do not believe in God’s continuing saving in Jesus, “like the unbelieving Gentiles, will be excluded”. However, it does not entail the rejection of the people of Israel as a whole, but the fulfilment of what God had promised to Abraham: after all, the Jewish patriarchs will be there (8:11) and other Jews as well. This shows how Matthew’s relation to his Jewish heritage defines his soteriology.

5.3.1.3. The Healing of Peter’s Mother-in-Law (8:14–17; cf. Mark 1:29–34)

The account of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and many others (8:14–17) unfurls Matthew’s soteriology in a significant way. Matthew inserts Isa 53:4 (“Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases”; cf. 8:17) in the summary of Jesus’ healings in 8:16–17 (cf. 4:23; 9:35). This validates Jesus’ saving role as healer. In Senior’s opinion, “Matthew envelops Jesus as healer in the mantle of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant” (8:17) because Jesus’ healing “not only takes away the sufferings of God’s

55 Unlike in Mark (1:29–34), where the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and the evening healings happen on a Sabbath day (Mk 1:21), Matthew does not link both his accounts to the Sabbath. While not entering the house of the centurion (8:5–13), a Gentile, Jesus enters the house of Peter’s mother-in-law, a Jew. Moreover, unlike in the healing of the centurion’s servant (8:5–13), where the Gentile centurion approaches Jesus to heal his servant, Jesus takes the initiative to heal Peter’s mother-in-law, a Jew, which foreshadows 15:24 (cf. 10:5–6). All these instances show that Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves” is very closely linked to his affirmative relation with Judaism, which entails continuity.
56 For a discussion on Matthew’s use of Isa 53:4a in 8:17, see Novakovic, *Messiah*, 125–32.
people but bears them himself”.

According to Meier, Matthew “extends the image of servanthood” in 20:28 to “include” Jesus’ healings as well as his death. For Meier, this means Jesus saves his people “by his life and his death”. That provides a more holistic model for Jesus’ saving mission (cf. 1:21), as Novakovic suggests. Such an inference is conceivable, given the likely link between 8:17 and 20:28 (cf. 26:28). However, in 8:17 it is not the death but the healing which Matthew has in mind because, while taking up “the release from suffering” brought by the Servant of Yahweh in Isaiah 53, Matthew disregards the idea of “the suffering being taken” up by another, which is not the purpose of Jesus’ healings (Nolland).

5.3.1.4. Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic (9:2–8; cf. Mark 2:1–12)

Matthew’s version of the healing of the paralytic (9:2–8) describes a controversy with the scribes surrounding forgiveness of sins, accompanied by a miracle of healing that confirms forgiveness (9:2–8). Jesus speaks the word of forgiveness to the paralytic. This raises a number of issues. Why does Jesus pronounce forgiveness of sins first, before he heals the paralytic? Is there any relation between healing and forgiveness of sins? Has Jesus taken to himself the divine prerogative of forgiving the sins of others? Is Jesus forgiving sins or just declaring forgiveness?

Some scholars—Beare, France, and Hagner—argue that Jesus’ healing of the paralytic is not a salvific act (1:21) as there is no reference to healing and forgiveness in the preceding healing accounts in chapter 8, especially in the only other instance of the healing of paralysis (8:5–13). Moreover, the other Matthean accounts of healing do not mention forgiveness of sins as if this were a necessary condition for healing; faith

57 Senior, Matthew, 112–13.
58 Meier, Matthew, 86.
59 Meier, Matthew, 86.
60 Novakovic, Messiah, 72–73, 131–32. In the view of Novakovic, “Jesus’ salvific mission is in fact God’s own mission and a sign of divine forgiveness” (73).
61 Nolland, Matthew, 361–62.
62 Beare, Matthew, 221–22; France, Matthew, 345; Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
rather than forgiveness is the normal requisite (15:28; cf. 9:2).\(^{63}\) One might also argue that the close connection between sin and sickness is dismissed in the only gospel story where the close connection between sin and sickness is discussed (John 9:1–3).\(^{64}\) What does Jesus’ unexpected assurance of forgiveness (9:2, 5–6) mean then?

For Matthew, the possible connection between sin and sickness is not merely “causal”, as Patte argues,\(^{65}\) nor does it stand only “in the background”, as Nolland suggests,\(^{66}\) but is clearly implied and mentioned in the healing of the paralytic,\(^{67}\) as most Matthean scholars rightly suggest.\(^{68}\) And James 5:14–16 too, reinforces the close link between healing and forgiveness, without making the latter a necessary condition for the former.\(^{69}\) In 9:2–8, therefore, as Runesson argues, there does appear to be a presupposition that the paralysis is related to the man’s sin and need of forgiveness of sins,\(^{70}\) unlike in John 9.

Does this mean suffering and sickness are essentially God’s punishment? That does not appear to be probable as this view is sometimes addressed in John 9:2 (“who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”) and, in the book of Job, but, according to Hagner, “it is never upheld as a correct or appropriate” theological position (John 9:3: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s

\(^{63}\) France, Matthew, 344.

\(^{64}\) France, Matthew, 345; Hagner, Matthew, 1:232. Only one other time in the canonical gospels does Jesus explicitly forgive someone’s sins (Luke 7:48).

\(^{65}\) Patte, Matthew, 125–26.

\(^{66}\) Nolland, Matthew, 380.

\(^{67}\) For the connection between sin and sickness see Exod 20:5; Lev 26:14–16; Deut 28:21–22; 2 Chr 21:15, 18–19; Ps 103:3; 4Q510; 1QapGen 20:16–29; 1QS 3:20–24 (both sin and sickness are caused by the angel of darkness); Luke 13:2; John 5:14; 9:2; 1 Cor 11:28–30; Jas 5:4–14; T. Gad 5; T. Sol. passim; b. Ned.41a; b. Šabb. 55a.

\(^{68}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 38, 89, 92–93; Hagner, Matthew, 1:232; Meier, Matthew, 91; Nolland, Matthew, 380; Gundry, Matthew, 165; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 216, France, Matthew, 315; Luz, Matthäus, 2:36; Patte, Matthew, 125–26; Margaret Davies, Matthew, 72, 76–77.

\(^{69}\) Cf. Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.

\(^{70}\) In Runesson’s view, the paralytic’s condition is the result of “his wrongdoing to others” for two reasons: the man is not born paralytic as in John 9:1–12; and “there is only one sin mentioned in Matthew which relates directly to God: sin against the holy spirit” (12:31–33). See “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 171 n. 105.
works might be revealed in him”; the story of Job; the “if” in Jas 5:15: “and anyone who has committed sins”). According to Hagner, “the fundamental premise” for the relation between sin and sickness is that “all sickness and suffering, like death itself, trace back to the entry of sin into the world” (Genesis 3). It is in this sense that Matthew understands the causal relation between sin and sickness. Therefore, in the view of Davies and Allison, when Jesus forgives the paralytic’s sins, “he is not treating a symptom but rooting out the symptom’s cause”. The paralytic man’s ability to walk not only confirms that his sins have been forgiven, but also reinforces the close relation between healing and forgiveness. This “presupposes the invasion” of the kingdom of heaven (salvation) “into the realm” of illness “caused” by sin in the present (2 Bar. 73:1–2), wherein people are saved not only from sin itself but also from its consequences (Isa 35:1–8); to forgive sin is to remove sin and heal. This links Jesus’ healings to 1:21, which is already evident in the citation of Isa 53:4 in 8:17. The link becomes more explicit in Ps 103:3: “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases” (cf. Ps 25:18; 32:1–2; 41:5; 79:9).

In the opinion of Luz, because Matthew links forgiveness of sins to Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge (“Son of Man”; 9:6), though Jesus forgives sins on earth, forgiveness of sins will be “released” (gelöst) only in the eschaton as it does not eliminate the final judgement (cf. 16:16; 18:18). Repschinski also shares the same

---

71 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
72 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
73 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
74 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:89.
75 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
76 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
77 Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
78 Luz, Matthäus, 2:37.
view but on another level. He contends that Matthew sets Jesus’ “power to forgive sins into relation with eschatological judgment”, which is already made explicit in John’s preaching (3:11–12), because of the association the “Son of Man” title has with Dan 7:13–14. ⁷⁹

The arguments of Luz and Repschinski are not compelling because the present tense of Jesus’ assurance of forgiveness (ἀφίεσθαι—9:2) reads like a “performative utterance”. ⁸⁰ As Davies and Allison, France, and Hagner rightly put it, Jesus is not simply “stating a fact” or “declaring” that God had forgiven the paralytic’s sins, something that was performed regularly by priests (cf. 8:4), “but is there and then forgiving the sins” (“your sins are [this moment] forgiven”). ⁸¹ Further, according to France and Harrington, there is no text in Jewish literature nor is there any synoptic tradition that endorses Repschinski’s view that Daniel’s Son of Man has the power to forgive sins. ⁸² And, in France’s view, Jesus is not appropriating Daniel 7, but uses it “to make a claim for his present status, as he will do again in 12:8”. ⁸³ Matthew has Jesus himself clearly separate his role “on earth” (11:4–5), and in the eschaton (7:21–23; 25:31–46; cf. 3:11–12). More significantly, the curing of the paralytic is a proof of God’s saving in Jesus, offered through forgiveness of sins, as promised in 1:21. Therefore, for Matthew, salvation is a present reality in Jesus’ healing (cf. 4:17).

Repschinski mounts further arguments against seeing Jesus’ healing as a saving act. He contends that, while Jesus speaks the word of forgiveness, “Matthew, however, does not let Jesus formulate the forgiveness in the first person but chooses the passive

---

⁷⁹ Repschinski, “He Will Save His People”, 259.
⁸⁰ France, Matthew, 345, 347.
⁸¹ France, Matthew, 345; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 89; Hagner, Matthew, 1:232.
⁸² France, Matthew, 347; Harrington, Matthew, 122.
⁸³ France, Matthew, 347.
voice” (9:2, 5). This means, though “the paralytic experiences forgiveness through Jesus . . . it does not seem to be Jesus who actually forgives” the sins of the paralytic; “Jesus does not speak of himself directly as having the power to forgive sins”. To augment his argument further, Repschinski uses 12:31 (“Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven”), where the passive tense appears again, but “this time in the future tense” (ἀφεθήσεται). But Repschinski’s thesis is again not persuasive; Jesus saves the paralytic from his sins (cf. 1:21). Moreover, 9:6 clearly states that, as the “Son of Man,” Jesus has the authority to forgive sins on earth. So, as Davies and Allison correctly contend, “Jesus does more than announce God’s forgiveness”.

Jesus’ claim regarding his authority to forgive sins on earth, as in 9:6, however, poses a few issues. Is Jesus God? Does Jesus replace the temple and the cultic practices associated with it? One might argue that, for Matthew, Jesus is the “source” of forgiveness (Davies and Allison) or “sharing” God’s prerogative to forgive sins (France) or has “merged” with God (Nolland) or “identified” with God (Gundry) or has “replaced” the temple (Repschinski). But these suggestions are not very convincing.

Matthew’s comment on the “evil” intentions of the scribes (9:4b) shows that he understands Jesus’ claim of authority differently from the scribes. For Matthew, the

---

84 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People”, 259.
85 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People”, 259.
86 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People”, 259.
87 Repschinski, “He Will Save His People”, 259.
88 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:91.
89 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:91.
90 France, Matthew, 347.
91 Nolland, Matthew, 381.
92 Gundry, Matthew, 163.
94 Loader, Law, 191; Luz, Matthäus, 2:37.
scribal charge of blasphemy is incorrect because 9:6 does not mean Jesus has taken to himself a divine prerogative. Rather, as Loader rightly argues, it means Jesus is “authorised” not just to declare forgiveness, but to forgive sins on earth and “to act with divine authority as the Son of Man saying makes clear” (9:6; cf. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31).

Such authorisation models sit well within Jewish traditions. John’s baptism, by implication, brings forgiveness of sins (3:6). Forgiveness of sins is also implied in the call to repentance by John (3:2); Jesus (4:17) and, later the disciples (10:7). Moreover, Matthew even argues that the forgiveness of God is subject to certain pre-conditions. Divine forgiveness cannot be appropriated unless one forgives others (5:21–26; 6:12, 14–15; 18:15–35); human forgiveness is closely linked to divine forgiveness. In short, Jesus’ claim of authority to forgive sins does not deny the view that only God could forgive sins, nor does it limit to himself the right and power to forgive sins.

For Matthew, Jesus the healer has the power to forgive sins. Therefore, according to France, the logic of the rhetorical question in 9:5 (“For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’?) is that “if the ‘harder’ of the two options can be demonstrated, the ‘easier’ may be assumed also to be possible”. It is certainly not “easier” to forgive sins (“to do”), since only God can do it, than it is to heal

---

95 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven,” 170–71. According to Runesson, the logic of the system of forgiveness in Matthew, “by implication, [is] that humans can, potentially, bind others in their debt, since debt can be removed only by the victim” (170). Therefore, the sins of the paralytic can be forgiven only if “the victim(s) of his sins . . . cancels his debts” (171). He notes, “by cancelling the debts that the man owes, Jesus overrides the role of the victim(s) and established a direct link to the forgiveness of God, which in turn results in the charge of some scribes present that this behaviour amounts to ‘blasphemy’ ” (171).

96 Loader, Law, 191.

97 Patte, Matthew, 49; Harrington, Matthew, 52–54; Luz, Matthäus, 1:205; Nolland, Matthew, 135–37, 140–42, 1081; McKnight, “Matthew,” 73; Loader, Law, 157, 192, 249; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 6.

98 Loader, Law, 192; Nolland, Matthew, 1081 n. 135.

99 Meier, Matthew, 62; idem, Vision, 132–35; Beare, Matthew, 177–78; Patte, Matthew, 89; Harrington, Matthew, 94–95, 122, 125, 270; Hare, Matthew, 69, 215; Gundry, Matthew, 109, 375; Luz, Matthäus, 1:459; 2:28–29, 37–38; France, Matthew, 252; Evans, Matthew, 147, 336–38.

100 France, Matthew, 346.
the paralytic. It is “easier” to pronounce (“to say”) forgiveness of sins than to command someone to walk as there is no objective way to check the inner change that is promised, whereas a claim to make a paralytic walk can be empirically verified. But, as France rightly argues, “Jesus’ question is not about which is easier to do, but which is easier to say” [emphasis original]. Jesus chooses the “harder” option to heal the paralytic and show that he has the authority to forgive sins. So, if he has power over sickness he also has power over sins. This makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers, given the close relation between sin and sickness in ancient Judaism. This means Jesus “deeds” are soteriological as they are continuous with his saving authority and status (cf. 11:4–5).

Matthew extends the scope of Jesus’ authorisation beyond Jesus. To do so, he reworks Mark’s concluding phrase—where the onlookers glorify God, saying “we have never seen anything like this” (Mark 2:12)—to: “they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings” (9:8). But who are these “human beings”? According to France, Matthew uses the “generalising plural” τοιούτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (9:8) “idiomatically to express surprise that this special prerogative of God has been shared with any human being. The reference is still to Jesus alone” [emphasis original]. France also argues that, however, in 16:19 and 18:18 Jesus will selectively share his special authority with the Twelve (selected men), “but that is far from being a blanket authorization for ‘human beings’ in general to dispense God’s forgiveness”. But France does not seem to explain 10:1 and John-Jesus-ecclesia continuity. Therefore, it is more probable that, as most Matthean scholars rightly argue, the plural (“human beings”) is intended to indicate that the ecclesia shares or participates in Jesus’ saving

---

101 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:92.
102 France, Matthew, 346.
103 France, Matthew, 348.
104 France, Matthew, 348. Similarly Gundry, Matthew, 165.
authority (10:1, 5–8; 28:18–20). This means God’s saving is not limited to Jesus and his earthly mission. Matthew, thus, brings again, Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology inseparably close, wherein all mutually, theologically and historically define and inform each other, but not necessarily equally.

In short, Jesus’ healing of the paralytic, while reflecting his authority to heal and to forgive sins on earth, is a salvific deed. And, hence, it constitutes Jesus’ saving mission which brings forgiveness of sins (1:21). This Matthew unfolds in relation to his Jewish theological location.


In order to illustrate the prophecy quoted in 11:5 that “the deeds of the Christ” include the restoration of sight to the blind—as Hare, and Davies and Allison, and Hagner rightly observe—Matthew situates the story of the healing of the two blind men in 9:27–31. He uses the Markan story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus, though he repeats it in 20:29–34 (cf. Mark 1:43–45; 8:22–26), which, as in Mark, appears just before Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In doing so, Matthew has changed the original reference to a single individual (Bartimaeus) in Mark so that now “two” people are referred to. Matthew repeats this feature in 20:29–34. But why “two” blind men? Various explanations for Matthew’s multiplication of the Markan figure by “two” have been proffered.

---

105 Nolland, Matthew, 383; Harrington, Matthew, 122, Loader, Law, 190; Hagner, Matthew, 1:234; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 217; Meier, Matthew, 92; idem, Vision, 71–72; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:96.
106 Hare, Matthew, 107; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:134; Hagner, Matthew, 1:252.
108 Loader, “Son of David”, 572. The other two instances of Matthew’s doubling: in Matt 8:28 one demoniac (so Mark 5:2) becomes two demoniacs; and in Matt 21:1–11 an ass (so Mark 11:1–10) becomes an ass and her foal. For a detailed account of Matthew’s doubling, see Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:87.
According to Meier and Gundry, Matthew would have been “compensating” for the omission of the blind man at Bethesda (Mark 8:22–26).\(^{109}\) This argument is not persuasive, as it presumes Matthew’s fondness for arithmetical accuracy in redaction, which, however, is not demonstrated elsewhere in his Gospel. It cannot be just a fondness for doubling, as Bultmann argues;\(^{110}\) if it were otherwise Matthew would not have limited doubling to selected healing narratives of blindness and exorcism. In contrast, Loader and Gibbs argue that Matthew’s doubling strategy may be purely because of forensic reasons: “the validity of the testimony of the two witnesses” (Deut 17:6; cf. Num 35:30).\(^{111}\) This could be possible because Matthew employs such a tradition elsewhere (18:15–16; 26:60–61; cf. Mark 14:57–58).

However, there is more to Matthew’s multiplication of the Markan figure by “two” in 9:27–31 and 20:29–34, given that 9:27–31 comes at the end of chapters 5–9, which represent Matthew’s version of Jesus’ ministry in miniature, and 20:29–34 comes at the end of Jesus’ active ministry. For Matthew, as in Mark, “blindness” is a metaphor for resistance to God’s saving initiative in Jesus (13:13–17 [the crowds]; 15:14; 23:16–17 [religious leaders]). And restoration of sight is the work of the Messiah (11:4–5). Those who respond to God’s continuing saving in Jesus receive sight, and the Jewish leaders who are rebellious to Jesus’ saving remain blind (15:14; 23:16–17).

The “two” blind men address Jesus as “Son of David” (9:27). This, in Matthew, indicates Jesus’ status as the royal Davidic Messiah-King (1:1–17, 20; 2:1–6), “promised in Scripture and sent to Israel”.\(^{112}\) The Davidic connection of Jesus plays a significant role in his healing, given that Matthew has Jesus several times heal as “Son


\(^{112}\) Loader, “Son of David,” 585.
Thus Matthew links Jesus’ healing to how God effected healing through David in the past, which entails soteriological continuity.

This shows that it is mainly the Jewish leaders who have rejected God’s continuing saving in Jesus, not the whole of Judaism; the “two” blind men recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah and the eschatological fulfilment of God’s continuing saving plans through the lineage of David (“Son of David”). This symbolically represents the positive response of the Jewish people, though not many, towards Jesus’ saving, and the salvation of the Jews (“sight”; cf. 11:5). Thus, as Loader fittingly concludes, duality “functions for Matthew as part of a system of motifs by which he interprets the significance of Jesus’ encounter with Israel as her Messiah. Within that system it emphasizes that Israel’s blindness . . . in rejecting the Son of David counts against her in the divine court of judgment”.

As with other sicknesses and physical deformities, blindness was also often considered as God’s punishment for sin in ancient Judaism (Gen 19:11; Exod 4:11; Deut 28:28–29; 2 Kgs 6:18, 25:7; Isa 59:1–5; Matt 12:22; John 9:2; Acts 13:11; b. Hag. 61a; b. Šabb. 108b–9a; Let. Aris. 316).

Moreover, the blind and people with defective sight suffered from social and religious marginalisation and exclusion: the blind were not allowed to serve as priests (Lev 21:16–20); concerning Jerusalem, “No blind man shall enter it in all his days and shall not profane the city where I abide” (11QTemple 45:12–14; cf. 2 Sam 5:8; 1QSa 2:3–11; 1QM 7:4–5); they suffered social harassment

---

113 For the “Son of David” as healer, see Duling, “Therapeutic Son of David,” 392–410. According to Baxter, Matthew’s warrant for connecting Jesus’ healing activity to the “Son of David” title is the Davidic shepherd of Ezek 34: Israel’s Only Shepherd, 37.

114 Loader, “Son of David,” 582.

115 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:134–35; Hagner, Matthew, 1:253; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 227. Blindness could also be the natural result of ageing; cf. Gen 27:1; 1 Kgs 14:4; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:135 n. 40.


117 Blind animals were unacceptable to Yahweh; cf. Lev 22:22; Deut 15:21; Mal 1:8.
as victims of cruelty (Lev 19:14; Deut 27:18); and were economically vulnerable (Jud 16:21; Job 29:12–17; Mark 10:46; John 9:8; Sir 40:28–30; t. Ta’an. 21a). Therefore, for Matthew, by healing the blind men Jesus not only “saves” them from God’s punishment for sin, but also “helps” them to have their due space in the social fabric.

To conclude: Matthew uses duality and the motif of blindness not only to interpret the significance of Jesus’ encounter with Israel, but also to emphasise the Jewish leaders’ blindness in rejecting her promised royal Davidic Messiah, who fulfils God’s saving promises for the messianic era by healing the blind (cf. 11:4–5).


The story of the healing of a man with a withered hand in 12:9–14, while illustrating the claim to a true interpretation of the Torah by Jesus in 11:28–30, as in 12:1–8, elucidates how Matthew defines Jesus’ healing (saving) in relation to his affirmative stance towards the Sabbath. [For a detailed discussion on the Matthean Jesus’ positive attitude towards the Sabbath, see chapter 4 (section 4.8.1.1)]. To achieve this, Matthew alters Jesus’ question in Mark—“Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4)—to a question asked by the Pharisees: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” It is now prefaced by the example of the sheep falling into the pit on the Sabbath, which would be regarded as a legitimate reason for working on the Sabbath day (cf. CD 11:13–14).118 Jesus, using a rhetorical device comparing a lesser with a greater, proposes to do healing by comparing his action to lifting a sheep from the pit. If

---

118 Apparently Matthew generalizes the question of the Pharisees here. The Pharisees’ questions were not completely wrong as such, though their intentions were evil (12:10, 14). It was allowable for Jews to relieve a life-threatening situation on the Sabbath (m. Yoma 8:6; cf. CD 11:13–14). So, it is certain that the Pharisees should not have any disagreement on healing someone, whose life is in danger, on the Sabbath. But the issue was the curing of a withered hand, which neither endangered a life nor was a recent illness requiring immediate treatment. The healing could have waited for the following day. But, Matthew has Jesus heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day. This, seemingly, reflects Matthew’s tendency to generalise the response of the Pharisees. It makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers who are familiar with the intense prejudices and polemics among various Jewish groups. That is, Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ saving “deed” (healing; cf. 11:4–5) is very much conditioned by his Jewish religious environment.
it is “lawful” to save an animal (12:7) on the Sabbath, then it is “lawful” to heal the sick (save). Matthew then rewrites Mark’s rhetorical question (Mark 3:4) so that what follows is a statement in the indicative, rather than a question in the interrogative, forming the conclusion of the argument about the sheep. Thus the Matthean Jesus deduces (ὡςτε) “it is lawful to do good” on the Sabbath (12:12). Therefore, healing means doing good; and if doing good is “lawful”, then healing is “lawful”, if healing is good and lawful, then it is salvific.


In his account of the healing of the epileptic boy (17:14–21), Matthew not only heavily shortens and simplifies his Markan source (9:14–29), but also shifts the focus from the faith of the epileptic boy’s father to the “little faith” of the disciples. Though Jesus gave his disciples the authority and power to continue his saving “deeds” on earth in 10:1, 7–8, they failed to heal and the epileptic boy (17:16). What does the failure of the disciples mean? Does this mean Jesus’ saving and the mission of the Twelve are discontinuous? If so, then how do we account for 10:1, 8? Does this mean Jesus has not transferred his authority completely? Is it because Jesus’ disciples are trying their authority for the first time? Is it because the three main disciples—Peter, James, and John—were not with them? Does this mean mere authorisation by Jesus is not sufficient to effect healing?

According to France and Meier, the disciples did not trust God; the authority to heal and cast out demons is not enough on its own; “faith is also necessary”. For Hagner, the disciples failed because “they had become uneasy over the extreme symptoms displayed by the boy”. These interpretations are not convincing because it would call into question the sufficiency of Jesus’ own power, since it was he who had

---

119 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:321.
120 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:321.
121 France, Matthew, 660, 662; idem, Evangelist and Teacher, 273–75; Meier, Matthew, 194.
122 Hagner, Matthew, 2:505.
bestowed the power upon the disciples to perform such miracles. And Jesus has not the slightest problem in healing the epileptic boy. It is not plausible that the disciples had no faith in their authorisation; had they not believed in their authority, they would not have tried to heal the boy.

Scholars like Hagner, Nolland, and France have also drawn attention to the possibility that the absence of the “leading disciples”—Peter, James and John—would have shaken the confidence of the remaining nine disciples. Such an inference is not tenable because Jesus authorised all the twelve disciples to heal and exorcise—not just Peter, James and John (10:1, 8). In addition, as in Mark and Luke, there is no explicit reference or allusion in the narrative that exempts Peter, James, and John from the failure (17:16, 19). Based on the context, as Luz correctly notes, “they came” (ἐλθόντων) in 17:14 refers to Jesus and the three disciples (Peter, James, and John), but 17:16 speaks not of the nine disciples who were on the mount of transfiguration with Jesus but only of “the disciples”. Moreover, in chapters 14–17 we have seen “the disciples” fail numerous times (14:15–17, 26, 30–31; 15:15–16; 23, 33; 16:5–11, 22–23; 17:4).

Hagner also argues that the disciples’ failure to heal the epileptic boy is because they were affected by the “doubting crowd”. Hagner’s argument is unpersuasive because the failure of the disciples elsewhere has nothing to do with the faith of the crowd (14:15–17, 26, 30–31; 15:15–16; 23, 33; 16:5–11, 22–23; 17:4). According to Davies and Allison, the disciples’ incapability “stems not from strict incapacity but from not exercising an authority they in fact possess”. This is possible, but not compelling because, according to Luz, miracles were not uncommon in the church

123 France, Matthew, 662; Nolland, Matthew, 712, 715; Hagner, Matthew, 2:504–5.
124 Luz, Matthäus, 2:522.
125 Hagner, Matthew, 2:505.
126 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:723.
(7:22), even in disputed ways. It discredits yet another proposition of France and Nolland: the disciples failed to heal because it was their first attempt to exercise their authority, given that Matthew, “unlike Mark 6:13; and Luke 10:17, has not recorded that they have actually done so.” Moreover, it is unlikely that Matthew makes such a link because the failure of the disciples is not unique to this passage (cf. 14:15–17, 26, 30–31; 15:15–16; 23, 33; 16:5–11, 22–23; 17:4).

According to Nolland, the disciples’ failure represents the failure of “the present generation”. But Nolland is not convincing because, as Luz and Hare rightly note, Matthew does not use “this generation” in relation to Jesus’ disciples anywhere else in his Gospel (17:17; cf. Mark 9:18). Gundry suggests that the failure of the disciples represents the failure of Israel and their unbelief. According to him, Matthew achieves this by omitting “to them” (17:17; cf. Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41) and thus shifts the focus from “the disciples to the nation of Israel”. This again is doubtful, as it does not explain why Matthew put the healing of the epileptic boy side by side with Jesus’ transfiguration, where Jesus is identified as the “Son of God”, which Matthew does in relation to the Law and the prophets, as represented by Moses and Elijah. For Luz, the narrative shows that in the Matthean community the experience of healing sometimes did not happen. This also cannot be probable as it questions the sustaining sufficiency of the authority which Jesus has given his disciples.

What then could be the reason for the disciples’ failure? Unlike Luke, who does not give any explanation (9:43), and Mark, who links the failure to the lack of prayer (9:29), Matthew gives the reason for the disciples’ failure as “little faith” (ὀλιγοπιστίαν;
17:20). But despite the disciples’ failure and “little faith”, Matthew has Jesus give them the promise that “faith as small as a grain of mustard seed can move mountains” (17:20), which, in contrast, in Mark “follows the temple expulsion” (Mark 11:22–23). In doing so, as Loader correctly argues, Matthew effectively “replaces Mark’s emphasis on the need of prayer” (cf. Mark 9:29). In Loader’s view, this is to remove the Markan image of the community of faith as “the new community of prayer” (11:15–25) and “the new temple”, which he develops in 11:1–13:37. For Matthew, Jesus established the *ecclesia* (16:16; cf. 10:1) not to replace the temple, as in Mark (11:22–25), but to mediate God’s saving in history as the temple does (cf. 18:20). This entails continuity.

However, perhaps there is more to Jesus’ promise in 17:20, given its narrative setting. Matthew positions Jesus’ promise between chapters 16 and 18, where the former describes the authorisation of the Twelve and the latter the authorisation of the *ecclesia*. This means Matthew would have used Jesus’ promise in a positive way. Matthew’s attention to the disciples’ “little faith”, and situating it before he comes to the possible failures and conflicts within the *ecclesia* in chapter 18, show what their faith, even if it is of the size of a “mustard seed”, can achieve (17:20). This would have been encouraging for Matthew’s Jewish hearers who face severe persecution from the Jewish authorities (10:17; 23:34), and have been accused of being people of “little faith” by Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries as they are blamed for “abrogating” the Law and the prophets.

In conclusion: in the account of the healing of the epileptic boy, Matthew defines his understanding of salvation in close association with ecclesiology and his
positive relation to his Jewish heritage. For Matthew, the continuity between Jesus’
mission and the mission of the twelve shows the sustaining sufficiency of God’s saving
in Jesus.

5.3.2. Exorcism

For Matthew, as with his healings, Jesus’ exorcisms also constitute his saving activity
(cf. 11:4–5). However, Matthew has considerably reduced (8:28–34; cf. Mark 5:1–20)
and sometimes even omitted accounts of exorcism (cf. Mark 1:23–28) within his
description of Jesus’ saving deeds. This places all the more significance on his
duplication of the exorcism of the dumb demoniac in 9:32–34 and 12:22–33. The only
other exorcism that remains is the encounter with the Canaanite woman in 15:21–28.


Matthew’s version of the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs in 8:28–34 significantly
differs from its Markan source (Mark 5:1–20). The most remarkable peculiarity is that
the single demoniac in the same story in Mark and Luke (though possessed by multiple
demons) has become in Matthew “two demoniacs”. This is similar to the accounts of the
healing of the “two” blind men (cf. 9:27; 20:30). Why “two” demoniacs? [For a detailed
discussion on duality in Matthew, see section (5.3.1.5) above in this chapter].

According to Loader, France, and Gibbs, Matthew uses the Jewish forensic Law
that “two or three witnesses” are needed for a valid testimony (Num 35:30; Deut 17:6;
19:15). 136 Since all the three places where Matthew employs duality give rise to Jesus as
“Son of David” (9:27; 20:30–31) and as “Son of God” (8:29), 137 it is possible that, by
using duality, Matthew is ensuring that the testimony concerning Jesus’ status/being is

---

Nolland, Matthew, 375.
But this is not “to convict Israel for its unbelief”, as Loader argues, nor to represent the Jewish response, as Walker and Schweizer note, because the narrative context does not contrast the faith of Israel with that of the Gentiles, unlike in 9:27–31 and 20:29–34, where Matthew locates the episodes in a Jewish religious setting. Further, there is no use of the title “Son of David” and the focus of the encounter as a whole is not so much on the conflict with Israel as on the conflict of the eschaton, the final judgement. Additionally, the Gentiles also reject Jesus’ saving mission (8:34), as Sim contends, much as the Jewish leaders would do.

Matthew underlines the authority (ἐξοστία) of Jesus (8:32; cf. 9:6, 8). He has already demonstrated Jesus’ authority as teacher and the authority of his teachings (7:29). Now Matthew shows the authority of Jesus’ actions (8:32); Jesus can cast out demons with the simple word “go” (8:32–34). Jesus’ authority is such that his word is his deed (cf. 8:9). This means Matthew’s motif in using duality is more likely to be christological.

As in other miracle pericopes, Matthew thoroughly links Christology and soteriology also in his story of the Gadarene demoniacs. According to Hagner, the phrase “coming out of the tombs” (8:28) suggests that demon possession is associated with “death and the powers of evil” in Matthew. And they express a supernatural recognition of Jesus as “Son of God”. Matthew, thus, brings the plight of the demoniacs and Jesus’ identity very close. So, for Matthew, Jesus, as “Son of God”, by his christological authority, saves the two demoniacs from death and the powers of evil.

---

139 Loader, Law, 191.
141 Sim, Christian Judaism, 222; idem, “Matthew and the Gentiles,” 23.
142 Hagner, Matthew, 1:226–27.
Thus, Matthew associates Jesus’ status as “Son of God” with his saving role as healer and helper (cf. 17:14–21).

Further, unlike in Mark (5:7) and Luke (8:28), Matthew adds “before time” (πρὸ καιροῦ; 8:29) to the demons’ question—“Have you come here to torment us before the time?” (8:29; cf. Mark 5:7). For Matthew, it implies the following: the demons recognise Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge (cf. 3:11–12; 25:31–46), who will judge evil spirits, along with wicked human beings, as evident in the Jewish apocalyptic traditions (I En. 15–16; 55:4; Jub. 5:10–11; 10:8–9; T. Levi 18:12); they recognise that καιρός (“the time”) has not come. This means Jesus’ role as judge is not earthly, but eschatological (3:11–12). Therefore, scholars—like Loader, Held, Strecker, and Schweizer—observe that 8:28–34, together with the preceding episode of the stilling of the storm (8:23–27), [to which we shall return later in this Chapter (section 5.3.4)], is a kind of “mini-apocalypse” as it gives a “foretaste” of Jesus’ role as the eschatological judge and his eschatological judgement and victory.

The presence of the pigs makes it clear that Jesus’ encounter with the demoniacs occurs in a Gentile territory. Does this mean Jesus extended his saving mission to the Gentiles? This is very improbable. Unlike in Mark (5:20), where Jesus interacts with the demoniacs at the conclusion of the story and actually sends the man out on a mission in the Decapolis, Matthew avoids any allusion to the beginning of the mission in the Decapolis. This he achieves by omitting Mark 5:20, as Loader and Sim correctly argue. Additionally, the Gentiles (pig owners) in the territory rejected Jesus.

Moreover, Jesus returns home to resume his mission (9:1; cf. 15:24). This makes Jesus’

---

143 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 212; France, Matthew, 341; Hagner, Matthew, 1:227; Hare; Matthew, 97; Loader, “Son of David,” 582.
145 Hare, Matthew, 96–97; Harrington, Matthew, 124; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 74; Loader, Law, 191; Luz, Matthäus, 2:34.
146 Loader, Law, 191; Sim, Christian Judaism, 223.
mission consistent with 1:21 and 15:24 (cf. 10:5–8); only at the end of the Gospel will Jesus commission his disciples to go to the nations (28:19–20). This sits well with Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ saving activity: while Jesus’ passing contacts with a few Gentiles are perhaps “incidental” (Sim)\textsuperscript{147} but point ahead to the post-Easter mission (28:19–20), Jesus himself undertakes no mission to the Gentiles during his earthly ministry (cf. 15:24). However, for Matthew, the positive responses of the Gentiles—like the centurion (8:5–13) and the Canaanite woman (15:21–28)—contrast with negative response of the Jewish leaders.

There is more to why Matthew omits Mark 5:20 and highlights the pig owners plea to Jesus to leave their territory. [For an in depth discussion on Matthew’s attitude towards Jewish purity laws, see chapter 4 (section 4.8.1.2)]. For Matthew, the logic is simple. The Gadarene Gentiles rejected Jesus, but it does not mean that the Gentiles everywhere did not respond to Jesus, because the former do not represent the latter. We have several instances of the Gentiles responding in faith to the mission of Jesus (8:5–13; cf. 15:21–28). Likewise, the Jewish leaders’ rejection of Jesus and his mission cannot be taken as rejection by Judaism as a whole because the Jewish leaders do not represent the whole of Judaism. This shows how closely Matthew defines his soteriology in relation to his affirmative attitude towards his Jewish heritage.

5.3.2.2. The Mute Demoniac (9:32–34; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14–45)

The exorcism of the dumb demoniac (9:32–34) is a redactional doublet (cf. 12:22–24). Perhaps the most significant aspect of this pericope is that Matthew makes a split between the response of the Jewish crowds and their leaders.\textsuperscript{148} This is already visible in 9:3, 8 and will come again in 12:23–24; 14:5; 21:46; 26:3–5 (cf. 21:26; 22:33–35). The


\textsuperscript{148} Nolland, Matthew, 404.
reaction of the crowd is amazement. For Matthew, the amazement of the crowd indicates the whole experience of the people of Israel: “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel” (9:33). According to Hagner, the conclusion in 9:33 refers to the healing of the mute demoniac (cf. 15:31). Since the narrative is positioned at the end of chapters 8–9, it is more possible that the crowds’ response refers to “the whole series of miracles” which Matthew has reported, as Davies and Allison rightly argue.

Contrary to the positive reaction of the crowds and their astonishment, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of “diabolical collusion”—“By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons” (9:34)—anticipating 12:24 and 12:27, which is a response not so much to Jesus himself but to the assertion of the crowds—“Never has anything like this been seen in Israel”. The Pharisees do not deny Jesus’ power to heal, as it can be objectively verified, rather they find fault with the continuity between Jesus’ being and his “deeds”: the “deeds” of Jesus are the “deeds” of the prince of demons; the authority of Jesus does not come from God but from the prince of demons. In the view of Carter and Stanton, the accusation of the Pharisees that Jesus is possessed would have been a typical strategy in the first century Jewish world whereby the Jewish leaders “demonize opponents and seek to control them” (cf. Acts 8:9–11; see also Rev 16:13–14), and Christians did this, too. According to Luz and France, the Jewish leaders’ “total and offensive” dismissal of the efficacy and sufficiency of Jesus’ saving authority brings the mounting hostility or “deep chasm” (den tiefen Graben) between the two to a new level, “and suggests a breach which is now irreparable”.

---

However, for Matthew, the Pharisees’ charge is wrong because the authority of Jesus is continuous with his being/status as the miraculously conceived “Son of God”. As the Messiah of Israel, who comes in the lineage of David (9:27–31), Jesus has been authorised to fulfil God’s saving promises (11:4–5; cf. Isa 35:5–6). Jesus’ response to the same accusation in 12:25–32 will make this clear, to which we shall return soon. Thus, by divorcing the Pharisees’ accusation (9:34; cf. Mark 3:22; Luke 11:14–14) and the positive reaction of the people (9:33), Matthew shows that the whole of Judaism has not rejected Jesus’ saving mission; the Matthean relationship with the Jewish leaders does not exhaust his attitude towards his Jewish heritage. This illustrates how Matthew’s Jewish theological location informs and defines his soteriology.


The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, announced in 9:34, erupts now in full scale in 12:22–37, which comes from Q, while in the long discussion which follows Matthew uses both Q and Mark. Unlike in 9:32–34, Matthew intensifies the miracle of exorcism: “the deaf and dumb demoniac is also blind” (11:4–5). Thus, according to Meier, “the extraordinary healing (a concrete case of what Jesus is doing in 12:15) calls forth strong though divided reactions”.

Matthew uses amazement of the crowd as a “standard motif” in his Gospel (9:8, 26, 33) to separate the visible Israel, as represented by the Jewish leaders, from what God had envisaged when he brought the people of Israel into being, through the calling of Abraham (1:2), which, in the present, is represented by the positive response of the crowds. Unlike in Mark and Luke, Matthew has the crowds connect Jesus’ miraculous “deed” with his status as “Son of David” (12:23). One might suggest that the crowds’

---

154 Meier, Matthew, 134.
155 Meier, Matthew, 134.
156 France, Matthew, 477.
reaction is doubtful (Davies and Allison, and Luz)\textsuperscript{157} or hesitant (Meier)\textsuperscript{158} or negative (Suhl, and Carter)\textsuperscript{159} or a specific speculation (France)\textsuperscript{160} or goes beyond their broader comment in 9:33—“Never has anything like this been seen in Israel”—(Hare).\textsuperscript{161} These interpretations do not seem to be convincing as they do not account for the narrative setting of the pericope. It is more probable, as Strecker and Hummel correctly argue,\textsuperscript{162} that, as in John 4:29, the tentative inquiring question—“Can this be the Son of David?” (12:23)—though μῆτι normally assumes a negative response, solicits a positive answer “yes”, given that Matthew contrasts the positive response of the crowd with the negative reaction of the Jewish leaders. This reflects the crowds’ growing understanding of the continuity between Jesus’ being and his saving activity. And Matthew contrasts it with the escalating blindness and possession of the Jewish leaders in rejecting the Messiah outright.

Being a Jewish crowd, they know that the Messiah must come from the lineage of David (Isa 11:10; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12), who will fulfil what God had promised his people in the present through his miracles (Isa 29:19; 35:5–6). Moreover, David himself is associated with healings and exorcism (1 Sam 16:14–23; Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 6.166, 168). Thus, Matthew’s introduction of the messianic title “Son of David” in 12:22–37, by linking the narrative to 9:27–31 and by taking up the thread of messianic identity from 11:2–5, reinforces the relation between “who Jesus is” (Christology) and “how Jesus saves” (soteriology).

The positive response of the crowd is set in stark contrast to the (pre)determined disapproval and resistance of Jesus’ Pharisical interlocutors (cf. Luke 11:15). For

\textsuperscript{157} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 2:335; Luz, \textit{Matthäus}, 2:258.
\textsuperscript{158} Meier, \textit{Matthew}, 134.
\textsuperscript{159} Alfred Suhl, “\textit{Der Davidssohn im Matthäus-Evangelium},” \textit{ZNW} 59 (1968): 57–81, here 72–73; Carter, \textit{Matthew and the Margins}, 271.
\textsuperscript{160} France, \textit{Matthew}, 477.
\textsuperscript{161} Hare, \textit{Matthew}, 138.
\textsuperscript{162} Strecker, \textit{Gerechtigkeit}, 118; Hummel, \textit{Auseinandersetzung}, 118.
Matthew, the reaction of the Pharisees is not so much to Jesus’ exorcism and healing as to the onlookers’ dangerous understanding and their “attempted” messianic interpretation of Jesus’ miracles. This Matthew achieves, unlike in Mark and Luke, by means of the addition of “when they heard [this]” (Nolland), and referring to Jesus “in the third person” (Davies and Allison). The Pharisees attribute the authority of Jesus’ miracles to Beelzebul and, thus, resort to discredit and scandalise the authority of Jesus’ being and his doing(s) before the crowd. Thus, Matthew prepares the hearers for Jesus’ counter-argument in 12:25–37.

By explaining the continuity between his being and his “deeds”, Jesus proves his status and the authority of his miracles, and questions the cogency of the Pharisees’ allegations. Any city or kingdom which is divided against itself invites its total destruction (12:25). Thus by constructing a reductio ad absurdum, based on the logic in 12:25, Jesus responds to the Pharisees’ charge that he is casting out demons by the prince of demons (cf. 12:24): if Beelzebul unleashes attacks against other demons in his kingdom, assuming Satan has a kingdom (cf. 4:8–10, 23–24; Jub. 10:1–14; T. Ash. 1:8–10; 1QS 3:16–26; T. Sol.), then it means Beelzebul is causing “civil war in the demonic kingdom” (12:26) and hence his destruction. So it is irrational and lacks commonsense to assume that Beelzebul has given power to Jesus, knowing that he would use the same power to vandalise the kingdom of demons itself. “That would be the case if the Pharisees’ charge were true”. Thus the Pharisees should not be frustrated and outraged with Jesus’ miracles, rather they should rejoice as they bring the

---

kingdom of God into the present (cf. 4:17) and Satan’s kingdom is replaced; the deaf,
dumb and the blind are saved from the bondage of Satan, given the relation between sin
and sickness in Judaism (cf. 11:2–5). This links Jesus’ saving miracles to his role as the
saviour (1:21). But the Pharisees are unhappy with Jesus. This means they belong to the
league of Beelzebul. Matthew has Jesus, thus, reinforce the continuity between his
being and doing and disprove the Pharisees’ charge of diabolical complicity.

Further, Matthew has Jesus understand the continuity between his being and doing
in close relation to his Jewish heritage. Jesus’ logic in 12:27 (“If I cast out demons by
Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out?”) is very clear: “two similar
activities (Jesus’ exorcism, the exorcism of others)” cannot be from “two radically
different sources (Beelzebul, God)”, “similar effects have similar causes” (12:33–
37). Thus by the *ad hominem* argument in 12:27, Matthew has Jesus assume the
continuing authority, validity, sufficiency and efficacy of the exorcists and exorcisms
happening in the life of the people of Israel.

One might argue that “your sons” in 12:27 (RSV translation) refers to “the
disciples” (Shirock) or “members of the community” (France) or “the Pharisees”
(Meier) or “those who belong to the same sphere” (Nolland) or “Jewish exorcists”
(Harrington) or “those associated with you [the Pharisees]” (Hagner). It is possible
that “your sons” includes the entire group of Jewish exorcists, including the disciples.
This means healing and exorcism were not uncommon in the history of the people of

---

173 Robert J. Shirock, “Whose Exorcists are They? The Referents of οἱ οἱ ὡμοί at Matthew
Israel. The purpose of Jesus’ argument is to situate his miracles and his disciples’ ministry (10:5–6) in continuity with how God effected salvation for the people of Israel through the exorcisms conducted by his messengers in the past. For Matthew, God’s saving dealing with his people in the form of exorcism does not begin with Jesus, nor does it end with him.

But such a juxtaposition of Jesus and the Jewish exorcists does raise some critical issues. Does this mean Jesus’ miracles and the miracles of others are the same? According to France, the uniqueness of Jesus’ exorcism “consists in the nature and authority of his exorcisms, not in the lack of any other exorcists”, for Jesus is “Son of David” (9:33; 12:23).\footnote{France, \textit{Matthew}, 479.} For Hagner, “the contrast is an absolute one”: “the work of Jesus is accomplished through divine agency”.\footnote{Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 1:343.} These elucidations are not really persuasive because they are not different from the Pharisees’ accusation. If it is one and the same God who effects exorcisms through Jesus and other Jewish exorcists, then their exorcisms should have the same validity and authority (cf. 12:30); God cannot and will not effect exorcisms in a less valid and sufficient way.

Matthew links Jesus’ authority to “the spirit of God” (12:28; cf. 3:17; 17:5). He deliberately uses the phrase “the spirit of God”, in place of Q’s “the finger of God” (cf. Luke 11:20), to connect not only to the reference in 12:18–21, which contains an extended citation from Isa 42:1–4, providing a programmatic statement of Jesus’ saving activity, just as Luke has done with Isa 61:1–2 in Luke 4:18–19, but also to the heavenly declaration and endorsement about Jesus’ status as “Son of God” (3:17; cf. 17:15). Matthew’s insertion of the “emphatic ἐγὼ” (12:28) also endorses Jesus’ divine status, as Davies and Allison, and Nolland rightly observe.\footnote{Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 2:341; Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 500.} For Matthew, the
authority of Jesus’ deeds is rooted in his being as “Son of God”. And Jesus’ being is continuous with God’s saving being. This means, as with Jesus’ being, his saving activity is also continuous with God’s being; the continuity between Jesus’ being and doing is continuous with the continuity between God’s being and saving. Thus, Matthew reinforces Jesus’ divine authority and his authorisation. But this is not to undermine the sufficiency and efficacy of other exorcisms that God had effected in the past through his messengers.

Therefore, as Davies and Allison suggest, Jesus upholds the validity of the miracles of others, but regards his own as different from the miracles of others because of his identity; “what is decisive is not the exorcisms but the exorcist”.

Jesus’ miracles are of a different import from the miracles of others—not in terms of authority and sufficiency—because it is the same God who authorised both, which entails continuity, but in terms of the status of the miracle worker; Jesus is “Son of God”, whereas other miracle doers are God’s messengers; God, not the exorcists, is the source of authority, sufficiency and efficacy, which is a Jewish understanding. But, for Matthew, the Jewish leaders have (mis)construed Jesus’ claim of fulfilling God’s saving promises in the present as Jesus equating himself with God, and thus limiting God’s saving to the person of Jesus. So the Jewish leaders went out of their way to discredit Jesus’ saving activity. This shows the Jewish texture of Matthew’s understanding of salvation.

It is with this divine authorisation that Jesus breaks into Satan’s kingdom (“a strong man’s house”) whereby he “binds” Satan, overpowers Satan’s rule and frees the captives (Satan’s “good” or “possessions”)—the sick, the blind and the possessed—given the relation between sin and sickness in Judaism (cf. Jub. 10:7, 11, 12–13; Tob

---

8:3; 1 En. 10:4, 11–13; 13:2). For Matthew, plundering Satan’s house (exorcism) means saving the possessed—“his people” who are “under Satan’s sway” (cf. 1:21; Isa 49:24–25). This means, for Matthew, Jesus’ healings and exorcisms bring salvation—freedom from sin and Satan—which links Jesus’ activity to 1:21 and 11:2–5.¹⁸⁴

God in Jesus is ready to forgive “all sins and blasphemy” (12:31) because it is that for which Jesus came (cf. 1:21). This, in the view of Davies and Allison, is “a simple way of declaring” God’s ever-continuing “readiness to forgive.”¹⁸⁵ According to Harrington, even considering “Jesus as a representative figure for humankind”, assuming Matthew uses Son of Man in a “generic” sense,¹⁸⁶ all will be forgiven. But blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven (12:31–32) not only in this age but also in the age to come. This Matthew links to Jesus’ role as the judge to come (3:11–12; 25:31–46), because it means rejecting “the spirit of God”. And rejecting “the spirit of God” means to refuse to recognise and to believe in God’s saving dealing in Jesus. Moreover, rejecting God’s saving in Jesus means rejecting the source of Jesus’ authority and power—“the spirit of God” (12:28). Therefore, the Pharisees, by rejecting God’s saving in Jesus, show their rebellion against God’s saving dealing with his people in the present and their unwillingness to be saved and forgiven, and, thus, make themselves not entitled to the salvation which God effects in Jesus, offered through forgiveness of sins; it was the Pharisees’ choice not to be saved and forgiven; unforgiven sinners are doomed to destruction.

But there is more to Jesus’ response to the accusation of the Pharisees. For Matthew, Jesus’ interpretation of his ministry is not just a self-defence of his authority and identity; rather it is the theological and contextual response of the Matthean

¹⁸⁴ Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:342.
¹⁸⁵ Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:345.
¹⁸⁶ Harrington, Matthew, 184.
community to the allegations of his Jewish contemporaries concerning the authority, validity and sufficiency of their ministry, given the continuity between Jesus’ mission and the mission of the ἐκκλησία. This Matthew achieves by linking 9:34 and 12:22–23 to 10:25 (“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household”) and 11:18 (“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’ ”). Jesus indicates that his disciples will also be accused of demon possession (10:25) as both Jesus (9:34; 12:22–23) and John (11:18) were accused. This indicates John–Jesus–ecclesia continuity.

5.3.2.4. The Encounter with the Canaanite Woman (15:21–28; cf. Mark 7:24–30)
The Matthean account of Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman (15:21-18) focuses not only on the continuity between Jesus’ being (Christology) and his “deeds” (soteriology), but also on how Matthew’s relation to his Jewish heritage informs his understanding of “how Jesus saves”. Unlike in Mark (7:25), Matthew has the Gentile woman, like the blind men in 9:27 and 20:30, identify Jesus as “Son of David” (15:22). This link is further reinforced in 15:24, where Matthew adds Jesus’ word that he has been sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, which evokes the initial statements of Jesus’ mission (1:21; 2:6). Therefore, as Luz rightly suggests, by addressing Jesus as “Son of David”, the Gentile woman turns to the Messiah of Israel, and not the Jewish Messiah turning to the Gentiles. Thus, by putting the Jewish messianic title “Son of David” on the Gentile woman’s lips, Matthew not only links Jesus’ status to his miracle, but also defines Jesus’ saving in close relation to his Jewish religious environment.

188 Luz, Matthäus, 2:434.
Some Matthean scholars—Levine, Harrington, Davies and Allison, and Saldarini—argue that Matthew could have thought of Jesus as going to a Gentile region. On the other hand, Luz and France are convinced that Jesus went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, though temporarily, because Jesus went to the land of Gadara earlier (8:28–34), in spite of 10:5–6. While the proposition regarding 8:28–34 may be true, the arguments supporting the Gentile setting of 15:21–28 do not seem to be justifiable.

As in Mark (7:1–23), Matthew juxtaposes the healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter with Jesus’ teaching about purity (15:1–20). In the discussion on the washing of hands (15:1–20), Matthew shows his commitment and sensitivity towards the Jewish purity and dietary laws, whereas in Mark, it instances Jesus’ breaking through the Jewish purity laws (“Thus he declared all foods clean”). As Loader rightly observes, “this conclusion coheres with the fact that Matthew links . . . [15:21–28] less clearly with what precedes than does Mark”.  

Further, for Matthew, Tyre and Sidon are the principal cities (especially Tyre) “frequently condemned by the OT prophets as inveterate enemies of Israel” (cf. 11:22–23). And “Tyre and Sidon” and “Canaanite” work together to recall traditional racial/ethnic prejudices. Therefore, Matthew has the Gentile woman “coming out” from Tyre and Sidon (15:22). This means “she crosses over to Jesus in Israel” because Jesus is the Messiah of Israel (cf. 15:24). More significantly, like the blind Jews (9:27–31; 20:30–31), she identifies Jesus as “Son of David” (15:22)—a traditional Jewish messianic title. This assumes the limitation of Jesus’ ministry. In other words, Jesus did not enter the Gentile territories and instead the Gentile woman came onto Jewish soil to

---

189 Levine, Social and Ethnic Dimensions, 137; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:546; Harrington, Matthew, 235; Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 72–73.
190 Luz, Matthäus, 2:433; France, Matthew, 594.
191 Loader, Law, 216.
192 France, Matthew, 592.
193 Meier, Matthew, 171; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 322.
ask Jesus, who is a Jew, for help and healing (15:22; cf. Mark 7:31)—as Loader, Meier, Runesson, and Hagner rightly observe.\textsuperscript{194}

Matthew makes the ethnic/racial context of the encounter more explicit by referring to the woman as “from that region” and describing her as a “Canaanite”. This “displaces Mark’s ‘a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth’ ” (Mark 7:26).\textsuperscript{195} In Nolland’s opinion, Matthew’s “choice of ‘Canaanite’ is archaising, designed to evoke scriptural images of the original inhabitants of Palestine”.\textsuperscript{196} It indicates a “traditional biblical vocabulary for the most pertinent and insidious of Israel’s enemies in the OT period”.\textsuperscript{197} Thus, it contrasts the Gentile woman all the more with the people of Israel. This suggests that—as Loader, Levine, and Saldarini rightly conclude—for Matthew, the ethnic and cultic barriers are still held in tact to set the context of Jesus’ mission in a Jewish setting.\textsuperscript{198}

Instead of responding positively to the Canaanite woman’s request to heal her daughter (15:22), Jesus replies that he has been sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24; cf. 9:36). For Matthew, “Israel” refers to the Jewish nation as a whole (Luz, and Davies and Allison).\textsuperscript{199} This Matthean redactional insertion, while presenting Jesus being consistent with his instruction to the disciples (10:5–6) and his divine authorisation (cf. 1:21; 3:17), reflects “Jesus’ self-understanding” as the Messiah of Israel.\textsuperscript{200} Further, it reinforces Israel’s soteriological privileges: Israel’s priority within

\textsuperscript{194} Loader, \emph{Law}, 216–17; Meier, \emph{Matthew}, 171–72; idem, \emph{Vision}, 104; Runesson, “Impact of Ethnic Identity,” 8; Hagner, \emph{Matthew}, 2:441.

\textsuperscript{195} Nolland, \emph{Matthew}, 631.

\textsuperscript{196} Nolland, \emph{Matthew}, 631–32.

\textsuperscript{197} France, \emph{Matthew}, 592. See also Sim, \emph{Christian Judaism}, 223; Levine, \emph{Social and Ethnic Dimensions}, 138–39; Hagner, \emph{Matthew}, 2:441; France, \emph{Matthew}, 593; Nolland, \emph{Matthew}, 631–32; Beare, \emph{Matthew}, 341.

\textsuperscript{198} Loader, \emph{Law}, 217; Levine, \emph{Social and Ethnic Dimensions}, 133–51; Saldarini, \emph{Christian-Jewish Community}, 72–73.

\textsuperscript{199} Luz, \emph{Matthäus}, 2:434; Davies and Allison, \emph{Matthew}, 2:551.

\textsuperscript{200} Hare, \emph{Matthew}, 177; Meier, \emph{Matthew}, 172; Nolland, \emph{Matthew}, 632; Hagner, \emph{Matthew}, 2:441; Sim, “Matthew and Jesus of Nazareth,” 159.
God’s saving schemes; and their status as the people of God. Moreover, it manifests God’s faithfulness to his saving promises given to the patriarchs.\textsuperscript{201}

According to Matt 15:26, “it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs”. In Sim’s view, “there is no indication here [15:26] that the dogs, the Gentiles, deserve to be fed at a later point in time,”\textsuperscript{202} given that Matthew drops the temporal distinction in Mark (15:26; cf. “Let the children be fed first”: Mark 7:27). But Matthew’s hearers would have known that the exalted Jesus removed the barriers implied in the mission to Israel and expanded it to all nations (28:18–20). In Loader’s view, “this has the effect of setting Jesus’ response [15:24] not so much in the context of traditional Jewish-Gentile relations, but of Jesus’ own mission”.\textsuperscript{203} Therefore, Jesus’ saying in 15:26 about giving children’s bread to the dogs “now falls within that perspective”.\textsuperscript{204} This means, as Loader correctly puts it, “this is the time of bread for Israel; it is not yet the time of bread for Gentiles”.\textsuperscript{205}

Therefore, the Canaanite woman’s overcoming of the barriers by her striking faith (15:28) does not mean Jesus offer a new way of salvation—Gentiles are saved by faith alone (Willitts)\textsuperscript{206} nor does it mean the faith of the Gentile woman either “dissolves” “Jesus’ refusal to extend his mission beyond the boundaries of Israel” (Senior)\textsuperscript{207} or “justifies a mission to Gentiles” (Gundry)\textsuperscript{208} or “extends” the Messiah’s mission (France).\textsuperscript{209} For Matthew, the mission beyond Israel is yet to come (cf. 15:24). The cure of the Gentile, like the healing of the centurion’s servant (8:5–13), therefore, could be

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotereference{201}{Hare, Matthew, 178; Hagner, Matthew, 2:441–42.}
\footnotereference{202}{Sim, Christian Judaism, 224.}
\footnotereference{203}{Loader, Law, 217.}
\footnotereference{204}{Loader, Law, 217.}
\footnotereference{205}{Loader, Law, 217.}
\footnotereference{206}{Willitts, “The Friendship of Matthew and Paul,” 150–58.}
\footnotereference{207}{Senior, Matthew, 132.}
\footnotereference{208}{Gundry, Matthew, 314.}
\footnotereference{209}{France, Matthew, 594–96; idem, Evangelist and Teacher, 234. According to France, “Jesus is sent to lost sheep outside the house of Israel; there is plenty of bread for the dogs as well” [emphasis original] (Evangelist and Teacher, 234).}
\end{footnotes}
“incidental” (Sim),\(^{210}\) not an “aberration” as Sim argues elsewhere,\(^{211}\) but “prefigures” the inclusion of the Gentiles after Jesus’ exaltation (28:18–20).

To conclude: for Matthew, Israel was the “primary target” of Jesus’ earthly ministry (15:24; cf. 1:21; 10:5–6) and his disciples’ mission (10:5–6; cf. 1:21), until the exalted Jesus removed the barriers and expanded the mission to all the nations (28:18–20). Even in the face of opposition and rejection (12:14), and even after prolonged conflict (cf. 9:2–17), “Matthew remained faithful both to the [saving] intent of the historical Jesus and to the particularism of the OT”.\(^{212}\) He upholds the centrality of Israel in God’s dealing with humanity. Furthermore, by having the Gentile woman address Jesus as “Son of David”, Matthew confirms that she is turning to the Messiah of Israel. She knows that Jesus is sent to Israel; and her faith is seen precisely in the fact that she nevertheless cries out to him. So, Jesus’ appreciation of the woman’s faith (15:28) does not imply rejection of Israel (15:22, 24), but contrasts with the Jewish leaders’ rejection of Jesus.

5.3.3. The Feeding Accounts

As in Mark (6:32–44; 8:1–10), Matthew also has two feeding narratives: feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21); and feeding of the four thousand (15:32–39). They underscore the authority of Jesus, as in Mark. Mark uses the feeding accounts to celebrate the inclusion of the Gentiles.\(^{213}\) As Loader notes, Mark uses “various significant motifs associated with Israel” in his account of the feeding of the five thousand: the people are depicted as being “sheep without a shepherd (6:34), “an image of Israel drawn from the description of Israel in Num 27:17” (“who shall go out before

---


\(^{211}\) Sim, Christian Judaism, 224.

\(^{212}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:557.

\(^{213}\) For a detailed discussion on how Mark achieves the inclusion of the Jews and the Gentiles in the blessings of the kingdom in his feedings accounts, see Loader, Law, 67–85, 210–20.
them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the
congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd’"); the crowds are
organised in hundreds and fifties, which recalls the arrangement of the people of Israel
in the wilderness (Exod 18:25; Num 31:14); the feeding narrative evokes how the
people of Israel were fed in the wilderness with the manna; and, the feeding miracle
occurs in a Jewish territory.214

By contrast, Marks sets the feeding of the four thousand in a Gentile territory
(8:1–10). In Mark, the people “come from a great distance” (8:3), which, according to
Loader, is possibly “an allusion to Gentiles”.215 And the number of baskets of leftover is
7, which “like 70 was a common enough symbol of the world of the nations”.216 More
significantly, unlike in the feeding of the five thousand, Matthew removes allusion to
Israel such as sheep without shepherd and sitting in hundreds and fifties from the
feeding of the four thousand.217

As Loader observes, Mark positions the two feedings on either side of Jesus’
teaching on purity in 7:1–23, which functions as the “centrepiece” of the complex 6:7–
8:26. Loader notes: “The position of 7:1–23 between these complexes [two feedings] is
significant, for 8:14–21 draws attention to the feedings in the context of discussion of
rival teaching”.218 “At stake is Jesus’ new teaching which sets aside part of the Law for
the sake of inclusion of the Gentiles”.219 This means, in Mark, Jesus who fed the
shepherdless sheep of Israel in 6:32–44 is now deliberately discounting the food laws in

214 Loader, Law, 67.
215 Loader, Law, 67.
216 Loader, Law, 67.
217 Loader, Law, 83.
218 Loader, Law, 68.
219 Loader, Law, 83.
7:1–23 and thus the break barrier between the Jew and the Gentile; “in Mark’s community these barriers have fallen”.\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 71.}

The breaking of the barrier between the Jew and Gentiles in Mark is further emphasised in Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophoenician woman (7:24–30), where the inclusion of the Gentiles in the feast of the kingdom is envisaged. Matthew achieves this, in Loader’s view, by modifying the exclusive position of the Jews in the kingdom to “first” (“Let the children be fed first”: 7:27).\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 80.} While forming “the introduction to the key interpretative narrative in 8:14–21”,\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 68.} this modification “allows the possibility that Gentiles may in future become recipients”.\footnote{Loader, \textit{Law}, 80–81.} This justifies Jesus’ feeding of the four thousand in a Gentile territory (cf. 7:24). Thus, Mark uses the feedings accounts, by positioning them on either side of Jesus’ teaching of the purity laws/food laws (7:1–23), which addresses what he sees as the barrier which needed to be discarded and the Syrophoenician story showing Jesus crossing the boundary, capping it off with the ‘tutorials” in 8:16-21 which is about whether the disciples understand the symbolism or not, celebrate the good news of salvation coming to both Israel and to the Gentiles in the blessings of the kingdom.

Matthew, in contrast, uses his feeding accounts to reinforce Jesus’ role and identity/status as the Messiah of Israel. Matthew has the Gentiles mission start only after Easter, unpicks the symbolism, so has no need to heighten the symbolism of Israel in the five thousand and relocates sheep without a shepherd and changes other things. The focus is not on numbers but how great the miracle is and he relocates the feeding of the four thousand so that it is in Jewish territory and a feeding of Jews. For Matthew, both feedings events echo how God saved his people in the wilderness by providing food...
(manna) and the future hope of Israel that they will be gathered on mountain of the Lord in the eschaton.

5.3.3.1. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:13–21; cf. Mark 6:32–44)

The Matthean account of the feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21) focuses largely on the identity of Jesus and God’s continuing saving in the present, as in the past. As in Mark (6:14–29) and Luke (9:7–9), Matthew puts his version of Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21) alongside the death of John the Baptist (14:1–12). Therefore, Matthew would have thought of Jesus’ mission, which means feeding the hungry here, as a continuation of John’s ministry, not because John by himself performed any feeding miracles, but because he stands in the soteriological lineage of the prophets who indeed did such miracles. Jesus’ feeding (14:13–15) recalls the Exodus story of the Manna (Exodus 16), where God fed his people in the desert, and Elisha’s miraculous feeding of a hundred men (2 Kgs 4:42–44). This means God continues to intervene in the needs of his people, which, for Matthew, is now through Jesus.

However, for Matthew, Jesus’ feeding of the crowd is not the same as other feeding miracles in the history of Israel (cf. 14:20). Unlike the story of the manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16) and Elijah’s miraculous feeding of hundred people from twenty loaves (2 Kgs 4:42–44), Jesus’ feeding recalls the vision of the eschaton when all of Israel would be gathered for the messianic banquet (Isa 25:6–10). Matthew’s conclusion of the miracle—“and they all ate, and were satisfied” (14:20)—also shows that Jesus’ feeding is different from miracles in the past as it fulfils Deut 8:10 (“You shall eat your fill”), which “anticipates the messianic age” when the hungry will be “satisfied” (5:6; cf. Luke 1:53; 6:21). And the “twelve baskets” referred to in Matthew, are not just a

---

224 According to Harrington, “there may be an allusion to Deut 8:10”, though Matthew/Mark and LXX use different words for “satisfied”: Matthew, 221.
225 Hagner, Matthew, 2:418.
“measure of volume” (Luz), but probably refers to “the twelve tribes of Israel” (Hagner, and Harrington) and “food for all Israel” (Nolland), and if so, most likely portray the “messianic fulfillment brought to the Jews” (Hagner).

According to Loader, unlike Mark, who gives importance to “numerical symbolism” and the inclusion of the Gentiles in his feeding accounts, Matthew focuses on “the massiveness” of the feeding and Jesus’ divine authority and power to perform such miracles; they expose and emphasise the (ontological) status of Jesus, because of the continuity between Jesus’ being and doing. This best explains why Matthew highlights the magnitude of the feeding miracle “by its size and inclusivity” (“aside from women and children”: 14:21; cf. 15:38)—as Carter, Hagner, and Loader rightly observe. For Loader, this “recalls the vindicatory function of miracles in 11:19”. Matthew’s emphasis on the massiveness of the feeding miracle is further evident in 16:9–10 (cf. Mark 8:19–20), where he has Jesus move from the amount of left over and the size of the crowd to the extent of God’s overflowing provision.

Accordingly, in Loader’s view, “Matthew has removed from the feeding of the five thousand much of the imagery of Israel” by omitting “the image of the sheep without a shepherd” (14:14; cf. Mark 6:34) and Mark’s “they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties” (Mark 6:40; cf. 14:19). Matthew does this because he has abandoned the symbolism of five thousand as referring to Jews and four thousand as referring to Gentiles. This however, does not refer to the “undivided church” (cf. 16:18),
as Gundry suggests,\textsuperscript{235} or to the Gentile inclusion. Instead, perhaps Matthew wants to show that Jesus’ feeding is not the reenactment/repetition/recapitulation of the past miracles, as Kennedy argues,\textsuperscript{236} but the eschatological fulfilment and continuation of God’s salvific plans and promises. This indicates that Matthew is not interested in the idea of the restitution of the people of God in the wilderness, as Luz rightly points out.\textsuperscript{237}

But there is more to Matthew’s omission of Mark’s “they reclined in companies of hundreds and of fifties” (Mark 6:40; cf. 14:19). The grouping of hundreds and fifties in Mark 6:40 is a graphic description of quasi-military organisation.\textsuperscript{238} This echoes Exod 18:25, which describes Moses choosing men out of Israel in hundreds and fifties.\textsuperscript{239} There are different possibilities with regard to why Matthew dropped the arrangement of men in the “companies of hundreds and fifties”. Had he concluded with Mark 6:40, Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries would have assumed that Jesus organised the crowd in company as a political saviour. Additionally, unlike in Mark 6:44, where Mark includes only men, as in Exod 18:25, Matthew has women and children, which, while emphasising the massiveness of the miracle, rules out political nuances, as Hare and France rightly observe.\textsuperscript{240} However, Jesus’ final judgement assumes political overtones. It is also possible that Matthew is following the method of counting in Exod 12:37, where the total number of people who left Egypt is counted as “six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children”.\textsuperscript{241} Perhaps Matthew omits Mark 6:40 to avoid any misunderstanding by his Jewish contemporaries that Jesus has come to replace Moses and Israel.

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{235} Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 294.
\textsuperscript{236} Kennedy, \textit{Recapitulation of Israel}, 3–4.
\textsuperscript{237} Luz, \textit{Matthäus}, 2:401.
\textsuperscript{238} France, \textit{Matthew}, 564; Hare, \textit{Matthew}, 165–66.
\textsuperscript{239} Hare, \textit{Matthew}, 165–66.
\textsuperscript{240} Hare, \textit{Matthew}, 165–66; France, \textit{Matthew}, 564.
\end{footnotes}
It is suggested by some scholars—Meier, Luz, Hagner, Gundry, Davies and Allison, Harrington, and Carter⁴²—that Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand in Matthew, especially in relation to how Jesus blessed the bread—“taking the five loaves and the two fish . . . blessed, and broke” (14:19; cf. Mark 6:41)—anticipates the Last Supper (26:26–28). But it is doubtful because, as Hare puts it, Matthew does not interpret “the event as presenting Jesus as the Bread of Life”, as John does (John 6:35–63).⁴³ Nonetheless, it is a messianic meal as Jesus is the compassionate miracle-worker, the Messiah of Israel, who supplies the physical needs of his people.

5.3.3.2. The Feeding of the Four Thousand (15:32–39; cf. Mark 8:1–10)

Like Luke, Matthew also could have omitted Jesus’ second feeding miracle in 15:32–39, but he not only retains the story, as in Mark, but also invests it with greater implications by creating for it a new and weighty introduction in 15:29–31. In this radical reworking of Mark’s introduction (8:1), Matthew adds Zion imagery by locating the miracle on a “mountain”.⁴⁴ Moreover, as Loader rightly notes, by incorporating “a summary of broadened range of healings” in the introduction to the account of the feeding of the four thousand (15:29–31), Matthew also creates an important inclusio with the feeding of the five thousand, “into which he had also introduced a reference to healing”: on both occasions Jesus is depicted as the healer (14:14; 15:29–31), whereas in Mark only in the feeding of the five thousand is healing mentioned.⁴⁵ This means 15:32–39 is not a mere repetition of 14:13–21 or superfluous to Matthew’s Gospel.

For Matthew, the locus of the second feeding—“mountain” (15:29)—symbolises the eschatological gathering of the people of Israel on the mountain of the Lord (Isa

---

⁴² Meier, Matthew, 163; Luz, Matthäus, 2:401; Hagner, Matthew, 2:418; Gundry, Matthew, 289–95; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:481; Harrington, Matthew, 220; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 307.

⁴³ Hare, Matthew, 166.


⁴⁵ Loader, Law, 212.
2:2–3; Mic 4:1–2). The feeding of the hungry multitude on the mountain anticipates the messianic banquet because it is Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, who is the host. It also invokes what the prophets of Israel had promised about Zion (Isa 25:6; Jer 31:7–14; cf. Mic 4:1–7). And it was on the mountain that the God of Israel spoke to his people through Moses. Matthew reworks Mark 7:37 (cf. 15:31) to show that the people “saw” the same “God of Israel” in Jesus. This polemic reflects the “blindness” (15:14) of the Jewish leaders and their continuous failure to lead the people (19:36) to the “God of Israel” (15:31).

According to Loader, for Matthew, the healing on the mountain as in 15:31 (“the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing”) is not only “a return of focus to eschatological fulfilment in Jesus’ ministry” (11:5–6), but also a strong allusion to God’s saving promise in Isa 35:5–6. Seeing this, the crowd “praised the God of Israel” (15:31). This is not an indication of the presence of the Gentiles, as Gundry suggests, but—as Loader, Luz, Levine, and Hare rightly observe—suggests the liturgical use Psalms in Matthew’s community (cf. 41:14; 72:18). For Donaldson, and Davies and Allison, all this suggests a strong allusion to the Old Testament motif of Mount Zion (Isa 25:6; Jer 31:7–14; cf. Mic 4:1–7). Zion is the place of eschatological gathering for the scattered people of Israel (Jer 31:10–12; Ezek 34:14), a place of healing (Isa 35:5–6; Jer 31:8; Mic 4:6–7) and the place of the messianic feast (Isa 25:6–10; Jer 31:12–14; Ezek 34:26–27; 5 Ezra 1:38–40). Thus, for Matthew, Jesus’ feeding and healing are the fulfilment of the eschatological promises surrounding

---

246 Loader, Law, 218. For details on Zion symbolism, see Terence L. Donaldson, Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 124–29.
247 Loader, Law, 218. See also France, Matthew, 598; Luz, Matthäus, 2:441; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:566–67, 575.
248 Gundry, Matthew, 319.
249 Loader, Law, n. 175; Luz, Matthäus, 2:440; Levine, Social and Ethnic Dimensions, 162; Hare, Matthew, 181.
Zion, which, therefore, unlike in Mark, involves only Jews, as Loader, Sim, and Cousland correctly contend; Jesus’ saving is the fulfilment of God’s blessings promised for the salvation of his people.

There is more to why Matthew positions the second feeding on the mountain. According to Hare, 5:1 and 15:29 form an *inclusio*; “the two references to Jesus sitting on the mountain bracket the intervening material”. In 5:1, Jesus “sat” on the mountain to teach the Torah, through which he revealed the will of God. And in 15:29, Jesus reveals God’s plans through his “deeds” such as healing and feeding. This means Jesus brings God’s saving plans and promises to fulfilment through his “words” and “deeds” described between 5:1 and 15:29 (cf. 11:2–5); Jesus saves his people in many ways (1:21; cf. 11:2–5).

As in the feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21), Matthew focuses on the identity and supernatural powers of Jesus. This he achieves mainly in two ways. Unlike Mark, who highlights “the numerical symbolism” of the feeding accounts, Matthew stresses the magnitude of the miracle by adding “four thousand men, besides women and children” to the numerical figure (15:38), as in 14:21. The emphasis on the massiveness of the feeding miracle is further evident in 16:9–10 (cf. Mark 8:19–20), where Matthew has Jesus highlight the extent of the feeding miracles and his surpassing authority rather than the amount left over in each case.

---

254 Hare, *Matthew*, 180.
257 Loader, *Law*, 211.
258 Loader, *Law*, 211.
and Allison, and Meier, Matthew revises alters Mark so as to show that it is the disciples who are unable to provide food for such a large multitude, not Jesus (15:33). Some scholars—Meier, Harrington, Hagner, Gnilka, and Gundry—argue that Matthew’s second feeding miracle in 15:32–39 refers to inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom, as in Mark (8:1–10). In Gundry’s view, Matthew includes the Gentiles in “the feast of salvation” by locating the miracle in a Gentile setting. According to Gundry and Gnilka, the Matthean phrase “they have been with me now for three days” (15:32; cf. Mark 8:3), supposing that the healing of the Canaanite woman’s daughter took place in a Gentile territory. In the view of Gundry, Matthew achieves this by omitting Mark 8:1, which otherwise might seem to imply “a new crowd different from the crowd at the preceding healing” (15:21–28). For Harrington and Hagner, it is the number “seven” (15:34) that refers to the presence of the Gentiles or, as Hagner suggests, “somewhat less plausibly, to ‘seventy’ gentile nations”. While Meier calls the community present in the second feeding miracle a “Gentile church” (cf. Mark 8:3), Hagner contends that “the smaller number of four thousand in reference to the Gentiles may subtly point to Israel’s priority in the reception of the abundance of eschatological blessing”. But these propositions—inclusion of the Gentiles—are doubtful.

---

259 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:571; Meier, Matthew, 174.
260 Meier, Matthew, 175; Harrington, Matthew, 241; Hagner, Matthew, 452; Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:36; Gundry, Matthew, 317–21.
261 Gundry, Matthew, 321.
262 Gundry, Matthew, 310; Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:36.
263 Gundry, Matthew, 320.
264 Harrington, Matthew, 241; Hagner, Matthew, 2:452.
265 Hagner, Matthew, 2:452. But for Gundry, “[t]he notion that the number seven derives from the seven deacons in Acts 6:1–6 and symbolizes the Gentile part of the church stumbles over the fact that the seven deacons were Hellenistic Jews, not Gentiles”: Matthew, 321.
266 Meier, Matthew, 175.
267 Hagner, Matthew, 2:452.
Mark’s composition uses both feedings and the purity dispute, and the Syrophoenician woman, to indicate the inclusion of the Gentiles and the removal of barriers but Matthew in effect subverts this. In the view of Loader, in 15:1–20, “Matthew has also changed the focus of the teaching section from being concerned with issues central to the Gentile mission, rejection of food laws (Mark 7:1–23), to being concerned with deprecating Pharisaic interpretation of purity laws”. Consequently “the encounter with the Canaanite woman no longer relates to it in the way as it does in Mark, namely, to underline the falling of the barriers and the inclusion of Gentiles”. Rather Matthew emphasises the faith of the Canaanite woman, as with the faith of the centurion (8:5–13), to contrast the Gentile faith and the response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus’ saving mission and thus “shame” the people of Israel, as Loader and Runesson correctly contend. At most, according to Loader, the faith of the Canaanite woman “only prefigure[s] later Gentile involvement”, and not the inclusion of the Gentiles in Jesus’ earthly mission. Thus, Matthew does not allow the purity dispute to say anything more than that washing hands is unnecessary, nor use the Canaanite woman episode to celebrate going to the Gentiles, nor locate the feeding of the four thousand in a Gentile territory, so now the whole complex serves not a symbolic celebration of the inclusion of the Gentiles but an affirmation about the soteriological continuity with Israel and its messianic hopes.

Furthermore, Matthew edits out all references to Gentile territories (15:29) and thus sets the miracle of feeding the four thousand on a “mountain” (15:29–31). But for Mark, Jesus still remains in a Gentile territory (7:31–37). And, in Loader’s view,

---

268 Loader, Law, 211–12, 218.  
269 Loader, Law, 211–12.  
270 Loader, Law, 212. Similarly, Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:543–54.  
271 Loader, Law, 212; Runesson, “Impact of Ethnic Identity,” 8, 10.  
272 Loader, Law, 212.  
273 Loader, Law, 212, 218.
“therewith the potential purity issues, passed over in Mark, disappear.”

Even otherwise, as we have seen in our discussion on Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman, Jesus has not entered into any Gentile territory; instead the woman “came out” from her territory to a Jewish terrain to request healing for her daughter from Jesus, who is a Jew (15:21–28). Additionally, Jesus’ self-understanding as the Messiah of Israel as in 15:24 makes it very unlikely that Matthew includes the Gentiles in his second feeding narrative (Hare). And, for Matthew, Jesus’ instruction to his disciples in 10:5 (“Go nowhere among the Gentiles”) is still valid until the exalted Christ removes the ethnic and geographic barriers in 28:19–20 (Senior, and Hare). Moreover, as Luz correctly observes, Matthew omits Mark 8:3b (“some of them have come from a distance”) to avoid any allusion to the Gentiles.

5.3.4. Jesus’ Authority over Nature

As in Mark (4:36–41; 6:45–56), there are two sea stories in Matthew: stilling the storm (8:23–27); and walking on the sea (14:22–33). These stories focus on Jesus’ being, his authority, continuity with the authority of the ecclesia, and the prefiguring of the eschaton, like the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28–34).


In his account of the stilling of the storm (8:23–27), Matthew focuses on the authority of Jesus over evil powers, the continuity between Jesus’ being and his saving, how the eschaton is foreshadowed in Jesus’ miracles, and his motif of salvation in continuity. For Matthew—as Carter, Harrington, and Davies and Allison argue—the “sea” (especially the storm at sea) is symbolic of the chaotic powers against God’s created

---

274 Loader, Law, 218.
275 Hare, Matthew, 181.
276 Senior, Matthew, 133; Hare, Matthew, 181–82.
277 Luz, Matthäus, 2:441.
order (Ps 65:5; 69:1–3, 30–36; 74:14; 89:10; 107:23–30; 124; Isa 43:2; 57:20; Dan 7:2–3; cf. Rev 13:1). If so, the stormy waters depict, on the one hand, the plight of the Jewish Christian community such as the Matthean community, because of persecution and affliction from the hands of their Jewish colleagues, and, on the other hand, the post-temple destruction trauma of the Jewish community at large. Therefore, for Matthew, the cry of the disciples for help (“Lord, save us! We are perishing”; 8:25), which echoes the cry of Jonah (“O Lord, do not let us perish”; Jonah 1:14), would have been the cry of the entire Jewish community for help, including the Matthean community/ecclesia.

Jesus now exercises his divine authority to save his disciples; Jesus being the “Son of God” is greater than Jonah (12:41). He “rebukes” the winds and the sea (8:26). This echoes God’s rebuke of the sea (cf. Ps 18:15; 104:7; 106:9; Isa 50:2; Nah 1:14). Matthew uses the word ἐπιτιμάω (8:26), which he uses to exorcise demons (17:18), while suggesting that the demons “caused the storm” (T. Sol. 16:1–3) or “expressing themselves in the storm”, to show that Jesus has authority over the sea and the demons. Jesus does what Ps 107:29 attributes to Yahweh: “He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed”. It recalls Yahweh subduing the raging flood (Gen 1:6–10; Gen 6 – 10; Ps 29:3; 65:7; 89:8–11; 93:3; 107:25–32; 124:4–5; 1QH 3:13–18) and overcoming the powers of chaos (Job 38:8–11; Ps 33:7; Prov

278 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 210; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:68, 70, 72, 74; Harrington, Matthew, 123.
279 France, Matthew, 336; Nolland, Matthew, 371; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:70, 72.
280 Cf. Meier, Gundry, and Hare, the pericope on “the stilling of the storm” is all about Jesus saving his church (the disciples) because the verb σώζω appears in the miracle in relation to Jesus helping his disciples, which coheres with Jesus’ mission (1:21). Moreover, they even argue that “ship” is symbolic of the church. See Meier, Matthew, 89; Gundry, Matthew, 156–57; Hare, Matthew, 95.
281 France, Matthew, 337; Nolland, Matthew, 372; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:74–75; Harrington, Matthew, 120.
282 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 210; Hagner, Matthew, 1:222; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:74; cf. France, Matthew, 337 n. 23.
284 Hagner, Matthew, 1:222.
285 Hagner, Matthew, 1:222.
8:22–31; Jer 5:22; 31:35). It illustrates the experience of the people of Israel. And the same God, now in Jesus, who is the “Son of God”, overcomes the swirling tempest of the Sea of Galilee, in the present (cf. 1:23; 28:19–20) and establishes “great calm”.

It is also possible that the description of the tempest in 8:24 evokes the mythical images of the frightening sea monsters such as Leviathan (Ps 74:14) and Rahab (Ps 89:10). And God will conquer such evil powers when he establishes his kingdom in its fullness in the eschaton (2 Bar. 29:14). Moreover, as Davies and Allison notes, “[i]n the OT the coming the eschaton is depicted in terms of Yahweh’s victory over the cosmic sea”. Therefore, as Hagner correctly argues, Jesus’ stilling of the storm foreshadows the dawning of the eschaton. In Psalms 46 and Isa 17:12–14, Yahweh’s victory over the sea is likened to his victory and authority over all the nations. This perhaps alludes to the political victory of Israel over the Roman Empire and its agencies, as Carter, and Van Aarde contend. And in Isa 50:2–3, Rev 13:1 and 21:1, the future and the final combat between Yahweh and the “adversary” are likened in analogous terms. As Davies and Allison fittingly suggest, it is against the backdrop of these Old Testament theological traditions that we must understand the divine authority of Jesus, the cry of the disciples and Jesus rebuking the winds and the sea.

Thus, for Matthew, the storm in the sea and Jesus’ victory over the sea (8:23–27), together with the Gadarene demoniacs episode (8:28–34), where Jesus is presented as coming to the demons before the eschaton (“before the time”; 8:29), is a “mini-apocalypse”, which gives a foretaste of the God’s final eschatological victory in Jesus’

---

encounter with the sea. So it is proleptic, foreshadowing what is to come, and to be read from the perspective of what Matthew depicts as a post-Easter understanding.

5.3.4.2. Walking on the Sea (14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52)

The second of Matthew’s sea stories—Jesus walking on the sea (14:22–33)—while depicting Jesus as the one who helps his disciples in danger, emphasises the continuity between the authority of Jesus and the authority of the ecclesia. As most of the scholars correctly observe, the Old Testament imagery of God treading upon the waters is the crux to understanding the christological emphasis of Jesus walking on the sea (Job 9:8; 38:16; Ps 77:16, 19; Isa 43:16; 51:9–10; Hab 3:15; Sir 24:5–6). However, the Old Testament does not provide any instance of human beings walking on the water, rather they “pass through” the waters (Exod 14:21–22; Josh 3:14–17; 2 Kgs 2:8, 14; Isa 43:2–3, 16–17). This means walking on the sea is a divine prerogative as it is a potent symbol of authority over the sea and creation. Therefore, Jesus’ walking on the water indicates “his domination of the sea and all it stands for and brings salvation to those in peril”.

As in Mark (6:50), by using the elements of theophany in Jesus’ encounter with his disciples (14:27), Matthew reinforces Jesus’ divine authority and his identity. Jesus calms the panicked disciples by revealing himself: “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid” (14:27). The reassuring “do not be afraid” (14:27; cf. Mark 6:50) is a characteristic part of divine visitation in Jewish traditions (Gen 15:1; Jud 6:23; Dan 10:12, 19; Tob

---

294 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:504; Meier, Matthew, 165; Hagner, Matthew, 2:423; Harrington, Matthew, 226; Senior, Matthew, 128; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 310; France, Matthew, 566; Hare, Matthew, 168.
296 Luz, Matthäus, 2:407.
297 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:504.
The self-introduction of Jesus is “a standard entry” in Christian and Jewish theophanies and epiphanies (cf. 17:7; 28:5, 10; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10; Rev 1:17; 2 En. 1:8). And the identification formula—ἐγώ εἰμι (14:27; cf. Mark 6:50)—is most likely intended to recall the divine self-introduction in the Old Testament (Exod 3:14; Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:2, 10–11; 45:18; 47:8, 10; 51:12). Moreover, like Yahweh (“Stretch forth thy hand from on high; Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, Out of the hand of aliens”: Ps 144:7), Jesus reaches out his hand to rescue the drowning Peter.

Thus, as in Mark (6:50), by using theophany language (14:27), Matthew reinforces Jesus’ being as continuous with God’s being (cf. 3:17; 17:5). This, however, for Matthew, is different from equating Jesus’ identity with God (cf 1:23; 28:19–20). It is also plausible that, as Luz suggests, by identifying himself as ἐγώ εἰμι to his disciples, Matthew has Jesus “dedemonised” (entdämonisiert) the ghost. This would have been a Matthean response to the accusation of the Pharisees that Jesus is possessed (9:24; 10:25; 12:24). God is present with his people in Jesus to save them (1:21, 23; 11:25–27). That makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers who were doubtful of God’s saving presence in their midst considering the destruction of the temple.

To reinforce the (ontological) continuity between Jesus’ being and God’s saving being further, unlike in Mark, Matthew uses the title “Son of God” (14:33). This was pronounced from the heavens earlier at the baptism of Jesus (3:17), and it will be further declared on the mount of transfiguration (17:5). According to Loader and France, Matthew closely links the disciples’ acclamation of Jesus’ status as “Son of God” in

---

298 Nolland, Matthew, 601.
299 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:506.
300 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:504; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 310; Meier, Matthew, 165; Hagner, Matthew, 2:423; Harrington, Matthew, 224–25; Senior, Matthew, 129.
301 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 311; Meier, Matthew, 165; Harrington, Matthew, 226–27.
302 Luz, Matthäus, 2:408.
14:33 and Peter’s christological confession and his authorisation in 16:16–18. For Matthew, as elsewhere, the title “Son of God” in 14:33 refers not just to a “functional title” (Hare) or a “unique messenger of God” (Hagner), but Jesus’ ontological status and continuity with God (Nolland, and Davies and Allison). This makes Jesus’ healings and his miracles different from those of others, and shows the close connection between “how Jesus saves” and “who Jesus is” in Matthean soteriology.

As with the disciples’ claim that Jesus is “Son of God” (14:33), Matthew’s substantial additions to the account of Jesus’ walking on the water also include Jesus inviting Peter to walk on the water (14:29). By this characteristic contribution to the episode, Matthew shows that Jesus shares his authority with Peter (14:29; cf. 10:1, 7–8; 11:27; 28:18). The authorisation of Peter in 14:33 matches his authorisation in 16:16–18 where, unlike in Mark, we do not, therefore, have the confession of Jesus’ messiahship for the first time, because Jesus has already been acclaimed “Son of God” by the disciples (14:33). This changes the emphasis in 16:16–18 from Christology as in Mark, to ecclesiology and authorisation—to continue Jesus’ saving mission on earth.

Moreover, the parallel with 16:16–19 also helps understand the powers—the gates of hell imagery must relate to what the sea represents, over which Jesus and the ecclesia can be triumphant. In other words, as Loader rightly argues, “Peter’s authority to walk

---

303 Loader, Law, 212–13; France, Matthew, 571.
304 Hare, Matthew, 171.
305 Hagner, Matthew, 2:424.
306 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2: 510; Nolland, Matthew, 603.
307 Cf. According to France, Meier, and Carter, 14:29 indicates Peter’s attempt to “imitate” Jesus. See France, Matthew, 567, Meier, Matthew, 165, Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 311. But this is improbable. The disciples do not need to “imitate” Jesus because they have already been given the authority to do what Jesus does (10:1, 7–8), including the authority to forgive sins (9:8). This is further strengthened in the authorisation of Peter in 16:16–18, where Matthew has Jesus give Peter the authority to bind and loose. And, in 18:18, Matthew will attribute this authority of Peter’s to the Christian community. It has been given the authority to declare God’s will outlined in the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus. This will be further expanded in 28:18–20 but also using the authorisation model and the assumption that their saving work there is by teaching as it is earlier by healing and exorcism—assumed also for the post-Easter period.
308 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:507.
over the deep symbolically represents the authority over the powers which Jesus gives him explicitly in 16:16–19.”  

Though the Matthean image of Peter is “largely a positive one”, as Broadhead rightly observes, it is doubtful that such an authority or authorisation as in 14:29 (cf. 16:16–18) refers to a special and unique authority of Peter which other disciples do not have, given that Matthew retains Peter’s failure to walk on the waters and Jesus’ scolding of Peter for his “little faith” (14:28–31). Jesus shares his functional divine authority with his disciples collectively, not individually (10:1, 7–8). Jesus’ authority is given to the twelve disciples, not certain individuals (18:18); they participate in the functional authority of Jesus. Moreover, as Broadhead correctly notes, for Matthew, Peter is often treated as a “representative of the disciples” (15:15; 16:22–23; 17:24; 18:21; 19:27–30; 26:33–34). And in 28:18–20, the exalted Christ confirms and reinforces the authority and authorisation of the disciples, which he had given to them during his earthly ministry (10:1, 5–8). Therefore, Jesus’ invitation for Peter to walk on the waters symbolises the authority and authorisation of the entire ecclesia to participate in Jesus’ authority (cf. 10:1) and his authorisation (cf. 28:18–20), and to continue God’s saving initiative in Jesus on earth (10:1, 5–8; cf. 11:2–5), till Jesus returns as the eschatological judge (25:31–46), as John predicted (3:11–12). This entails soteriological and historical continuity.

---

309 Loader, Law, 213.
310 According to Broadhead, Peter is treated harshly at times in Mark, especially in the Gethsemane scene and in the scene of Peter’s denial, both of which seem to have been shaped to portray Peter in a negative way. See Prophet, Son, Messiah: Narrative Form and Function in Mark 14 – 16 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 88–111, 146–61.
311 Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 152. However, for Broadhead, Peter plays a “unique” and “distinct” role in Matthew, which suggests a special Petrine tradition and a group who sponsors those traditions (153).
5.3.5. The Raising of the Dead (9:18–26; cf. Mark 5:21–43)

Matt 9:18–26, like its Markan source (5:21–43), intertwined the stories of the healing of a woman with a haemorrhage and the raising of the ruler’s daughter as a single narrative. Matthew reworks Mark radically by omitting the name “Jairus” and the phrase “one of the rulers of the synagogue”, whereas Mark uses the phrase four times (5:22, 35, 36, 38). Perhaps this omission indicates the Matthean community’s escalating conflict with the Jewish leaders who control the synagogues. However, despite omitting reference to the synagogue, Matthew still has Jesus raise the daughter of the Jewish ruler. This clearly shows that the Matthean conflict is with those who rule the Jewish religious institutions such as the synagogues, not with the whole of Judaism.

According to Harrington, because he alters Mark’s ἀνέστη (Mark 5:42) to ἠγέρθη (“arose”) in 9:25, which is a “standard term for resurrection”, Matthew understands the resuscitation of the dead as in 9:18–26 as “a sign pointing toward the resurrection of Jesus”. This is not probable, though the Matthean community would have had such a link with eschatological resurrection in mind. For Matthew, the authority to raise the dead is not limited to the person of Jesus, but continuous with God’s saving dealings with his people in the past and with how God will effect saving in the present and in the future through his disciples. God had effected the raising of the dead through his messengers of God such as Elijah and Elisha in the past (Elijah [1 Kgs 17:17–24; cf. Sir 48:5]; Elisha [2 Kgs 4:32–37]). In the historical present, Jesus raises the dead, which, for Matthew, is the fulfillment of God’s promises to his people through his messenger Isaiah ( Isa 35:5–6; cf. 11:4–5). Thus, Matthew links the miracle to 1:21. And in the

---

312 Harrington, Matthew, 131.
313 Harrington, Matthew, 132.
314 Nolland, Matthew, 395.
315 France, Matthew, 361, 365; Nolland, Matthew, 394 n. 198; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 226; Hare, Matthew, 106; Hagner, Matthew, 1:248.
future the disciples will also do the raising of the dead (10:7–8). Therefore, Jesus’ raising of the dead in 9:18–26 does not foreshadow his resurrection, but reinforces the continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past, and also between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ecclesia, and the fulfilment of God’s saving promises in Jesus in the present.

In his account of the healing of the haemorrhaging woman (9:20–22), Matthew uses “the language of salvation” to describe the healing and deliverance of the woman. This Matthew does by using the words σέσωκέν (“made you well”) and ἑσώθη (“made well”) in 9:22. This clearly links Jesus’ healing of the woman to 1:21 (cf. σώζω). According to France, given the close association of “the language of salvation” with faith, “salvation” in this miracle refers to “spiritual salvation”. Harrington puts it in a different way: “while the primary healing was physical, the spiritual aspect of healing (salvation) is also present”. Does this mean 1:21 separates spiritual and physical salvation? Does 1:21 separate healing and salvation? If so, how does it account for 11:4–5, where Jesus refers to his “deeds” as messianic and salvific?

It is unlikely that Matthew separates the physical and the spiritual, given the close relationship between sin and sickness in Judaism, which in fact connects the physical and the spiritual, if such a separation is possible (cf. 9:2, 5–6). Moreover, each and every act of God in history is soteriologically complete, sufficient and efficacious in itself. If not, it would mean that despite healing the sick, Jesus would still have to do something “special” to “save” a person. That would not account for 11:4–5 and the relation between 1:21 and 9:22. Further, it disregards the continuity between Jesus’

---

316 France, Matthew, 361.
317 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 225; Luz, Matthäus, 2:53; France, Matthew, 363.
318 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 225.
319 France, Matthew, 361.
320 Harrington, Matthew, 131.
being and his doing, which is continuous with that between God’s being and saving. More significantly, such a physical-spiritual dualism is not a Jewish notion, but a Hellenistic category which is foreign to Matthew. However, such dualistic notions would have influenced Christian thinking later, though most likely not at the time of the composition of the Gospel, given Matthew’s strong Jewish religious environment.

5.3.6. Conclusion

In chapters 8 to 25 Matthew presents reports of Jesus’ saving “deeds”—healings, exorcisms, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, stilling the storm and walking on the sea. They include evidence of the activities which are already mentioned in 4:23 (cf. 9:35). During this whole section, Matthew depicts Jesus as healer and helper. He authenticates it by using a formula quotation in 8:17: “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Isa 53:4). These salvific roles are closely and characteristically linked to various messianic titles such as “Son of God” and “Son of David” which Matthew makes for Jesus. This shows that Jesus’ miraculous “deeds”, which bring healing to the sick and help to the needy, characterise his role as the Messiah of Israel (11:5; cf. Isa 28:18–19; 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1). Therefore, how Matthew understands Jesus’ healing and helping has a defining impact on his soteriology.

5.4. AUTHORISING THE ECCLESIA AND ISSUES OF CONTINUITY

The historical and soteriological continuity between Jesus’ ministry and the mission of the disciples assumes greater importance in chapters 16 and 18. In order to reinforce the authority, continuity and validity of ἐκκλησία, Matthew links the very being of ἐκκλησία to Jesus’ status. This Matthew achieves by connecting Peter’s confession of Jesus’ status (“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”; 16:16 RSV) and the formation of the ἐκκλησία. Though Jesus has been identified as “Son of David” earlier
in 9:27 and 15:22 (to come are 20:30–31; 21:9, 15), this is the only place where Jesus is confessed as “the Christ”. Peter’s confession (16:16) agrees with the heavenly declaration earlier at the time of Jesus’ baptism (3:17) and later on the mount of transfiguration (17:5), with Jesus’ own statements (11:25–27), and with the disciples’ confession in 14:33. It underlines Jesus’ saving mission and his ontological continuity with God. Thus, Matthew has Peter confess Jesus as the realisation of the messianic hopes of the people of Israel and the fulfilment of God’s saving promises. Peter’s confession is not just about the (ontological) continuity between Jesus’ being and God’s being, but is also about the continuity between Jesus’ doing and God’s saving nature. This entails continuity between history and soteriology; the being of ἐκκλησία is rooted in fulfilment and continuity.

One might argue that Matthew’s use of “ἐκκλησία” (16:18; 18:17) and his references to “their/your synagogue/s” (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34) prove that his community is totally separated from Jewish heritage and institutionalised as a Christian community. In the view of Broadhead, ἐκκλησία “stands in stark contrast to the συναγωγή”. For Runesson, ἐκκλησία was “one of many synagogue terms in the first century”. It is possible that ἐκκλησία indicates a somewhat institutionalised form of gathering because they had the disciplining power (18:17) and the authority to make decisions in God’s name. And ἐκκλησία has been promised protection against the “gates

---

321 Nolland, Matthew, 661; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:620; Luz, Matthäus, 2:460. In the opening chapter Matthew has identified Jesus as the Christ of royal messianism (1:1, 16, 17, 18) through whom God will save his people from their sins as long promised (cf. 1:21). As in 1:17; 2:4; 11:2; 22:42; 26:63, “the Christ” is the Messiah of Israel. And the Messiah is God’s own Son in whom the living God is “with us” (cf. 1:23).

323 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 333.
326 Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew,” 464. In Runesson’s opinion, the “English word ‘church’ presupposes that the institution it designates is something other than a synagogue” (464).
of Hades” (16:18). It is Jesus who built the ἐκκλησία (16:18) and he is present in all their gatherings. But, as Sim and Nolland fittingly argue, Matthew’s use of ἐκκλησία is theologically different from how it is used elsewhere in the New Testament.⁵²⁷

Matthew understands his ἐκκλησία in relation to his post-70 C.E. Jewish social setting.⁵²⁸ Both ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή are likely to be derived from the LXX, where it denotes “assembly” of God’s people (Deut 9:10; 31:30; 2 Chr 1:3; 1 Macc 2:56; 1QMQ 4:10; Josephus, Ant. 4.144, 6.86).⁵²⁹ That both were used for “the assembly of Yahweh” was a great advantage—members of the ἐκκλησία could express their historical and soteriological continuity with Jewish traditions.⁵³⁰ Moreover, in James 2:1 and 5:4, ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή are used interchangeably. It is doubtful whether Matthew understands the destruction of the temple as the direct reason for the formation of ἐκκλησία. Most likely, the ever-intensifying conflicts with the Jewish leaders, who rule of the synagogues, might have led Matthew’s community to form its own gathering.⁵³¹ For Matthew, as Konradt concludes, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” find their salvation only as part of the ἐκκλησία.⁵³²

Moreover, in Barber’s view, Jesus’ building of the ἐκκλησία is “best understood in light of Matthew’s Davidic Christology”.⁵³³ As with Meyer and Witherington,⁵³⁴

---

Barber also notes that Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession (16:17–19) recalls Davidic traditions of temple building (2 Sam 7:12–13; 1 Chr 17:7–10), given that in 16:17–19 Matthew identifies Jesus’ saving role as “builder”.\(^{335}\) The “stone” imagery is frequently used in relation to temples in Jewish traditions (Gen 28:10–22; Isa 8:14–15; 28:16; Zech 4:7–9; m. Yoma 54a–b; Lev. Rab. 20:4; Num. Rab. 12:4; 4 Ezra 13:36; T. Sol. 23:6–8).\(^{336}\) Therefore, Barber, Betz, Dunn, and Meyer rightly treat Matthew’s description of Jesus as the “builder” of ἐκκλησία, as belonging to the traditions of “the son of David’s temple-building activity”.\(^{337}\) Thus for Matthew, Jesus’ saying that he will “build” his ἐκκλησία on a “rock” fits into “the same Davidic matrix”.\(^{338}\) This entails continuity. Therefore, for Matthew, as Konradt rightly contends, the creation of ἐκκλησία means creating a new gathering or a transformation in the “theologischen Koordinatensystems”,\(^{339}\) it is not a “substitute” for Israel nor is ἐκκλησία conceived as the new people of God. And thus, as Broadhead rightly observes, Matthew “moves the focus” from the post-70 C.E. theological location to “the future location”—“all of those called” to participate and continue God’s saving in Jesus.\(^{340}\) For Broadhead, such a “strategic development” would be “prescriptive and hortatory”.\(^{341}\) This, however, as Saldarini correctly notes, would have been a “counterclaim” against the “evil and adulterous” Jewish leaders (cf. 16:4);\(^{342}\) just as the Jewish leaders would have “claimed

\(^{335}\) Barber, “Davidic Temple Builder,” 940.


\(^{338}\) Barber, “Davidic Temple Builder,” 940.

\(^{339}\) Konradt, Israel, 403.


\(^{341}\) Broadhead, “Discipleship and Ecclesiology,” 19.

\(^{342}\) Saldarini, Christian-Jewish Community, 119.
to lead the assembly [συναγωγή] . . . so Matthew claimed to lead the assembly”

[ἐκκλησία] of Israel according to the teachings of Jesus who fulfils and continues the true sense of the Torah;\(^{343}\) for Matthew, therefore, ἑκκλησία means a Jesuanic Jewish entity or “Jesus-centered form of Judaism”.\(^{344}\) It is also probable that ἑκκλησία denotes perhaps a collective and organised vigilance of the Matthean community against the “leaven” of the Jewish religious leaders (cf. 16:6).

This reflects only “physical distancing” from the συναγωγή because of the presence of the hostile Jewish leaders, who do not accept the authority of Jesus and his roles—teacher, judge, helper and healer—not “emotional” distancing from Jewish theological and soteriological traditions. It does indicate a community that considers itself to be within the theological confines of first-century Judaism, yet at variance with the “blind” Jewish leaders. If it is in this sense, we can agree with France’s proposition: “the phrase [ἐκκλησία] encapsulates that paradoxical combination of continuity and discontinuity which runs through NT’s understanding of Jesus and his church in relation to Israel”.\(^{345}\) In short, as Sim, Saldarini, Harrington, and Nolland correctly note, it is plausible that Matthew uses ἑκκλησία to “distinguish” his community (assembly) from that of the assemblies (synagogues) of his Jewish opponents, without suggesting that ἑκκλησία replaces Judaism (4:23; 9:35 cf. 10:17; 23:34).\(^{346}\)

Some Matthean scholars argue that Peter is the “foundation” of the ἑκκλησία and hence he plays a “unique” role (Sim, Davies and Allison, Meier, Hare, Harrington, Broadhead, and Gundry).\(^{347}\) This argument is likely as it is Peter who responded and

\(^{343}\) Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 119.


upon whom 16:17–19 focus, but not persuasive because “Peter is never regarded as isolated from the twelve” (Hagner). For Matthew, the authority of ἐκκλησία is rooted in the divine authority of Jesus. Additionally, as Loader rightly argues, “Matthew breaks Mark’s suspense of presenting here the disciples’ first confession (16:13; cf. Mark 8:27)”. What Peter affirmed in 16:16 has already been confessed by the disciples (14:33). This means Peter’s confession of Jesus as the “Son of God” is not a “unique” revelation to Peter (16:16). Therefore, the focus is not Peter, as some argue, but the authorisation of the disciples, as represented by Peter.

Further, as Hagner and France observe, “rock” does not refer to Peter’s character, as we will see later, given that “rock” implies stability, but to the authority and function which he represents. Moreover, the same authority Jesus gives to Peter is given to the whole ecclesia (18:18). And it is unlikely that, despite the possible allusions to Isa 22:22, where the “key of the house of David” is given to Eliakim, the new steward, the “keys” of the house of David are with Peter. For Matthew, what is more important is not what is happening to Peter, but what is happening through Peter. Therefore, the authority which Jesus gives to Peter does not mean Peter possesses a more special

---

2:619–20; Meier, Matthew, 182; Hare, Matthew, 188–89; Harrington, Matthew, 247; Broadhead, Jewish Ways of Following Jesus, 152–53; Gundry, Matthew, 330. However, Sim argues elsewhere that the whole ἐκκλησία is given the authority to bind and loose, not just Peter: Christian Judaism, 143. For Sim, Matthew uses 16:17–19 as an anti-Pauline polemic. See Sim, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 14; idem, “Matthew and anti-Paulinism,” 778; idem, “Matthew and the Pauline Corpus,” 411–17.


349 Loader, Law, 219.


352 Hagner, Matthew, 2:471; France, Matthew, 620–22.

authority than other disciples nor does it refer to the “unique” position of Peter.\textsuperscript{354} Instead, it means reinforcing the authority which Jesus had already given to his disciples in 10:1 and 10:5–8 and extending the authorisation to generations to come. Thus, Matthew makes Jesus’ saving continuous not only with the mission of the twelve disciples, but also with the generations of disciples to come.

If so, “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” and the authority to “bind” and “loose” (16:19) are given not only to the disciples but to the entire ecclesia. But what does the language of keys and of “binding” and “loosing” mean? One must understand it in the context of Jesus’ warning against the “leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:6). And more importantly, as Davies and Allison rightly argue, the Jewish leaders “shut the door to the kingdom” by issuing such false teachings: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them” (23:13).\textsuperscript{355} But Matthew has Jesus open the kingdom of heaven; Jesus has the key to the kingdom of heaven: “the righteousness of the Torah” (5:20).

The continuity between Jesus’ mission and the mission of the ἐκκλησία reaches its climax in the last commandment (28:16–20). [For a detailed discussion on the last commandment, see chapter 4 (section 4.8.3)]. The ἐκκλησία is authorised to preach, to teach, to baptise, and to make the nations, including the Gentiles, observe the righteousness of the Torah (28:18–20), which is the key to salvation (cf. 5:20). This best explains the language of binding and loosing (16:19): ἐκκλησία is authorised to make correct judgements on matters pertaining to the Torah (cf. QLuke 11:52; Rev 1:18; 2 En. 40:9–11; b. Sanh. 113a).\textsuperscript{356} This does not entail mere dealing with membership

\textsuperscript{355} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 2:639.
\textsuperscript{356} Loader, \textit{Law}, 219. See also Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 2:635–41.
issues, as Hare argues, or solving moral issues, as Meier observes. For Matthew, the teaching of the Torah by the ἐκκλησία is authoritative and valid, unlike what Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries would allege, because the authority of ἐκκλησία is continuous with the authority of Jesus. However, the authority of ἐκκλησία does not entail replacing Israel because Jesus’ authority, which brought the ἐκκλησία into being, is continuous with the authority of God, who brought the people of Israel into being. In other words, both the calling of Abraham and the calling of the ἐκκλησία are historically and soteriologically continuous because the God who called Abraham is the one who called the ἐκκλησία into being through Jesus, who is the son of God. This shows how closely Matthew links soteriology and ecclesiology.

Matthew 18 further augments the continuity between the authority of the disciples and the authority of ἐκκλησία. The same power of “binding” and “loosing” that had been given to the disciples (16:19) is also entrusted to the ἐκκλησία (18:18–19). This power is for deciding membership (Senior, and Hare) and disciplining (Carter, Loader, Luz, Hagner, and Meier). However, there is more to it. The authority of ἐκκλησία is continuous with the saving mission of Jesus and his disciples. This Matthew achieves by linking the authority of ἐκκλησία to the parable of the “lost sheep” (18:12–14; cf. Luke 15:3–7). This shepherd-sheep image evokes Jesus’ mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (9:36; cf. 10:5–8; 15:24). For Matthew, the shepherd role of the ἐκκλησία is continuous with the shepherd role of Jesus (15:24) and his disciples (10:5–6). This means the authority of the ἐκκλησία is not only to discipline the

---

357 Hare, Matthew, 192.
358 Meier, Matthew, 205.
359 Nolland, Matthew, 748; Senior, Matthew, 145; Sim, Christian Judaism, 143.
360 Senior, Matthew, 145; Hare, Matthew, 191.
361 In the rabbinic system, teaching authority and disciplining authority are vested in the scribal office (2 En. 40:9–11; b Sanh. 113a). See Bornkamm, “Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose,’” 88.
362 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 368; Loader, Law, 219, 224; Luz, Matthäus, 2:465; Hagner, Matthew, 2:532; Meier, Matthew, 205–6.
believing community, but also to save the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” by teaching the righteousness of the Torah, as interpreted by Jesus (28:18–20). The classic boundary marker in 18:17 (cf. 5:46–47) shows that Matthew thinks of, and disciplines, his community in Jewish terms because he still operates within the confines of first-century Judaism.\(^{363}\) In other words, God’s saving does not end with Jesus’ disciples, as with Jesus, but it must continue because God’s being continuously participates in history, which makes history salvific.

However, while Jesus’ authority is continuous with his being as the “Son of God”, the authority of the disciples is not rooted in their being but linked to Jesus’ authority. This means the authority of Jesus and the authority of the ἐκκλησία are not the same, not in terms of sufficiency and efficacy. Likewise, the mission of the ἐκκλησία and Jesus’ mission are not the same, not in terms of sufficiency and efficacy, but in terms of the continuity between the being and doing of the agents of mission.

5.5. THE SAVIOUR AS HEALER AND HELPER: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Matthew’s depiction of Jesus as healer and helper, especially in chapters 8–25 but also in the rest of the gospel, reflects his understanding of salvation in continuity. For Jesus’ healings and helping reflect for Matthew how God responds to his people, as in the past, and fulfils their needs in the present, as he had promised through his prophets or messengers (cf. 1:21; 8:17; 11:5–6; Isa 35:5–6; 53:4; 61:1). Jesus’ fulfilment reinforces the ever-continuing sufficiency and efficacy of God’s saving promises for his people in history (10:5–6; 16:18; 18:18); fulfilment and continuity characterise Jesus’ miraculous/salvific/messianic “deeds”.

\(^{363}\) White, “Crisis Management,” 222.
John the Baptist failed to understand how Jesus’ “deeds” matched with God’s saving initiatives in the past, and his plans and promises for his people to be fulfilled in the messianic era (11:2–5). He identified Jesus as the eschatological judge (3:10–12; cf. 7:21–24; 25:31–46). But Jesus preached repentance and salvation (4:17), healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead (4:23–9:35). What John prophesied about Jesus’ role was not consistent with Jesus’ “words” and “deeds” (11:2).

Nevertheless, Matthew will have Jesus fulfil John’s predictions, but only in the eschaton. This is evident in the story of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28–34). Matthew adds “before time” (8:29 cf. Mark 5:7) to the demons’ question to show that Jesus’ role as the judge is eschatological (3:11–12). Jesus’ miracles foreshadow his eschatological roles. Thus, Matthew makes Jesus’ saving in the present and his eschatological roles continuous.

If John’s concern was the incongruity between his prediction of Jesus as the judge to come, and Jesus’ deeds of compassion and his preaching of repentance and salvation, the Jewish leaders’ issue was with the validity of Jesus’ authority and of his miracles (9:32–34; 12:22–32). They rejected Jesus’ mission because they believed that he had no authority to forgive sins (cf. 9:2–8) and cast out demons (9:32–34; 12:22–32). By rejecting the divine authority of Jesus, the Jewish leaders rejected the soteriological continuity that is being claimed in Matthew for Jesus (cf. 12:22–32). And Matthew uses motifs such as “duality”, “blindness” and “possession” to contrast the positive response of the people and the unfaith of the Jewish leaders (9:27–31; 20:29–34; 9:32–34; 12:22–32). By positioning chapter 10 before 11:2–6 Matthew produces the effect that Jesus’ response to the charges of the Jewish opponents now serves also as a theological defence of the authority of the mission of his community.
For Matthew, the God who saved his people in the past (cf. 1:2–17) is the one who authorised Jesus to save his people in the present (cf. 1:18–21; 3:17; 17:15; 15:24; 28:18–20). And Jesus’ being/status as “Son of God” (cf. 3:17; 17:5) and his divine authority (9:2, 5–6; 28:18–20) are continuous with God’s being and his saving initiatives in the past. Therefore, the continuity between Jesus’ being and his miracles hold God’s saving initiatives both in the past and in the present together. This explains why Matthew always focuses on Jesus’ divine authority (8:5–13, 23–27; 9:2–8; 14:13–21, 22–33; 15:32–39) and his titular status—“Son of God” (8:28–34; 14:22–33; cf. 3:17; 17:5), “Son of Man” (9:2–8) and “Son of David” (9:27–31; 12:22–37; 15:21–28; 20:30–31)—in his accounts of Jesus’ miracles. For Matthew, “who Jesus is” is inseparably linked to “how Jesus saves”. This makes Jesus’ miracles different from other miracles in the history of Israel.

However, Jesus’ miracles do not replace the miracles in the history of the people of Israel, because the latter do not suffer from lack of salvific sufficiency and efficacy. For the God who effected miracles through his messengers in the past is the one who performs miracles in Jesus in the present. Both Jesus’ miracles and the miracles in the Old Testament are salvific, but differ in terms of the status of the miracle-worker. Otherwise, it would mean that God’s initiatives in the past are replaced by a more soteriologically effective initiative in Jesus. This is outrageous for many of Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries as it would have questioned the salvific sufficiency of God himself.

Matthew’s theological motif of historical and soteriological continuity is further evident in Jesus’ attitude towards the Gentiles. In the story of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28–34), Matthew omits Mark 5:20 to avoid any allusion to Jesus extending his earthly mission to the Gentiles. For Matthew, the positive comments about the centurion
(8:5–13) and the remarkable faith of the Canaanite woman (15:21–28) do not indicate the opening of mission to the Gentiles, let alone the abandoning of mission to Israel. Instead they serve, first and foremost, the purpose of shaming those Jews, especially the blind Jewish leaders, who do not accept God’s saving initiative in Jesus. In addition, while using the Markan account of the feeding of the four thousand (8:1–10), Matthew has fairly thoroughly dismantled the Markan composition, so that it no longer celebrates the participation of the Jews and the Gentiles in the blessings of the kingdom and thus now reinforces Jesus’ priority for the people of Israel and the eschatological fulfilment of God’s promises to Israel in Jesus (15:32–29). However, Matthew’s hearers would have known that Jesus would remove the ethnic barriers and extend his mission to the Gentiles after his exaltation (cf. 28:18–20).

For Matthew, God’s saving initiatives as reflected in Jesus’ miracles must continue on earth through the disciples (ἐκκλησία), as Jesus continued God’s saving dealings with his people in the past through his miracles, because God is saving. The authority which Jesus had given to his disciples in 10:1, 5–8 is further reinforced in chapter 16. Matthew links the authority and authorisation of the ἐκκλησία to Jesus’ divine authority and his status as “Son of God” (14:22–33; 16:16). The ἐκκλησία is authorised to hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven—the righteousness of the Torah (5:20). The ἐκκλησία is authorised to continue Jesus’ saving mission on earth through preaching (10:7; 16:18; 28:18–20) and miracles (10:7–8), as Jesus saved his people through his “words” and “deeds” (4:23 – 9:35).

For Matthew, Jesus saves his people from their sins (cf. 1:21) through his “words” and “deeds” (4:23–9:35; cf. 11:2–5). But in 26:28 Jesus’ death is referred to as “for the forgiveness of sins” (cf. 20:28). In what sense then is Jesus’ death also saving? This we shall discuss in the next Chapter.
6.1. INTRODUCTION

We have seen in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study that, for Matthew, Jesus saves his people, as promised in 1:21—through his teaching, miracles, and helping (Matthew 1–25). But this raises a number of critical issues. Does Jesus’ saving through his teaching, miracles, and helping mean his saving mission (1:21) ends with his public ministry (Matthew 1–25)? If so, how would Matthew understand 26:28, where he adds “forgiveness of sins” (cf. 1:21) to his account of the Last Supper (26:28; cf. Mark 14:24)? How does Matthew define Jesus’ death and resurrection in terms of salvific sufficiency and efficacy in relation to his saving as illustrated in chapters 1–25? Is Jesus’ death as saving as his life and ministry? If so, why is it singled out and linked in particular with forgiveness of sin? Is this just a soteriological tradition Matthew incorporates and to which he gives no weight? Or does it have a special significance in some way—indicated by the fact that Matthew makes a special addition in this regard? In this Chapter, therefore, we shall discuss these issues as they impinge on our understanding of Matthew’s description of Jesus’ saving (cf. 1:21) in his death and resurrection, especially in chapters 26–28 but also elsewhere in the Gospel.
For the most part, Matthew’s Passion Narrative follows the Markan story and his sequence of events very closely. As in Mark (14:12–16), Matthew positions his account of the Last Supper in the theological and narrative setting of Jesus’ passion and death. In 26:1–16 Matthew sets the stage for Jesus’ crucifixion: a fourth Son of Man passion prediction is set at the outset (26:2), “the chief priests and the elders” make a plan to kill Jesus (26:3–4; cf. Mark 14:1–2; Luke 22:1–2), Jesus is anointed for his burial (26:6–13; cf. Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50), and Judas strikes a deal with the chief priests (26:14–16; cf. Mark 14:10–11; Luke 22:3–6). Then, as in Mark, Matthew juxtaposes Jesus’ command to prepare the Passover meal (26:17–19; cf. Mark 14:12–16), his foretelling of Judas’ betrayal (26:20–25; cf. Mark 14:17–21) and his words over the bread and over the cup (26:26–29; cf. Mark 14:22–25). The “pouring out” of the “blood” of Jesus (“my blood”) “for many” refers to his death (26:28).

For Matthew, given Jesus’ role to “save his people from their sins” (1:21), his redactional insertion in 26:28 (“for the forgiveness of sins”; cf. Mark 14:24), is, perhaps, the most significant soteriological statement in his version of Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples. Does Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 mean that what is predicted in 1:21 is now “achieved” in 26:28 by his death? What did Jesus “achieve” in his death that he could not “achieve” during his earthly ministry? How does Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ “pouring out” of his “blood” match his affirmative attitude towards the temple and the cultic sacrifices associated with it? How does Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ death as in 26:28 match other theological convictions concerning “forgiveness of sins” in chapters 1–25? How
fundamental a role does Jesus’ death play in Matthew’s soteriology, given his affirmative relationship to his Jewish heritage? Matthean scholars have approached these issues from different vantage points. As a result, various explanations have been proffered.

According to Luomanen, for Matthew, what the angel of the Lord had predicted to Joseph in 1:21, concerning Jesus’ primary role as the saviour, is not “achieved” in Jesus’ death (cf. 26:28), but in his teaching and healing.\(^1\) Therefore, for Luomanen, 1:21 is not soteriologically linked either to 26:28 or to Jesus’ death.\(^2\) This is primarily because the authority of Jesus to forgive sins (9:2–6) and the same authority which is transmitted to the disciples (10:1; 16:18; 18:18; cf. 9:8) do not entail “any hint of Jesus’ sacrificial death”.\(^3\) Further, Luomanen observes, “although the passion predictions anticipate Jesus’ death, Matthew does not use them to highlight the atoning character of death so much as to picture Jesus’ exemplary humility and submission to God’s will”\(^4\) and evoke the “deuteronomistic motive of a rejected prophet”.\(^5\) Moreover, in Matthew’s view, as Luomanen says, “Jesus was not sent to die for his people but to heal their diseases, preach repentance and lead them into eternal life through his authoritative interpretation and proclamation of the law”.\(^6\)

As Luomanen puts it, “Matthew is more concerned about showing the fulfillment of the old covenant in Jesus’ activity than about what would constitute the basis for a new covenantal relationship in Jesus”.\(^7\) He also observes that, in Matthew, Jesus does not save “many” (πολλῶν; cf. 26:28) from their sins nor “all the nations” (πάντα τὰ

---

\(^1\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 115–20, 224–27.


\(^3\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 221–22.

\(^4\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 230. Similarly, according to Kennedy, from Matthew’s perspective, “Jesus is required to exhibit obedient sonship as the embodiment of Israel”; Jesus’ recapitulation, thus, becomes salvific for his people. See *Recapitulation of Israel*, 225.

\(^5\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 226.

\(^6\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 226.

\(^7\) Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 224.
ἔθνη; cf. 28:19), but only “his people” (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ: 1:21). However, Luomanen does not underestimate the significance of 26:28 as they indicate “the institutional character” of the Lord’s Supper in the Matthean community. the members of the community experienced “salvation as a present reality” in the partaking of the Lord’s Supper as “the celebration takes place in the sphere of the covenant”. Therefore, Luomanen concludes that “the relative position of the idea of forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ blood within Matthew’s symbolic universe [is] . . . rather isolated in relation to other convictions about forgiveness . . .”; “different convictions about forgiveness and its justifications appear side by side within his [Matthew’s] symbolic universe”; “Matthew has not developed any coherent ‘theology of forgiveness’ “.

Luomanen’s position on Matthew’s understanding of soteriology is convincing in many respects: Jesus saves his people through his teaching and healing; “Jesus was not sent to die for his people but to heal their diseases, preach repentance and lead them into eternal life”; salvation is a present reality to those who partake in the Eucharist; Jesus’ death is an exemplary evidence of his unswerving commitment to God’s will. However, Luomanen’s interpretation of Jesus’ death does raise some critical questions. If 26:26–29, “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 in particular, were mere evidence of the institutional character of the Lord’s Supper in the Matthean community, then how does it account for Matthew’s positioning of “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) in the

---

8 Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 225.
12 Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 222. Streckert also suggests that the idea of atoning death is part of Matthew’s tradition rather than Matthew’s own theology. See *Gerechtigkeit*, 181, 222.
13 Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven*, 222.
context of Jesus’ death, given the redactional freedom which he shows throughout the Gospel? What is the basis of salvation which the partakers of the Eucharist experience—teaching or healing?

On the other hand, Davies and Allison soteriologically link the death of Jesus and 26:28 to 1:21. But they interpret it in somewhat inconsistent ways: “the death of Jesus is soteriological, a deliverance from slavery to sin”;15 “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 is a “partial exegesis of 1.21: Jesus saves his people from their sins by dying for them and so permits a new relationship with God”;16, Jesus’ death must be “atoning”;17 “Even when 1.21 and 26.26–9 [26:26–29] are taken into account it is impossible to construct a Matthean theory of the atonement”;18 Jesus saves in many ways;19 “the entire gospel is to be read” in the light of 26:28, “for it is at the crucifixion that Jesus pours out his lifeblood”;20 the relationship between 1:21 and 26:28 shows that, “notwithstanding Matthew’s insistent demand for human righteousness, salvation is the gift of God” (cf. 20:28).21

Even though Davies and Allison’s construal of Jesus’ death is indisputable in many areas—Jesus saves in many ways; Jesus’ death is soteriological; 1:21 and 26:28 are soteriologically linked—it poses a few issues. What does it mean to say that 26:28 is only a “partial exegesis” of 1:21? If 26:28 is only a “partial exegesis” of 1:21, then why is the entire gospel to be read from the vantage point of 26:28? If Jesus’ death is “atoning”, then what does it mean to say that “Jesus saves in many ways”? Is Jesus’ “atoning” death as salvifically efficacious as his other saving roles—such as teaching and healing? If Jesus’ death is atoning, then why is there no theory of atonement in

---

15 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:474.
16 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:474.
17 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
18 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:100.
19 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
20 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
21 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:210.
Matthew? How is Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ atoning death theologically reconciled with his Jewish religious environment and his affirmative attitude towards the temple and the Torah?

In the view of Carter, Jesus’ saving of his people from their sins (ἁμαρτία; cf. 1:21; 26:28) through his death in 26:28, by way of 20:28, is only a “partial answer” to 1:21. Jesus’ death effects forgiveness of sins, but this carries out his saving commission as announced in 1:21 only “in part”. Carter suggests the following reasons: the “primacy effect” of 1:21 defines Jesus’ entire life as the means of his saving work; the noun “release” (ἀφεσίς; cf. 26:28) “denotes much more than a personal restoration to fellowship with God” (Lev 25: 10, 11, 12, 13, 28, 30, 31, 33, 40, 41, 50, 52, 54), though it includes forgiveness of sins; “Jesus speaks in communal terms” in 26:26–29; Jesus’ death “reveals the deep sinfulness of the imperial elite in rejecting God’s will for the world (20:25–28)” and, “the term ‘blood’ recalls the liberation of the people from Egypt” (26:28).

But, while agreeing to the “programmatic effect” of 1:21, Carter’s soteriological scheme leaves some questions unanswered. If 1:21 exercises a “primacy effect”, then why does Jesus’ saving in 26:28 constitute 1:21 only “in part” or “partially”? What does this “in part” mean? Is Jesus’ saving by his death more effective or less effective or as effective as his other saving roles such as teaching and healing? If 26:28 is only a “partial answer” to 1:21, then does that mean there is no soteriological continuity between Jesus’ life and his death? If so, does that mean 1:21 is “achieved” before

---

29 Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 76.
26:28? If 1:21 is “achieved” before 26:28, then why is there no such reference in the Gospel? If 1:21 is “achieved” before 26:28, then why must Jesus continue his saving “in part”?

For Saldarini, Jesus’ saving mission (1:21) “is achieved by his teaching and healing and preeminently by his death”. He also argues that Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) to “the liturgical formula in Mark (14:24) specifically fulfills the promise of Jesus’ name in Matt. 1:21”. But these two statements pose a few issues. Why is Jesus’ death only “preeminently” salvific, when 1:21 is “fulfilled” in 26:28? Do “preeminently” and “fulfil” have dissimilar soteriological weight and implications? Does it mean Jesus’ death was not as salvifically effective as his teaching and healing?

In his essay on Matthew’s soteriology, Blanton IV argues that, in Matthew, Jesus saves his people in three ways, which elaborate 1:21: teaching of the Torah, healing activity, and death on the cross. However, because Matthew understands “sin” as transgression of “the stipulations of the Torah”, Blanton notes: “Jesus ‘saves his people from their sins’ not primarily by forgiving sin or by his death on the cross but by exhorting his audience to follow the Torah with perfect obedience”. Therefore, for Blanton, Jesus’ saving by the teaching of the Torah far “outweighs” other means of saving—healing and death on the cross—as they are the “least developed” and “least significant” in Matthew. Blanton arrives at such a conclusion on the basis of a tally of

30 Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 166.
31 Saldarini, *Christian-Jewish Community*, 295 n. 121.
32 Blanton, “Saved by Obedience,” 393–413.
37 Blanton, “Saved by Obedience,” 413.
38 Blanton, “Saved by Obedience,” 413.
the number of verses that constitutes each category: Torah teaching (263 verses); healing (59 verses); the death on the cross (4 verses).39

Though Blanton’s emphasis on the saving nature of Jesus’ teaching of the Torah is important, his interpretation of Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves” as a whole is not convincing. First and foremost, it does not account for Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 and its close link to Jesus’ death. It also overlooks the close relationship between “who Jesus is” and “how Jesus saves” in Matthew. In what sense does the tally of the number of verses form the basis for determining the primacy of Jesus’ saving by the teaching of the Torah—quantity or quality? In what sense does Jesus’ saving teaching “outweigh” his saving by healing and death on the cross? In what sense is Jesus’ death on the cross “less significant”—christological or soteriological?

According to Loader, Matthew does not give the impression that he limits “forgiveness of sins” which Jesus effects (cf. 1:21) to “something achieved by Jesus’ death” on the cross.40 For Loader, Jesus’ death, his teaching, and miracles are salvific.41 He also observes that, though Jesus saves in many ways, Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” to the word about the blood (26:28) “must be given its weight”.42 However, for Loader, forgiveness of sins as based on Jesus’ sacrificial or vicarious death as in 26:28 is not “central” to Matthew’s understanding of forgiveness43 nor does Matthew turn it into the major salvific role;44 “forgiveness seems primarily rooted in the attitude of God, not in an act of vicarious or sacrificial atonement”.45

43 Loader, Law, 249.
45 Loader, Law, 249.
While Loader’s interpretation of Matthean soteriology as a whole is persuasive, it
does, however, raise a few concerns. In what sense is Jesus’ saving by death not
“central” to Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves”? Is there any reason other
than Matthew’s affirmative relationship to his Jewish heritage that Matthew does not
make Jesus’ saving by death “central” to his soteriology? Is Jesus’ death on the cross as
salvifically efficacious and sufficient as his teaching and healing? If so, why does
Matthew not turn Jesus’ death into a saving role?

A significant number of Matthean scholars have observed “sins” in 1:21c (ἀπὸ
tῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν) and 26:28 (εἰς ἅφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν), noted the link of the last meal
with the cross, and, by way of 20:28 (“to give his life a ransom for many”), concluded
that Jesus saves his people from their sins through his death. What the angel had
foretold in 1:21 is now, they argue, “fully achieved”—not “in part” or “partially” or
“preeminently” or “less significantly”—in his sacrificial death on the cross (cf. 26:28).
For Matthew, therefore, as many scholars argue, the salvation offered through the
“new” forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings (1:21) is solely rooted in his atoning
death, as it is in 26:28.

---


47 For Deines, Jesus brings a “new” forgiveness through his death: see “Not the Law but the Messiah,” 71.

One might even argue, therefore, that Jesus’ rejection, suffering, and death was “necessary” (Gibbs), “inevitable, foreseen, and accepted” (Senior). According to Senior, the death of Jesus has been looming large almost from the very beginning of the narrative. Gibbs identifies four references in the Gospel to show that, for Matthew, Jesus’ atoning death was a soteriological necessity: as in Mark (8:31), Matthew uses ὅτι in 16:21 to show that Jesus’ death was a “divine necessity”; like Mark (14:27), Matthew also cites Zech 13:7 in 26:31, which indicates that it was God’s will to strike Jesus the shepherd (26:31); Jesus accepts the cup of God’s wrath (26:36–46); and Jesus’ death was a divine judgement (27:45–54). Therefore, in Gibbs’ view, as Son of God, Jesus died a vicarious and atoning death and, in doing so, he averted the wrath of God and saved his people from their sins.

Some scholars find further evidence for this in Matthew’s omission of “for the forgiveness of sins” (3:6) from Mark’s account of John the Baptist’s message (Mark 1:4); it is not John’s baptism of repentance that brings forgiveness of sins, but Jesus’ blood (27:4, 24–25; cf. 27:6,8). They also contend that what occurs at Matthew’s account of John’s baptism is not the forgiveness of sins, but merely the confessing of sins. One might also argue that the theme of forgiveness of sins in the healing of the

---


50 Senior, _Passion of Jesus_, 166.
51 Senior, _Passion of Jesus_, 166–68.
54 Meier, _Matthew_, 24; Beare, _Matthew_, 90–92, 509; Hagner, _Matthew_, 1:47; Gundry, _Matthew_, 43, 528; idem, “Salvation in Matthew,” 409; Luomanen, _Entering the Kingdom of Heaven_, 208–9, 220–21, 236, Carter, _Matthew and the Margins_, 95–96; Davies and Allison, _Matthew_, 1:300–301; 3:474; Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 258, 261; idem, _Nicht Aufzulösen_, 74; France, _Matthew_, 107–8; Gurtner, _Torn Veil_, 134; Senior, _Passion of Jesus_, 69; Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92; Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 8–9, 13.
55 Davies and Allison, _Matthew_, 1:300–301; Repschinski, _Nicht Aufzulösen_, 74.
paralytic (9:2–8) indicates Jesus’ authority to forgive sins, and not actual forgiving of sins, as predicted in 1:21.\(^{56}\)

Those who consider Jesus’ death as an atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins “for many” find further evidence in the verbal link between the ransom saying in 20:28 (ἀντὶ πολλῶν) and 26:28 (πολλῶν).\(^{57}\) Jesus brings “forgiveness of sins” by “giving his life as a ransom for many”, which is made through his sacrificial blood. This Matthew achieves, according to Davies and Allison, as in Mark (14:24), “by the use of ἐκχυννόμενον, a sacrificial word which connotes a violent death and, in connexion with Passover, recalls the slaughtered paschal lamb”.\(^{58}\) Further, Gibbs argues that the two certain grammatical features in 20:28 inform 26:28 and, thus, Matthew’s atonement theology: the phrase “as a ransom for many” modifies the infinitive “to give”; and, the sense of the preposition ἀντὶ is “in the place of, instead of”.\(^{59}\) Therefore, for Gibbs, Jesus’ death is a “vicarious payment”.\(^{60}\)

Matthew does not, however, seem to limit salvation offered through “forgiveness of sins” (1:21) “to something achieved by Jesus’ death” on the cross nor does he limit such salvation to the person of Jesus.\(^{61}\) The language of saving used in 1:21 (σῴζω) does not say anything about “how Jesus saves”, nor is there any explicit hint that what is predicted in 1:21 is to be achieved exclusively through Jesus’ death.\(^{62}\) The verb σῴζω

---


\(^{60}\) Gibbs, “Atonement,” 224.


refers five times to eschatological deliverance from danger (8:25; 10:22; 16:25; 19:25; 24:13–22), and three times to healing (8:25; 9:21, 22 [2x]). The use of σῴζω in the derisive comment in 27:42 also most likely refers to Jesus’ healing (“He saved others; he cannot save himself”). This means, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving mission includes healing and eschatological saving from distress; Jesus saves his people in many ways. In other words, Matthew’s understanding of salvation is bigger than just what 1:21 means. Thus the use of σῴζω in relation to saving from sins in 1:21 does not necessarily imply an exclusive focus on Jesus’ death.

According to Hasitschka and Carter, the interpretation of the name of “Jesus” in salvific terms as in 1:21 is “programmatic” for the entire life and ministry of Jesus. This means 1:21 exercises a “primacy effect” whereby Matthew defines Jesus’ whole life and ministry as effecting salvation, as Carter rightly observes. In other words, the commissioning of Jesus in 1:21c functions at the outset as a “point-of-view statement”. Matthew encourages the reader to read the Gospel from the vantage point of 1:21, and not in light of 26:28, as Davies and Allison argue, as if Jesus’ whole life was a preparation for his death. This suggests that, according to Matthew, Jesus saves his people as predicted in 1:21 through his public ministry as well as through his death.

Matthew gives yet another interpretation of Jesus’ name in 1:23: “God with us” (μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός). This means God’s forgiving and saving presence is still salvifically present in Jesus in the midst of his people, despite the destruction of the temple; God’s saving presence is realised in a privileged way in the presence of Jesus (18:20; 26:29; 43).
28:20). That, however, does not entail replacement of the temple, given Matthew’s positive attitude towards it. This means the naming and interpretation of Jesus’ name in 1:21 and 1:23 are soteriologically linked in Matthew. Therefore, as Hasitschka correctly notes, “salvation from sin through Jesus is at the same time the way into a new relationship with God which is marked by the experience that God is with us through the mediation of Jesus”; 69 Jesus’ presence itself is saving.

Matthew edits out “for the forgiveness of sins” in his description of John the Baptist’s preaching (3:1; cf. Mark 1:4). But the suggestion that Matthew dropped it because John the Baptist’s message is not salvific, as some scholars argue, 70 is implausible, given that Matthew summarises John’s preaching with the same words with which he summarises Jesus’ preaching and the preaching of the disciples (3:2; 4:17; 10:7). 71 The responsibility of forgiveness is implicit in John’s call to repentance as in Jesus’ call. As Loader rightly argues, “John, Jesus and the disciples proclaim repentance with the implied promise of forgiveness” (3:1; 4:17; 10:5). 72 Likewise, though Matthew omits “for the forgiveness of sins” in John’s baptism (3:6; cf. Mark 1:4), “he still understands John’s baptism as bringing forgiveness” (3:6). 73 Therefore, for Matthew, the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings is not a “new” kind of forgiveness, as Deines argues, 74 but a continuation of how God had effected forgiveness of sins in the past through his messengers such as John the Baptist.

69 Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92.
70 Meier, Matthew, 24; Beare, Matthew, 90–92, 509; Hagner, Matthew, 1:47; Gundry, Matthew, 43, 528; idem, “Salvation in Matthew,” 409; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 95–96; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 1:300–301; 3:474; Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 258, 261; idem, Nicht Aufzulösen, 74; France, Matthew, 107–8; Gurtner, Torn Veil, 134; Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 92; Draper, “Matthew’s Theological Location,” 8–9, 13. Cf. According to Luomanen, Matthew omits “the forgiveness of sins” in his description of John’s kerygma because “this was not in line with his overall understanding of baptism as an act of repentance.” See, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 221.
71 Nolland, Matthew, 1081 n. 135; Loader, Law, 249; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 6.
72 Loader, Law, 249.
The announcement in 1:21 that Jesus “will save his people from their sins” is also significantly elaborated in his teaching of the Torah. Jesus saves his people by encouraging and exhorting his audience to follow the Torah with perfect obedience (5:20; 7:21–24; 21:28–32; 19:16–23), but as interpreted by him. Matthew understands sin as rejection of the saving demands of the Torah. This is well attested in the early Jewish literature of Second Temple Judaism (Deut 28:25, 36–37, 41, 47–57; 30:1–5; 1 Kgs 8:56–61; Ezek 10:18–19; 11:22–23; Jub 1:22–24; Wis 2:12–13; 4:20 – 5:1; 4 Ezra 3:35–36; 7:45–46 etc.). If one wishes to be in a saving relationship with God, which God had initiated with the calling of Abraham (1:2), one must do the will of God, which for Matthew is not, however, left undefined, but set out in the Torah (7:21; 21:28–32). It was, therefore, Jesus’ messianic mission to teach the true sense of the Torah and, thus, both save them from sinning and its consequences, and assure them of forgiveness when they did sin (5:17–20; 11:2–5; cf. 28:18–20). This would help the people of Israel to have, or to be in, a saving relationship with God.

Furthermore, for Matthew, obedience to the Torah is a prerequisite for “eternal life” (19:11–17). More significantly, practising the righteousness of the Torah (5:20), meaning doing the will of God as interpreted by Jesus, is a sufficient criterion for entering into the kingdom of heaven as it makes one saved and “perfect” like the heavenly father (5:48). This explains the soteriological implications of Jesus’ ethical teachings (3:11–12; 7:21–23; 25:31–46). In this sense Jesus’ teaching of the Torah, in as much as it advocates not committing sins, serves a saving function in Matthew.

Although Matthew never indicates explicitly that Jesus saves by advocating strict adherence to the Torah observances, given Jesus’ affirmative attitude towards the Law and the prophets (5:17–20), we can say that when Jesus advocates obedience to the

---

75 Blanton, “Saved by Obedience,” 400.
Torah, he in effect directs his followers to avoid sins so that “his people” may remain in the saving relationship to which God had already initiated them through the calling of Abraham (cf. 1:2), and to be saved at the eschatological judgement, which Jesus will do in the end on the basis of his teaching of the Torah. Thus Matthew understands Jesus’ teaching of the Torah as one of the many ways of “achieving” 1:21, though not necessarily the primary way, as Blanton argues.\footnote{Blanton, “Saved by Obedience,” 393–413.}


The account of the healing of the paralytic is also crucial in respect of “how Jesus saves” his people in Matthew, as it clearly shows that Jesus’ saving is not limited to, or rooted in, his death on the cross (9:2–8). Jesus brings forgiveness of sins to his people during his earthly ministry itself (9:2, 5–6). This means that prior to his death on the cross and even without reference to it, Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic (9:2–6). This shows the close relationship between Christology (“who Jesus is”) and soteriology
(“how Jesus saves”) in Matthew. Matthew roots Jesus’ saving in his identity as the saviour, and not in any one particular saving moment or event in his life and ministry.

For Matthew, the authority to forgive sins is not limited to Jesus alone. In 9:8, the entire ekklesia (“the human beings”), not just Matthew’s own congregation, as Luomanen contends,80 is invited to continue and to participate in Jesus’ authority to forgive sins (10:1, 5–8; 28:18–20).81 The authority of the ekklesia to forgive sins is continuous with Jesus’ saving authority (10:1, 5–8). For Matthew, the disciples, like Jesus, have also been authorised to forgive sins and to effect forgiveness of sins (9:8; 10:1). Therefore, the authority to forgive sins is not unique to Jesus, in Matthew.

Furthermore, for Matthew, given the close relationship between sin and sickness within early Judaism, as well-attested in Deuteronomy and Jubilees (Deut 28:21–22, 27–29, 35, 60–61; Jub. 10:10–14), Jesus’ healing activity serves also as a means by which Jesus saves his people from their sins (cf. 9:20–22; 27:42).82 Healing narratives in Matthew employ the verb σῴζω in 9:21, 22 and 27:42, where it is Jesus’ healing that “saves”. This fulfils God’s saving plans for his people in Jesus in the present (11:2–5; cf. Isa 35:6; 61:1–2; 2 Bar. 73:2; 74:2); Jesus saves his people from their sins through various aspects of his ministry.

It is also important to look at Matthew’s affirmative attitude towards the temple, since Matthew interprets the effect of Jesus’ death in terms of the traditional temple sacrifices (Leviticus 4–5). Throughout the Gospel, Matthew maintains a positive and affirmative attitude towards the temple and the sacrificial cults associated with it (5:23–

80 Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 221.
81 Nolland, Matthew, 383; Harrington, Matthew, 122; Loader, Law, 190; Hagner, Matthew, 234; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 217; Meier, Matthew, 92; idem, Vision, 71–72; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:96; Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 221.
Therefore, unlike in Hebrews, it is improbable that the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings through his death (26:28) in any way invalidate the salvific efficacy and sufficiency of the cultic laws and sacrifices (cf. 20:28; 26:28; 27:51, 45–46, 54).\(^{83}\) Nowhere does Matthew state or assume that Jesus’ sacrificial death makes other sacrifices redundant. Despite Jesus’ saving death and the physical destruction of the temple, the soteriological significance of the temple continue to be valid. This shows that Matthew does not understand salvation offered through forgiveness of sins as something “achieved” only by Jesus.

Equally, it is also problematic to use the “ransom logion” in 20:28 to show that Matthew limits salvation to something “achieved” by Jesus’ death. Though 20:28 does not appear in the context of Jesus’ discussion regarding his death, the presence of πολλῶν links 20:28 to 26:28 and thus to Jesus’ death. The link between 20:28 and Jesus’ death is more explicit in the connection between 20:28 and other Son of Man sayings elsewhere in the Gospel. However, the link between 20:28 and Jesus’ death does not necessarily indicate that Matthew makes Jesus’ death central to his understanding of soteriology nor does 20:28 call into question the saving role of the temple and cultic sacrifices because the phrase “ransom for many” (20:28) is used in relation to service (“to serve”; διακονέω); it is an invitation to serve, to the extent of giving one’s life for many. Therefore, in 20:28, Matthew has Jesus stress forcefully that his disciples must be prepared to practise the “supreme instance of servant mentality” (Nolland)\(^{84}\) and “utmost sacrifice” (Gerhardsson)\(^{85}\) and thus mediate God’s saving, which characterises Jesus’ entire life and ministry, not just his vicarious death as in 26:28.

---

Therefore, for Matthew, Jesus’ death is not “once and for all” atonement for sins, for that would give the impression that Jesus is “achieving” something in his death which he could not “achieve” during his public ministry. This calls into question, according to Nolland, “the relationship between the soteriology that is implicit in the rest of his ministry and that which is involved in his death”. It would also give the impression that, for Matthew, Jesus’ death was a “divine necessity”, which could relegate the rest of his life and ministry to insignificance. Such an understanding of the relationship between 1:21 and 26:28 matches Matthew’s description of Jesus’ saving activity in chapters 1–25.

Further, it would be problematic to consider Matthew as still theologically identifying himself as fitting within the confines of Judaism when assuming salvation as something achieved only by Jesus, for his Jewish contemporaries would have seen such a soteriological claim as effectively discrediting the Torah, the sufficiency of the temple, and the vicarious effect of the suffering of others. Moreover, one might expect more direct and explicit indications elsewhere in the Gospel narrative besides 26:28 that for Matthew salvation as forgiveness of sins was rooted in Jesus’ death.

From the above detailed discussion we may conclude that Matthew does not perceive “forgiveness of sins” which Jesus brings (1:21) as something “achieved” by his death. For Matthew, Jesus did not aim to “achieve” anything in his death on the cross that he could and/or did not “achieve” during his earthly ministry. Moreover, in Matthew, it is not only Jesus who brings forgiveness, but Jesus’ disciples and John the Baptist also bring forgiveness (3:1–2; 10:1, 5–8). Matthew even makes human forgiveness a necessary condition for effecting divine forgiveness (6:14–15; 18:21–36).

---

86 Nolland, Matthew, 1082.
And the Torah, the temple and cultic practices continue to be salvifically significant and sufficient (cf. 5:17–20; 8:4).

This raises a few important issues. What, then, does Jesus’ death accomplish? How does Matthew understand Jesus’ death in relation to his Jewish religious environment? Why does Matthew add “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 if in his life and ministry Jesus is able to forgive sins? Is there any soteriological continuity between what Jesus “achieved” in the rest of his ministry (cf. 11:4–5) and what he “achieved” on the cross, as in 26:28, and what he will “achieve” in the eschaton (7:21–24; 25:31–46)?

In Matthew, Jesus’ death is saving as it does bring “forgiveness of sins”, as in 26:28. For Matthew, Jesus’ death on the cross is as salvifically sufficient and efficacious as his saving through his earthly ministry as teacher, healer, and helper. This best explains why Matthew unfolds his understanding of “how Jesus saves” in close relation to various christological titles and salvific roles which he attributes to Jesus. The very close, if not inseparable, relationship between Christology (“who Jesus is”) and soteriology (“how Jesus saves”) plays a defining role in Matthean soteriology. Therefore, the “forgiveness of sins” which Jesus brings is rooted not in his death—but in his authorisation, authority, identity as the saviour, and his being/status as son of God; Jesus’ entire life and ministry is salvific. Thus Jesus’ various ways of saving his people from their sins must be equally saving in terms of sufficiency and efficacy.

But how then does Jesus’ death effect/bring about forgiveness of sins and salvation? In what sense is Jesus’ death saving? These questions have been variously understood and interpreted. Some Matthean scholars would suggest that the phrase “my blood of the covenant” (αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης) in 26:28 is a poignant allusion, as in Mark (14:24), to Exod 24:8, which narrates the ratifying of the covenant between God
and the people of Israel on Sinai.\textsuperscript{87} In the words of Repschinski, 26:28 is a “creative reimagining of Exod 24:1–11”.\textsuperscript{88} After God’s revelation on Mount Sinai and the gift of the Decalogue, Moses “threw” half of the blood of the sacrificial oxen against the altar, representative of God, and the other half upon the people (Exod 24:3–8) thereby sealing the covenant between God and the people (“See the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” [Exod 24:8]). According to Nolland, “the blood, shared between the altar and the people”, while “binding” God and the people of Israel together in a saving relationship, “aligns” the people with the holiness of God, given that blood can impart holiness (Lev 6:20).\textsuperscript{89} Davies and Allison, and Edwards note the presence of a first century Jewish soteriological tradition that interprets Moses’ act in Exod 24:6–8 as atoning sacrifice in Heb 9:19–22.\textsuperscript{90} Similarly, the Targums on Exod 24:8 such as Targums Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan also interpret Moses’ actions as atoning sacrifice.\textsuperscript{91}

And now Jesus, by defining the cup of wine as αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης (26:28), not only relates the “blood” to be “poured out” (ἐκχυννόμενον) by his death (αἷμα μου) to the sacrificial “blood of the covenant” which Moses “threw” against the altar, but also “re-establishes” the covenantal relationship between God and his people, as Runesson

\textsuperscript{87} Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 506; idem, Matthew and Empire, 88; idem, Storyteller, 193; Runesson, “Impact of Ethnic Identity,” 16; Heil, Death, 36; Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 94; Margaret Davies, Matthew, 182; Meier, Vision, 83–84; idem, Matthew, 318–19; Senior, Passion of Jesus, 66–67; Hagner, Matthew, 1:773. See also Scot McKnight, Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005), 287–89; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:475; Luz, Matthäus, 4:114; Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:402; Repschinski, “He Will Save His People,” 261, 263; Hare, Matthew, 298; France, Matthew, 994; Nolland, Matthew, 1079; J. Christopher Edwards, The Ransom Logion in Mark and Matthew: Its Reception and Its Significance for the Study of Gospels (WUNT 2/327; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012), 118–19; Eubank, Wages, 174; Gnilka, however, overlooks the significance of Heb 9:19–22. See Matthäus, 2:402.


\textsuperscript{88} Nolland, Matthew, 1079.

\textsuperscript{89} Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:475; Edwards, Ransom Logion, 118–19.

argues, and, thus, seals a covenant marked by the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, Davies and Allison argue that “there is a typological relationship between the act of Moses and the act of Jesus”, which is, possibly, “consistent with and reinforced by the Moses typology present elsewhere” in the Gospel. As Moses made a sacrifice for the people so that they might enter into and/or remain in the saving relationship with God, which began with the calling of Abraham, so does Jesus offer himself as a sacrifice (“new Isaac”?) with his own blood (αἷμα μου), that is, his life, and, effects “forgiveness of sins” (cf. 1:21).

To a great extent, Jesus’ interpretation of the cup in 26:28 reflects the influence of Exod 24:8. However, it still does not seem to account for a few issues. If we consider “blood” and “covenant”, the allusion to Exod 24:8 in 26:28 is very likely, but if we look at “poured out” and “many” it is not compelling. In Exod 24:8 Moses “took” the blood and then “threw” (LXX; κατεσκέδασεν) it at the altar, whereas Jesus is shedding/“pouring out” (ἐκχυννόμενον; 26:28) his own blood (αἷμα μου); Moses offers the blood of ox, whereas Jesus offers his own life/blood. More significantly, the allusion to Exod 24:8 does not seem to account for other elements of the story, such as the conspiracy of “the chief priests and the elders” to kill Jesus (26:3–4; cf. Mark 14:1–2;

93 According to Meier, “since Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9 at the triumphal entry (21:5), he may well intend the allusion to Exodus 24 to be coupled with an allusion to Zechariah 9” (LXX; “the blood of your covenant [with me]”): Vision, 184 n. 219. Similarly, idem, Matthew, 319; Nolland, Matthew, 1079; Heil, Death, 56 n. 16. Although it is likely because Zech 9:11 has “the blood of the covenant,” it is not compelling, as Allison rightly argues, since the Greek of 26:28 is closer to LXX Exod 24:8. Moreover, Exod 28:8 is connected with a meal (cf. 24:11), whereas Zech 9:11 is not. See Dale C. Allison, Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), 272 n. 208.
94 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:473.
95 According to Huizenga, Matthew presents Jesus as a “new Isaac” and his death as inaugurating a new divinely-ordained sacrifice just as the Akedah was seen as the basis of the temple and its sacrifices. See The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew (NovTSup 131; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 263–91.
96 “The life of all flesh is its blood”: Lev 17:14. Cf. 11QT 53:6: “For the blood is the life and you shall not eat the life with the flesh”.
97 McKnight, Jesus and His Death, 287.

Since the blood of the Passover lamb is especially important in the exodus (Exod 12:7, 13, 22–23) and Exod 24:8 is part of the exodus event in the broader sense, France, Gnilka, Hare, and Carter argue that the “blood” of Jesus in 26:28 recalls the “blood” of the Passover lamb.\(^98\) Just as the blood of the Passover lamb, which the Israelites in Egypt smeared on the doorposts and the lintel of the houses, had been a sign of their salvation (release from Egyptian captivity and oppression), so “now it will be Jesus’ blood [“my blood”] which is his people’s salvation”.\(^99\) This is possible, given the link between the Passover meal and the death of Jesus in Matthew’s version of the Passion Narrative (26:2), as in Mark. Moreover, there were Jewish traditions which treated also the Passover lamb as vicarious.

However, linking Jesus’ “blood” to the “blood” of the Passover lamb raises some issues. First and foremost, the three very crucial “words” which Matthew uses to explain the saving effect of Jesus’ death—“covenant”, “poured out”, and “forgiveness of sins”—are not present in the story of the “blood” of the Passover lamb. In addition, the “blood” of the Passover lamb signals saving from death, and freedom from slavery, whereas for Matthew the “blood” of Jesus brings “forgiveness of sins”. And “blood” is used in Matthew “metaphorically”, not literally,\(^100\) unlike in the story of the Passover, which otherwise would have been outrageous for his Jewish colleagues as there is an absolute prohibition on the consumption of any blood (Lev 17:11, 14; Deut 12:23)\(^101\) and, therefore, it would have been impossible for the Matthean community to refer to

\(^{98}\) France, Matthew, 993; Gnilka, Matthäus, 2:402; Hare, Matthew, 298; Carter, Matthew and Empire, 88.

\(^{99}\) France, Matthew, 993.

\(^{100}\) Hagner, Matthew, 2:773.

\(^{101}\) There is a clear rationale appended to the Law: blood if life (Lev 17:11, 14; Deut 12:23).
the “blood” in 26:28 literally. Moreover, it is not clear how the allusion to the “blood” of the Passover lamb relates to Jesus’ encounter with the Jewish leaders and their plot to kill Jesus.

It is also suggested that, as in Mark, Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ blood as “poured out for many” in 26:28 probably alludes to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 because “ἐκχυννόμενον matches ἀπόψεων from Isa 53:12”: “he poured out himself to death . . . he bore the sin of many”. Matthew uses the preposition περὶ in place of Mark’s ὑπὲρ, which, according to Gibbs, indicates “a noticeable tendency in Koine Greek to use certain prepositions interchangeably”. Matthew’s choice of the preposition περὶ—which recalls “sacrificial terminology in the LXX . . . [where] περὶ often occurs with ἀμαρτίας” (Gundry)—is identical with the word used in the LXX to translate Isa 53:4, 10 (cf. 8:17), where the Servant, whom the Targum identifies as the Messiah (Tg. Isa. 52:13), is depicted as saving his people from their sins (Isa 53:5–6, 8, 10, 11, 12).

However, the argument that 26:28 recalls Isaiah 53 suffers in many respects. As Luz and Luomanen rightly argue, it is doubtful that there is an allusion to Isaiah 53 in 26:28, as in 20:28, because of the literal variances in the wording. The two crucial terms in 26:28—“blood” and “covenant”—are absent in Isa 53:12. Further, in the view of Edwards, the proposed connection between ἐκχυννόμενον and ἀπέδωθη is problematic. Edwards points out that “the LXX translates ἀπέδωθη in Isa 53:12 with πορεδόθη”; “the LXX never translates ἀπέδωθη with ἐκχύνω”; “ἐκχύνω does not occur in the

102 Edwards, Ransom Logion, 118; Meier, Vision, 184 n. 220; idem, Matthew, 319; Hagner, Matthew, 1:773, Margaret Davies, Matthew, 182; Senior, Passion, 67–69; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 507; idem, Storyteller, 193; Nolland, Matthew, 1080; France, Matthew, 994; Harrington, Matthew, 368.
104 Gundry, Matthew, 528.
105 Luz, Matthäus, 4:115; Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 222 n. 9.
106 McKnight, Jesus and His Death, 290.
107 Edwards, Ransom Logion, 118.
Moreover, while the word πολλῶν, which appears in 26:28 and Isa 53:12, is not unique to Matthew (Mark 14:24), the phrase “for the forgiveness of sins” in 26:28 is Matthew’s distinctive addition, which is not referred to explicitly in Isaiah’s passage. On the other hand, Matthew uses Isaiah 53 more directly and explicitly in the context of Jesus’ healing (8:17; cf. Isa 53:4) than in the Passion Narrative. It is also improbable that Matthew uses περί and ὑπὲρ synonymously, as Gibbs suggests, given the extent of careful and thorough redactional changes Matthew makes in his narrative, as in 26:28.

One might also argue with Hagner, Luomanen, and Carter that the language “poured out” in 26:28 alludes to the cultic sacrifices that mediate God’s saving (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34). As the blood of the sacrificed animals was “poured out” by priests on the altar as a sin offering to atone for the sins of the people, so does the blood that will be “shed” or “poured out” by the death of Jesus represent a sacrifice for the atonement of sins “for” “many” people. Runesson is of the view that “since the temple had been rendered into a ‘den of robbers’ . . . atonement is impeded. The blood of Jesus, the righteous one par excellence, given voluntarily . . . now brings the forgiveness needed”. Runesson advances his position later: “Jesus must die to ‘save his people from their sins’ (1:21; 26:28), since the temple has been abandoned by God and will later be destroyed” [emphasis not original]; “Jesus has to die precisely because the Temple will be destroyed” [emphasis not original]; “Jesus offers himself in place of the (defiled) temple cult in order to bring the atonement which cannot otherwise be

108 Edwards, Ransom Logion, 118.
109 Hagner, Matthew, 1:773; Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 227; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 506.
112 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom,” 173.
achieved without the temple cult” [emphasis not original]. Repschinski goes even further: “in the death of Jesus, the temple loses the last pretensions to being a place of salvation . . . God himself has ended the temple’s efficaciousness. The temple is no longer needed” [emphasis not original]. He also says, “if the temple was the place where one went for reconciliation and forgiveness, now Jesus is the one offering God’s healing and forgiveness” [emphasis not original].

But interpreting Jesus’ death on the basis of 26:28 as replacing the temple as a source of forgiveness of sins is not convincing for various reasons. According to Matthew, Jesus’ leaving of the temple comes as a result of the failure of the Jewish leaders not the failure of the temple (24:1–2). For Matthew, the failure of the Jewish leaders does not take away the salvific role of the temple for the people of Israel, given that he does not base the saving function and sufficiency of the temple on the Jewish leaders and their “holiness”. Matthew does not confuse the failure of the Jewish leaders with the saving role of the temple. Jesus’ death as replacing the temple would not have been soteriologically consistent with Matthew’s rather consistently positive and affirmative stance towards the temple and the Torah (cf. 5:17–20).

It has also been suggested that Matthew’s addition of “for the forgiveness of sins” reflects the influence of Jer 31:31–34, where the forgiveness of sins is connected to

113 Runesson, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom,” 172.
114 Repschinski, “Re-imagining the Presence of God,” 48–49. Runesson also shares the same view: “after God has left his abode as a consequence of its defilement, caused by the sins of the leaders, the Temple can longer fulfill its purpose.” See, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom,” 173 [emphasis not original].
115 Repschinski, “Re-imagining the Presence of God,” 49. Runesson’s view is also of the same: “Since the Jewish law is still to be taught after Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 28:19–20), it would have to be assumed that the teaching on forgiveness, which was previously positioned in relation to the temple cult, is now centered on Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for the sins of the many”. See, “Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom,” 173 [emphasis not original].
116 Davies, Setting of the Sermon on the Mount, 59; Gundry, Matthew, 528; David Hill, The Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 339; Charette, Theme of Recompense, 78; Hagner, Matthew, 2:773; Hare, Matthew, 298; Heil, Death, 37; Meier, Vision, 184 n. 220; idem, Matthew, 320; Nolland, Matthew, 1081; France, Matthew, 994; Carter, Storyteller, 193; Michael P. Knowles, Jeremiah
the concept of the covenant. Many scholars think that 26:28 contains the idea of a “new covenant”. \(^{117}\) According to Luz, given the implicit “typological” allusion to Exod 24:8 in 26:28, it is clear that Jesus’ blood inaugurates a covenant, which is different from the Sinai covenant. \(^{118}\) Therefore, for Luz, even though the emphasis “new” is missing, Matthew still understands the “covenant” in 26:28 as the “new covenant” as in Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor 11:25. \(^{119}\) Jesus saves his people from their sins through his death, thereby inaugurating a new covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah.

The proposition that Jeremiah 31 influences 26:28 is however open to question. Though many MSS and patristic citations add the adjective “new” (καινὴς) to the “covenant” (A C D D\(^ b\) sc1141 tg W 074 \( f^{1.13}\) Maj latt sy sa bo Ir\(^ {ai} \)), this seems motivated by the liturgical tradition represented in Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor 11:25. \(^{120}\) As Davies and Allison rightly suggest, the literal agreements that 26:28 have with Jer 31:31–34 (“covenant” and “sins”) are “less obvious”. \(^{121}\) Moreover, “the notion of a new covenant was known apart from Jeremiah”, \(^{122}\) because the self-definition of the Qumran community as the people of the covenant was not based on Jer 31:31–34 (CD 6:19; 8:21; 19:33–34; 20:1–2; 1QpHab 2:3; 1QSb 3:25–26; 1Q34\(^ {bis}\) 2:5–6). \(^{123}\) More significantly, it cannot be accidental that the word (καινὴς) is absent in 26:28, given the

\(^{117}\) France, Matthew, 994; Meier, Matthew, 319; Luz, Matthäus, 4:114–15; Gundry, Matthew, 528; Margaret Davies, Matthew, 182; Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” 94–95; Hagner, Matthew, 2:773; Senior, Passion of Jesus, 67 n. 26; Nils Alstrup Dahl, “The Passion Narrative in Matthew,” in Interpretation of Matthew (ed. Graham N. Stanton; IRT 3; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 42–55, here 50–1; Huizenga, Zur Vergebung der Sünden, 36, 60; Mohrlang, Matthew and Paul, 17; Gnëka, Matthäus, 2:401; Charette, Theme of Recompense, 77–78, 82, 119; Heil, Death, 36; Hare, Matthew, 298.

\(^{118}\) Luz, Matthäus, 4:115.

\(^{119}\) Luz, Matthäus, 4:115.

\(^{120}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:473 n. 472; McKnight, Jesus and His Death, 287.

\(^{121}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:473.

\(^{122}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:473. See also Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 224.

\(^{123}\) Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:473; Nolland, Matthew, 1080 n. 128. See also Christian Wolff, Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum (TU 118; Berlin: Akademie, 1976), 116–47.
amount and extent of redactional reworking Matthew does in 26:28, unless he is simply reproducing his tradition and seeing no need to change it.

Further, the link between Jeremiah 31 and Matt 26:28 is limited to presence of the concepts such as “covenant” and “forgiveness” in both passages. A covenant that is different from the Sinai covenant is not a typically Matthean theological notion (cf. 5:17) as it does not fit into his understanding of salvation in continuity. Moreover, as McKnight rightly observes, “the concept of a future covenant/new covenant in Judaism [is] connected to sacrifice and blood” (cf. Bar 2:27–35; CD 4:19:21; 8:21; 20:12–13; Jub. 1:15-25). Therefore, the “self-referential meaning” which Jesus supplies to the cup—“my blood of the covenant”—does not mean a “new” or “another covenant”.

For some scholars—Troxel, Carroll and Green, Gerhardsson, Crowe, Senior, Eubank, and Kingsbury—the basis for seeing Jesus’ death as saving in 26:28 is his “programmatic obedience” to God’s will. According to Troxel, for Matthew, Jesus’ death brings salvation “insofar as it confirms Jesus’ obedience”. Matthew portrays Jesus’ death as an act of exceptionally conscious obedience to God’s will (26:42: “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done”). Eubank goes a little further, “it is Jesus’ obedient giving of his life that earns the ransom-price [forgiveness of sins] rather than the mere fact of his death per se”.

This position is very promising as it is soteriologically consistent not only with Jesus’ other means of saving his people in Matthew 1–25, but also with Matthew’s authorisation Christology. It also explains Jesus’ teaching of God’s will as outlined in

---

126 McKnight, *Jesus and His Death*, 287.
130 Eubank, *Wages*, 162.
the Torah, his polemical encounter with the Jewish leaders over God’s will and the true sense of the Torah, Jesus’ last judgement based on doing God’s will as interpreted by him, the conspiracy of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus, 26:29, and Jesus’ struggle in Gethsemane. However, such a position does not seem to take note of the critical words in 26:28 (“blood”, “poured out”, and “forgiveness of sins”), which Matthew uses to explain the saving nature of Jesus’ death, and the violence involved.

Scholars like Loader and Nolland interpret Jesus’ saving death in terms of vicarious suffering, which would have been possibly acceptable and tolerable for Matthew’s Jewish contemporaries, who could also consider the vicarious suffering of the righteous as mediating God’s saving. Though the “blood” being “poured out” for “the forgiveness of sins” is probably sacrificial imagery (26:28), it can be assumed as referring to intense vicarious suffering because, as Nolland points out, in Jewish traditions the “reference to ‘my blood’ [cf. 26:28] can also be used metaphorically of suffering that falls short of death” (Job 16:18, “Earth, do not cover my blood”). In his willingness to accept sufferings as the consequence of the intrigue and violence of the Jewish leaders and the Romans, and their disobedience to God’s will, Matthew has Jesus declare God’s ever-continuing saving plans for his people in history, despite the physical destruction of the temple and the Jewish leaders’ rejection and killing of God’s messengers in the past (23:34–37).

This makes Jesus’ death “saving” as it not only announces God’s continuing plans to bring forgiveness to his people (cf. 1:21; 26:28), but also grants “forgiveness of sins” itself (26:28). According to Jewish theological and soteriological traditions, it is not human blood that seals the covenant between God and his people, but the blood from

---

131 Loader, Law, 249; idem, “Matthew 1–4,” 6; Nolland, Matthew, 1078–84.
132 Nolland, Matthew, 1078. According to Nolland, “my blood” in Job 16:18 refers to Job’s intense suffering: Matthew, 1078 n. 120.
the sacrifice of animals (Exod 24:8). However, in Nolland’s view, the idea of “representative and substitutionary bearing of the punishment” for sins on behalf of others is not unparalleled in Judaism (Isa 52:13–53:12; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:21–22). According to 4 Macc 6:29 (“make my blood their purification”), like the sacrifices of atonement in the temple ritual (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34), “representative and substitutionary suffering” of the righteous also effect purification of people and thus mediate God’s saving. Nolland also shows close resemblance between the LXX of Exod 30:10 (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ καθάρσιμου τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν) and 4 Macc 6:29 (καθάρσιον αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ ἐμὸν αἷμα). In Lev 6:20 we see that “blood” can impart holiness. It is also relevant to take note of the sacrificial terminology of Exod 32:30, where Moses’ willingness to offer his own life is described as atoning sacrifice (“perhaps I can make atonement for your sin”). Isa 53:10 (“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin”) understands giving up of one’s life in vicarious suffering as salvific. Therefore, the saving nature of Jesus’ vicarious suffering makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers.

All these theological traditions seem to indicate that Matthew understands the saving nature of Jesus’ death in terms of vicarious suffering. This sits well with first century Jewish understanding of salvation. In the Old Testament traditions, according to Nolland, if the word “blood” appears with “possessive pronoun” or “first person form” the reference is most likely to “violent death” (1 Sam 26:20; Ps 30:9; 4 Macc 6:29).

133 Nolland, Matthew, 1080.
134 Nolland, Matthew, 1080.
135 Nolland, Matthew, 1080.
136 Nolland, Matthew, 1080.
137 Nolland, Matthew, 1081.
138 Nolland, Matthew, 1078. But there is no emphasis on the violence when it is used in the context of animal sacrifice (Exod 29:20; Lev 1:11). It is also used to refer to menstrual blood (Lev 20:18) and the blood associated with child birth (Lev 12:7; Exod 16:6, 9, 22). See Nolland, Matthew, 1078 n. 115.
Infrequently, “my blood” refers to “the blood one has shed” (Judg 9:24; Ezek 22:13). According to Luz and Gurtner, Matthew seems to use “blood” in 23:30 and 23:35, which evoke the violent death (“blood”) of God’s prophets and messengers in the past, “in the Old Testament sense of containing life”. Likewise, in 27:6 “blood” is used for the murder of Jesus (“blood money”, 27:6; “field of blood”, 27:8). In light of the usage of “blood” in Jewish theological traditions and also of 23:30 and 23:35 which speak of the shedding of the blood, “pouring out” and “my blood” in 26:28 clearly refer to Jesus’ violent death and murder.

The “blood” of a martyr as perhaps salvific would not have been unheard of for Matthew’s Jewish audience. The violent death (murder) of the Maccabean martyrs — those who were martyred by Antiochus Epiphanes IV during the Hellenisation crisis of 175 to 164 B.C.E., including the aged priest Eleazar, the seven brothers and finally the mother of seven (4 Macc 1:7–12; 5:1–18:5; cf. 2 Macc 6:18–7:42) — caused God to intervene mercifully and save the people of Israel from the Seleucid dynasty (2 Macc 7:37–38). The “blood” of the martyrs was the means of purifying Israel’s sin and taking Israel’s punishment (4 Macc 1:11; 6:27–29; 17:21–22). The language of 4 Macc 6:28–29 (“Be merciful to your people and let our punishment be a satisfaction on their behalf. Make my blood their purification and take my life to ransom theirs”) and 17:22 (“Through the blood of these righteous ones and through the propitiation of their death the divine providence rescued Israel”) indicate that the “blood” of the devout martyrs is salvific. This means that Jesus’ violent death (murder) might also have been understood

139 Nolland, Matthew, 1078 n. 115.
140 Luz, Matthäus, 4:114; Gurtner, Torn Veil, 135.
141 Gurtner, Torn Veil, 135.
142 According to Sammy Keel Williams, “the concept of Jesus’ death as saving event had as its creative source a Greek-Hellenistic tradition of effective, beneficial human death for others, most likely as this tradition was modified and mediated by IV Maccabees.” See “Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations,” HTR 65 (1972): 591–605, here 605. See also Sammy Keel Williams, Jesus’ Death As Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept (HDR 2; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975).
as salvific. In other words, it is not incoherent for Matthew to claim both that Jesus’ death effected forgiveness of sins and to depict the temple, John the Baptist, and not least the earthly Jesus, as also bringing forgiveness of sins.

The understanding of Jesus’ death in Matthew as a combination of Jewish belief in the vicarious effect of violent suffering and death and elements drawn from Exodus and Isaianic traditions is compelling, for it sets the saving death of Jesus in continuity not only with Jesus’ other means of saving his people as delineated in Matthew 1–25, but also with God’s saving initiatives in the past through his prophets and messengers. This means there is a soteriological continuity not only between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving dealings in the past, but also between Jesus’ life and death in terms of sufficiency and efficacy.

Moreover, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving through his death was not an alternative plan after the failure of his initial plan to save his people through teaching, healing and helping; what he “achieved” in his life and public ministry, he continued even in his death. Therefore, for Matthew, Jesus’ death is as salvific as his life and ministry, given the close relationship between Christology and soteriology and how Matthew unpacks Jesus’ saving in relation to the various titles and saving roles which he ascribes to Jesus. Matthew depicts the saving nature of Jesus’ death in terms of the sacrificial imageries such as “blood” and “poured out” (26:28), which, however, does not entail replacing the temple or the Torah or cultic practices. This makes sense for Matthew’s hearers because such a theological notion is not without parallel in Jewish soteriological traditions.

Further, Matthew does not understand Jesus’ “violent death”/“vicarious suffering” as an isolated soteriological event in the history of God’s dealings with his people,

143 However, as Freyne points out, with the exception of Rev 1:5 (ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός), the term “martyr” is not used of Jesus himself within the New Testament. See, Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 169–70.

144 Nolland, Matthew, 1082.
which began with the calling of Abraham, but in relation to the dialectical relationship between God’s ever-continuing saving initiatives in history and the response of his people and their leaders. Matthew theologically positions Jesus’ vicarious/violent death in continuity with all the messengers of God who were murdered/killed by the Jewish leaders including John the Baptist. Matthew achieves this by linking 26:28 (“my blood” and “pouring out”) to the shedding of blood by the divine messengers in the past like John the Baptist, the prophets, sages and wise men (23:30–31, 34–35); Jesus’ violent death (murder) is soteriologically linked not only to the murder of the prophets, but also to his disciples in the future. As Luz and Knowles rightly suggest, Matthew encourages his readers to historically and soteriologically connect Jesus’ vicarious/violent death with the murder (shedding of the blood) of God’s prophets and messengers in the history of Israel (23:34–35).

Despite the Jewish leaders’ rejection and murder of the prophets and messengers, God continues his plans to be in a saving relationship with his people but through new messengers in history; the death of the prophets resulted in the coming of John; Jesus continued John’s mission; now Jesus’ disciples will continue Jesus’ mission. It is not “different” stages, one replacing the other, as the salvation historians argue, but a continuation of God’s same salvific plan, which began with the calling of Abraham (1:2), with the same sufficiency and efficacy. Thus Matthew appears to indicate that God will continue to initiate his same saving plans, notwithstanding the Jewish leaders’ rejection and killing of Jesus. In this sense Jesus’ violent/vicarious death is saving.

The saving nature of Jesus’ violent death or vicarious suffering explains the importance of 26:29. In 26:29, not only does Jesus reinforce the calling and authorisation of his disciples (10:1, 5–8), but also invites them to share his suffering and

---

145 Luz, Matthäus, 4:115; Knowles, Jeremiah, 7–8.
death (cf. 10:17–18; 23:34). This is not merely a “sacramental participation in the suffering and death of Jesus”, as Heil suggests,\textsuperscript{146} or an invitation to enjoy the fruits/benefits of a once and for all finished saving act realised in Jesus’ death, but an invitation to continue the same divine saving plans (1:21) being “achieved” through Jesus’ life and death, to the extent of giving one’s life (20:28), till the eschaton (28:18–20). What Jesus “achieved” in his life and death does not exhaust God’s ever-continuing initiatives to be in a saving relationship with his people or have them come to a definite conclusion in Jesus’ life and death. This indicates that the mission of the disciples and even their likely suffering and death (cf. 10:17–18; 23:34) are continuous with Jesus’ life and death, which would make sense for Matthew’s hearers, who faced severe ordeals from the Jewish leaders. In this sense, Matthew’s understanding of the salvific nature of Jesus’ vicarious/violent death, as in 26:28, would possibly have been the contextual and theological response of his community to the existential and soteriological questions of the post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment, to which they seem to, or claim to, belong.

But does this mean Jesus’ vicarious suffering and his violent death are salvifically the same as the suffering and violent death of John the Baptist, the prophets and Jesus’ disciples? There is commonality, but clearly Matthew singles out Jesus’ death as unique. For as the “Son of God”, Jesus’ being (status) is ontologically continuous with God’s saving being. Jesus is ontologically superior to all the divine agents both in the past and in the future. Therefore, as Luz rightly argues, in contrast to the martyrs in the past, the reach of Jesus’ death (murder) is much wider because he saves “many” through his suffering and death, given that the weight of 26:28 lies on “many”.\textsuperscript{147} This is not to imply that all that God did in the past to be in a saving relationship with his people—

\textsuperscript{146} Heil, \textit{Death}, 36.
\textsuperscript{147} Luz, \textit{Matthäus}, 4:115.
which includes the Torah, the Temple, cultic laws, and even Jesus’ life and ministry—have been replaced, as though they were ineffective, mediating an inferior salvation.

The apocalyptic signs at Jesus’ death such as earthquake and resurrection of people vindicate the status of Jesus as son of God, which we shall discuss in more detail in the next section. But this does not mean Jesus effects a “new” kind of salvation in his death. At the time of his baptism, before the public ministry, the heavens attested Jesus’ status as “Son of God” (3:17). And, on the mount of transfiguration, Jesus’ divine sonship was confirmed (17:5). Later, the centurion, seeing the apocalyptic signs at Jesus’ death, confessed Jesus as son of God (27:54). Jesus lived, ministered, and died as “Son of God”. This shows the close link between Christology and soteriology in Matthew; Jesus’ life and death are soteriologically continuous.

In conclusion: for Matthew, Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21) through his death, as in 26:28, as efficaciously as he saved his people through his life and ministry, given the close connection between Christology and soteriology. With varying degrees of emphasis, scholars have attempted to explain the saving nature of Jesus’ death in Matthew in terms of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, the concept of a new covenant in Jeremiah (31:31–34), and the ratification of the covenant on Mount Sinai and Moses’ offering of the blood of the animal at the altar (Exod 24:6–8). Some or all of the Old Testament allusions may well have influenced the soteriological tradition which has come through Mark to Matthew; making any specific allusion to them by Matthew is, however, difficult to identify. Matthew would have shared the affirmation, “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3).

Jesus’ saving death has also been understood in terms of vicarious suffering, conscious obedience, and violent death by scholars. For Matthew, Jesus’ vicarious/violent death is not an isolated saving event, but is very much in continuity
with the murder of the prophets and messengers in the past (23:34–37). This makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers because they are familiar with how the vicarious suffering of the faithful (Isaiah 53), the blood of a devout martyr (Isa 52:13–53:12; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:21–22), and obedience to God’s will unto death can effect God’s saving. Moreover, this accounts for Jesus’ encounter with the Jewish leaders, their plot to kill Jesus, Judas’ betrayal, and Jesus’ struggle in Gethsemane. Therefore, it is possible that Matthew would have understood the saving nature of Jesus’ death in terms of vicarious suffering and violent death (murder).

We have seen that Matthew would probably have understood the salvific meaning and nature of Jesus’ death, as in 26:28, in different ways: obedient sonship, vicarious suffering, and violent death (murder). Though less plausible, Old Testament allusions to Isaiah 53, Jer 31:31–34, and Exod 24:8 also would have been in Matthew’s mind when he composed 26:28. Does this mean Matthew has not developed a “coherent” soteriology, as Luomanen presumes? Or does it mean that Matthew is not “concerned to speculate” how Jesus’ saving death in 26:28 is explained, as Boring argues? It is more likely that Matthew would have been able to embrace a number of these traditions, if not all, and so put all these diverse soteriological traditions, scriptural allusions, and multiple voices/understandings in respect of Jesus’ saving death, side by side. Perhaps, as Broadhead argues, this reflects an “ongoing debate among various living [soteriological] traditions within the Matthean community”. These traditions however are not necessarily “competing” or “contradictory” in nature. For Matthew, there is no inherent contradiction between various ways of understanding Jesus’ saving death insofar as there is no contradiction between Jesus’ many ways of saving his people.

---

148 Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 222.
And for Jews it was possible to affirm everything about God being saving—forgiveness of sins, the temple rites, and occasional vicarious deaths—without sensing a contradiction among them or the need to treat them as alternatives. It was possible then for Matthew to do the same—even though it could create the potential for one to press the logic and so make death for sins so central that salvation offered forgiveness of sins could not be contemplated during Jesus’ life. The latter is clearly not Matthew’s position. Matthew both knew and (by his addition) used and interpreted the early ‘Christian’ traditions about Jesus’ death as saving in this direction but retained the rest.

6.3 WHAT ELSE IS SALVIFIC IN MATTHEW’S DEPICTION OF JESUS’ PASSION AND RESURRECTION?

For Matthew, Jesus’ death is saving, as in 26:28—as salvifically sufficient and efficacious as his life and ministry. Matthew achieves this without making Jesus’ saving death central to his understanding of soteriology or turning it into “the major [salvific] role definition of Jesus as might fit Paul”.¹⁵¹ This means there is an overt sense of continuity between Jesus’ life and death. Matthew maintains the same theological pattern and framework of continuity in the rest of his depiction of Jesus’ passion and resurrection.

In his description of the mockery under the cross (27:38–44; cf. Mark 15:27–32), Matthew reinforces the saving nature of Jesus’ life and ministry. Like the bystanders (27:39–40), who most probably represent the “ordinary Jews”, as France suggests,¹⁵² the Jewish leaders (27:41) also mock Jesus (27:42), possibly demanding a sign (cf. 12:38; 16:1): “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him” (27:42). The use of the verb

---

¹⁵² France, Matthew, 1070.
σῶσαι in 27:42 (ἔσωσεν and σῶσαι) suggests a possible link to 1:21 (σῶσει). The first clause (“He saved others”) probably refers not just to Jesus’ saving of his people from diseases (cf. 9:21–22), as Hagner and Hare assume, but also saving from physical danger (8:25; 14:30). But what about the second clause—“he cannot save himself”? How does it function in 27:42 in relation to 1:21 and 26:28?

According to Davies and Allison, for Matthew, Jesus “cannot save himself because he must, through his death, save others” (27:42). But this interpretation is doubtful for two reasons: it does not match the first clause (“he saved others”), which means Jesus “saved others” through his healings and rescuing them from physical danger; and it gives the impression that for Matthew Jesus’ death is a “divine necessity” (δεῖ; 16:21), as Gibbs argues. Matthew does not understand Jesus’ death on the cross as a “must” because he does not conceive salvation as something achieved only by Jesus’ death. Moreover, interpreting Jesus’ death as a “must” or limiting Jesus’ saving to his death would not account for 11:4–5 and the way Matthew links Jesus’ violent death to the murder of the prophets like John (14:1–2; 23:34–37; cf. 10:17–18), who also could not save themselves from their death. What then is salvific in “he cannot save himself” (27:42)?

Matthew does not directly identify or equate Jesus with God (cf. 1:23), but as one in whom God is actively and salvifically present through his “deeds” (cf. 11:4-5). For Matthew, it is God who saves (cf. Deut 33:29; Judg 2:16; Ps 3:7; 6:4; 69:1, 14, 35). And Jesus, the Son of God (cf. 3:17; 17:5), has been “authorised” (28:28–20; 9:6) to save his people (1:21). Therefore, “he cannot save himself” (27:42) shows that it is not

---

Jesus who saves (1:23), but God himself through his “words” and “deeds” (11:4–5). If so, God continues to be salvifically present in Jesus’ death (cf. 27:51–54) as God was present in Jesus’ life and ministry. This is saving.

At a literal level it clearly refers to Jesus’ plight of being nailed to a cross from which he cannot save himself. But at another level, for Matthew, saving means “giving one’s life for others” (cf. 20:28; 26:28), and not saving oneself. This accords with Jesus’ understanding of what it means to be saving—“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (16:25); for Matthew, the inability to save oneself in the course of dying for others is indeed saving. This makes sense for Matthew’s hearers, in the post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment, facing persecution from the Jewish leaders, as Jesus did (10:17–18), and waiting for God’s vindication. In this sense, Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ death, as in 27:42, is salvific (cf. 26:28).

Likewise, Matthew’s description of the astounding theophanic/apocalyptic events that immediately follow Jesus’ death also indicates the saving nature of Jesus’ death as it vindicates his vicarious suffering, violent death, and his status as the Son of God (27:51–54; Mark 15:38–39). Following Mark (15:33), Matthew had already invested the death of Jesus with apocalyptic tones by mentioning the darkness at noon (27:45). Now he extends it not only by including Mark 15:38, which evokes the onset of the great tribulation, but also by expanding it with events and wonders which “God immediately works in response to Jesus’ death” (27:51b–53).

In the view of Meier, 27:51–54 describes apocalyptic “events”, not apocalyptic “signs”, because the latter “does not do justice to what Matthew calls in verse 54

---

159 According to Allison, 27:51–54 is a “purely metaphorical narrative”—a “theological fiction”—because “although the passage begins as though it is narrating events that took place when Jesus died, we soon enough run into the phrase ‘after his resurrection’” (Constructing Jesus, 452).
He also notes, “in the case of the raising of the dead we are dealing not with apocalyptic signs but apocalyptic events, end-time events retrojected into the historical event of Jesus’ death” [emphasis original]. The apocalyptic events following Jesus’ death, however, do not entail the beginning of the “next stage” of the history of God’s salvific dealings with his people, replacing all that God did in the past to be in a saving relationship with his people, as some salvation historians contend. Matthew does not understand salvation offered through forgiveness as something achieved only by Jesus’ death so that it replaces all other means of saving such as the temple and the cultic sacrifices. [We shall return to it later in our discussion on the splitting of the temple curtain]. Nor do the apocalyptic events indicate the beginning of the eschaton in history because that was happening already in Jesus’ ministry (12:28).

Instead, they indicate a major eschatological turning point because an important element of what is to happen in the eschaton begins with Jesus’ death. The raising of the dead saints happening within history with Jesus’ death is the beginning of eschatological resurrection which many Jews have expected for the end-time (Isa 26:19; Ezek 37:11–14; Dan 7:18, 22; 12:1–13; Zech 14:5; 1 En. 51:4–5). According to Nolland, “Matthew seems to be saying that with the death of Jesus history has begun its final rush to the eschatological denouement”; “that which happens now in miniature” at Jesus’ death is a “proleptic manifestation” “of what is due to happen on a grand, even a cosmic scale”. To some degree the exorcism at Gadara (8:28–34) functions also as a foretaste of the apocalypse. And this makes Jesus’ death an eschatological event of
enormous significance. It warrants such an apocalyptic treatment and colouring of Jesus’ death in contrast to other events in his life.

A spectacular chain of astounding events occurs one after the other: the rending of the veil; an earthquake; the splitting of rocks; and the resurrections in the holy city (27:51–53). But in what sense do they relate to the salvific nature of Jesus’ death? One might argue that the tearing of the veil from top to bottom (27:51a; cf. Mark 15:38) is an apocalyptic assertion and attestation of the salvation which Jesus effects through his atoning death. Since it followed a Gentile confession of faith in Jesus, one would surmise that the saving death of Jesus puts an end to the saving role and significance of the sacrificial cult of the temple, “the temple is no longer needed”, “God himself has ended the temple’s efficaciousness”, given that the passive ἐσχίσθη (the veil “was torn” open) suggests “an act of God”. Jesus is the one in whom God’s saving presence is encountered. But such a soteriological position is not plausible, given Matthew’s positive and affirmative attitude towards the temple.

For Matthew, according to Davies and Allison, the splitting of the curtain (27:51a) “foreshadows or symbolizes the destruction of the temple” by Rome in 70 C.E. as “the context refers to Jesus’ prophecy of [its] destruction” (27:40).

For Davies and Allison, there are more reasons for such an inference: the other signs surrounding the cross have an eschatological setting; and “there are Jewish texts which announce that

---


167 Luz, Matthäus, 4:363.

168 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:630.

169 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:631.
the old temple will not continue in the new age” (*IEn.* 90:28–29; *Jub.* 1:27; *Tob* 13:16–18; 14:5; 11QTemple 29:8–10). However, as Loader correctly notes, though Matthew retains Markan temple mockery (27:40), the rending of the curtain is “no longer associated, as in Mark, with disparagement of the [temple] cult”. In addition, as Loader correctly notes, “whereas in Mark the rending of the curtain immediately precedes” the centurion’s confession of Jesus’ divine identity, in Matthew the tearing is “just the beginning”. More significantly, as Loader rightly argues, though, as in Mark, Matthew understands the rending of the veil as indicating God’s judgement, Matthew “subordinates” it “to a more significant theme: the presentation in apocalyptic colouring of Jesus as the Son of God” (27:54).

Matt 27:51b, not in Mark, is a Matthean insertion. Earthquakes were usually linked to theophanic scenes (Exod 19:8; Judg 5:4; 1 Kgs 19:11–12; 2 Sam 22:8; Ps 18:6–8; 77:19; *T. Levi* 3:9). That will also be the case at the end of time (*4 Ezra* 6:13–16; 9:3; 2 Bar. 27:7; 70:8; *1 En.* 1:3–9, 102:2; Zech 14:4–5; Joel 2:10; 4:16; Isa 5:25; 24:18–23; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5). And in Jewish traditions the earthquakes often accompany God’s coming in judgement (Isa 29:6; Ezek 38:19). However, according to Gurtner, Davies and Allison, and Hagner, Matthew does not seem to consider earthquake as indicating God’s judgement because of the resurrection of the dead after Jesus’ death and the use of earthquake at Jesus’ resurrection (28:2). Moreover,

---

Matthew’s use of the passive means God is the agent (ἐσείσθη).\textsuperscript{178} Therefore, in 27:51b, the earthquake perhaps shows God’s salvific response to Jesus’ suffering and death, which reaches a climax at the resurrection of the dead. In this sense the earthquake indicates the saving nature of the death of Jesus.

The earthquake in 27:51b sets off a chain reaction: the earthquake splits the rocks, the splitting of the rocks opening the tombs, and the opening of the tombs allows the dead to come forth. The breaking of the rocks (27:51b) points to the manifestation of God’s power (Nah 1:5–6; 1 Kgs 19:11; Ps 114:7; Isa 48:21).\textsuperscript{179} While a number of Jewish texts provide the background for the splitting of the rocks (1 Kgs 19:11–12; Isa 2:19; 48:21; Nah 1:5–6; Zech 14:4; \textit{T. Levi} 4:1), according to Allison and McKnight, despite the parallel between Ezek 37:12 and 27:52, Zech 14:4–5 is the most fitting background for the resurrection of the dead (27:52).\textsuperscript{180} In the view of Allison, the north panel of the third century c.e. synagogue at Dura Europos, a Syrian town on the Euphrates, offers important historical evidence that, in addition to Ezekiel 37, Zech 14:4–5 was also interpreted as an account of resurrection within ancient Judaism.\textsuperscript{181} In the section of the panel, where the resurrection of the dead is depicted, the “revived dead” emerge from a split Mount of Olives, which indicates the close resemblance between the panel at Dura and Zech 14:4–5.\textsuperscript{182} Allison provides more evidences to support his argument: \textit{Tg. Zech} 14:3–5; \textit{Tg. Song} 8:5; \textit{Song Rab} 4:11.1; \textit{Ruth Rab}. 2;

\textsuperscript{178} Luz, \textit{Matthäus}, 4:363.
\textsuperscript{179} Gurtner, \textit{Torn Veil}, 146–47; Nolland, \textit{Matthew}, 1213.
\textsuperscript{181} Allison, \textit{End of the Ages}, 43.
\textsuperscript{182} Allison, \textit{End of the Ages}, 43.
Eccles. Rab. 1.11.1. Therefore, for Allison, Zech 14:4–5 is the most appropriate background for 27:52.

This is significant because, according to Allison, the close resemblance between 27:52 and Zech 14:4–5 reflect “the early church’s conviction that the end of Jesus could be depicted as though it marked the eschatological turning point”. For Matthew, God—who promised salvation for his people in the past, as in Zechariah 14—is actively present in Jesus’ death (cf. 1:23); God’s presence is saving. This entails continuity not only between Jesus’ life and death, but also between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past.

But in what sense does the resurrection of the dead in 27:52–53 indicate the saving nature of Jesus’ death? Scholars have given various explanations: there is a “causal relationship” between Jesus’ death and the resurrection of the dead (Gurtner, Weren, and Meier); the resurrection of the dead signals the end of the old aeon and breaking-in of the new age as Jesus’ death is atoning (Meier); “the death of Jesus is life-giving” (Meier, and Hill); Jesus is “the first fruits of the dead” (Meier), the resurrection of the holy ones shows that “Jesus has earned their price of release” (Eubank).

But these suggestions raise some issues. If it is Jesus’ saving death that causes the resurrection of the “holy ones”, then does that mean Matthew includes the dead ones

---

183 Allison, End of the Ages, 43.
184 Allison, End of the Ages, 46.
186 Meier, Matthew, 352.
188 Meier, Matthew, 352.
189 Eubank, Wages, 192. He argues that “Jesus gives his life to earn the ransom-price for the many, so it is after his death that Matthew portrays the holy ones bursting forth from their graves.” (192).
also in the primary target of Jesus’ saving mission—“his people” (1:21)? Additionally, it is unlikely that Matthew depicts Jesus as the “first fruit of the dead” (1 Cor 15:20). Chronologically, Jesus’ resurrection occurs only after the resurrection of the holy ones, which, therefore, means “after Jesus’ resurrection” in 27:53b would have been added at a later stage. Matthew’s use of the divine passive (ἠγέρθη) also shows that it is not Jesus’ death, but God’s saving response to Jesus’ violent death that caused resurrection of the holy ones.

Therefore, given that Matthew connects Jesus’ violent death to the murder of God’s prophets in the past (cf. 26:28; 23:34–37), it is more probable that the appearance of the “holy ones” means God’s saving response to Jesus’ death and all the prophets and righteous ones who have been killed. For Matthew, God, by first raising the holy ones, who represent “the Jewish past” (Davies and Allison), and later raising Jesus, soteriologically links what he had “achieved” through his messengers in the past and what he “achieves” through Jesus’ life and death in the present. In short, Jesus’ death—and his resurrection, which is to follow—stands in soteriological continuity with the resurrection of the Jewish past, as represented by the “holy ones”.

Seeing the supernatural events, “the centurion and those with him” make their response: “Truly this man was God’s Son” (27:54). Most interpreters argue that Matthew understands 27:54 as the “proleptic realisation” of 28:18–20 because Matthew has the disciples make the same confession in 14:33; “the vast Gentile multitudes” becoming Jesus’ disciples is anticipated in 27:54. In the view of Konradt, the Son of David who brings salvation through healing, helping and forgiveness to Israel is

---

190 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:634.
191 Meier, Matthew, 352; idem, Vision, 205; idem, Law and History, 34; Heil, Death, 86–87; Hagner, Matthew, 2:852–53; Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 537–38; idem, Storyteller, 194; Hare, Matthew, 324; Gundry, Matthew, 577; Luz; Matthäus, 4:368; France, Matthew, 1083–84; Boris Repschinski, “Matthew and Luke,” in Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries (ed. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski; LNTS 333; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 52; McKnight, Death, 361.
revealed through his death and resurrection as the Son of God who will bring salvation to the whole world.\textsuperscript{192} According to Meier, “Jesus’ death-resurrection means for Matthew the passing of the \textit{heilsgeschichtliche} restrictions of Jesus’ public ministry, both as to territory and people”, and the “breaking-in” of the new era, which he calls \textit{die Wende der Zeit}.\textsuperscript{193}

Sim, contrary to most traditional readings, has convincingly contended that 27:54 is not meant to be interpreted as an instance of Matthew’s positive characterisation of the Gentiles as it does not entail a conversion experience of the centurion, as many would presume.\textsuperscript{194} This Matthew achieves by altering his Markan source (Mark 15:39). The added phrase, “and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus” (27:54), recalls 27:36 (“then they sat down there and kept watch over him”) and drops Mark’s “the centurion, who stood facing him” (Mark 15:39).\textsuperscript{195} This means, for Matthew, unlike in Mark 15:39, it is not just the centurion alone, but all “those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus”, which includes the Jews and the soldiers (cf. 27:36), also who make the confession (27:54).\textsuperscript{196}

Further, as Sim correctly points out, the soldiers in 27:27–37 are not depicted in a positive light.\textsuperscript{197} He notes, “Matthew, by contrast with his Marcan source, explicitly identifies the brutal soldiers charged with executing Jesus with the ones who declare that Jesus is the Son of God”.\textsuperscript{198} Moreover, as Runesson rightly observes, in Matthew,

\textsuperscript{197} Sim, \textit{Apocalyptic Eschatology}, 200; idem, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers,” 405.  
\textsuperscript{198} Sim, \textit{Christian Judaism}, 225; idem, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers,” 404–5; see also, idem, Sim, \textit{Apocalyptic Eschatology}, 200. According to Sim, “Mark gives no indication that he [the centurion] belonged to the group of soldiers charged with the execution of Jesus. The Centurion is thus depicted
the confession of the centurion and all “those with him” was out of “fear” (ἐφοβήθησαν) as a result of the astounding events that happened immediately after Jesus’ death. 199 As Sim fittingly notes, Matthew’s centurion and those who were with him fear the judgement of God as they realise what they have done; the centurion’s “terrified acknowledgement of Jesus as Son of God bespeaks their sense of guilt and concession of defeat in the face of the divine, and foreshadows the attitude of the wicked on the day of judgment” [emphasis not original]. 200 On the other hand, Luke not only links the centurion’s statement to his change of attitude towards Jesus (“he praised God”), but also understands it as his recognition of Jesus as a righteous man (innocent) in 23:47. Therefore, it is not certain whether 27:54 is “intended to be taken” as a confession of faith, or as an expression of the fear of judgement.

There is more to 27:51–54. Matthew’s use of the “holy ones”, representing the “devout Israelites”, 201 and “holy city”, representing Jerusalem (which is not a negative representation as Carter presumes), 202 does not seem to suggest a passing away of the “limitations of territory and people that had clung to his [Jesus’] public ministry”, as Meier and other salvation historians fervently contend. 203 Rather, the references to the resurrection of the pious Jews, and Jerusalem as the “holy city”, not only link the saving nature of Jesus’ death as in 27:51–54 to 1:21 and 15:24, but also reinforce the soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving and God’s saving in the past. However, after his exaltation, Jesus will expand the ethnic and geographical scope of his mission

---

199 Runesson, “Judging Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew,” 144. For Meier, the “fear” of the centurion and all “those with him was a “holy fear”: Matthew, 352. See also Sim, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers,” 408–11, 422. Sim notes: “we must not forget the role which the fear of the soldiers plays in prompting them to speak” (408).

200 Sim, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers,” 422.

201 Gundry, Matthew, 576; Senior, Matthew, 166–67; Davies and Allison, Matthew, 3:633; Hagner, Matthew, 2:849; France, Matthew, 1081.

202 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 536.

(28:18-20). This, however, does not mean a cessation of mission to the Jews, because Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in continuity.

As in Mark and Luke, Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ resurrection (28:1–10) would also have been influenced by various Jewish-apocalyptic traditions (Isa 26:29; Dan 12:2; Ezek 37:7–14; 4 Macc 7:19: 13:14, 17; 16:25), where (general) resurrection is part of an eschatological scenario. In the view of Weren, Matthew makes two important changes to his soteriological traditions: first, “the resurrection is no longer a future event, but it is placed within history” [emphasis original]; and, contrary to Ezek 37:1–14 and Isa 26:19, where the concept of resurrection is understood “in the sense of the restoration of the nation of Israel”, resurrection is made “individual”, as in Dan 12:2, where resurrection means “the renewal of life after (a martyr’s) death”.

“The turning point in Jesus’ fate does not occur at the end of the age”, but after three days. This, as Weren points out, is not unparalleled in Jewish traditions. In 2 Macc 7:36, the youngest of the seven brothers is hopeful that all his brothers may be given an everlasting life after a brief period of suffering. Similarly, in Luke 23:43, Jesus promises a place in paradise to the crucified thief, who asked to be remembered to him. But why does Matthew make these changes? How does it inform his understanding of “how Jesus saves”?

According to Weren, the emphasis on individual resurrection, as in Dan 12:2, and placing Jesus’ resurrection within history, informs how Matthew links Jesus’ violent death to all the divine messengers who have been murdered, which would have been perhaps connected to the Maccabean martyrs who resisted Hellenisation of the Jewish

---

204 Weren, “Resurrection,” 701–11.
206 Weren, “Resurrection,” 703–5, 709–10. According to Weren, the concept of “the general resurrection . . . [is] missing in Matthew’s Gospel” (708).
religion. This is likely, given the possible link between 4 Maccabees and Matthew (compare 4 Macc 7:19 and 16:26 with Matt 22:32; 4 Macc 13:14 with Matt 10:28; 4 Macc 13:17 with Matt 8:11). For Matthew, Jesus’ resurrection is God’s saving response to all who have laid down their lives in doing the will of God. Jesus’ resurrection, thus, confirms the continuity between “how Jesus saves” and how God saved his people in the past. In other words, by placing Jesus’ resurrection in history (28:1–10), Matthew makes Jesus’ resurrection saving, without making it central or turning it into a major saving role, as with Jesus’ death.

And now after resurrection, Jesus commissions his disciples to expand their mission to all nations (28:18–20), which includes the Gentiles, as foreshadowed in the story of the magi. The disciples’ mission is to prepare all nations for Jesus’ return as the eschatological judge and shepherd by teaching all of them to observe all that Jesus commanded. And God will be continue to be salvifically present in the midst of his people in Jesus (28:20), despite the physical destruction of the temple, as he was actively present in Jesus during his earthly ministry (cf. 1:23), till Jesus returns in the end to judge his people, as predicted by John (3:11–12; 25:31–46), based on the Torah teaching of the disciples, as interpreted by Jesus during his earthly life. This perhaps best explains why Matthew places his own emphasis on the promise and commissioning in 28:18–20 in his account of Jesus’ resurrection.

To conclude: Matthew understands the saving nature of Jesus’ death and his resurrection in terms of continuity and authorisation model Christology. As authorised by God (“sent”: 15:24; cf. 28:18–20), Jesus saves many through his teaching, healing and helping during his life-time (11:4–5; 27:42). Jesus saves his people even in his death (26:28), though he is not saving himself (27:42), because saving does not mean

---

211 Weren, “Resurrection,” 705.
saving oneself but saving others (16:27). This Matthew endorses through the apocalyptic events which follow at Jesus’ death, by expanding Mark 15:39 with 27:51–54; it is God who saves.

For Matthew, the apocalyptic events immediately following Jesus’ death refer to something which brings such a major change that it can be celebrated as a major eschatological turning point. They indicate God’s powerful intervention in Jesus’ death, vindication of Jesus’ status as son of God, the impending judgement, and the breaking-in of the eschaton; the end time is already happening now in Jesus’ death. This signals a major turning point in the history of God’s dealing with his people. This best explains why Matthew gives enormous significance to Jesus’ death compared to other saving events in Jesus’ life.

The statement of the centurion and those who witnessed Jesus’ death in 27:54 is not a confession of faith, nor is it an indication of the Gentiles, coming to Jesus, as some presume, but an expression of the fear of the judgement of God. The resurrection of the “holy ones” is God’s response to Jesus’ violent death and to the killing of the prophets in the past (22:34–37), and, perhaps, to the possible suffering of Jesus’ disciples in the future (10:17–18). If the resurrection of the “holy ones” represents the affirmation of the validity of the Jewish past in Jesus’ death, then the temple which is the symbol of the saving relation between God and his people would also be affirmed in Jesus’ death, as it was in his life, though the temple veil is torn into two from top to bottom, signalling God’ judgement on the Jewish leaders who misused the temple, not the dissolution of the temple and its cult. And, thus, for Matthew, the destruction of the temple is not an indication of the abrogation of the validity and sufficiency of the temple.

Unlike major Jewish soteriological traditions, but of course like other early Christian writings, Matthew places Jesus’ resurrection within history. This helps
Matthew to relate his post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus will judge in the end not only his people, but all nations, which includes the Gentiles, based on his teachings of the Torah. The disciples are therefore commissioned to prepare all nations for Jesus’ final judgement by teaching them all that he commanded. And Jesus will be with his disciples in this mission of saving all nations as he was with them during his earthly ministry. This creates the impression that Matthew gives more importance to Jesus’ final judgement, commissioning, and his promise of prolonged presence, rather than to the resurrection event, in his account of Jesus’ resurrection.

6.4. THE SAVIOUR IN DEATH AND RESURRECTION: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Matthew depicts Jesus’ death and resurrection as the continuation not only of his public ministry as outlined in chapters 1–25 (cf. 11:4–5; 27:42), but also of God’s saving dealings with his people in the past, and not as attempting to provide a new option or an alternative means after a supposed failure of his earlier options, namely, teaching, healing, and helping. Scholars have interpreted the salvific nature of Jesus’ death in 26:28 in terms of Moses’ offering of the blood at the altar and on the people at Sinai (Exod 24:8), the suffering servant (Isaiah 53), new covenant (Jer 31:31–34), the blood of the Passover lamb, temple sacrifices (Lev 4:7, 18, 30), obedient sonship, vicarious suffering, and violent death. Understandably, being Jewish-Christian, Matthew’s community would have searched for Scriptures to understand not only the saving nature of Jesus’ death, but also the continuity between Jesus’ saving death and God’s salvific promises in the past. And Matthew would also just as likely not only have known early Christian traditions about Jesus’ death as saving, but also have acknowledged the link
by making the specific addition in this regard in 26:28. However, for Matthew, 26:28 is not just a tradition he incorporates and to which he gives no weight. Matthew does give the soteriological tradition in 26:28 special significance, indicated by his depiction of the apocalyptic events following Jesus’ death, but without defining Jesus’ saving role primarily in terms of his death.

One might wonder why Matthew does not make Jesus’ saving death the core of his soteriology. Matthew perhaps does not want to limit Jesus’ saving to any one particular role or event in his life and ministry. It is also likely that the Matthean community would have understood and felt the effect of Jesus’ saving death in various ways including forgiveness of sins, but as ultimately grounded in divine authorisation and God’s being. Moreover, Jesus’ saving does not replace any of God’s saving means and patterns in the past. For Matthew, there is no contradiction between Jesus’ saving roles and God’s saving patterns in the past; in fact, they are both salvific and in continuity. Since Jesus’ saving is not limited to any one event or moment in his life, Matthew does not want to tie Jesus’ saving death to any one effect or interpretation.

At the same time, Matthew’s community would have also been aware of other soteriological traditions available in 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees. According to these traditions, the blood of a devout martyr brings salvation and forgiveness. In the light of Jesus’ obedient sonship and vicarious suffering, Matthew’s community might have sensed something in common between Jesus’ death and that of the Maccabean martyrs: both Jesus (crucifixion) and the Maccabees (martyrdom) suffered violent death. Moreover, since his community understands Jesus’ saving death in terms of already “revealed” saving patterns, Matthew, very likely, would not have understood Jesus’ life and death as bringing a “new” kind of forgiveness and salvation. This best explains why Matthew makes Jesus’ violent death continuous with the murder and killing of the
prophets in the past. Jesus’ death fits into the ever-continuing history of God’s initiatives to be in a saving relationship with his people. Given their post-70 C.E. Jewish religious environment and probable persecution by Jewish authorities, they might have well understood the saving nature of Jesus’ death in continuity. In this way Matthew also makes his soteriology contextual: a contextual response to the existential and theological questions of his community pertaining to the destruction of the temple and persecution by the Jewish leaders.

Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in his death and resurrection in “continuity” in chapters 26–28. In 26:28, Matthew makes Jesus’ death continuous with God’s saving in the past by linking Jesus’ violent death to the murder of the prophets and the divine messengers in the past, including John, perhaps as in Q (cf. 6:23; 11:49; 13:34). By inviting his disciples to participate in his suffering in 26:26–29, Matthew has Jesus make his suffering and violent death continuous not only with the possible suffering and death of his disciples in the present (10:17–18; cf. 23:34–37), but also in the future (cf. 26:29). Though the disciples might face persecutions and death, God will be actively present with his disciples in Jesus till the end of ages (28:20), as God was present with his disciples in Jesus in the past (1:23). In 26:28, we see the soteriological continuity not only between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past, but also between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ἐκκλησία. This entails a past-present-future continuum.

As with other Jews of his time, Matthew could hold together an understanding of God’s forgiveness, a sacrificial/temple cult which also mediated it, John the Baptist who mediated it by baptism, and also as something made possible through the vicarious suffering or violent death of the righteous. The apocalyptic events following Jesus’ death (27:51–54) indicate that it refers to something which brings such a major change
that it can be celebrated as a major eschatological turning point. At Jesus’ death, what many Jews would have expected to happen for the end time already happens—the resurrection of the saints (27:52–53). Therefore, the history of God’s saving initiatives is no longer just a dialectical relationship between God’s salvific interventions in history and people’s response to them, but eschatological too; the history of God’s saving dealings with his people takes a major eschatological turning point in Jesus’ death. And, for Matthew, this necessitates such an apocalyptic treatment of Jesus’ death in contrast to other events in his life.

In 27:54, seeing the astounding events such as the earthquake and the splitting of rocks, the centurion and all those who were with him identified Jesus as Son of God. This however, is not a confession of faith, but an expression of the fear of judgement. Jesus was identified as Son of God at the time of his baptism (3:17) and later on the Mount of Transfiguration (17:5). This means there is no change in Jesus’ status; Jesus is still the Son of God; change of fate has not changed Jesus’ status. If so, Jesus’ life and death bring salvation, with equal sufficiency and efficacy, because he is authorised to save his people not only through his life, but also through his death (28:18–20. This means, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving does not begin or end on the cross.

Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ resurrection and the last commandment (28:1–20) also reinforce this notion—soteriological continuity. By making Jesus’ resurrection a historical event, like other New Testament writers, Matthew not only links Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles, but also provides his concept of history. The history of God’s saving relationship with his people is not linear, as if one stage is replacing another. For Matthew, the history of salvation is not about God initiating different saving plans at various historical junctures and crossroads, but it is about God continuing the same saving plan which he had initiated with Abraham. However, God
sends new/different messengers because of the negative responses of the Jewish leaders and their killing of the prophets. The same saving plan is continued, but with new/different messengers. Since the same saving plan is continued, no one stage in the history of God’s dealings with his people replaces the stages in the past. This Matthew achieves not only by making Jesus’ resurrection an historical event, but also by linking Jesus’ resurrection and the resurrection of the pious Jews, without indicating that the former causes the latter.

It is the responsibility of the ἐκκλησία to continue God’s saving in Jesus on earth, till Jesus returns as the eschatological judge and shepherd. During his earthly ministry Jesus commissioned his disciples to continue his mission (10:1, 5–6; cf. 15:14). Now after his resurrection, he reinforces the same commissioning and authorisation, but with a larger scope in terms of territory and the people (28:18–20). Since Jesus’ saving does not replace what God “achieved” through his messengers in the past, Jesus’ final commissioning does not replace his earlier commissioning of the disciples. This means Jewish mission is as valid and open as ever. Thus, Matthew makes not only the historical Jesus and the exalted Jesus soteriologically continuous, but also Jesus’ saving and the mission of the ἐκκλησία.

The exalted Jesus commissions his disciples to continue what he “achieved” in his life and death by teaching all that he commanded. This is crucial for Matthew because of the continuity between Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles. The historical Jesus who interpreted the true sense of the Torah is the one who will judge his people in the end as the eschatological judge, based on his teaching of the Torah. The mission of the ἐκκλησία is to continue Jesus’ teachings of the Torah and prepare “all nations” for the final judgement. This explains Jesus’ programmatic statement about his positive attitude towards the Law and its eternal validity in 5:17–19. Therefore, the teaching of
the ἐκκλησία is saving; since it is the same teaching of Jesus that the “ἐκκλησία” continues, the teaching of the ἐκκλησία is as saving as Jesus’ teaching. In other words, unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew focuses on the theme of judgement even in his depiction of passion and resurrection, as in Matthew 1–25. This makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers who face questions concerning the saving sufficiency of the Torah and the temple, given their post-70 C.E. religious environment.

To sum up: for Matthew, Jesus’ death and resurrection are as salvific as his life and ministry. The salvation which Jesus brings as predicted in 1:21 is not rooted in, or limited to, any event or moment in Jesus’ life and death, given the way Matthew unfolds his understanding of “how Jesus saves” in close relation to “who Jesus is” (Christology) and other themes like the Torah and the temple. This applies to Jesus’ many ways of saving his people from their sins (1:21) and Matthew’s many ways of understanding the saving nature of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Matthew’s many ways of understanding the saving nature of Jesus’ death and resurrection are equally valid insofar as Jesus’ many ways of saving are equally sufficient.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study has been to re-examine Matthew’s understanding of soteriology. According to Matthew’s birth narrative, Jesus’ role is to “save his people from their sins” (1:21). But this raises a number of questions. How does Matthew understand this saving role? How does Matthew unfold Jesus’ role and status as the saviour in the rest of the gospel narrative? What theological themes/motifs in the Gospel define and determine Matthean soteriology? And what might such a soteriology have meant for Matthew’s first hearers in his context?

As we have seen in the literature review, the various proposals which the scholars have offered in relation to Matthew’s soteriology raise some critical issues. Many Matthean scholars have not adequately taken into account the close connection between how Matthew depicts Jesus’ saving and various other theological themes in the Gospel. These include God’s attitude towards the people of Israel, the salvific role of the temple and the Torah, the close relation between sin and sickness, the validity of other means of saving such as the vicarious death of the righteous, and the close relation between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness. In addition, the close relationship between “who Jesus is” (Christology) and “how Jesus saves” (soteriology) either was not attended to or received too little attention in most accounts of Matthean soteriology.

By contrast, this study has argued that Matthew does not understand salvation as something achieved primarily by Jesus’ death nor does he understand salvation as something only Jesus brings. The theme of salvation in Matthew is also bigger than just what 1:21 means because at the core of his soteriology as reflected in his Gospel
narrative as a whole, is the conviction that Jesus’ saving is the continuation of God’s saving dealings with his people through his prophets and messengers in the past. For Matthew, therefore, Jesus’ saving as predicted in 1:21 confirms and upholds the continuity of God’s saving relationship with his people, which began with Abraham, the continuing sufficiency and validity of all that God had done or given or initiated or instituted in history to save his people, and God’s ever-continuing invitation for his people to enter into and to remain in a saving relationship with him.

For Matthew, the salvation which Jesus brings is not “something” which begins or even ends with Jesus. The God who authorised his messengers/kings/judges/prophets in the past (cf. 1:1–17; 22:34–37) is the same God who authorised Jesus to save his people in the present (1:21; cf. 1:23; 9:2–6; 28:18–20). And the God who authorised Jesus to save his people is the same God who authorised Jesus to authorise his disciples/ecclesia to continue God’s saving initiatives in history as Jesus does (10:1; 28:18–20). Authorisation is a key element in Matthew’s Christology and therefore his soteriology. For Matthew, therefore, Jesus has come not to replace or abrogate the Torah and the prophets—but to declare their true sense, validity, and soteriological sufficiency (5:17–19), and to fulfil and uphold them, and, thus, save his people (1:21; cf. 11:2–5). This means that for Matthew there cannot be any inherent contradiction in terms of sufficiency and efficacy between God’s saving initiatives in the past and his salvific intervention in Jesus in the present.

This study also has argued that, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving mission (1:21) is the historical confirmation not only of the continuation of God’s saving actions from the past, but also of God’s ever-continuing saving nature. And, because he is the “Son of God” (3:17; 17:5; 27:54), Jesus’ status/being as the saviour is (ontologically) continuous with (though not equal to) God’s saving being (cf. 1:23; 18:20; 28:20), as
indicated already in his miraculous conception (1:18–25). Moreover, Matthew situates Jesus’ saving mission not only in continuity with how God saved his people through his prophets, messengers, kings, and judges in the past, but also with how he will save his people through Jesus’ disciples (ecclesia) in the future. In short, this study has argued that Matthew understands salvation in continuity. This investigation, therefore, has sought to show how and why Matthew has developed this especially in the context of the historical and theological challenges and questions of post-70 C.E Judaism.

According to Matthew’s Gospel, the history of God’s saving dealings with his people begins with the calling of Abraham (1:2). In Luke, on the other hand, the point of departure is Adam (3:38). And Mark originates his account of Jesus’ saving with the appearance of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:1–11). For Matthew, the saving relationship which God had initiated with/through Abraham is continued in history as reflected in the genealogy (1:1–17). And what God had continued in the life of his people since Abraham is affirmed, fulfilled and continued in Jesus. This Matthew achieves by juxtaposing the genealogy (1:1–17) and the birth of Jesus (1:18–25). Hence, for Matthew, the genealogy (1:1–17) is not just a preamble to Jesus’ birth (1:18–25), but an affirmation of the validity and continuity of the salvific history of the people of Israel which began with Abraham (1:2).

In Matthew’s Gospel, the history of the people of Israel is not a summary of various salvific and historical events or stages, where one stage or event replaces the other, but a story of an ever-continuing dialectical relationship between God’s saving initiatives in time and space and people’s response to them. God’s initiatives in history will continue so long as God is saving. Saving is God’s very nature. God is always saving. God’s saving being makes salvation continuous in history. God’s saving nature holds his initiatives through kings, judges, prophets and messengers in the past and his
initiative in Jesus in the present together and soteriologically connected. This entails historical and soteriological continuity.

Matthew’s use of the pattern of fourteen generations in the genealogy, fulfilment citations, the titles like “Son of David” and “son of Abraham”, and the promise–reward pattern in the Beatitudes also reinforces the historical and soteriological continuity. The somewhat artificially contrived pattern of 3x14 in the genealogy, probably dictated by the need to highlight David, indicates divine planning, saving intent and divine control in the life and history of his people (1:1–17). Jesus’ promises of reward in the Beatitudes (5:3–12) are not new promises but an affirmation of the continuing sufficiency and validity of what God had promised in the past. Fulfilment citations also underscore salvation in continuity because they show that Jesus not only matched the pattern of God’s saving actions or interventions in the past but also fulfils what was seen as divinely-inspired prophecy. This, however, does not mean that the divine saving plans or intent have come to an end with Jesus.

By supplementing Mark’s “Jesus Christ” with “Son of David” (1:1; cf. Mark 1:1), Matthew shows that Jesus fulfils the saving plans which God had promised to his people in the past to be fulfilled in the future through the descendants of the divinely-elected and anointed king of Israel—David. Matthew highlights David as “the king” in the genealogy (1:1–17), which counts the first of the three groups of fourteen up to David, and overall uses the genealogy to prove that Jesus is a descendant of David, through Joseph, even though he later implicitly denies a biological link (1:18–25). Matthew juxtaposes the virginal/miraculous conception of Jesus and the genealogy to fortify the connection between Jesus and the Davidic family. He strengthens the connection further by closely associating the title “Son of David” with “king of the Jews” (1:1, 16–17; 2:2; cf. 1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:16). The legend of Herod and the magi
(2:1–12) also has royal Davidic messiahship of Jesus as its focus, which draws on many pre-existing traditions to strengthen Jesus’ qualification to be Israel’s Messiah.

Additionally, Jesus’ physical and theological identification with the Davidic family/ancestry, while linking Jesus’ saving to God’s saving in the past, makes Jesus’ identity/being/status as the saviour continuous with the identity/being of the people of Israel. And, such identification makes “how Jesus saves” and “how God saved” his people in the past continuous. This best explains why Matthew depicts Jesus’ saving in terms of various salvific roles. Therefore, the foregoing research argued not just continuity in general, but continuity in the range of salvific roles, whereas most would argue that continuity is through the same God but now doing something “new” in Jesus which was not present in his repertoire before.

Matthew supplements Mark’s “Jesus Christ” also with “son of Abraham” in 1:1 (cf. 1:2) to reinforce soteriologically Jesus’ physical continuity with God’s people and more specifically with the royal line of that people. The continuity between Jesus’ saving with God’s people and God’s dealing with his people is further reinforced through beginning the genealogy with Abraham (1:2). Matthew also employs various typologies (Joseph–Joseph; Jesus–Moses; and, Jesus–Israel) to show that Jesus genuinely belongs to Israel and its salvific heritage.

But, in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus is more than just an Israelite, Israel’s Messiah and a royal descendant of David; Jesus is the “Son of God”. This Matthew underlines primarily through Jesus’ miraculous or virginal conception (1:18–25). And it serves to make a claim regarding the status of Jesus as the saviour, later expressed in his designation as the “Son of God” (3:17; 17:5; 27:54). It also serves to give further background to the unmediated heavenly acclamation, “You are my beloved Son” (3:17; cf. 17:5; 27:54). “My Son” occurs also in the citation from Hos 11:1 in 2: 15. This, too,
is based on the miraculous conception. Matthew, thus, makes Jesus’ being or status as the saviour (ontologically) continuous with God’s saving being, without directly equating Jesus with God (1:23; 28:18–20; cf. 9:2–5, 6); Jesus is “God with us” (1:23), but, seemingly, at least initially, not by direct identification as God, but through what he does—saving his people from their sins (1:21).

Likewise, Jesus’ final words in 28:18–20 also do not claim Jesus as God, but claim that Jesus is authorised by God. This is the basis and source of Jesus’ status and authorisation as the saviour. As such Matthew also depicts him as present with his people in 28:20, as already in 18:20, in the same way that Jews could speak of Shekinah being present. For Matthew, therefore, Jesus is ontologically superior to all of God’s messengers, kings, judges and prophets in the past, as the exchange before Jesus’ baptism illustrates (3:14–15). Jesus’ superior status does not, however, imply Jesus is replacing the temple and the Torah, given Matthew’s positive attitude towards them (5:17–20, 23–24; 8:4; 17:24–27; 19:16-23; 22:34-40).

The Matthean claim that God is actively present in Jesus’ “words” and “deeds” is also in some sense a claim of divine identity. This claim, while falling short of claiming to be “God with us” in a literal sense, would be likely to be seen by many Jews as outrageous and blasphemous, as reflected in the high priest’s charge at the Jewish trial. Because Matthew’s Christology (“who Jesus is”) was not tolerable for many of his Jewish contemporaries, then his soteriology (“how Jesus saves”) would also not have been tolerable for many Jews, given the close connection between Christology and soteriology. This best explains Jesus’ conflict with the Jewish leaders over his identity/being/status as the “Son of God” and saviour, his divine authority to teach the Torah and forgive sins, and his healing and helping, despite his physical and theological identification with God’s people as the “son of Abraham” and as the “Son of David”.
The continuity between God’s saving in the past and Jesus’ saving in the present is further reinforced in the continuity between John and Jesus, the summary of whose message is identical (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”: 3:2; 4:17), who share common themes (7:16–20; 12:33; 13:8, 21:19, 41, 43), face similar accusations and in parables are shown as similarly rejected (21:28–22:14).

Matthew historically and soteriologically links various salvific roles which he ascribes to Jesus—king, shepherd, judge, teacher, healer, and helper—to many roles which David, the divinely elected and appointed king of Israel, had assumed. Resembling King David, Jesus, Son of David, is not only the “king of the Jews”, but also the shepherd of Israel (2:6; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70–71). And, to a first century Jew, the Messiah who comes forth from the lineage of David to “shepherd” the people of Israel is the one who will also “judge” the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 34:4–10; Mic 5:1–9; Pss. Sol. 17; 4 Ezra 13:34–50; 2 Bar. 77–86). The status of Jesus as the “Son of David” is also very closely related to his saving role as healer, because David himself was also connected with healings (1 Sam 16:14–23; Josephus, Ant. 6.166, 168). Moreover, in the Old Testament, with one exception (2 Sam 13:1), “Son of David” refers to Solomon, who was later renowned as a mighty healer and exorcist (Josephus, Ant. 8.45–49; b. Git. 68a–b; cf. Wis 7:17–22). This would have encouraged Matthew to use “son of David” in the context of healings and exorcisms (9:27; 12:23; 15:22–23; 20:30–31). As with David, in Matthew, the various saving roles of the Messiah—king, shepherd, healer, helper, and judge—merge in Jesus; Jesus saves his people in many ways (1:21). This further explains the close relationship between Christology and soteriology in Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew, thus, reinforces not only his initial claim that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel but also the soteriological continuity between “how Jesus saves” and “how God saved” his people in the past.
The integration of various salvific roles and functions exercised by God’s messengers such as kings, judges, and prophets in the past, in Jesus shows major progress and change, but not a “new” stage replacing all that God said and did in the past, in the history of God’s saving initiatives in the life of the people of Israel. For this is the eschatological fulfilment of Jewish messianic hopes because God had predicted through his prophets such a merging of various salvific roles and functions in the eschaton (Isa 35:5–6; 61:1). And at the climax of the history of salvation, Jesus fulfils and upholds all that God had planned and promised for the salvation of his people. What was to happen in the eschaton is already happening in Jesus’ saving (12:28). Therefore, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving is the eschatological fulfilment, the climax of the history of God’s dealings with his people, and the beginning of the eschaton. This, however, does not mean Jesus’ saving replaces God’s saving in the past because all that God had initiated and instituted through his messengers, kings, judges, prophets in the past to save his people is being held together, affirmed and continued in Jesus’ saving (2:6; 11:2–5; 25:31–46). In this sense, Jesus’ saving is a “new” divine initiative, and it takes a “new” turn in the history of God’s saving initiatives, but the saving relationship which God had initiated through the calling of Abraham remains the same and is continuous.

Of all the role descriptions which Matthew makes for Jesus, Jesus’ salvific role as teacher (cf. 7:29) appears to have the greatest defining impact on Matthew’s understanding of “how Jesus saves”. For Matthew, Jesus is the scribe *par excellence*, a role also to be fulfilled by the teachers in Matthew’s community (13:52; cf. 7:29). More significantly, Jesus, as the eschatological judge, as John had announced (3:11–12), will judge his people in the end based on the Torah, but as interpreted by him (cf. 7:21–24; 25:31–46). Therefore, Matthew gives considerable theological significance to Jesus’ role as teacher, his polemical encounter with the Jewish leaders over the correct
observance and true sense of the Torah, and his divine authority to interpret it (5:17–20).

Matthew positions Jesus’ salvific role as teacher and his saving teaching in continuity with the Torah (5:17–48; 19:16–23; 22:34–40; cf. 11:2–5; 28:18–20). The programmatic statement in 5:17–20 asserts that Jesus has come not to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil and uphold them. This means the Law remains in force. Therefore, the antitheses in 5:21–48 do not mean Jesus is introducing a “new” rule for salvation, or effecting a “new” kind of salvation through his teachings and interpretation of the Torah (cf. 5:20). Nor is he giving a “second opinion” regarding what the Torah requires or demands of his people in order to be in a saving relationship with God. Instead, Jesus is reinforcing the continuing salvific sufficiency of the righteousness of the Torah (5:20; 19:16–23) and proclaiming its true sense. Hence, Jesus’ interpretation/teaching is not at variance with the saving demands or requirements of the Torah.

This is further evident in Jesus’ teaching concerning the Sabbath (12:1–8; 24:20), purity and dietary laws (15:1–20), validity of the temple (5:23–24; 17:24–27; 21:13–14; 23:37–39; 26:55), and divorce (5:31–32; 19:3–12). And, Jesus, by his divine authority not only as the “Son of God”, but also as the judge to come (3:11–12; cf. 25:31–46) and as the interpreter of the basis for the last judgement, holds the Torah and his interpretation/teachings in continuity; Jesus is at one with the Torah as God’s will and is its champion and interpreter.

For Matthew, Jesus as the coming judge (3:11–12; 7:21–24; 25:31–46) declares in advance the criterion for his final judgement by bringing out the definitive meaning of the will of God envisaged in the Law and the prophets (cf. 5:17–20). And, because of his divine authority as the “Son of God” (cf. 28:18) and special relationship with God
(11:25–30), Jesus’ teaching brings out the true sense of the Torah (5:20; cf. 11:28–30). Therefore, for Matthew, in Jesus’ salvific teaching, Torah observance has become more salvifically effective, not because Jesus added anything “new” to the Torah, but because the Torah is now observed according to the true sense of what God requires of his people in order to be in and to have a saving relationship with him, which he began with Abraham, that is, with more intensity and clarity. It is in this sense that Matthew understands the “newness” which Jesus brings in his saving and teaching. This means the basis or the repertoire of salvation is still the same both in the present and in the future, as in the past.

Therefore, the contrast in the antitheses is not between Jesus and the Torah, but between how the Torah was being interpreted and how it should be interpreted. This means keeping the Torah, even to the smallest details and tiniest minutiae (5:18–19), but as interpreted by Jesus, is saving (5:20; 19:16–23; 22:34–40). That underlines the historical and soteriological continuity between “how Jesus saves” his people in the present through his teaching of the Torah and “how God saved” his people in the past through their obedience to the Torah, given that the Torah represents God’s will, his savings plans, and his demands or requirements to be in an ever-continuing saving relationship with him (5:20; 19:16–23; 22:34–40).

For Matthew, both the Torah and Jesus bring salvation, because the divine authority of Jesus and the authority of the Torah are not contradictory. The God who gave the Torah to his people as the means of saving is the same God who authorised Jesus to fulfil and uphold it and thus save his people. Moreover, fulfilling the Torah does not mean replacing it but fulfilling what God had promised his people in the past for their salvation. The salvation which Jesus brings and what the Torah demands or requires of his people in order to be in a saving relationship with God are continuous.
This is consistent with Matthew’s affirmative attitude towards his Jewish heritage, because a community upholding the validity, continuity and soteriological sufficiency of the Torah like Matthew’s, but as understood by Jesus, thus, belongs within, or claims to be a part of, first-century Judaism, at least at the time of the composition of the Gospel.

But Matthew’s christological claims about Jesus’ saving role as teacher and his divine authority to interpret the Torah as the “Son of God” and as the judge to come were exclusive as they would have sought to have Jesus’ teaching monopolise Torah interpretation and so would have provoked exclusion and persecution. This accounts for Jesus’ ever-increasing tension with the Jewish leaders. However, given the broad boundaries of first-century Judaism, Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus’ salvific role as teacher and his distinctive interpretation of the Torah would have been a conscious theological and contextual attempt to affirm the soteriological continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving in the past, in order to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of his Jewish opponents, and to validate his Gospel over against them.

Matthew’s delineation of Jesus’ salvific role as teacher is continuous not only with the Torah, but also with the authority of the Torah-teaching institutions such as the seat of Moses and the synagogues (23:2–3). Matthew upholds the authority attached to the seat of Moses and the teaching authority of those who sit on it (23:2). In 23:3, Jesus accepts the teaching of “the scribes and the Pharisees”, because it is referred to in close connection with the seat of Moses and its authority (23:2). Likewise, though Matthew’s treatment of the synagogues appears to be negative (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; cf. 23:34), the distancing pronoun “their” does not indicate Jesus or Matthew’s community annulling the authority of the synagogues to teach the Torah. For 10:17 and 23:34 imply that members of the Matthean community can still be hauled before the synagogue on
charges of discipline and continue engaging in a missionary campaign to their fellow Jews (cf. 10:5–6). Moreover, the Matthean Jesus is depicted also as teaching and preaching in “their synagogues” (4:23; 9:35). It suggests that according to Matthew, Jesus’ divine authority to teach the Torah does not call into question the validity of the Torah-teaching institutions such as the seat of Moses and the synagogues.

The continuity between Jesus’ saving in the present and God’s saving dealings with his people in the past is further reinforced in the parables of the kingdom of heaven and the judgement scenes (21:23–22:46; chapters 24–25). The Jewish leaders—as represented by the first son (21:28–32), wicked tenants (21:33–46), and the “original invitees” for the wedding feast (22:1–14)—did not do the will of God and rejected God’s messengers (21:31; cf. 7:21). Therefore, the kingdom of God (vineyard/Israel) will be taken away from the Jewish leaders (21:28–46), and it will be given to a “nation” (Jesus’ disciples) producing the fruits of the vineyard (21:43; 22:1–14). But this does not entail rejection of Israel because the “nation” does not imply “new tenants” or people of different ethnicity, but “other tenants” who already belong to the vineyard (Israel). This is not a contrast between the Jews and the Gentiles but between the Jewish leaders and Jesus’ disciples. God has not abandoned his people; God still acts in history, but now in Jesus to save his people (vineyard/Israel) from the corrupt leaders (wicked tenants), to whom the vineyard (Israel) had been handed over previously. This would have been a contextual, theological and soteriological response to the post-70 C.E. questions concerning the identity and continuity of the people of Israel as God’s people.

Matthew’s role description of Jesus the saviour as healer and helper (chapters 8–25) also enhances the continuity between “how Jesus saves” in the present and “how God saved” his people in the past. The God who gave the authority to Jesus to perform saving miracles in the present is the same God who gave the authority to his messengers
and prophets in the past to save his people through miracles. Therefore, the authority of Jesus and the miracles he performed, echo divine authority and the miracles in the life of the people of Israel respectively: the healing of the leper (8:1–4) is reminiscent of the story of Miriam’s seven-day leprosy (Numbers 12) and Elisha’s healing of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1–14); Jesus’ feedings of the multitude (14:13–21; 15:32–39) recall the Exodus story of manna (Exodus 16); Jesus’ stilling of the storm (8:23–27) evokes Yahweh subduing the raging flood (Gen 1:6–10; Gen 6 – 10; Ps 29:3; 65:7; 89:8–11; 93:3; 107:25–32; 124:4–5; 1QH 3:13–18) and overcoming the powers of chaos (Job 38:8–11; Ps 33:7; Prov 8:22–31; Jer 5:22; 31:35); Jesus’ walking on the sea (14:22–33) echoes Yahweh’s treading upon the waters (Job 9:8; 38:16; Ps 77:16,19; Isa 43:16; 51:9–10; Hab 3:15; Sir 24:5–6); and, Jesus’ raising of the dead recollects Elijah and Elisha’s resuscitation of the corpses (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:32–37).

But, for Matthew, there is more to Jesus’ miracles, because they are not mere repetition and recapitulation of certain past historical events but the fulfilment of God’s saving plans and promises which he had revealed to his people in the past through his messengers and prophets. This best explains why Matthew uses an Old Testament prophecy to authenticate Jesus’ salvific role as healer: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases” (Isa 53:4; cf. 8:17). Jesus’ “deeds” (11:2), therefore, while bringing help to people, characterise his role as the Messiah of Israel. In response to John’s query whether he is the Christ, Matthew has Jesus refer to his “deeds” (11:2) as “the deeds of the Christ” and enumerate them by paraphrasing Isaiah (11:5; cf. Isa 26:19; 28:18–19; 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1).

Further, Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21) summons up the vision of the end-time when all of Israel would be gathered together for the messianic banquet (Isa 25:6–10). And Jesus’ feeding of the four thousand on the mountain (15:32–39)
suggests a Mount Zion typology because the feast on the mountain evokes the promises about Zion (Isa 25:6; Jer 31:7–14; cf. Mic 4:1–7); for, in Jewish expectations, Zion is the place of the gathering of a scattered Israel (Jer 31:10–12; Ezek 34:14), the place of healing (Isa 35:5–6; Jer 31:8; Mic 4:6–7), and the place of the messianic feast (Isa 25:6–10; Jer 31:12–14; Ezek 34:26–27). Jesus’ feeding and healing in 15:32–39 fulfil the eschatological promises surrounding Zion; Jesus’ “deeds” are the fulfilment of God’s saving promises and plans.

The fulfilment of eschatological hopes and promises in Jesus’ saving “deeds” indicates a significant change and development in the history of God’s salvific dealings with his people: what God’s messengers and prophets had predicted to his people about what would happen and be fulfilled in the eschaton is already happening in Jesus in the present. But this does not constitute something totally “new” and different about Jesus, nor does it indicate a “new” kind of salvation, because the repertoire and the source of salvation are till the same. Instead, this means Jesus’ healing and helping are saving; “how Jesus saves” and “how God saved his people in the past” are continuous. God continues to be saving and, therefore, his saving relationship with his people remains and his saving initiatives in history continue.

For Matthew, Jesus’ healings are saving not only because they are continuous with God’s saving in the past and fulfil God’s saving promises and plans in the present, but also because they bring or effect forgiveness of sins in the present. In the account of the healing of the paralytic (9:2–8), Matthew has Jesus forgive the sins of the paralytic (“Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven”; 9:2), as predicted in 1:21 (“he will save his people from their sins”). For Matthew, this indicates Jesus’ authority to forgive sins (“the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”; 9:6). That makes sense for Matthew’s hearers because of the close relationship between sin and sickness in
Judaism. Jesus’ healings presuppose the invasion of the kingdom of heaven (salvation) into the realm of sickness caused by sin, wherein people are saved not only from sin but also from its symptoms. Therefore, for Matthew, the salvation which Jesus brings is not rooted in any one particular event in the life of Jesus; Jesus’ “words” and “deeds” are saving.

As with his depiction of Jesus’ salvific role as teacher and his teachings, Matthew uses the “authorisation model” of Christology to link Jesus’ status as the healer and his healings. As the Messiah of Israel, who is “God with us” (1:23) and the judge to come (3:11–12; 7:21–24; 25:31–46), Jesus is authorised to act with divine authority (9:6; cf. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31), and thus bring forgiveness of sins to his people through his healing. This shows how Matthew links Christology and soteriology. But the forgiveness of sins which Jesus effects or brings through his healing is not a new kind of forgiveness, because Matthew does not limit forgiveness to something which only Jesus brings. For John’s baptism and his call to repentance also entail forgiveness (3:2, 6); human forgiveness effects divine forgiveness (6:14–15; cf. 18:21–35). Moreover, the God who effects or brings salvation in/through Jesus has always been saving (1:1–17). This means Matthew understands Jesus’ saving in continuity with God’s saving in the past.

For Matthew—as with Jesus’ teaching, healing, and helping—his death is also saving because it brings forgiveness of sins (26:28; cf. 1:21). The possible allusions to Moses’ offering of the blood at the altar and on the people at Sinai (Exod 24:8), the suffering servant (Isaiah 53), the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34), the blood of the Passover lamb, and the temple sacrifices (Lev 4:7, 18, 30) show that Matthew would have interpreted Jesus’ death in the light of Old Testament passages. Matthew would have also been aware of the soteriological traditions in 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees
which understand the saving nature of death perhaps differently: the blood of a devout martyr brings salvation and forgiveness. It is also likely that 26:28 indicates Matthew’s awareness of other early Christian traditions about Jesus’ saving death. However, Matthew does not make Jesus’ saving death definitive for his soteriology.

In 26:28, perhaps as in Q (cf. 6:23; 11:49; 13:34), Matthew makes Jesus’ saving death continuous with God’s saving in the past by linking Jesus’ violent death to the murder of the prophets and the divine messengers in the past, including John (cf. 23:34–37). This is further evident in 27:42, where Matthew soteriologically links Jesus’ “inability” to “save himself” (27:42) to all the divine messengers in the past like John who could not save themselves. And Matthew uses apocalyptic events to show that God is actively present in Jesus even in his death (cf. 1:23) as he was with his people and messengers in the past (27:51–54). It also shows that it is God who saves, though Jesus is authorised to save his people. This explains why Matthew does not causally link Jesus’ saving death to the raising of the “holy ones” (27:51–52). Therefore, for Matthew, God’s saving through his prophets and messengers in the past and Jesus’ saving through his teaching, healing, helping, and death are continuous.

Matthew does not, however, give the impression that he understands forgiveness of sins as something “achieved” by Jesus’ atoning/vicarious/sacrificial death or by Jesus alone. As we have seen, while he omits “for the forgiveness of sins” in 3:6 (cf. Mark 1:4), Matthew still understands John’s baptism as bringing forgiveness. And, Jesus effects forgiveness of sins through his healings (9:2, 5–6), which makes sense for Matthew’s hearers, in view of the close relationship between sin and sickness in Judaism. In addition, Jesus’ death does not call into question the salvific sufficiency of the temple and cultic laws (cf. 5:17–20; 8:4), which also included provision for forgiveness, given Matthew’s positive attitude towards the temple (5:23–24; 8:4; 17:24–
Moreover, for Matthew, one’s forgiveness depends on one’s forgiveness of others (6:14–15; 18:21–35). Matthew also notes that the authority to forgive sins is also delegated to the disciples (9:8).

Therefore, for Matthew, forgiveness of sins seems primarily rooted in the attitude of God, not in an act of vicarious or sacrificial atonement, although he knows the tradition and, by addition, ensures the link (cf. 26:28). For Matthew, there is no problem with Jesus’ death as bringing forgiveness and the positive light given to the Torah and the temple as means of saving, and both existing side by side. Matthew offers a “both/and” rather than “either/or” understanding of soteriology. This makes sense for Matthew’s Jewish hearers because Judaism could hold together a range of soteriological concepts without sensing a contradiction among them or the need to treat them as alternatives: an understanding of God as saving and forgiving; the temple or sacrificial cult which mediates God’s forgiveness; John the Baptist mediates it by baptism; God’s forgiveness is also made possible through the suffering of the righteous. And Matthew would have known such early Christian soteriological traditions treating Jesus’ death in such a typically inclusive Jewish way.

But why does Matthew introduce apocalyptic colouring to the scenes of Jesus’ death thus making it an eschatological event of enormous significance? The apocalyptic events that immediately follow Jesus’ death, while indicating its saving nature, show that Jesus is (ontologically) superior to all the martyrs in the history of the people of Israel who effected God’s saving through their vicarious suffering; Jesus is the “Son of God” (27:54). For Matthew, Jesus’ identification as the “Son of God” (27:54) does not mean his death is more saving than his life because Jesus was identified as the “Son of God” earlier at his baptism (3:17) and at the mount of transfiguration (17:5). Nor does Jesus’ death replace all other saving means because, as we have seen earlier, Judaism
could hold together the notion of God as forgiving, and the notion that martyrs’ death could be vicarious without contradiction, and so can Matthew.

In Jesus’ death Matthew refers to something which brings such a major change that it can be celebrated as a major eschatological turning point. In this sense what is to happen in the eschaton, namely the resurrection of the dead, is beginning to happen with Jesus’ death. The resurrection of the dead was something which many Jews have expected for the end-time. That which is happening at Jesus’ death is an anticipation and intimation of what is due to happen on a grand scale in the end. In other words, the resurrection of the dead indicates that God’s saving in history has begun its final rush to the eschatological conclusion. And, for Matthew, this warrants such an apocalyptic treatment of Jesus’ death in contrast to other events in his life. But Jesus’ death does not imply the beginning of a “new stage” in the history of God’s dealings with his people, replacing God’s saving in the past and other saving means, because in his depiction of the apocalyptic events at Jesus’ death Matthew thinks primarily of God in action subsequent to the death of Jesus and not of the “effects achieved” directly by Jesus’ death. Therefore, for Matthew, there would not have been such a major theological and soteriological tension between the notion of God as saving and the notion of Jesus’ saving death, as some other Christian soteriological traditions would assume.

For Matthew, God’s dealing with his people does not end with Jesus’ saving death because God is saving. Therefore, Matthew has Jesus authorise and commission his disciples to continue his mission on earth (10:1, 5–6), especially by teaching all that he commanded (28:18–20), and thus prepare the nations for the final judgement. Jesus will come as the judge in the end to judge his people based on his teaching of the Torah, and to separate the nations into sheep and goats like a shepherd (25:31–46). According to Matthew, Jesus’ earthly roles as teacher and shepherd are historically continuous with
his eschatological roles as judge and shepherd. Thus, Matthew broadens the meaning of Jesus’ saving mission: Jesus’ saving from sins (1:21) includes not only forgiveness of sins, but also declaring and teaching the true sense of the Torah as the basis of his final judgement and thus the calling of his people to repentance. Consequently, his people will be saved from their sins in the present and saved from the eschatological judgement.

The continuity between Jesus’ earthly roles and his eschatological roles is further reinforced in Matthew’s delineation of Jesus’ role as shepherd (2:6; 25:31–46; cf. 9:35; 15:24). For Matthew, as the Messiah who comes forth from the lineage of David, Jesus is the shepherd of Israel (2:6; cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70–71), who is compassionate towards the lost and harassed sheep of the house Israel (9:35; 15:24). And the shepherd of Israel will be rejected and struck down by the Jewish leaders (26:31; cf. Zech 12:10). But the same shepherd who is compassionate, yet rejected and struck down, will come again as the eschatological shepherd who will judge his sheep (25:31–46), as predicted by John the Baptist (3:11–12). It implies that Jesus’ earthly role as the shepherd of Israel is historically continuous with his role as the eschatological shepherd.

However, given that God is saving, Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ eschatological roles does not mean God’s saving initiatives in time and space have come to an end with Jesus’ death. Instead, it will be continued on earth through Jesus’ disciples, till Jesus, Son of Man (13:41; 16:28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31), returns in glory as the eschatological judge and shepherd (25:31–46), as John prophesied (3:11–12), when he will not be in a salvific role.

By ascribing the same utterance in identical form in 4:17 to Jesus (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”), and also in 10:7 of the preaching to the disciples as their message, Matthew makes the saving mission of Jesus’ disciples
continuous not only with Jesus’ saving but also with John’s mission (3:2), as noted
above. Both Jesus and Jesus’ disciples suffer the same fate and have the same opponents
(10:17; 17:9–13; 23:34). Like Jesus (9:34; 12:22–24), Jesus’ disciples also face false
accusation (5:11–12; 10:18; cf. 10:14–15). The continuity between Jesus and his
disciples (ἐκκλησία) is further evident in chapters 21–22 where Matthew sets John,
Jesus and the disciples in parallel and continuity. Matthew supplements Mark’s parable
of the wicked tenants (21:33–46; cf. Mark 11:27–33) with the parable of the two sons
(21:28–32) and the parable of the wedding feast (22:1–14), to make a characteristic
Matthean cluster of three. The three parables speak of responses to John, Jesus, and the
disciples, respectively.

To reinforce further the continuity between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the
ἐκκλησία, Matthew uses the “authorisation model” in his Gospel. The God who
authorised Jesus to “save his people from their sins” (1:21) is the same God who
authorised Jesus to authorise his disciples (ἐκκλησία) to continue his mission on earth
(10:1, 5–8). Matthew deliberately places the authorisation of Jesus’ disciples as in
chapter 10 before 11:2–5 to show that what the disciples have been authorised for in
10:5–8 is to continue “the deeds of the Christ”—teaching, healing, helping, casting out
demons, and raising the dead (10:8; cf. 11:4–5). Moreover, for Matthew, the authority to
forgive sins is not limited to Jesus, but is extended to the entire ἐκκλησία (9:8; cf. 16:19;
18:18). The last commandment of Jesus (28:18–20) also reinforces the continuity
between Jesus’ saving and the mission of the disciples (ἐκκλησία).

In conclusion: for Matthew, soteriology means the ever continuing saving
relationship between God and his people, which began with the calling of Abraham
(1:2). God’s saving nature, which means his desire to enter into a saving relationship
with his people and to sustain that relationship in time and space (history), is as
continuous as his being because there is no ontological discontinuity between God’s being and his saving nature. Therefore, for Matthew, God’s saving dealings with his people in history reflect the continuity between God’s being and his saving nature. This means God’s saving initiatives in history are as continuous as his being. God’s being is saving; and, it is the saving nature that qualifies and defines God’s being; God is a saving being, not a static ahistorical being.

For Matthew, therefore, God’s saving nature makes his being continuous in engaging the life and existence of his people in history (1:1–17). In other words, it is God’s saving nature that allows his people to participate in God’s saving being. It means God’s people can and need to respond to God’s saving initiatives in time and space (history). This makes God’s saving historical. The historical nature of God’s saving being and the salvific response of God’s people to various divine initiatives in history are soteriologically continuous. In effect, for Matthew, soteriology and history are continuous; soteriology is historical, and history is soteriological. It is in this larger theological framework—“soteriology-history continuity”—that Matthew defines and unfolds Jesus’ mission to “save his people from their sins” (1:21).

Since soteriology and history are continuous, for Matthew, history is neither linear nor vertical, but both. Matthew does not understand history as linear because history is not just the sum total of God’s people’s actions and reactions since there is a divine saving intent that guides the very course of the history of his people. History is not vertical either for Matthew because it is not just about divine interventions in space and time. It is also about the responses and participation of God’s people in the divine saving dealings in history. It is the divine saving intent that makes history soteriological and it is the human participation that makes God’s saving initiatives historical.

However, the continuity between history and soteriology involves conflicts too, since
the responses of God’s people to God’s initiatives are not consistent because there is no continuity between the being and the character of God’s people. Consequently, God’s saving dealings with his people continue till his people find their being as God’s people continuous with their behaviour and character as God’s people. This is the fullness of the saving relationship between God and his people into which they are being invited and initiated through the calling of Abraham (1:2).

Therefore, for Matthew, Jesus’ saving as predicted in 1:21 is God’s saving initiative itself (cf. 1:23; 11:2–5). This means “how Jesus saves” his people is how God salvifically responds to the historical needs, challenges and struggles of his people. In effect, how Matthew understands “how Jesus saves” is how Matthew understands God’s saving response to the historical, theological and soteriological questions of post-70 C.E. Judaism. Does God still save? Is God still present with his people? Has God abandoned his people? Is the Torah still valid and sufficient? Has God destroyed the salvific institutions such as the temple and the cultic practices associated with it? Did “his people” lose their privileged status as God’s people?

Clearly then, for Matthew, Jesus’ positive attitude towards the temple and the Torah shows God’s affirmative attitude towards all that he initiated and instituted through his messengers, prophets, kings and judges since the calling of Abraham for the salvation of his people, which accounts for the eschatological merging of various salvific roles in Jesus, and the privileged identity of the people of Israel as God’s people. The Torah and the temple continue to mediate God’s saving, but as understood by Jesus. The Torah has become more effective in Jesus’ teaching. The people of Israel remain as God’s people. God has not abandoned his people; instead, God is still salvifically present in the midst of his people (cf. 1:23), despite the physical destruction of the temple. And, Jesus, because of his (ontological) continuity with God’s saving
being as the “Son of God”, holds in continuity God’s saving in the past and how God will save his people in future. In this sense, Matthew’s understanding of salvation in continuity, as reflected in his Gospel account of God’s saving initiative in Jesus, is a theological response to the post-70 C.E. historical situation. And this is the historical and theological responsibility that Matthew’s soteriology exercises in his Gospel.

On the basis of the fruits of this approach to Matthew, there are grounds for giving greater attention in future research to soteriological continuity in the investigation of other New Testament writings, for it might enhance our understanding not only of Matthew’s relation to other early Christian communities but also of their relation to first-century Judaism. Such examinations could also probably throw more light onto issues like why/how Matthew holds both the Jewish and the early Christian soteriological traditions together, without apparently identifying any incongruity among them or considering them as options or alternatives.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Gerhardsson, Birger. “Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew.”


Kollmann, Bernd. “Die Goldene Regel (Mt 7, 12/Lk 6, 31): triviale Maxime der Selbstbezogenheit oder Grundprinzip ethischen Handelns.” Pages 97–114 in *Er


———. Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005.


———. “Where was the Gospel according to St. Matthew Written?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41 (1979): 533–46.


Waetjen, Herman C. “The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew.”


Warner, Anita R. “Fulfilling All Righteousness: The Death of Jesus in Matthew.”


