*New Beacon Bible Commentary

MATTHEW

A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition

Robert S. Snow
and Arseny Ermakov

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DEDICATION

To
Kent E. Brower
Mentor, Colleague, Friend

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The purpose of the New Beacon Bible Commentary is to make available to pastors and students in the twenty-first century a biblical commentary that reflects the best scholarship in the Wesleyan theological tradition. The commentary project aims to make this scholarship accessible to a wider audience to assist them in their understanding and proclamation of Scripture as God's Word.

Writers of the volumes in this series not only are scholars within the Wesleyan theological tradition and experts in their field but also have special interest in the books assigned to them. Their task is to communicate clearly the critical consensus and the full range of other credible voices who have commented on the Scriptures. Though scholarship and scholarly contribution to the understanding of the Scriptures are key concerns of this series, it is not intended as an academic dialogue within the scholarly community. Commentators of this series constantly aim to demonstrate in their work the significance of the Bible as the church's book and the contemporary relevance and application of the biblical message. The project's overall goal is to make available to the church and for her service the fruits of the labors of scholars who are committed to their Christian faith.

The *New International Version* (NIV) is the reference version of the Bible used in this series; however, the focus of exegetical study and comments is the biblical text in its original language. When the commentary uses the NIV, it is printed in bold. The text printed in bold italics is the translation of the author. Commentators also refer to other translations where the text may be difficult or ambiguous.

The structure and organization of the commentaries in this series seeks to facilitate the study of the biblical text in a systematic and methodical way. Study of each biblical book begins with an ***Introduction*** section that gives an overview of authorship, date, provenance, audience, occasion, purpose, sociological/cultural issues, textual history, literary features, hermeneutical issues, and theological themes necessary to understand the book. This section also includes a brief outline of the book and a list of general works and standard commentaries.

The commentary section for each biblical book follows the outline of the book presented in the introduction. In some volumes, readers will find section ***overviews*** of large portions of scripture with general comments on their overall literary structure and other literary features. A consistent feature of the commentary is the paragraph-by-paragraph study of biblical texts. This section has three parts: ***Behind the Text***, ***In the Text***, and ***From the Text***.

The goal of the ***Behind the Text*** section is to provide the reader with all the relevant information necessary to understand the text. This includes specific historical situations reflected in the text, the literary context of the text, sociological and cultural issues, and literary features of the text.

In the Text explores what the text says, following its verse-by-verse structure. This section includes a discussion of grammatical details, word studies, and the connectedness of the text to other biblical books/passages or other parts of the book being studied (the canonical relationship). This section provides transliterations of key words in Hebrew and Greek and their literal meanings. The goal here is to explain what the author would have meant and/or what the audience would have understood as the meaning of the text. This is the largest section of the commentary.

The ***From the Text*** section examines the text in relation to the following areas: theological significance, intertextuality, the history of interpretation, use of the Old Testament scriptures in the New Testament, interpretation in later church history, actualization, and application.

The commentary provides ***sidebars*** on topics of interest that are important but not necessarily part of an explanation of the biblical text. These topics are informational items and may cover archaeological, historical, literary, cultural, and theological matters that have relevance to the biblical text. Occasionally, longer detailed discussions of special topics are included as ***excursuses.***

We offer this series with our hope and prayer that readers will find it a valuable resource for their understanding of God's Word and an indispensable tool for their critical engagement with the biblical texts.

Roger Hahn, Centennial Initiative General Editor
Alex Varughese, General Editor (Old Testament)
George Lyons, General Editor (New Testament)

AUTHORS' PREFACE

In the writing of this commentary, we have quickly discovered the enormity of the task at hand. Countless hours of thinking, conversing, reading, writing, editing, and proofreading went into this book. The journey of interpretation was filled with moments of desperation and great discoveries, with deep thinking about practical applications and challenges posed by this Gospel for the modern church, along with the painstaking process of formulating thoughts and wordsmithing.

Readers will see quickly that we have engaged a number of conversation partners along the way: Davies and Allison, Guelich, Gundry, Hagner, Keener, Luz, Nolland, France, and many others. There are likely places where their ideas have come through even unbeknownst to us. We hope that all this effort and all of these voices will help readers grasp Matthew's message better and that the book will serve the modern holy people of God in their mission.

We also hope that this commentary provides fresh insight into holiness themes in Matthew's Gospel. One important contribution that this Gospel makes for those in Wesleyan-holiness traditions is that purity of heart is inextricably linked to purity of action, both of which are enabled by the indwelling presence of Immanuel: God with us. It is our hope that you will see the various ways in which the holy God desires to form a holy people so that they might be light and agents of salvation to the sick, tormented, and marginalized.

We have also attempted to demonstrate how Matthew's presentation of Jesus is thoroughly shaped by the Scriptures of Israel and its traditions. Of all the Gospels, Matthew draws explicit attention to the influence of the OT. One can only understand Jesus as Messiah, Christ, Lord, and Son of Man in light of the OT, "so that the scriptures . . . may be fulfilled" (Matt 26:56 NRSV).

The issue of holiness and the influence of the OT on the NT has been a lifelong area of study for the editor of his commentary, Dr. Kent E. Brower, whose early research considered the influence of the OT on Mark's Passion Narrative, and his recent publications are dedicated to exploration of holiness and community in the NT. Dr. Brower was our PhD adviser. In our own doctoral research, we have examined the influence of various OT voices on the Gospel of Mark, its Christology, and ecclesiology.

As the authors of this commentary, we are delighted to dedicate this volume to our mentor and colleague, Dr. Brower. Much of our own thinking on holiness and intertextuality has been shaped by him, and it is our hope that this commentary reflects that profound scholarly influence. Any shortcomings in this area, or elsewhere, are, of course, the fault of the authors!

We also would like to thank our families, academic institutions, faith communities, friends, and colleagues for their continual support, encouragement, and insightful conversations.

Robert S. Snow and Arseny Ermakov
Calgary and Melbourne
Easter 2019

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

With a few exceptions, these abbreviations follow those in *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Alexander 1999).

General

→	see the commentary at
↔	intertextual relationship between two—usually—OT and NT texts
//	Synoptic parallel to
2T	Second Temple
2TJ	Second Temple Judaism
2TP	Second Temple period
Aram.	Aramaic
BCE	before the Common Era
bk.	book
ca.	circa, approximate time
CE	Common Era
ch	chapter
chs	chapters
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
esp.	especially
ET	English translation
etc.	*et cetera*, and the rest
Gk.	Greek
HB	Hebrew Bible
Heb.	Hebrew
idem	the same
i.e.	*id est*, that is
Lat.	Latin
lit.	literal; literally
LXX	Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)
MS	manuscript
MSS	manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text (of the OT)
n.	note
n.d.	no date
n.p.	no place; no publisher; no page
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
s.v.	*sub verbo*, under the word
v	verse
vs.	versus
vv	verses

Modern English Versions

KJV	King James Version
NEB	New English Bible
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

Print Conventions for Translations

Bold font	NIV (bold without quotation marks in the text under study; elsewhere in the regular font, with quotation marks and no further identification)
Bold italic font	Author's translation (without quotation marks)

Behind the Text:	Literary or historical background information average readers might not know from reading the biblical text alone
In the Text:	Comments on the biblical text, words, phrases, grammar, and so forth
From the Text:	The use of the text by later interpreters, contemporary relevance, theological and ethical implications of the text, with particular emphasis on Wesleyan concerns

Ancient Sources

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1—2 Sam	1—2 Samuel
1—2 Kgs	1—2 Kings
1—2 Chr	1—2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Job	Job
Ps/Pss	Psalm/Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs/ Song of Solomon
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

(Note: Chapter and verse numbering in the MT and LXX often differ compared to those in English Bibles. To avoid confusion, all biblical references follow the chapter and verse numbering in English translations, even when the text in the MT and LXX is under discussion.)

New Testament

Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom	Romans
1—2 Cor	1—2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1—2 Thess	1—2 Thessalonians
1—2 Tim	1—2 Timothy
Titus	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1—2 Pet	1—2 Peter
1—2—3 John	1—2—3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation

Apocrypha

Bar	Baruch
Jdt	Judith
1—2 Macc	1—2 Maccabees
3—4 Macc	3—4 Maccabees
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

OT Pseudepigrapha and NT Apocrypha

Apoc. Ab.	*Apocalypse of Abraham*
(Arab.) Gos. Inf.	*Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*
2 Bar.	*2 Baruch*
3 Bar.	*3 Baruch*
4 Bar.	*4 Baruch*
1 En.	*1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)*
2 En.	*2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)*
4 Ezra	*4 Ezra*
Jub.	*Jubilees*
Pss. Sol.	*Psalms of Solomon*
Sib. Or.	*Sibylline Oracles*
T. Adam	*Testament of Adam*
T. Dan	*Testament of Dan*
T. Iss.	*Testament of Issachar*
T. Job	*Testament of Job*
T. Levi	*Testament of Levi*
T. Sol.	*Testament of Solomon*

Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts

CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the *Damascus Document*
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
1QH	*Thanksgiving Hymns*
1QM	*War Scroll*
1QpHab	*Pesher Habakkuk*
1QS	*Rule of the Community*
1QSa	*Rule of the Congregation* (appendix a to 1QS)
1QSb	*Rule of the Blessings* (appendix b to 1QS)
4Q159	Ordinances
4Q164	Isaiah Pesher
4Q174	*Florilegium*
4Q242	*Prayer of Nabonidus*
4Q268	*Damascus Document*
4Q521	*Messianic Apocalypse*
11Q20	*Temple Scroll*
4QMMT B	*Miqṣat Maʿaśê ha-Torah* (Some Observances of the Law)

Eusebius

HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*

John Chrysostom

Hom. Matt.	*Homiliae in Matthaeum*

Josephus

Ant.	*Jewish Antiquities*
J.W.	*Jewish War*

Pliny the Elder

Nat. Hist.	*Natural History*

Rabbinic Texts

m. ʾAbot	*Mishnah Avot*
b. B. Meṣ.	*Babylonian Bava Metziʾa*
b. Bek.	*Babylonian Bekorot*
b. Ber.	*Babylonian Berakot*
m. Ber.	*Mishnah Berakot*
m. Git.	*Mishnah Gittin*
m. Ned.	*Mishnah Nedarim*
b. Šabb.	*Babylonian Šabbat*
m. Šabb.	*Mishnah Šabbat*
m. Sanh.	*Mishnah Sanhedrin*
m. Šeqal.	*Mishnah Sheqalim*
Midr. Qoh.	*Midrash Qohelet Rabbah*
Sop.	*Masekhet Soperim*
y. Taʿan.	*Jerusalem Taʿanit*
b. Yebam.	*Babylonian Yebamot*
b. Yoma	*Babylonian Yoma*

Tacitus

Ann.	*Annals*

Contemporary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.*
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*

BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCT	Chalice Commentaries for Today
DJG	*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*
DNTB	*Dictionary of New Testament Background*
DOTP	*Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
EDEJ	*Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HvTSt	*Hervormde teologiese studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JATS	*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCP	*Jewish and Christian Perspectives*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MAJT	*Mid-America Journal of Theology*
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDB	*New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PG	Patrologia graeca
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift* für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

Greek Transliteration

Greek	***Letter***	***English***
α	*alpha*	*a*
β	*bēta*	*b*
γ	*gamma*	*g*
γ	*gamma nasal*	*n* (before γ, κ, ξ, χ)
δ	*delta*	*d*
ε	*epsilon*	*e*
ζ	*zēta*	*z*
η	*ēta*	*ē*
θ	*thēta*	*th*
ι	*iōta*	*i*
κ	*kappa*	*k*
λ	*lambda*	*l*
μ	*mu*	*m*
ν	*nu*	*n*
ξ	*xi*	*x*
ο	*omicron*	*o*
π	*pi*	*p*
ρ	*rhō*	*r*
ρ	initial *rhō*	*rh*
σ/ς	*sigma*	*s*
τ	*tau*	*t*
υ	*upsilon*	*y*
υ	*upsilon*	*u* (in diphthongs: *au, eu, ēu, ou, ui*)
φ	*phi*	*ph*
χ	*chi*	*ch*
ψ	*psi*	*ps*
ω	*ōmega*	*ō*
ʽ	rough breathing	*h* (before initial vowels or diphthongs)

Hebrew Consonant Transliteration

Hebrew/ Aramaic	***Letter***	***English***
א	*alef*	ʾ
ב	*bet*	*b*
ג	*gimel*	*g*
ד	*dalet*	*d*
ה	*he*	*h*
ו	*vav*	*v* or *w*
ז	*zayin*	*z*
ח	*khet*	*ḥ*
ט	*tet*	*ṭ*
י	*yod*	*y*
כ/ך	*kaf*	*k*
ל	*lamed*	*l*
מ/ם	*mem*	*m*
נ/ן	*nun*	*n*
ס	*samek*	*s*
ע	*ayin*	ʿ
פ/ף	*pe*	*p; f* (spirant)
צ/ץ	*tsade*	*ṣ*
ק	*qof*	*q*
ר	*resh*	*r*
שׂ	*sin*	*ś*
שׁ	*shin*	*š*
ת	*tav*	*t; th* (spirant)

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INTRODUCTION

Matthew's place in the biblical canon as the first Gospel signals its importance for the early church. Its authoritative status was supported by the traditional belief that Matthew, an apostle of Jesus, composed his story first among other Gospels. Early church fathers paid particular attention to Matthew: the first Gospel was "most widely read, commented upon and used in patristic writings" (ACCS 1a:xxxvii). The first few generations of Christians learned the stories of Jesus' life from Matthew (ACCS 1a:xxxvii). Unique discourses in Matthew—such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, the Birth Narratives, the Beatitudes, and so forth—are deeply engrained in Christian discourse and thinking.

The church noticed the distinctive character of Matthew's Gospel early on. Each of the four Evangelists was given an allegorical symbol to capture his unique perspective. They corresponded to four mythical creatures from Ezek 1:10 (also Rev 4:6-8). Matthew was represented by "the winged creature with a face of a man." Irenaeus of Lyon (ca. 130-202 CE) explains this choice by Matthew's representation of Jesus. For him, the symbol of the divine man represents the emphasis on Christ's humanness: "This, then, is the Gospel of His humanity; for which reason it is, too, that [the character of] a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel" (*Against Heresies,* 3.11.8). Modern scholars might disagree with this assessment but unanimously agree on the distinctiveness of Matthew's voice. This commentary attempts to capture the first Gospel's special character and communicate it to a contemporary Wesleyan reader.

With the arrival of modern biblical criticism—with its drive to reconstruct "early Jesus tradition"—the Gospel of Matthew lost its preeminent place in theological scholarship because scholars believed that it reflects later Christian traditions. Despite this shift in scholarly interests, the Gospel of Matthew continues to play an important role in the life of the church and brings its distinctive voice into the conversation about Jesus, the kingdom of heaven, and the holy people of God. Its emphasis on communal living, cruciform mission, and formation of Christian identity enriches the dialogue that is taking place within a new generation of holiness people. This commentary invites us to hear what Matthew has to offer.

A. Title

The earliest manuscripts bearing the name Matthew come to us from the fourth century CE (though portions of the Matthean text appear in papyri $\mathfrak{P}^{64/67}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ dated by early second and third century CE). Codex Sinaiticus, for example, simply refers to the Gospel as *kata matthaion* or "according to Matthew." Fifth-century manuscripts add *euangelion* or "gospel" to the title. Thus, the name of the book—as we have it now—was not given by the author himself but derives later from the period of formation of "the fourfold Gospel canon" (*NIB* 8:106) and is modeled on the introductory line from Mark 1:1. But other scholars disagree (Hengel 1985, 64-84; Turner 2008, 11-13), arguing that the inscription emerges as soon as other "gospels" appeared (Bauckham 2006, 304).

The word "gospel" or "good news" (Gk. *euangelion*) was originally used to refer to proclamation of royal news: birth in the family, ascension to the throne, victory in the battle, and so forth. In the OT, *euangelion* refers to the good news of YHWH's return, victory over his enemies, and liberation of his people (Isa 52:7). In early Christian literature, the word refers to the announcement of the inbreaking kingdom of God and salvific work of Christ, his death and resurrection. "Gospel" is also used to identify a genre of early Christian writing—akin to ancient biography—that recounts and interprets the events of Jesus' life and his teachings.

B. Author

As with the title, identification of the author comes from later Christian tradition and its attempt to connect the text with an eyewitness and the apostolic tradition. Eusebius mentions that out of the twelve apostles only Matthew and John have left "written memorials" and have done so "under the pressure of necessity" (*HE* 3.24.5). He also notes that Matthew preached among Jewish people and has composed his Gospel in Hebrew (*HE* 3.24.6).

This assertion is based on the witness of Papias, the bishop of Heirapolis (second century CE), whom Eusebius quotes later: "So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and everyone interpreted them as he was able" (*HE* 3.39.16). What are these oracles (*logia*)? Do they represent the Gospel as we have it now? Or are they detached recollections of Jesus' teaching? What does the phrase *Hebraidi dialektō* mean? Hebrew/Aramaic language or Jewish style of writing? Does *hērmēneusen* mean "translate" or "explain/interpret"? Donald Hagner suggests Papias' statement could be interpreted as a reference to a collection of sayings of Jesus in Aramaic that were later translated and used by other Gospel writers (2012, 196). However, a possibility remains that Papias' testimony is inaccurate altogether (France 1989, 66).

Modern scholarship raises questions about the provenance and authorship of the Gospel. Several factors are at play: ambiguity of ancient witness, the lack of concrete historical data, and even modern bias against church tradition. Moreover, some studies of the Matthean text do not support early assumptions. For example, there is no strong evidence that the existing Matthean text is a direct translation from the Hebrew/Aramaic original.

The almost universal assumption by scholarship of Markan priority (Mark written before Matthew) makes it easier to imagine Matthew using and correcting Mark rather than Mark's omission of 50 percent of Matthew's text and awkward correction of Matthew's Greek. In comparison with Mark, Matthew demonstrates "a consistently clearer, more concise and correct, use of Greek" (Johnson 2010, 166).

Scholarship is also divided on whether the Apostle Matthew is behind the Gospel. There are arguments to support Matthew's authorship as well as to question it. However, we don't have clear historical evidence to support either claim.

Whatever is the answer to the question of the historical identity of the author, one might agree with J. K. Brown that it "is not essential to the interpretation of the First Gospel" (*DJG*, 575). Taken on its own terms, the Gospel of Matthew appears to be anonymous; nowhere does the text *explicitly* reveal the identity of its author.

Richard Bauckham recognizes the complexity in attribution of the Gospel. Although references to "Matthew" as "the tax collector" in 9:9 and 10:3 do not provide a strong case, he suggests that they "could either be a pseudepigraphal claim to Matthean authorship or could reflect a role that the apostle Matthew actually played in the genesis of the Gospel" (2006, 302). In any case, the writer of the Gospel leaves his fingerprints everywhere in the text. This makes it possible to reconstruct a portrait of the implied author emerging from the narrative. According to Eugene Boring, the person who looks at his readers from the text is a teacher of the church that has Jewish background and uses Greek as his first language; perhaps a Jew who grew up in a Hellenistic city. The writer knows enough Hebrew for biblical interpretation and

Aramaic for everyday communication. He is familiar with rabbinic traditions and methods of interpretation. He knows the Jewish Scriptures well and appeals to them constantly; the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) is his text of choice (*NIB* 8:106-7).

C. Date and Location of Composition

Dating the Gospel of Matthew is complicated and often speculative. Historical evidence is limited. Three issues need to be considered: the literary relationships among the Synoptic Gospels, the fall of Jerusalem, and the usage of Matthew in early Christian writings (*DJG*, 576). In the past, scholars tended to date the appearance of the text in the first half of the second century mainly on the basis of the appearance of Trinitarian language (28:19) and the usage of *ekklesia* translated as "church" (16:18; 18:17).

However, this position has been abandoned since early Christian writings already demonstrate familiarity with the Matthean text (such as the *Didache*, the Letters of Ignatius, and the Gospel of Peter). Currently, scholars date Matthew in the second part of the first century CE; the dates range from 58 to 95 CE (*DJG*, 576). However, the "majority consensus" places Matthew between the mid-70s to 90 CE because, first, Matthew uses the Gospel of Mark as his source, thought to be composed in the late 60s CE (see Brower 2012, 27-28). Second, confrontation with the Pharisees (23:1-36) and the conflict between synagogue and *ecclesia* (10:16-23) is reflective of the situation within formative Judaism after the destruction of the temple (Brown 1997, 217).

Location of composition is also hard to ascertain. The traditional view places Matthew somewhere in Palestine since it was believed that the Gospel (or parts of it) was first written in Hebrew and among the Jews. That could fit well with some of Jewish features of the Gospel, such as the usage of Aramaic and attention to Jewish traditions and the Hebrew Scriptures (France 1989, 91-92).

However, Palestinian origins of the Gospel have been abandoned in favor of the idea that Matthew has composed his story of Jesus in Syria, specifically, Antioch. Some arguments for this location had been suggested. First, a sizable Jewish diaspora in this Hellenistic city could serve as a backdrop for engagement with Jewish traditions and conflicts in the Gospel. Second, Antioch is also known as one of leading Christian centers and some early documents that refer to Matthew are related to that church (Ignatius and possibly the *Didache*). Third, the usage of good Greek as well as Hebrew/Aramaic could fit in the multilingual context of this metropolis. Finally, Matthew adds "Syria" to the Markan description of the extent of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:39 / Matt 4:24); this also could be interpreted as reference to the location (Brown 1997, 212). However, other places—such as Alexandria, Transjordan, Jerusalem, Tiberius, and even Sepphoris—have also been suggested (*DJG*, 576; France 1989, 93).

D. Sources

The answer to the question about written sources is predicated upon one's view of the relationship among the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The Two Source Hypothesis is most popular, postulating that Matthew and Luke used Mark and an unknown source (Q) to compose their Gospels. According to this theory, Matthew draws upon several written sources.

First, Matthew uses the Gospel of Mark that was written earlier (in the 60s of the first century CE) and had been in circulation among early Christian communities. Overall, Matthew closely follows Mark's text in chronology and language. However, he makes a few editorial changes: improves Greek expressions, omits or changes certain passages (for example, Matt 12:22-37 / Mark 3:20-30), demonstrates a reverent attitude toward Jesus (for example, Matt 8:23-27 / Mark 4:35-41), and highlights the magnitude of miraculous events (Brown 1997, 204-5).

Second, Matthew also shares material with Luke that is not found in Mark. Scholars identify this document as a collection of Jesus' sayings and call it Q from the German word "quelle," which simply means "source." Both Matthew and Luke incorporate and adapt Q material in the light of their narratives and theological perspectives (*NIB* 8:95). Vivid examples of that are found in comparing two versions of "the Sermon on the Mount" (Matt 5:1—7:27 / Luke 6:17-48; 11:1-13).

The existence of this hypothetical source has been questioned. Mark Goodacre, for example, explains the presence of common material by Lukan dependence on and redaction of Matthew as well as having access to independent traditions (2002). He offers a revamped version of Farrer-Goulder hypothesis that finds no need for Q in a solution for the Synoptic problem: Matthew used Mark and Luke used both for composing his Gospel (Goodacre 2001).

Third, the Gospel also contains material that is found nowhere else. The most evident examples are Matthew's birth narrative (chs 1—2), stories about Peter (14:28-31; 16:17-19; 17:24-27), and insertions into the passion stories: Judas's death (27:1-10), the dream of Pilate's wife (27:19), washing hands and the crowd's response (27:24-25), events following Jesus' death (27:51-53), and the guards at the tomb (27:62-66; 28:11-15).

Fourth, Matthew uses OT scriptures as a source in a variety of ways (→ G. Matthew's Use of the Old Testament for more detailed explanation).

Older hypothesis of textual dependence attempted to explain the existence of the final form of the Matthean text on the basis of *written* sources. This approach often underestimates the place and interconnectedness of memory, orality, and literacy in the formation and preservation of the Gospel traditions. These days, *oral tradition* and *oral history* increasingly receive attention in NT studies. Scholars, reacting to the results of form-critical inquiry, have explored different avenues: the relationship between orality and writing

(Kelber 1997; Botha 2012); the place of individual and social memory in the formation of the Gospels (Dunn 2003; Rodriguez 2010; McIver 2011); and the role of eyewitness testimony (Byrskog 2000; Bauckham 2006). The issues of transmission and the spread of oral traditions have also not escaped scholarly attention (Gerhardsson 1998; Bailey 1995).

Scholars have reassessed the process of the formation of the Gospels in light of the practices of memorization, eyewitnessing, oral performances, and passing on of knowledge that were widespread in the ancient—predominantly oral—culture (as an opposite to our modern, text-based or even screen-based culture). Studies have highlighted the reliability of memory and oral traditions in preserving and transmitting knowledge. At the same time, they have uncovered the interplay between stability and fluidity, the relationship between individual and social memory, and the complexities related to remembering, eyewitness interpretation of events, construction of a testimony, oral performances, accommodation of change, and deliberate alterations. Moreover, the fact that formation, transmission, and then recording of oral tradition was influenced by many factors and belong to a variety of interconnected contexts, adds to the complexity of the issue at hand.

In that light, the Synoptic Gospels are envisaged to be based on memories of Jesus, his teaching and actions that were passed down by word of mouth from eyewitnesses to the next generation of his disciples (Dunn 2003, 125-32). Bauckham also claims that traditions about Jesus have originated with particular eyewitnesses whose names were preserved and who played the role of moderators and guarantors in the process of its transmission. The twelve apostles—from the center in Jerusalem and through the network of communities around the empire—played a major role in spreading and controlling oral tradition (2006, 290-357).

Scholarly discussion around oral tradition helps to understand that the Gospels did not appear in a vacuum but in the wider context of communal life of early Christianity and arose out of its oral practices. The Gospels not only contain oral tradition but are actually embedded in it and its performance in the early church. This is how evangelists knew stories about Jesus in the first place (Rodriguez 2010, 27-31). Perhaps similarities and differences among the Gospels could be explained by sharing and performing oral tradition.

As with other models of explanation of the genesis of gospel texts, the models of oral tradition have their limits. We don't have access to oral performances. This forces scholars to reconstruct orality on the basis of clues we get from the written text, which in turn creates a circular argument. Moreover, we can only speculate about particular circumstances, social contexts of transmission, and the length of transmission chains (in comparison to rabbinic ones). We do not know to what extent the evangelists used oral tradition, their memory, and written sources in the composition of the Gospels. Appearance of the written Gospels in their final forms at the early stages of Christian history also raises questions about the place, importance, and limitations of oral tradition (Eve 2013, 177; see also Hurtado 2014, 321-40).

E. First Readers

The issue of the first audience for Matthew is a complicated one; scholars had not often been able to provide a compelling argument (Vine 2014, 202-7). Although the Gospel could have been written to the wider church in *oikoumene* (Bauckham 1998*b*), it does not alleviate particular concerns Matthew raises by his editorial work. And one of these is the relationship between the Matthean audience and synagogue.

The text presupposes that some of Jesus' disciples still follow Jewish traditions and participate in synagogue life (10:17; 23:2-3; 24:20). Moreover, the early Christian community finds itself caught in a dramatic change within formative Judaism as it emerges in the wake of devastation of Jewish war and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.

While other groups disappeared or dramatically weakened, the Pharisees and their scribes took leadership in shaping and reconstructing the religious life of faithful Jews. Establishment of the center of rabbinic teaching in Yavneh/Jamnia (Palestine) played an important role in projecting the Pharisaic vision for post-temple Judaism (but see discussion on historicity of Yavneh movement in Collins 1997, 3-5; Lee 2001, 206-15). The rabbinate have gradually consolidated power over synagogues and started drawing lines between "normative" Judaism as they understood it and the rest, "Their treatment of the Jewish Christians was in line with this general policy: they tried to exclude them from the synagogues and to persuade other Jews to ostracize them in social and even in commercial life" (Alexander 1999, 6).

Jewish followers of Jesus the Messiah found it hard to fit into that program and adjust to the rising domination of the Pharisees. In response, they provided an alternative vision and fostered their own sense of identity, structures, rules of communal life, and teaching based on Jesus' tradition (see Matt 18; *NIB* 8:100-101).

The signs of alienation and conflict with forming rabbinic Judaism are scattered across the text of Matthew. Drawing lines between "my church" (16:18) and "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34; see 10:17) culminates in identifying "the Jews" (28:15) as a separate group. The leaders of the disciples are called to behave in ways opposite of the rabbis of the time (23:4-12). Matthew's unique material emphasizes the divide even further: the scathing critique against the Pharisees and scribes (23:1-36) and the rejection of the Messiah by the religious leadership and the crowd (27:15-26).

On the rabbinic side of the conflict, the composition of *Birkat-ha-minim* (a curse on heretics) and its inclusion among the Eighteen Benedictions (Jewish public prayer) in the first century CE illustrates the struggle further. A later Palestinian recension of the prayer also included *notzerim* (Nazarenes or Christians) as an explanatory gloss on *minim* (Alexander 1999, 8-9). The church fathers took this prayer as an attack against Christians (*NIB* 8:100; also see Stanton 1992, 142-45, for a cautious treatment of the prayer in Matthean studies).

In this context of rising tensions, Matthew's first readers represent the Jewish *ecclesia* under persecution from the wider Jewish community. Though far from the complete "parting of the ways," the Christian community is in the time of transition—gradually departing from forming rabbinic Judaism and reorienting itself to the Gentile mission (see Saldarini 1994; Sim 1998).

However, these emerging differences and separation do not imply complete severing of ties or do not suggest anti-Semitism. For Matthew, the identity of the *ecclesia* is deeply rooted in Jewish faith. It is the God of Israel who is behind the Gospel story and assures his continued presence with the believers: "God with us" (1:23). Jesus the Messiah is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1), and the "king of the Jews" (2:2).

The twelve apostles—the new leaders of God's people—will judge "the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28) and part of their mission is to proclaim the good news of God's reign to all "towns of Israel" (10:23), thus claiming authority over all of Israel (Schnackenburg 2002, 7). Their mission and self-understanding are rooted in the overall narrative and intentions of Hebrew Scriptures. The message is clear: Matthew's church—embracing both Jews and Gentiles—is the new holy people of God gathered around Jesus the Messiah on the mission of God in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

F. Matthew's Narrative

There have been some major shifts in understanding over the past sixty years on what constitutes a Gospel beginning with an approach known as form criticism in the mid-twentieth century. In this approach, the sayings and deeds of Jesus have been randomly placed by the Gospel authors because there is little evidence of creativity and intentionality in the ordering and presentation of their written form. This approach is clearly not with the final form of the text, but rather with the oral or written traditions from which it was composed. Therefore, Matthew's organization of the individual stories is likened to the process of stringing together pearls on a string.

For advocates of this method, much of the Gospel material does not tell us about the historical Jesus. Rather, on the basis of several criteria, one must distinguish between texts that reflect the beliefs and experiences of the early church and those that provide us with firm historical insight into the ministry of Jesus.

Recent scholars argue that the alleged tension between *the Christ of faith*, as that which in the Gospels is a product of the early church, and *the Jesus of history*, as that which actually can be traced to Jesus himself, is overdrawn. Scholarly consensus has shifted and now scholars place more emphasis on the final form of the biblical text. Even a prima facie reading of Matthew, Mark, or Luke indicates that these are carefully structured pieces of writing and are not just a series of randomly placed stories. This is evident in the assessment of Jack Kingsbury:

> The Gospel of Matthew is a unified narrative, or "artistic whole." The story it relates is governed, as will be seen, by a single, overarching "evaluative point of view." Moreover, the action, thought, and interactions are all organized by means of a coherent plot. This plot has a beginning, middle, and artful ending. (1988, 1-2)

This method of interpreting the Gospels is known as narrative criticism.

A narrative approach distinguishes between the grammar of a story and its discourse. Story grammar refers to the constituent parts of a story, such as settings, characters, plot, and resolution. In Matthew's Gospel, there is an overarching narrative that describes the birth of Jesus, his Galilean ministry, and then the plot dramatically slows when recounting his final days in Jerusalem culminating in the Messiah's crucifixion followed by his resurrection. This overarching narrative is made up of a variety of individual stories each of which have their own unique settings, characters, plot, and resolution, all of which develop Matthew's theological themes.

The discourse of a narrative is concerned with how the author tells the story. In Matthew, this is evident, for example, in the way he describes the characters, his ordering of the oral discourses and mighty deeds of Jesus, his use of unique terminology, and his use of the OT. Since Matthew's implied audience is composed of Christian communities with a predominately Jewish constituency and emerging Gentile presence, he will tell the story of Jesus in a way that makes Jesus' ministry relevant to this mixed audience and their experiences.

Many scholars agree that Matthew's audience not only is made up of Jew and Gentile alike but also is the object of non-Christian Jewish hostility. These Jewish detractors are likely those who refuse to accept that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, such as the Pharisees who came to prominence after the temple's destruction in 70 CE. The vitriolic language of Jesus in Matt 23, which he directs toward the scribes and Pharisees for moral and religious corruption, is in some way connected with this hostility. It also bolsters the faith of Matthew's community to persevere as they know that Jesus himself dealt with such things from the same group of people. This is just one example in which we see the influence of Matthew in the way that he recounts the story for the sake of his audience.

We also see Matthew's influence in his emphasis on the Jewish and royal lineage of Jesus. This is abundantly evident in the introduction to the genealogy that highlights his royal and ethnic heritage: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). As we will see throughout the commentary, Matthew describes the identity of Jesus and his ministry in such a way to draw out his royal and Jewish status.

Some narrative-critical studies devalue the role of the historical world of the biblical text in favor of a strict emphasis on its literary and narrative features. But there is no reason to draw a hard line between history and literature. To study Matthew as a narrative does not obviate insights that come from the text's historical world either from the time that Jesus ministered or the time during which Matthew's text was composed. So, where appropriate, this commentary considers relevant layers of history whether it be the Second Temple or rabbinic periods. Matthew is still an ancient text, written to an ancient audience, during an ancient time, in an ancient place.

G. Matthew's Use of the Old Testament

One only has to read the first two chapters of Matthew to see why those responsible for the arrangement of the books of the NT in the third and fourth centuries of the church placed Matthew at the beginning. No less than five times in these chapters do we encounter the formula quotation, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet" (see 1:22), which expresses that Jesus and the events surrounding his birth fulfill OT prophecy. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah who comes in fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. Matthew quotes larger sections of the OT compared with Mark and Luke; see, for example, the longer quotations from Deuteronomy in Matthew's account of Jesus' temptation (4:1-11) compared with Luke's (Luke 4:1-13). There are many echoes and allusions to the OT in Matthew that underscore the formative role of the OT in his Gospel.

The scholarly term often used to refer to such analysis is known as intertextuality, which is defined as "any given use of language [in our case, Matthew's text] is intelligible only because and in terms of its *interconnection* with prior uses and understandings of its constituent metaphors, concepts, images, symbolic worlds, and terminology" (emphasis added; Soulen and Soulen 2011, 87). The prior uses for us are contained in the OT texts to which Matthew refers.

That Matthew uses the OT in his story of Jesus is obvious, but the ways in which the OT functions in his Gospel is much less clear because he doesn't always appear to evoke it in a consistent manner. For example, the first OT quotation is from Isa 7:14, found in Matt 1:23. The sign of Immanuel in Isa 7 is a symbol of judgment that will come upon Judah for Ahaz's refusal to ask Yahweh, the Lord, for a sign (see vv 16-17). However, Matthew presents the proclamation of the angel to Mary, that she will name him Jesus because "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21), as the fulfillment of Isa 7:14. For Matthew, the sign of Immanuel, or God being with his people, is now fulfilled in Jesus who brings salvation for Israel whereas for Isaiah, several centuries before, the sign represented judgment that is to come upon Judah for Ahaz's disobedience in not requesting a sign. How are we as interpreters to make sense of Matthew's new understanding of Immanuel?

Another example that scholars have pondered is Matthew's statement that when Jesus and his family settle in Nazareth this "fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene" (Matt 2:23*b*). The problem here is that the OT does not associate the Messiah with Nazareth, let alone state that he would be called a Nazarene. How are we to understand Matthew's comment?

Our last example is found in Matt 8:17. Here Matthew links the fulfillment of Isa 53:4 ("He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases") with the healing ministry of Jesus who exorcised many demons "with a word and healed all the sick" (Matt 8:16*b*). Although this is the fullest quotation of Isa 53 in the Synoptic Gospels, there are other echoes of this text elsewhere in Matthew but only in relation to the passion of Jesus. But here there is no hint of his suffering. Rather, this section of the Gospel, Matt 8—9, recounts his mighty deeds and acts of power as Yahweh's anointed. What are we to make of the difference between the context of this OT quotation in Matt 8:17 with the content of the quotation itself?

Many of Matthew's quotations and allusions to the OT are much clearer in the contribution they make to Matthew's presentation of Jesus. However, in order to get the most from his use of the OT, it is crucial to adopt a clear method and to define clearly the terms that we use in this commentary.

1. *Quotation*: an explicit reference to an OT text that begins with "it is written" or "this was to fulfill." The examples discussed above, Matt 1:23 and 8:17, are such quotations. When analyzing quotations in Matthew, we will consider two items: (*a*) the differences in terminology between the version Matthew quotes and that of his source text, that is, the LXX, which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, or the Masoretic Text, which is the Hebrew text of the OT; and (*b*) the significance of the literary context of the OT passage that Matthew quotes to determine any unstated thematic correspondences between the literary context of Matthew's citation and the literary context of the OT citation itself (Hays 1989, 20).

2. *Allusion*: a reference to an OT text by means of two or more terms embedded in Matthew's text. Once it is clear that Matthew is referring to a specific OT text in a passage, the interpreter must determine how much of the context of the OT text contributes to our understanding of its use in Matthew. Hays accurately notes that "as we move farther away from overt citation [into allusions], the source recedes into the discursive distance, the intertextual relations become less determinate, and the demand placed on the reader's listening powers grows greater" (1989, 23). This serves as a helpful reminder that more than one terminological correspondence is necessary between Matthew's text and the one he evokes so interpreters can establish an allusion with a higher degree of probability.

3. *Echo*: a much broader category that refers to more than one passage that may be at work behind a Matthean one not because the author intentionally refers to them but rather because his mind is so furnished with the scriptural imagery of the OT that he unconsciously uses it. Some scholars refer to this as "influence" in which one or more OT passages have influenced the author's mind but there are no explicit terminological connections.

Since allusions and echoes are more difficult to identify and to determine what meaning they provide for the narrative context in which they appear, an example of an allusion and then an echo might help clarify our approach. First, an allusion to Elijah the prophet is evident in Matthew's description of John the Baptist in 3:4: "John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey." Since Matthew and his audience know the OT Scriptures so well, he evokes Elijah as the framework through which to view John by means of terminological correspondences with 2 Kgs 1:8 [LXX], in which the same terms are used to describe part of Elijah's clothing, specifically, "leather belt" and "his waist." Jesus confirms this allusion later in Matthew when he speaks of John as Elijah: "But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands" (Matt 17:12). In light of these things, Elijah the prophet has returned in the person of John the Baptist.

An echo of the OT Scriptures is evident in the phrase "forty days and forty nights" that denotes the period of Jesus' fast in the Judean wilderness (4:2). In Exod 34:28, Moses is with the Lord on Sinai "for forty days and forty nights" and he did not eat or drink (see Deut 9:9). The prophet Elijah was also without food and drink for the same period of time several centuries later (1 Kgs 19:8). Beyond fasting, the connection between Jesus and Moses or Jesus and Elijah is not strong, although both Moses and Elijah fast in a wilderness setting.

Perhaps the strongest echo is Israel's wilderness wandering in which they spent not forty days but forty years in the wilderness (Num 14:33). Since Israel was in the wilderness so that the Lord could test them (Deut 8:2-3), and that Satan now comes to Jesus likewise in the wilderness to test him (Matt 4:1), this echo seems to be the strongest. Since there are a number of instances where the time frame of forty is used in the OT and that more than one background is informative, Matthew's use of it here functions as an echo.

H. Matthew's Key Theological Themes

1. Matthew's Christology

Jesus and his identity are at the center of the Matthean story. A multitude of voices offer their answer to the question: "What kind of man is this?" (8:27). While God the Father affirms Jesus as the beloved Son (3:17; 17:5), his opponents claim that he is possessed by Beelzebul (12:22-27). While John the Baptist confesses that he is "not worthy to carry" Jesus' sandals (3:11), the Pharisees (9:3) and the high priest call him a blasphemer (26:65). While the disciples recognize his messianic identity (16:16), the religious leaders slander him for being a friend of "tax collectors and sinners" (9:11). While pilgrim crowds announce him to be "the Son of David" (21:9), Jerusalem crowds perceive him as a prophet from Galilee (21:11). Jesus' own confessions (16:13; 24:36-37; 26:64) and secrecy around revealing his identity (8:4; 12:16; 16:20) add to the enigma of this divisive figure.

Matthew offers his vision right from the beginning: Jesus is the Messiah (Son of David), Son of Abraham, and the Son of God (see Matt 1). The evangelist connects these titles with Jesus' mission, his relationship with the people of God, and his divine identity; these play an important role in the developing drama of Matthean Christology. By means of narrative Christology—through titles, words, and deeds—Matthew leads the readers in unraveling the mystery. Like the Twelve, they are taken on a journey of discovery of who Jesus truly is.

a. The Messiah (the Son of David, the King of the Jews)

At the outset of the story, Matthew announces that Jesus is the Messiah (Gk. *Christos*—"Anointed one") who belongs to the royal house of David through Joseph's line (1:6, 16). He is a descendant of the legendary king David to whom God has promised an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam 7:1-17). The birth narratives utilize the titles "Messiah" and "Son of David" extensively (Matt 1:1, 16-18; 2:4) and even include the title "king of the Jews" (2:2) to highlight this.

Matthew illustrates what kind of Messiah Jesus is through the rest of the Gospel. Jesus exercises his messianic authority in healings (9:27-31; 20:29-34) and exorcisms (12:22-23; 15:21-28). The summary of the Messiah's deeds includes purification, resurrection, and proclamation of the good news (11:2-6). Jesus the Messiah brings salvation (1:21) and restoration to the people of God (15:29-31). But there is more.

The scene of Christ's entry to Jerusalem is filled with messianic sentiments and expectations (21:1-11). Jesus, the Son of David, enters the royal capital and exercises extraordinary authority over the temple by driving away traders, performing healings, and teaching in the holy place (21:12-17, 23-27). Here in Jerusalem, Jesus redefines the messianic notion even further—the Son of David also has a divine identity (22:41-45).

Peter's confession is a turning point in the narrative where recognition of Jesus as the Messiah by the disciples (16:13-20) is coupled with Jesus' prediction of his own suffering and death (16:21-23). From now on, the Twelve have to come to terms with the idea that suffering is the key aspect of the Messiah's mission. The title "Messiah" consistently appears throughout the Passion Narrative and is referenced by the high priest (26:63), the members of Sanhedrin (26:68), and Pilate himself (27:17, 22).

The Passion Narrative draws heavily on Isa 53 and the Psalms of the righteous sufferer to demonstrate that the suffering and death of the Messiah are divinely sanctioned. The title "the king of Jews" reappears again in the final scenes: where Herod failed (Matt 2:2), the Romans succeeded (27:11, 29, 37, 42). The King of the Jews takes up his throne—the cross; this is how redemption, restoration, and liberation of the people of God come to fulfillment.

b. Son of Abraham and Son of Man

The relationship between the Messiah and the people of Israel is a key aspect of Matthean Christology. He embodies faithful Israel and represents the people of God. Through direct citations and allusions, Matthew evokes scriptural traditions of corporate personality to describe Jesus' identity. From the beginning, Jesus is called "the son of Abraham" (1:1), which connects Jesus with the people of God. But for Matthew, Jesus is more than just a Jew; as the Messiah he represents the people of God. Matthew's unique story of the escape and return from Egypt perfectly illustrates the point (2:13-23). Jesus has repeated the path of the people of God and fulfilled the prophecy of Hos 11:1 about Israel: "Out of Egypt I called my son." Jesus reenacts the story of Israel. At the baptism (Matt 3:13-17), Jesus aligns himself with "the people of Jerusalem and all of Judea" and later acts on their behalf (*DJG*, 581).

In the temptation episode, Jesus also reenacts Israel's Exodus experience (4:1-11). After forty days in the desert—unlike the historical people of God—Jesus emerges as the faithful one. The theme of faithfulness and corporate representation continues in the Passion Narrative. Matthew employs the imagery of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isa 53) in picturing Christ to drive the point home—Jesus fully commits himself to the divine will and dies for and on behalf of the people of God (Matt 1:21; 20:28).

The representation of faithful Israel is also highlighted by the usage of "the Son of Man" language (10:23; 16:27-28; 24:30-31; 26:64) with its allusions to Dan 7 where a human-like figure represents Israel (*DJG*, 581). Thus, for Matthew, in suffering and vindication of the Son of Man, new Israel gathered around the Messiah has been vindicated (Wright 1992, 291-97).

c. Son of God (Immanuel, Lord, Wisdom)

From the beginning, Matthew identifies Jesus as "Immanuel"—"God with us" (Matt 1:23). But the coming of Jesus is not just a sign of the God's kingdom breaking in. The birth narrative is clear—Jesus himself is the embodiment of YHWH's presence. The conception and birth of Jesus from the Holy Spirit (1:18-25) presents the mystery of incarnation; Jesus' divine sonship is rooted in this act of divine intervention. The Son of God is not just manifesting the divine presence and actions through his ministry of proclamation and deeds of power (doing what the God of Israel promised to do) but he himself is God incarnate.

That disclosure of divine identity takes place throughout the whole Gospel narrative: the divine voice at the baptism (3:13-17), stilling the storm (8:23-27), confronting evil cosmic powers (8:28—9:1), offering forgiveness of sins (9:2-8), raising the dead (9:18-26), walking on water (14:22-32), Jesus' transfiguration (17:1-8), and the apocalyptic scenes of enthronement and universal authority (25:31-32; 26:64). Moreover, the motif of the continual divine presence in Christ bookends the whole story: In Christ, God is with his people (1:23) and will continue "to the very end of the age" (28:20).

Apart from the narrative disclosure and using the Son of God title, Matthew consistently refers to Jesus as "Lord." In Jewish tradition, the Hebrew word *adonai* and the Aramaic *maryah*—both meaning "Lord"—served as a deferential substitution for the divine name YHWH. These helped to avoid pronouncing the name of God during the reading of scripture (Hurtado 2003, 109). In Matt 3:3 "the way for the Lord" (or YHWH; see Isa 40:3) has been interpreted as a reference to Jesus (see Matt 1:22). Here and in other instances, Matthew appropriates and redefines the title "Lord" (Gk. *kyrios*) to highlight Jesus' divine identity. To drive the point even further, the evangelist also places the title in the explicit scenes of worship where people prostrate (*proskynein*) themselves before Christ in recognition of his divinity (4:9-10; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 14:32-33; 18:26; Hurtado 2003, 338).

Matthew also appropriates wisdom traditions to illustrate the divine identity. In 2TJ, personified Wisdom was portrayed as a heavenly being who existed before the creation of the world and could dwell on earth among human beings (1 En 42; Wis 6:12—11:1; Sir 24:8-12; Bar 3:37). Matthew evokes this tradition in relation to Jesus in ch 11 (see also 23:34-39). The statement from 11:19, "But wisdom is proved right by her deeds," equates the deeds of Messiah (11:2-6) with that of Wisdom; Jesus is divine Wisdom herself (France 1989, 303-5; see also Douglas 2016).

In Jesus, the divine Wisdom dwells among the people of God. The chapter also continues to evoke wisdom tradition in different ways (*DJG*, 580): the motif of hiddenness and revelation (Job 28; Wis 9↔Matt 11:25-27); the call to come (Sir 24:19↔Matt 11:28); to rest (Sir 6:287↔Matt 11:28); not to be weary (Wis 6:14↔Matt 11:28) and to accept the yoke (Sir 51:26↔Matt 11:30): "Put your neck under her [Wisdom's] yoke, and let your souls receive instruction" (NRSV).

Matthew's narrative Christology employs a variety of titles, scriptural motifs (Suffering Servant, righteous sufferer, wisdom, etc.), and stories to paint a comprehensive picture of Jesus' identity. Matthew goes far beyond "the gospel of Jesus' humanity"; even the language of Son of Man is no mere reference to his humanness but also to an elevated status in the heavenly realm (see 24:30-31; 25:31-46; 26:64). The references to his divine identity are hard to miss. At the end of the Gospel, the main question "what kind of man is this?" receives its answer. Jesus, the exalted and victorious Messiah, the Son of God, is the Lord over all nations and the entire universe (28:17-20).

2. Matthew's Community

a. Defining Identity

Matthew is often called "the gospel of the church." This highlights one of its key concerns—identity, mission, and the communal life of believers. For Matthew, the question "who is Jesus?" is followed by "what does it mean to be his followers?" These are inseparably connected. The notion of being a disciple is rooted in Jesus' identity, mission, and teaching; it is unashamedly Christ-centric and cross-shaped. Disciples—personally and communally—are those who are totally committed to Jesus, follow him, imitate his serving attitude, participate in the mission of God, and exhibit loyalty and obedience to God to the point of sacrificial self-giving (France 1989, 260-68).

Apart from discipleship language, Jesus also defines the community of followers in terms of household. They all are brothers and sisters who obey their heavenly Father—God (12:46-50). This is the new family as their real family ties might have been severed because of their commitment to Christ (8:21-22; 19:27-30). Matthew also abundantly uses imagery and language of the people of Israel to describe his community (10:1-15; 19:29). This highlights their identity as the reconstituted holy people of God who gathered around Jesus the Messiah and are bound to him by covenant relationship (26:26-29).

At the end of the Gospel, "The Great Commission" (28:17-20) recapitulates Matthew's vision of the church. It is a worshiping community gathered by and under the authority of the exalted Lord Jesus. He has sent and empowered it to participate in the mission of the Triune God—bringing people from all nations under the divine rule. The new people of God are also marked by living out Jesus' teaching, trust and faithfulness, and experience of his continual presence.

b. Patterns of Discipleship

By telling the story of Jesus' disciples, Matthew not only pursues historical interests but also demonstrates what it means to be a follower. A few interrelated patterns of discipleship emerge in Matthew's story. The first is the calling and empowerment of the Twelve for the mission of God. Jesus' call to follow him is inseparably connected with his ministry. Jesus' first proclamation of the good news (4:17) is followed by the calling of the first disciples (4:18-22): "Follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." The mission does not proceed without them; it is a communal affair. The call is then followed by commissioning and sending out (10:1-15). The Twelve are not just followers or helpers; they are given authority to confront the evil cosmic powers and to participate in the holistic restoration of the people of God. They have become the empowered agents of the kingdom and Jesus' co-workers. A pattern emerges: from fishermen to followers to apostles (Watts Henderson 2006, 31-94). Other disciples in the Gospel demonstrate a similar response to the salvific grace of God: healing is often followed by a desire to follow Jesus and proclaim the good news (9:27-31; 20:29-34).

Second, the response to follow Jesus is a costly one. It requires complete self-denial—leaving everything behind for the sake of Jesus' mission and the kingdom of heaven. This often involves severing family ties, abandonment of pursuit for material gains, and social status (19:27-30). However, this renunciation does not come unnoticed; Jesus, the exalted Lord, will reward those who have been faithful to him: they "will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (19:29). This reveals another pattern of discipleship: self-denial is followed by a reward.

Third, one has to be prepared to suffer and even die for the sake of Jesus and the good news: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (16:24). The mission of God is cruciform. Jesus shows the path for his disciples—suffer and die for others. Jesus' sacrifice was followed by resurrection and vindication. Here is the hope for the believers: the God of the living will bring his faithful to life and reward them at the time of great reversal in which "the last will be first" (19:30). Suffering and vindication are part of the pattern of Christian living.

Fourth, the disciples' misunderstanding is another motif that runs through Matthew. They constantly fail to grasp Jesus' identity and implications of his mission (13:51; 14:31; 16:12; 17:13). The revelation of divine mysteries is not always met with comprehension. At the same time, secondary characters in the story demonstrate perceptiveness of faith (20:29-34; 26:6-13). However, participation in the mission of God is not predicated on complete understanding of these truths; it is a journey of discovery, listening to God and learning on the way (13:11; 16:17; 17:5).

Fifth, the disciples' drive for positions of power and authority is met by Jesus' example and teaching on servanthood (18:10-14; 20:20-28; 23:1-12). Humble service and care for others is at the heart of this discipleship pattern: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (20:26).

Sixth, Matthew also shows that the disciples' faith is often mixed with doubt: uncertainty about Jesus' identity (8:26), the provision of God (6:30), and Jesus' bodily resurrection (28:17). The acts of worship, adoration, and realities of ministry are faced by people of "little faith"; it's a part of the discipleship story. An unwavering faith is not a prerequisite for following Jesus but is something to be nourished and cultivated, something to strive for (Donaldson 1985, 45).

Seventh, the theme of betrayal runs through the Passion Narrative: Judas' plot (26:14-16), Jesus' warning (26:21-25, 31-35), abandonment at Gethsemane (26:56), and Peter's threefold denial (26:69-75). All of the apostles, the closest disciples, abandon their Lord. But this grim scene of disloyalty, betrayal, and denouncement is balanced by the faithfulness of female disciples who follow Jesus to the end and witness his crucifixion (27:55-56). Faithfulness and betrayal mark another pattern of discipleship.

Eighth, the disciples' failure to remain loyal highlights the final motif. Even though the mighty pillars of the church might stumble and fall, and even denounce their Master, Jesus does not hesitate to offer forgiveness and reconciliation (26:32) and reinstate them for the mission of God despite lingering doubt (28:16-20). Thus, for Matthew, on the path of Christian discipleship, human failure is met with divine grace and restoration that is freely offered.

c. Communal Living

For Matthew, the life of the community is based on Jesus' example, teaching, and interpretation of Scripture. There are a few key elements in his vision of communal life. First, it is a community of *love*. Love toward God and neighbor are the central commandments for Jesus' followers (22:24-40; 19:19). The Sermon on the Mount takes it even further—the disciples are called to imitate God's perfect love by embracing and forgiving enemies (5:43-48). Second, it is a community that includes and empowers the marginalized—women, children, disabled, Gentiles, poor, and "sinners" (4:18-25; 8:1-17; 9:1-13, 18-34; 15:21-31; 18:1-5; 20:29-34; 26:6-14; 27:55-56; 28:1-10).

Third, it is a community of boundless mercy. Followers are called to practice limitless forgiveness toward each other since they have experienced the same from God the Father (5:38-31; 6:14-15; 18:21-35). Fourth, it is a community of servanthood. The leaders are warned against employing culturally driven tyrannical (20:25) or hierarchical (23:8-10) patterns of leadership (Donaldson 1996, 46). Instead, they should emulate Christ by serving "the little ones," taking care of the vulnerable and embracing the position of powerlessness (18:1-10; 20:20-28).

However, Matthew calls the community members to sobriety and watchfulness (18:8-9; 24:36—25:30). Love and mercy go hand to hand with justice that reflects God's character (*DJG*, 582). This sometimes plays out in shocking and unexpected ways (20:1-16; 25:14-46). Being a member of the new people of God does not release one from accountability and responsibility. Unlimited forgiveness cannot be used to justify abuse and cover up sins. The Matthean Jesus warns the disciples about the perils of failure to extend forgiveness, to remain faithful, to serve others, and to keep others from stumbling and to do the will of God (7:21-29; 16:24-27; 18:6-9, 21-35): "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven" (7:21). Believers have to keep in mind that Jesus is both the merciful Savior (1:21) and Judge (25:31-46). Matthew reminds his readers about the dialectic relationship between divine grace and judgment (Luz 1995, 132).

3. The Kingdom of Heaven

The kingdom of heaven is Matthew's language to talk about the reign of God. It is synonymous with "the kingdom of God" used by other gospel traditions. But unlike others, Matthew utilizes the Jewish circumlocution "heaven" (Heb. *shamayim*; Gk. *ouranos*) in reference to God. For the evangelist, this is not just a reflection of Jewish piety; he is making a theological point. This kingdom is radically different from earthly kingdoms and comes from the heavenly domain of God (see 6:4). This also underlines the fact that in the inbreaking of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry, heaven and earth are meeting together and divine rule is established in the human realm (Pennington 2007, 279-330).

As N. T. Wright and others have demonstrated, the notion of the kingdom of God is rooted in OT scriptures and 2TJ traditions (*DJG*, 471-72). Jews believed that the God of Israel will return to Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) to liberate and restore his people and rule as a king (e.g., Isa 40:1-10; Mic 4:1-8).

Jesus the Messiah enacted the traditions of YHWH's coming in his actions: restoring the people of Israel, overcoming cosmic powers of evil, journeying to and arriving at Jerusalem, establishing the new covenant at the Last Supper, and liberating the people of God through his suffering and death on the cross. Thus, Jesus has embodied YHWH's return and believed that the kingdom of heaven "was coming in and through his work" (Wright 1996, 651-52). Inauguration of the divine rule is taking place through Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, and his mission: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28).

The theme of the kingdom being established runs throughout the Gospel. In the beginning, John the Baptist and Jesus announce the arrival of the kingdom: "the kingdom of heaven has come near" (3:2; 4:17). The first part of the Gospel reveals the nature of God's reign: healings and forgiveness of sins point to holistic salvation (9:2-8; 15:30-31); befriending sinners and tax collectors—to hospitality (9:10-13); taking care of slaves, children, and women—to the transgressing of social and gender boundaries and reversing the pyramids of social power (8:5-13, 14-15; 9:18-25; 18:1-5; 19:13-15); confronting unclean spirits and religious authorities—to challenging power structures (8:21—9:1; 26:57—27:26); helping Gentiles—to demonstrating radical inclusion and challenging racial prejudices (8:5-13; 15:21-28).

The parables of the kingdom of heaven in Matt 13 reveal some of its mysteries. The notion of the kingdom is dynamic and often hard to grasp. Jesus explains that it has arrived but at the same time it is growing and spreading until it comes in its fullness (vv 31-33). As it is breaking into this world, different people react differently, and there are implications for accepting or resisting it (vv 1-8, 18-30, 36-43). And it is worthy of giving everything for its sake (vv 44-53).

In the second part of the Matthean narrative, Jesus vividly reenacts the Lord's appearance in the holy city and the temple and clashes with earthly powers that resist its arrival. In that conflict, Jesus, the King of the Jews, gives his life. This is a culminating point in ushering in the kingdom: death on the cross liberates the people of God from sins so that it can come in its fullness (Wright

2016, 219). Now people have been set free to live under God's rule. They are given power and authority—"the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (16:18-19)—to invite others into his domain (28:16-20), and to act in such a way as to disclose "in word and deed the character of the kingdom" (*DJG*, 475).

In this light, the Sermon on the Mount (5:1—7:29) is not a utopian picture of the future or simply an ethos for a new community. It is about a cruciform and missional way of being in this world (Wright 2016, 362-81). This is how the kingdom operates: through the new holy people of God who act as peacemakers, justice-hungry men and women, pure-in-heart followers, poor-in-spirit disciples, the merciful, the meek, and the martyrs. People who learn how to love, to embrace enemies, to selflessly give, to pray, to rely on God, and to suffer thus to embody a new righteousness and holiness (Wright 2016, 218). These are the new holy people of God—both Jews and Gentiles—who live under Christ's authority and through whose mission, life, and suffering "the saving rule of god will be brought to bear upon the world" (Wright 2016, 219).

I. The Commentary's Perspective

All studies of the Bible are guided by certain ways of reading the biblical text whether the interpreter/reader is aware of them or not. While there are a variety of ways the Bible is currently interpreted in the world of NT scholarship, two methods of biblical study will chart our course in this commentary on Matthew: narrative criticism and intertextuality.

The former considers Matthew as a story organized by means of an intentional structure and recounted through a variety of literary features. To refer to the text as a story does not mean that we are diminishing the historical and theological truthfulness of the events it contains, but, rather, we are advocating that Matthew communicates these things in the form of a narrative or story.

The latter, intertextuality, considers the correspondences between the text of Matthew and that of the OT whether they be quite overt, as in a quotation, or subtle, as in an allusion or echo. This is a crucial aspect of Matthean studies because the Scriptures for Matthew are not the NT writings but rather the OT, the source of his theological reflection on Jesus and the kingdom he inaugurates.

COMMENTARY

PART ONE: MATTHEW 1:1—16:28

Robert S. Snow

I. THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH: MATTHEW 1—2

A. The Genealogy of the Messiah (1:1-17)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus. This genealogy is selective, like genealogies in the OT (Davies and Allison 1988, 176-77). For example, Matthew has omitted three kings, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah between Jehoram (Joram) and Uzziah (v 8*b*; see 1 Chr 3:11-12). He also leaves out Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim between Josiah and Jeconiah (Jehoiachin). The omissions enable him to achieve an even fourteen generations between Abraham and David (Matt 1:17).

Biblical genealogies are not always concerned with the actual genealogical descent of a figure. Rather, they reveal the significance and identity of an individual (Huffman 1992, 255). For example, the number fourteen by which Matthew structures his genealogy is the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew: "Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah" (v 17). Another anomaly, in contrast with ancient genealogies, is Matthew's bold inclusion of four named women. This irregularity has theological significance for our understanding of God's saving purposes now revealed in Jesus Messiah.

IN THE TEXT

■ **1-17** Although not evident in the NIV, the first two words of Matthew's Gospel in Greek read "book of origin" or "book of beginning" (*biblos geneseōs*). In Gen 5:1 of the LXX, the same phrase introduces the genealogy of Adam, which is a subtle connecting point between Matthew's Gospel and the OT. His genealogy not only refers to a list of Jesus' ancestors but also, in light of the meaning of "genesis" ("origin" or "beginning"), it points to the origin of Jesus himself, perhaps implicitly like John 1:1.

Since Gen 5:1-32 recounts primeval material about the creation or beginning of Adam and Eve, among other things, "Matthew might have opened his gospel as he did in order to draw a parallel between one beginning and another beginning" (Davies and Allison 1988, 150). Through this evocation, Matthew elevates the birth of the Messiah to a cosmic level: just as the author of Genesis recorded the origins of the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, Matthew now speaks of another creation, a new creation, which is the Messiah himself!

Messiah

Matthew immediately identifies Jesus as "the Messiah" (1:1). The Greek word for Messiah is *christos*, from which we get the English word "Christ." Christ is not a surname for Jesus but functions as a title denoting a specific function. The root of the corresponding Hebrew word for *christ* means "anointed," and, in the OT, kings and priests were anointed for their respective vocations. Christ/Messiah as a title refers to Jesus' royal vocation to inaugurate God's reign on earth. This is similar to the functions of Israel's kings who would represent God's rule on earth by, for example, advocating obedience to the Mosaic law in order to maintain the status of Israel as a holy people. However, few of Israel's kings fulfilled this, and exile was the result (Deut 4:25-31).

During the time of exile and continuing into the 2TP, some segments of Judaism, such as the Pharisees and Essenes, expected God to anoint another human king to restore the nation. He does so in the person of Jesus, and Matthew's Gospel reveals what this restoration entails and how it will be accomplished. It is very different from what some groups were expecting, as we shall see.

In the second half of v 1, Matthew isolates two key figures in the history of Israel, **Abraham** and **David**. For Matthew, any consideration of the origins of Jesus must include Abraham, the father of Israel, and King David, Israel's greatest king. Here we see that Matthew has structured the first part of his genealogy around these two figures, as his concluding summary makes clear: **Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah** (v 17).

Exile and Messiah are the organizing principles. By beginning his Gospel in this way, Matthew introduces his readers to King Jesus, who will deliver Israel from exile, as opposed to lead them into it like his predecessors. As a true son of Abraham, Jesus will create a new Israel in the midst of whom the holy presence of the exalted Christ will remain forever (28:20*b*).

Matthew has structured his genealogy in three parts, each with fourteen generations, although there are only thirteen in the third part. Scholars have offered a number of proposals for the numerical symbolism (see Davies and Allison 1988, 161-65). The most popular is that fourteen is the numerical value of the Hebrew letters that make up David's name, *d+w+d* = 4+6+4 = 14. Assigning numerical significance to words was common in ancient times, known as *gematria* (see Rev 13:18).

Through the use of **fourteen**, Matthew has structured an orderly genealogical account demonstrating that the birth of Messiah Jesus is in strict accordance with God's sovereign plan to bring salvation to his people, delivering them from the pain of that past. Second, since fourteen is the numerical value of David—Israel's greatest king—King Jesus, who originates from David, will bring salvation as God's anointed. He will defeat his adversaries, albeit in a very different manner from the military might of old.

Comparing Matthew's genealogy with Luke's, one noticeable difference is the former's inclusion of women. Genealogies do not typically reference women, although there are exceptions (e.g., Gen 11:29; 22:20-24; 35:22-26; Davies and Allison 1988, 170). Matthew mentions four women, in addition to Mary: **Tamar** (1:3*a*), **Rahab** (v 5*a*), **Ruth** (v 5*b*), and Bathsheba (**Uriah's wife** [v 6]). Studying Matthew from a narrative-critical perspective requires readers to determine why he includes them.

Scholars have offered at least a couple of reasons: (1) All of these women are Gentiles: **Tamar** and **Rahab** are likely Canaanites, **Ruth** is a Moabite and Bathsheba is a Hittite. In Matthew's genealogy, all of these Gentile women are mothers who contributed to the genealogy of Jesus by bearing sons. If Gentiles can play a role in the origins of Jesus, maybe Matthew has included them as a foreshadow of those places in the Gospel where Gentiles become the recipients of the gospel and full-fledged subjects of God's reign inaugurated through his Messiah. (2) The moral behavior and/or stature of these women fall short of expected Jewish moral standards: **Tamar** seduces her father-in-law **Judah** (Gen 38); **Rahab** is a prostitute (Josh 2:1); Naomi commands **Ruth** to lie at the feet of **Boaz**, in which "feet" likely refers to his genitals (Ruth 3:4-8); and **David** commits adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11). Some argue, however, that David raped her (e.g., Davidson 2006, 89).

If God can use scandalous situations in the history of ancient Israel, which culminate in the coming of the Messiah, he can certainly work through this very present issue of a virgin who has conceived outside of her betrothed husband. The scandal is so serious that Joseph is contemplating divorcing her in secret because she has conceived outside of their sexual union.

FROM THE TEXT

During the ministry of Jesus, the most influential group of Jews are the Pharisees who fiercely maintain ritual purity and faithfulness to their oral law. This law is a series of additional laws to ensure obedience to the written Mosaic law. Their emphasis on purity ensures that they be holy as God is holy (Lev 20:26). The need to be set apart, which is what holiness meant to the Pharisees and most 2TP Jews, makes perfect sense given the ever-present profaning and paganizing influence of the Romans.

In Matthew's description of the origins of Jesus, we learn that God does not separate himself from human situations that are less than morally acceptable and ritually pure. In fact, these things culminate in the coming of Messiah Jesus. This trend continues when unclean Gentiles are the first ones to worship King Jesus (Matt 2:2); when God sends Mary, Joseph, and their child to an unclean land, Egypt (v 13); and when Jesus begins his ministry in the darkest place in the land of Israel, in the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali (4:13-16).

Holiness denominations have not always viewed the dark and sinful places of this world as opportunities for the reign of God to be made known, but rather have been busy adhering to certain moral codes that would separate them from such defiling places. Even at this early stage of Matthew's Gospel, it is clear that God uses scandalous situations for his saving purposes and does not shy away from entering into them so that redemption and salvation might come.

B. The Messiah as Immanuel (1:18-25)

BEHIND THE TEXT

Matthew begins this section with an introductory comment: "This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about" (1:18*a*). The Greek word for "birth" is the same for genealogy in v 1: *genesis*. A more accurate translation might be "this is how the origin of Jesus the Messiah came about." In vv 1-16, Matthew provides his readers with a macroscopic view of the origin of Jesus beginning with the well-known father of the Jews, Abraham. Now he dramatically narrows the focus of his lens on the origin of Jesus beginning with Joseph. In both cases, it is clear that God's hand is at work whether through his use of women of questionable moral character and ethnicity or the angelic visitations of Joseph providing him with the knowledge he needs for his next move.

God makes his plans known to Joseph through dreams (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19). Nolland thinks Joseph's dreams are related to the patriarchal ones in Genesis (20:3; 31:11, 24; 46:2; 2005, 96-97). This forms another connection with the first book of the OT. As Davies and Allison point out, "Dreams are frequently vehicles of divine revelation in the OT . . . and they remain so in the intertestamental period literature" (1988, 207). The NT, and especially Matthew, is no exception (see also 27:19). As a result of his first dream, Joseph "took Mary home as his wife" (v 24) and "gave him the name Jesus" (v 25*b*).

IN THE TEXT

■ **18-19** Matthew begins his microscopic account with conflict and tension, which actually characterizes the rest of his story: Mary is already with child before any sexual encounter with Joseph. Since he is a law-abiding Jew, he will divorce her. There are provisions in OT law for determining if a virgin who is pledged to be married has either intentionally committed sexual sin or has been raped in a place where no one could hear her screams (Deut 22:23-27).

Joseph wants to avoid the public trial where these things are determined, which would invariably **expose her to public disgrace** (Matt 1:19; Davies and Allison 1988, 204-5). Rather, he wants simply **to divorce her quietly**. He likely would have drawn up a certificate of divorce. Moses refers to this provision in Deut 24:1, which would preserve his status as a law-abiding Jew. However, Joseph is making these plans ignorant of God's will, which will soon be made known to him: Mary is pregnant by **the Holy Spirit** (Matt 1:18*b*).

■ **20-21** Matthew records the first of four divine visitations that Joseph receives, all of which ensure the protection of the defenseless child Messiah. **After** Joseph **had considered** his plan to divorce Mary, an **angel of the Lord** appears **to him in a dream** (v 20). The Greek word for the verb **considered** connotes thinking very carefully about an issue. This verb only appears three times in the NT, and its second instance is in 9:4, where Jesus castigates the scribes for "thinking evil in [their] hearts" (NASB). In both cases, intellectual musings occur outside of divine knowledge, and in both cases something suprarational occurs in response (→ 9:6).

For Joseph, an **angel of the Lord** appears revealing the divine plan that includes an explanation of Mary's pregnancy. He is not to divorce his wife **because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins** (1:20*b*-21).

Angel of the Lord

References to "the angel of the Lord" occur early in the OT, most notably in Genesis. The angel also appears to Moses in Exod 3. He is not distinct from God himself but is rather a manifestation of him (Exod 3:2 ff.; see also Judg 6:12-18). In later Jewish texts, angels become distinct (e.g., Zech 1:8-17) and are named by the time of the NT (e.g., Luke 1:26).

Not unlike the angel that appears to Joseph in Matthew, an angel of the Lord appears to Hagar, after she becomes pregnant, announcing to her that she will give birth to a son, she will name him Ishmael, and why she will give him this name. Although Matthew is obviously not quoting Gen 16:11 in Matt 1:21, the angel's words to Joseph reflect the same literary pattern. One of the major functions of the "angel of the Lord," whether the figure is the Lord's manifest presence or a separate divine figure, is to herald words of promise and blessing for the sake of the Lord's people.

Although Jesus is still not the biological son of Joseph, he is essentially legally adopted as Joseph's child and legitimately becomes "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1) (Hooker 1997, 27). Through his obedience, "Joseph, the Davidid, proves that he has made Jesus his own" (Davies and Allison 1988, 208). In the angel's proclamation, there is a connection between naming the child **Jesus** and his mandate of saving Israel from their sins (v 21).

The name *Jesus* is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means "Yahweh is salvation." Jesus not only heralds salvation but also is the means of salvation. This is evident at numerous points in Matthew (e.g., 8:25; 9:2; 26:28). His mandate is to rescue Israel **from their sins**, which may come as a surprise in light of Jesus' parting words to his disciples that they are to "make disciples of all nations" (28:19). A closer look at the Abrahamic covenant demonstrates that a movement from Israel to the nations is natural.

Israel's founding father, Abraham, receives a promise that "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Gen 12:2). Israel is God's nation that not only receives blessing from him but also is to be a blessing to "all peoples on earth" (v 3*b*). This is captured clearly in Isa 49:6*b* in God's words to the servant, who represents Israel: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." However, the effects of the fall were too much for the nation as she almost continually rebelled against God, eventually leading to her exile in a foreign land.

A number of scholars argue that despite Israel returning to the land after this period, she still languishes due to the presence of sin within the nation (Wright 2013, 139-63). Jesus' ministry, then, begins with his baptism demonstrating that he is a new Israel, without sin, and subsequently calls others to live under a new reign of God. His reign is inaugurated by his authoritative words and mighty deeds leading to the rescue of ethnic Israel from her sins. She will then become light and blessing to the nations (e.g., Matt 5:14).

■ **22-25** In the first of five fulfillment formulas, Matthew expresses that **all this** [the birth of Jesus] **took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us")** (1:22-23). In many discussions of this quotation, scholars focus on the discrepancy between Matthew's text, which reads **virgin**, and the Hebrew OT, which uses the term "young woman" instead (Isa 7:14 NIV n.). For a helpful discussion of the many issues surrounding this, consult Brown 1977, 144-50.

According to Brown,

> For both the MT [the OT] and the LXX [the Septuagint], . . . the sign offered by Isaiah was not centered on the manner in which the child would be conceived [i.e., from a virgin], but in the providential timing whereby a child who would be born precisely when that people's fortunes had reached their nadir. (1977, 149)

In other words, Matthew's major point in citing Isa 7:14 is that the birth of Jesus means that Yahweh is now with his people and not that his mother is a virgin.

The vocation of Jesus to save Israel from **their sins** is "a sign" (Isa 7:14*a*), to use Isaiah's language, of **Immanuel**. The figure in King Ahaz's day is a sign of judgment that will take the form of an Assyrian invasion because of his failure to rely upon God for deliverance from aggressive neighbors (vv 15-25). However, the sign appears to be transposed into one of hope in 8:10 forming a taunt to the Assyrians: "Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us." While the sign initially signifies judgment, in the next chapter, it is associated with salvation.

Matthew clearly interprets it as the latter, namely, through the birth and ministry of Jesus, Yahweh will save his people from their sins. Matthew appears to overlook the immediate literary context of his OT quotation in Isa 7. However, there is an unstated correspondence between Matthew's understanding of Immanuel and its transposition into a sign of salvation in Isa 8. Israel's Davidic hopes are now being fulfilled. Jesus Messiah inaugurates a reign that leads with salvation bringing light and hope to his wayward people (France 2007, 57). This is **God with us**!

FROM THE TEXT

This passage reveals what is of ultimate importance in Matthew's understanding of Jesus: he is salvation! Since, as Paul says, "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" (Col 1:19), we see the heart of God revealed in Matthew's Gospel. As followers of Jesus who are indeed sent into "all nations" (Matt 28:19), our message and deeds should reflect the mandate of Jesus himself to bring rescue and deliverance.

The Israel of Jesus' day is really not that much different from the plight of many people in our global society. Every day, people suffer the effects of economic, social, and spiritual oppression to which the gospel of Jesus Christ and its message of salvation bring hope and healing. In one of his homilies on Matt 1:23, John Chrysostom, a fourth-century church father, comments that the naming of Immanuel comes as a result of the multitudes witnessing the presence of God among his people in tangible ways (*Hom. Matt.* 5.2-3). While Chrysostom recognizes that God has been among his people in the past, it has never been so openly until now.