

**Ο ΚΛΑΥΘΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΒΡΥΓΜΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΟΔΟΝΤΩΝ: ITS FUNCTION  
AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEME OF APOCALYPTIC  
JUDGMENT IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

**By**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and has not previously been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

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## Abstract

On six occurrences (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:451 and 25:30), Matthew recorded Jesus pronouncing judgment utilising the idiom *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Although the majority of commentators acknowledge the uniqueness of this phrase, virtually none deal with its function within Matthew's gospel or theology. This gap in the literary landscape of Matthean literature marked the bifold rationale of this literary study, namely, to investigate the nature and function of this Matthean maxim, and consequently, seek to deduce its contribution to the theme of apocalyptic judgment in Matthew's Gospel.

Having established the literary milieu of Matthew's gospel (part 1), a diachronic analysis of the words *weeping* (κλαυθμός) and *gnashing* (βρυγμός) (part 2) revealed that although the individual terms were conventional, the phrase *en bloc* is a unique New Testament idiom disclosing a particular theological message. An exegesis of the six passages containing the phrase (part 3) revealed that each occurrence played a central role in Matthew's gospel, communicating an essential messages pertaining to the theme of apocalyptic eschatological judgment. The phrase likewise appears in structurally relevant sections, seemingly increasing in literary potency with each emergence. Moreover, the idiom is almost always uttered in the context of false disciples, who stand in total contrast to the righteous. In light of this, the expression *weeping and gnashing of*

*teeth* has four possible functions (part 4), namely, (a) a method or system by which the Evangelist hopes to make the message of the particular parable unforgettable, (b) a prophetic anticipation of an aspect of the larger shape of history, (c) a linguistic device, which increases the degree of emphasis or heightens the force given to the message of eschatological judgment, and (d) a literary connector that holds together a number of specific passages of Scripture. In Matthew's case, the phrase glues together the passages that communicate a holistic theology of eschatological judgment.



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 RATIONALE.....	1
1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....	4
<b>CHAPTER 2 PRELIMINARY STUDIES -- STRUCTURAL, LITERARY, THEMATIC.....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	9
2.2 THE GENRE CLASSIFICATION OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW .....	9
2.3 AUTHORIAL RATIONALE .....	22
2.4 LITERARY STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE.....	41
2.5 MATTHEW'S THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES .....	47
2.6 THE THEME OF JUDGMENT IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL .....	67
2.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	88
<b>CHAPTER 3 WORD STUDIES.....</b>	<b>91</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	91
3.2 ΒΡΥΓΜΟΣ -- DIACHRONIC RANGE OF USE.....	94
3.3 ΚΑΛΥΘΜΟΣ -- DIACHRONIC RANGE OF USE.....	101
3.4 THE METAPHORICAL USE OF ΟΔΟΝΤΕΣ IN THE BIBLE.....	109
3.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION .....	112
<b>CHAPTER 4 EXEGESIS OF SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES .....</b>	<b>113</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	113
4.2 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 8:5-13 .....	114
4.3 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43 AND 47-50 .....	132
4.4 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 22:1-14 .....	158
4.5 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 24:45-51 AND 25:14-30 .....	186
4.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	227

<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>239</b>
5.1 A BRIEF REITERATION OF THE PROBLEM .....	239
5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS.....	239
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	246
<b>WORKS CITED .....</b>	<b>249</b>

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 RATIONALE**

With the conceptual theological developments yielded by redaction critical studies, Matthean scholars began to distinguish categorically the author not merely as a writer with surface theology, but as an editor with a precise message (Hagner 1993:liii) and design (Green 2000:30). For a more holistic understanding of Matthew's theology, a careful analysis of his sources and redactional *modus operandi* was conducted frequently. Within this framework, an assortment of unique themes of Matthean theology began to emerge. For example, redactional scrutiny disclosed that (a) the fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven (Hagner 1985:ix), (b) the peculiarly rich and complex use of the Old Testament (Carson, Moo and Morris 1992:84), and (c) the authors special use of "worship language" (Nolland 2005:42) are all unmistakably some of Matthews's favorite themes. The accentuation on the theme of eschatology, it seems, is likewise emphatic in Matthew (Mounce 1998:4). It is from this emphasis that the research question is born.

As the number of authors recognizing the editorial nature of Matthean authorship steadily increased, relationships between ultimate purpose and sub-themes or theologies (to communicate the message) began to emerge. Witherington went as far as to conclude that Matthew "very likely saw himself as primarily an editor or redactor, not an author"

(1994:343). Gundry argues that although Witherington's sentiments are somewhat overstated, "by focusing on how Matthew consistently edits his sources, one can observe some of his emphases, which in turn helps one interpret more obscure passages in the light of his whole Gospel" (in Keener 1999:12).

Matthean scholars and authors of several high quality commentaries (e.g., Hagner 1993; Guthrie 1996; Keener 1999; Drane 2001; Bruner 2004; Nolland 2005; France 2007; Turner 2008) have recognized that Matthew places unambiguous emphasis on eschatology. Hagner for instance (1993:lxiii) suggests that Matthew genuinely has interest in eschatology and that the apocalyptic thread runs throughout the entire gospel. Guthrie (1996:n.p.) similarly attributes eschatological interest as one of the key characteristics of the gospel. In fact, he makes it very clear that the words of Jesus cannot be divorced from His eschatological interest.

However, although several studies have focused on the broader theme of eschatology and apocalypticism within Matthew (especially the prominence of chs. 24 and 25), only a few have further identified the evangelist's focus on judgment within this theme and its implications on Matthew's macro-theological constancy. Two contemporary authors recognizing this thematic thread are Mounce (1998:4) and Hagner (1993:lxiv), both correctly commenting that Matthew not only accents divine judgment but he also highlights its inevitability and seriousness.

On further investigation and analysis of Matthew's eschatological discourse, as it stands intertwined with the theme of judgment, one is struck with the author's recurrent use of the idiom ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων ("weeping and gnashing of teeth"). In fact, this phrase appears seven times in the synoptic gospels; six times in the gospel of

Matthew (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:45<sup>1</sup> and 25:30) and only once in the gospel of Luke (13:28). The majority of commentators certainly acknowledge the unique nature of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, but virtually none deal with its particular function in Matthew's gospel or his theology. It is from this gap in the literary landscape of Matthean literature that this study hopes to contribute towards.

## 1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

### 1.2.1 The Main Problem

Matthew is not a haphazard, hit-and-miss writer, but one with a distinctive purpose, rationale and theology. The essential belief of contemporary redactional investigation is that Matthew's gospel is carefully designed, with smaller literary units cautiously and purposefully arranged to communicate a specific message. It stands to reason therefore that Matthew carefully constructed his writing on both macro and micro levels. This consideration then makes it likely that the writer was attempting not only to communicate something through his repeated use on the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, but also had precise purpose(es) and a specific function(s) as well. It is from this hypothesis that the research question originates, namely, *what is the nature and function of the phrase "weeping and gnashing of teeth," and what contributions does it make to the theme of apocalyptic judgment within the gospel of Matthew?*

### 1.2.2 Key Questions

The success of this thesis hinges on the accomplishment of the following five subsidiary questions:

1. What is the broader literary context of Matthew's gospel, and how does the theme of judgment fit such a design, especially in terms of Matthew's apocalyptic language?
2. What is the *characteristic disposition* of both the individual word units (ὁ κλαυθμός, ὁ βρυγμός and ὁ δόντων) and the expression as a whole (ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὁδόντων), in relation to the structure, thematic emphases, and general theological thought pattern of Matthew's gospel?
3. What is the *meaning* and *connotation* of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὁδόντων in the gospel of Matthew?
4. What is the primary *purpose* and *function* of the expression ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὁδόντων within the literary context of Matthew's gospel?
5. What thematic contributions do *weeping and gnashing of teeth* passages make to the broader theme of judgment in Matthew's gospel?

### 1.2.3 Hypothesis

The phrase ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὁδόντων is a literary device, by which the Evangelist hoped to call attention to the perceived reality of the final judgment in the minds of his hearers.

## 1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 1.3.1 Research Design

This study falls within the field of biblical exegesis, an “in-depth, inductive examination of Scripture in which the exegete systematically applies established hermeneutic tools (exegetical methods) to discover the meaning and implications of a text of a biblical text

(or group of texts)” (Smith 2008:169). In light of this, solving the main problem will require five major steps. First, the study will commence with focus on issues pertaining to the literary context and nature of the gospel of Matthew. Then, it will examine the theme of judgment in relation to discoveries of the preceding step. Next, it will analyze the connotation and denotation of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων in its literary context, followed by an exegetical analysis of the six Matthean passages containing the phrase. This will hopefully yield clues as to the nature and function of the phrase in the context of Matthew’s gospel. Lastly, it will summarize the research and commence with implications for biblical theology.

Therefore, a complimentary partnership between textual (exegesis) and lexical analysis forms the core procedural framework of this thesis. The mode of reasoning of this study is therefore predominantly inductive, attempting to produce a basic theory for understanding of the significance of a relatively frequently used expression within the corpus of Matthean literature.

### **1.3.2 Research Methodology and Tools**

In order to ascertain both the nature and function of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων in Matthew’s gospel, a more precise description of the four design steps follows.

**Step 1--** To better understand the context of Matthew’s gospel, the first undertaking of this study is the careful analysis and investigation of various preliminary issues, such as the genre classification, authorial rationale, literary structure (on both a micro [pericope] and macro [gospel] levels), and unique Matthean theological emphases.

Next, attention must shift to the theme of judgment within the thematic and structural framework of Matthew's gospel. This will demand a brief literature review of significant works on apocalyptic eschatology in the last century, followed by a concise survey of judgment pericopes in relation to Matthew's five-discourse literary structure.

Finally, to better grasp the strength of the theme of judgment in Matthew's gospel, the chapter concludes with a brief analysis of Matthean expressions pertaining to apocalyptic judgment. This section will require the application of a combination of discourse, content and redactional analytical tools, as necessary.

**Step 2** -- This section shall commence with a detailed diachronic analysis of the terms κλαυθμός and βρυγμός. In other words, the section seeks to explore firstly the meaning (connotation and denotation) of each term as employed in both extra-biblical and biblical literature (LXX and NT), and secondly, to observe the semantic range of meaning of these words within the proposed literary corpus.

The term ὁδόντων requires a different approach, namely, a survey of biblical imagery (both Testaments) containing the metaphorical use of ὁδόντων.

These two aforementioned steps will produce a tentative understanding of the connotation and denotation of the complete apocalyptic expression, ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὁδόντων.

**Step 3** -- Once the semantic range of usage of the individual words and the possible meaning of the phrase as a whole is perceptible, an inductive exegetical analysis of the six Matthean pericopes (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:45 and 25:30) follows. Each pericope analysis will follow this structure: (a) determination of the discourse unit, (b) analysis of textual variants, (c) form, structure and redactional considerations, (d) verse-



by-verse exegesis, and finally, (e) conclusions and contributions of the phrase to the broader theme of judgment. The conclusions yielded from such investigation will then assist in determining the conscious, speaker and/or author-intended nature and function of the phrase within Matthew's gospel. This section requires the utilization of three analytical tools, namely, discourse, rhetorical and redactional analysis.

**Step 4** -- Once the above steps and questions receive thorough investigation, the study finally concludes with a summary of the research findings.

### **1.3.3 Convictions and Presuppositions**

I shall research and present the following thesis from the perspective of the following five personal and doctrinal perspectives.

- The Scriptures (66 books of the Reformed Bible) are the inspired word of God and inerrant in the autographs.
- The primary goal of exegesis is to discover the *conscious* author-intended meaning, with the Holy Spirit leading the writing process to ensure that the intended message is communicated in writing.
- The text has only one primary, timeless, author-intended meaning, but many applications of that meaning. The goal of the exegetical (grammatical-historical) chapter is to strive to discover that meaning.
- The historical Jesus and the Jesus of the gospels is the same person.
- Mark wrote his gospel first, which both Matthew and Luke utilized (along with sources Q and L) in the compilation of their gospels (two-four source hypothesis).

All things considered, Guthrie's (1996) comments describe wholly the sentiments expressed in this study:

Before dealing with these problems it is best to form some estimate of the gospels in the form in which they have been transmitted, for there can be no doubt that they have exercised a profound influence on Christian thought quite independently of any critical assessment of them. This approach differs from that of some modern schools of criticism which begin with certain presuppositions which affect the value of the extant gospels ... the present treatment is based on an assumption that it is the gospels themselves and not their sources or origins which have molded Christian history, and that the latter must be approached by means of the former.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PRELIMINARY STUDIES -- STRUCTURAL, LITERARY, THEMATIC**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is a discussion and analysis of numerous foundational literary aspects within the gospel of Matthew, such as purpose, structure, genre, writing style, narrative techniques and distinctive theological perspective(s). Once the above matters are carefully considered, the remainder of the chapter shall focus on the Matthean theme of judgment, as it relates to the literary structure of his gospel, and the broader theme of apocalyptic eschatology. In short, the purpose of this chapter is to recognize the author's narrative and theological *web*, so as to probe the relationship between Matthew's literary style (purpose, structure and rationale) and one of his major theological emphasis (eschatological judgment of the wicked).

#### **2.2 THE GENRE CLASSIFICATION OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

What kind of document did Matthew think he was writing? Is the genre of the gospels unique or "are there parallels which may have provided a pattern for their generic" (Guthrie 1996:17)? Hypotheses regarding the genre classification of the gospels are in no

short supply.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the majority of scholars (e.g., Carson, Moo and Morris 1992; Stanton 1992; Keener 1999; Nolland 2005) stand in virtual consensus on the following tenet: accurate exegetical and interpretive work depends to a large degree on accurate discussion about genre. As Tate (1997:151) correctly observed, “a familiarity of genre, sub-genre, conventions, and strategies by which the author engages the reader must receive as much consideration as the world behind the text.” In other words, accurate interpretation of Matthew’s literary category is a vital step in accurately interpreting the Evangelist’s gospel message.

However, gospel genre classification is no easy task, primarily because “the issue is not merely a question of labeling but of interpretation as well” (Collins 1995:239). What’s more, type studies appear emphatically interconnected with purpose, structure and theology. What seems to compound the problem is the rich mixture of literary types present in the gospels as a whole. As George (2001:19) points out, the gospel of Matthew contains biographical data (e.g. 1:1-17), narrative (e.g. 4:1-11; 14:22-33) and prophecy (e.g., 16:21). Major discourses including the Sermon on the Mount (5-7) and the Olivet Discourse (24:3-25:46) also make significant contributions to the text.

In current discussions, there are two ideas as to the meaning of genre. Talbert (1988:54) explains:

On the one hand, there are those who use genre for classifications that have no necessary ties to a particular social matrix that is limited by time and space: e.g., tragicomedy, parable, fantasy. On the other hand, others speak of genre in the sense of literary grouping tied to a particular time, place, and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> The dispute concerning the genre of the gospels dates back to the Enlightenment, with the work of Kerman Samuel Reimarus and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (Collins 1995:239).

milieu: e.g., romance, aretalogy, Greco-Roman history, ancient Mediterranean biography.

This section of the study is concerned with the latter connotation.

Most scholars agree that the genre of Matthew's gospel is somewhat multifaceted in character. Some view Matthew (and the other gospels) as unique, inimitable and matchless literary types created by the church with the purpose of "sharing their own faith in Jesus, and used in the celebration of Christian worship and in the missionary endeavor of inviting others to follow him" (Darne 2000:n.p.). Others are convinced that "while possessing some unique features, the Gospels share enough features with other works of the ancient world to be placed in the genre of these works" (Carson, Moo and Morris 1992:47), such as a type of ancient biographical writings.

What is the most plausible gospel genre hypothesis then? "If we are to take the genre of Matthew seriously (as we must), an exigent corollary follows: Matthew's gospel must be set in first century literary context and the literary conventions of the most closely related ancient writings must be considered carefully" (Stanton 1992:61-62). Stanton's sentiments frame the layout of this epigrammatic section, as a brief exposition of the two most popular genre classifications follows below, namely (a) Jewish midrash and (b) biographical writings or gospel.

### **2.2.1 Jewish Midrash**

Some interpreters (e.g., Goulder 1974; Gundry 1982; Miller 1990) have attempted to correlate the gospel of Matthew and Jewish midrash. "In Jewish midrash, biblical stories are sometimes retold with elaborate, edifying embellishments" (Nolland 2005:21).

Gundry (1982) advocates this view,<sup>2</sup> believing that Matthew “midrashically” used his sources, and overstated the gospel tradition with unhistorical ornamentation (especially Q material that has been designated as M material [e.g., birth narratives of Matthew cps. 1 and 2]). He (p. 629) explains that “Matthew did not write entirely reportorial history. Comparison with midrashic and haggadic literature of his era suggests that he did not intend to do so.” A few pages later, he justifies his conclusions by further stating that Matthew’s readers would not interpret his midrash historically, for “history mixed with nonhistory is still an acceptable mode of communication; ... unhistorical embellishment can carry its own kind of truth alongside historical truth” (p. 631). Cunningham and Bock (1987:157) elaborate on Gundry’s view: “Gundry suggests that sometimes Matthew created stories as reflections on historical events and other times he modified the authentic traditions and made them contradictory to the historical picture represented by Mark and Q.” Or, as Carson understands Gundry’s conclusions, Matthew adds non-historical touches to historical material, sometimes creating stories ... to make a theological point (Carson 1984:39).

In light of the view that Matthew is midrash, Nolland (2005) brings in the required balance, by explaining that inasmuch as midrash might engage the arrangement of an edifying theological elucidation of Jesus, Matthew’s gospel could be said to fit the type (broadly speaking). “His Jewish writing style and his way of echoing of biblical and wider Jewish tradition are also reminiscent of Jewish midrash. But Jewish midrash is also characterized by embellishment of the core biblical narrative with accounts of imagined events provided to illustrate some truth or another. There is very little in the gospel of Matthew that invites comparison with midrash in this sense (p. 21).

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<sup>2</sup> For a thorough discussion and critique of this view, see France 1981. For a more forceful critique of Gundry’s position on Matthew as *midrash*, see Cunningham and Bock 1987.

Hagner's (1993:lviii) observation is likewise noteworthy at this point, as he distinguishes and elaborates on the broader and narrower meaning of this genre classification:

In Jewish literature, it [the view that Matthew is Jewish midrash] came to refer specifically to the interpretation of Biblical texts. In its broader meaning, when applied to Matthew, it refers to the setting forth of an edifying, theological interpretation of Jesus in, or under the form of, historical narrative. In its proper, more restricted meaning, midrash refers to such 'historicizing' done in connection with specific OT quotations.

With this distinction in mind, it is therefore very clear that Matthew, to some extent, displays a certain 'midrashic' mode of retelling narratives. However, this cannot be pressed too far. As Keener (1999:22) points out, "that Matthew interprets Jesus in light of the Old Testament is clear, but Matthew also interprets Old Testament record in light of Jesus." In other words, Matthew was not a creator or distorter of tradition, but rather an interpreter of his sources. Interpretation does not mean automatic non-historical distortion or historically baseless composition of narratives.

A careful validity analysis of this view as represented by Gundry is not necessary. A few strong objections will suffice. Guthrie (1996:19) raises two difficulties. Firstly, Gundry sometimes applies the term *midrash* to the entire gospel, and other times only to parts of it; this inconsistency causes confusion. Secondly, it is unlikely that there was such literary practice in approaching Jewish history. Carson (1984) concurs with Guthrie's second point and makes a number of crucial auxiliary observations. He recognizes the semantic shift within Judaism, with respect to midrash. Rejecting the view represented by Gundry, he explains that only by the fourth century A.D. had midrash developed a more specialized meaning akin on what Gundry refers. Carson (p. 40) concludes that Gundry

cannot legitimately appeal to midrash as a well defined and recognizable literary genre in the first century; available evidence only supports this from the fourth century onwards.

France (2001:25) raises two additional objections. He points out that even if such literary practices were common in non-Christian Judaism, it would be unwise to presuppose that Matthew felt it appropriate to follow them. Moreover, “it should be clearly recognized that a delight in tracing scriptural connections and an intention to relate historical fact are not mutually exclusive.” He continues, “to conclude that Matthew’s text is full of subtle allusive references to the Old Testament is not *ipso facto* to conclude that the stories it tells are the product of imagination” (p. 25).

Although the above objections are not exhaustive, they certainly demonstrate the inadequacy of the view that Matthew is midrash.

As long as Matthew’s *embellishments* are not viewed as purposeful distortions of history, or inadvertent inaccuracies, “but as homiletical embroidery of traditional material of a kind widely accepted in Matthew’s day, charges of error are unfounded,” concludes Moo (1983:31). Simply stated, “midrashic” tendencies do not automatically point to non-historicity. Therefore, it is not necessary to spend any more time demonstrating that the gospel of Matthew does not fit the gospel genre of midrash comfortably. Keener’s (1999:22) observations serve to conclude on the hypothesis that the gospels are midrash:

That Matthew interprets Jesus in light of the Old Testament is clear, but Matthew also interprets the Old Testament record in light of Jesus; indeed, has Matthew been creating infancy narratives about Jesus to match Old Testament messianic texts, he usually could have chosen better texts to start with and create stories that matched them better. Matthew customizes his account to show fulfillment of prophecy, but this is not the same as creating events from whole cloth. Matthew is more interested in interpreting tradition than creating



it. Many scholars thus point out, against other scholars, that it is too simplistic to define Matthew's narrative as midrash.

### 2.2.2 Biographical Writings (Gospel)

This view is *perhaps* the most widely held genre hypothesis at present. This brief outline serves as an apologetic for this view.

Readers throughout history understood the gospels as biographies, notes Keener (1999:17). However, some have challenged this view in the earlier part of the twentieth century, attempting other categorizations (e.g., folk literature, community rule, apocalypse, church liturgy). Yet, the wheel has seemingly turned full circle, as various prominent contemporary scholars (e.g., Stanton 1974;<sup>3</sup> Aune 1987; Burridge 1992) steadfastly deem the gospels a form of Graeco-Roman biography, but with some distinction as well as parallels. Analysis of these differences is unnecessary for the purposes of this chapter. However, it is essential to commence this brief section with a brief synopsis of the most influential scholarly work concerning the genre of the gospels, namely, Richard Burridge (2004).<sup>4</sup> He reflects on the context of the rationale for his study: "It is of crucial importance that either the biographical hypothesis be given a proper scholarly footing or else exposed as a false trail" (1995:24). An outline of his methodology and conclusion follows.

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<sup>3</sup> Although Stanton now views the gospels as a form of ancient biographical writings, it was not always the case. He (1992:64) explains that initially, he believed that the gospels are different from biographical writings in a number of significant ways.

<sup>4</sup> *What are the gospels? a comparison with Graeco-Roman biography*, was originally published in 1992 as a revision of Burridge's doctoral thesis. The second edition of his work was published in 2004, where all ten of his chapters underwent minor revisions. The only major change is the additional chapter, in which Burridge engages with various reviews and relevant scholarly debates. Stanton (1992:64) predicted that this will remain the standard discussion on gospel genre classification for a long time to come. He has been proven correct in this prediction, as no other work on the topic has been undertaken in such detail.

In his first chapter, Burridge surveys the various attempts to solve the problem of gospel genre over the last century and a half, writing that although similarities exist between the gospels and ancient biographies, no satisfactory answer has yet satisfied scholarship as a whole. Burridge explains (p. 24) that he perceived two major areas of weakness in most theories, namely, the weak handling of the literary theory of genre, and the understanding of the development of the diverse types of prose and literary relationships contemporary with the gospels themselves. He concludes his chapter by noting that only a thorough interdisciplinary study involving literary theory and Graeco-Roman literature, as well as gospel studies, would be required to answer the question of gospel genre once and for all. In chapter two, entitled *genre criticism and literary theory*, Burridge demonstrates that genre basically functions as a set of expectations or a kind of contract between the author of the text and the reader(s), to guide the expectations of the text (p. 42). After some careful analysis, he concludes that “genre is a concept absolutely basic to the study of text and one which involves the attempt to set them within the web of literary relationships of their own day” (p. 49), which will inevitably have three salient implications for gospel genre (pp. 53-54): (a) the gospels are unique literary works is a flawed hypothesis, for literary theory does not allow such conclusions. In simple terms, all genres have evolved from previous genre types; (b) the gospels necessitate comparison with literature types of their own day; and (c) the numerous genre propositions by various scholars arise from a failure to appreciate the proper definition of genre and the level of its function. With this framework in mind, Burridge commences his third chapter, in which he carefully examines the development of βίος in the Graeco-Roman world. His main conclusion is that the βίος genre has gone through stages of development, sharing some similarities in form and content with other genres, such as historiography, moral philosophy, polemic, rhetoric, encomium, and the like. Thus, βίος is not stiff, “but is capable of flexibility,

adaptation and growth” (p. 80). Additionally, BurrIDGE identifies two major analogies between gospels and βίος, namely, (a) biographical type writings occur naturally in communities and groups of people who have formed around a certain charismatic teacher or leader, and (b) that a major function and purpose of βίος is in a context of didactic and philosophical polemic and context (p. 80). In his fourth chapter, BurrIDGE reverts to the works of 1980’s scholars who viewed the gospels as a type of biography, concluding that still more work is needed in terms of literary theory and classical biography (p. 105).

In part two of his work (remaining seven chapters), BurrIDGE turns away from the negative task of assessing the work of others and background considerations, and shifts his focus on the positive need to establish the viability of his own hypothesis. He does this (ch. 5) by identifying four generic features of literary genres, namely, opening features, subject, external features and internal features. His summary deserves full citation (p. 126):

We have now set out a clear methodology of genre analysis to study Graeco-Roman βίος and the gospels. Genre is identified through a wide-ranging variety of different internal and external features, including both content and structure. The suggestion of genre will be recognized through the opening features of a text and its title. The subject will be identified by analysis of verb subjects, as well as through the allocation of space. An initial expectation of genre will then begin to emerge, which is confirmed or corrected by further analysis, first of the external features of representation, size, structure and so forth, and finally by the internal features of further aspects of content.

In chapters six and seven, BurrIDGE turns his attention to the treatment of generic features (highlighted in ch. 5) of five early and five late Graeco-Roman writings considered biographical in genre, establishing a number of common generic features. Suffice to mention the major determining feature, namely, the subject (regarding other features

however, there is great flexibility). According to BurrIDGE, all the analyzed works concentrate attention on one individual. He (p. 184) elucidates on this aspect, by explaining that there is however a high degree of flexibility in the treatment, for in some cases, the life of the individual is covered evenly across all life areas, while in other cases, it covers only one single interlude. In some cases, the focus is on the deeds within the context of chronology, while in others, the focus is topical teachings or virtues without adhering to any particular chronological order. However, what is certain is that the βίος genre is often gestured at the outset by making clear mention the subject's name in the title or within the opening paragraphs of the writing.

Chapter eight is of most importance within the context of this thesis section, for BurrIDGE examines the gospels in terms of the generic features in his fifth chapter. In terms of generic features, he concludes that there is a high degree of correlation between the features of the gospels and those noted in βίος. BurrIDGE elaborates (p. 235), explaining that “all four gospels lack any kind of biographical title, but the range of opening features (genealogy, starting directly into narrative, preface or prologue) is also found in βίος, especially the early use of the subject's name.” Moreover, close examination of the subjects of the verbs reveals interesting insight: the gospels seem to show evidence of the same “skew” effect noticed in βίος, attributable to the focus on *one* person as the subject, rather than a variety of subjects in the manner of other narrative genres.

Concerning the structural, external features, BurrIDGE likewise concludes that the mode or representation of purpose narrative, the medium-length size, the chronological structure intertwined with topical interests and the narrow scale are all typical of βίος. Also, “the basic literary units of stories, sayings and speeches are not dissimilar from those of βίος,

nor is the deliberate selection from a range of oral and written sources to reveal the particular characterization desired by the author for his portrait” (p. 235).

Burridge’s study of the internal features revealed similarities (wide geographical setting, topics, style, and motif) and differences. He concludes by saying that although the difference between Graeco-Romans *βιοι* and gospels is broad, these differences are simply not divergently broad enough to warrant expelling the gospels from within the genre of *βιος* literature. “The increased tendency among New Testament scholars to refer to the gospels as ‘biographical’ is vindicated; indeed, the time has come to go on from the use of the adjective ‘biographical,’ for *the gospels are βιοι*” (p. 235).

It seems that the work of Burridge has knocked another nail into the coffin of other genre classifications so often put forward for the gospels. Even vehement protesters like Dale C Allison, who once urged that Matthew is an omnibus of genres (e.g., apocalypse, community rule, catechism, cult aetiology), wrote the following with reference to Burridge’s hypothesis (2005:143):

I am no longer sure that this view [omnibus of genres] is the correct view. Significant resemblances obtained between First Gospel and certain Hellenistic biographies, and these may well suffice to determine classification. I am currently inclined, because of the work of Richard Burridge, to think not just that Matthew contains biographical features but that it is in fact an instance of Greco-Roman biography. ...The undisputed fact is that Matthew, despite its incompleteness as a biography in the modern sense, is the partial record of an individual’s life and so biographical.

Over and above the work of Burridge in identifying the gospels with biography however, Allison further strengthens the hypothesis of Burridge by offering further grounds for

Matthew's rationale in writing his gospel in biographical form, all of which are rooted within the specific content of the Evangelist's faith and gospel.

Firstly, explains Allison, "the distinctiveness of Matthew's thinking over against that of his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries in the acceptance of Jesus as the centre of his religion: it is around him [Jesus] as a person that his theological thinking evolves" (p. 144). In other words, for Matthew, revelation of God and His salvific plan belongs completely to a person, and that person's history<sup>5</sup>. It is within this context that Matthew not only wrote what Jesus said (as atypical of rabbinic Judaism), but also what Jesus did and how He lived, in order to record the life of a person whose life was distinctively important, and thus, required detailed recording. And for such a record, the person-centered genre of biography was necessary.

Secondly, emphasizing the above point of historicity, Allison further elucidate that unless Christ's sayings were intimately interconnected with his [Jesus] story, his teachings would be liable to grave misunderstanding (e.g., "let the dead bury their own" [8:22]). Thus, "much of Jesus' speech demands a narrative. The former cannot survive without the latter. As with the book of Jeremiah, content demands context. Speech requires biography" (p. 147).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Allison is right in observing that the "fivefold alteration of narrative and discourse, which holds together aspects of Jesus that others in the early church did not so conjoin, reflects the strong conviction that there should be no isolation of word and deed because what matters is their common source, namely, Messiah Jesus" (2005:154).

<sup>6</sup> Allison (2005:147-154) makes an additional point in the quest for the source of Matthew's biographical impulse, namely, social crisis and ethical impulse (social crisis stimulates the production of biographies, and change of allegiance to the models of such biographies). Although this point may be indicative of Matthew's rationale for choosing biography to pen the story of his Savior, such a conclusion seems to me interpretively subjective and highly speculative.

Lastly, the moral aims of biography cannot be understated. Matthew's gospel cannot be separated from its moral intention to change lives (i.e.: the Sermon on the Mount). As Samuel Johnson (quoted in Allison 2005:153-154) so eloquently put it,

No species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction of every diversity of condition.

Facing penning a final conclusion on the issue of gospel genre however, one more concern merits brief attention, namely, the historical accuracy of the gospels as biographical literature.

Aune (1988:125) for example has concluded that although historicity of biographical works varies from writer to writer, biographers intended biographies to be essentially historical works. Keener (1999:19) sees historical accuracy and the way writers used their sources as relative. He explains that although the biographical genre differs from that of history, shared interests between the two genres allows comparison. For example, whereas historians focused on making a person more interesting, biographers focused more on the virtues of the chosen person (for less technical audiences). Bringing the focus back to the gospels, although Matthew heavily redacted his main source (Mark), it is a rather unwarranted presupposition to assume that redaction for literary or theological emphasis automatically renders Matthews information as non-historical. Keener (1999:23) sums up my sentiments by stating that Matthew is not only a storyteller, but also a historian-biographer and an interpreter. Moreover (p. 24),

If Matthew's basic genre suggests historical *intention*, his relatively conservative use of sources... indicates that Matthew's other purposes did not obscure an essential historical intention. ... sources on which Matthew depends

also preserved a substantially reliable picture of Jesus, the tradition being ‘carefully transmitted and relatively stable’ as well as quite close in time to the events described.

In light of the above, it is vital to recognize that the evangelist based his literary work on the *uniqueness* of the person, character and life of Jesus, the Son of the one God. No one like Jesus ever walked the earth, so the interconnection between Matthew’s convictions and the genre of his work is without *clear* parallel. However, a third dimension in classifying Matthew cannot be left out, namely, his theologically inspired accent. Within the gospel genre of the gospel, it is clear that readers discover theologically inspired emphasis, trustworthy historical data and “delightful literary artistry” (Blomberg 1997:107).

In conclusion, then, the gospel of Matthew is a Graeco-Roman *historical-theological biography*, focused and centered on the words and works of Jesus Christ.

### 2.3 AUTHORIAL RATIONALE

For what purpose did Matthew write his gospel?<sup>7</sup> The book most certainly encompasses an array of themes, subjects and issues, superseding any single given motivation. “There is no reason why a writer, inspired or otherwise, has to have one and only one purpose in writing” (Blomberg 1992:34). To attribute the gospel of Matthew to a single purpose of writing would create far more and complex difficulties on the subject matter than it would solve. Although the task is complex, it is possible to find clues as to the situation, which provoked the Evangelist’s work.

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<sup>7</sup> I will assume the author is Matthew, without forming a judgment as to which *Matthew* is meant.



Because the author's purpose must be inferred in light of the historical occasion (Guthrie 1996:34), this section shall commence with "setting in life" contemplations (*Sitz im Leben*), followed by considerations on the authorial rationale of the writer.

### 2.3.1 Sitz im Leben

What prompted Matthew to write such a masterful, yet paradoxically pro and anti Jewish literary piece? What state of affairs does such a gospel address? There is no easy answer, since the text is silent on this matter. Nonetheless, such questions are answerable through reasonable inferences from the content of the gospel (Blomberg 1992:34) and cultural and historical milieu (external). Menninger's (1994:23) cautioning observations are vital:

Scholars are restricted by the material that can be used to develop a *Sitz im Leben*. They are forced to deal almost exclusively with the first gospel when reconstructing its life-setting because any evidence outside Matt.—which might aid in developing a *Sitz im Leben*—is considered by many to be untrustworthy. The difficulty in reaching a consensus on the issue of the historical relationship stems directly from the speculative nature of any attempt to reconstruct a life-setting for Matthew.

In this section, I will rely heavily, but not exclusively, on the information contained within Matthew's gospel.

Matthew's scheme in general focuses on conflict and disagreement. More accurately, the inferred key concern for the Evangelist is the schism between the newly formed church and its Jewish contingency *in relation to the completion of the gospel*. Therefore, it is necessary to further limit the scope from a general *life setting* to the *Sitz im Leben* within the context of Judaism.

Brief notes on the date of Matthew's composition are in order. I am aware of the current debates on the topic of dating the completion of the gospel of Matthew, and in short, there is simply no consensus on the matter. Date hypotheses for the scripting of Matthew range by as much as four decades. For example, some scholars argue that Matthew wrote his gospel as early as the 50's (e.g., Barbie 1985; Nelson 1990, quoted in George 2001) or early 60's, based on a proto-Matthew which was later enlarged (e.g., Robinson 2000). Although such a proto-Matthew is possible, it seems to me highly speculative. Moreover, Matthew was penned after Mark, and placing the date for Matthew's composition in the 50's would negate the best hypothesis for Mark's date of writing (mid 60's).

Others argue for a much later date, somewhere in the late 80's or early 90's (e.g., Bruce 1980; Senior 1998) , based on the "assumption that Mark itself was written after the fall of Jerusalem with an extra decade or two to give it time for wide promulgation" (Nolland 2005:14). Again, such a conclusion is improbable, for the dating of the gospel of Mark is essentially less certain than the dating of Matthew's gospel (Morris 2000:9). It would make more sense to date the gospel of Mark from the gospel of Matthew, not the reverse. From the outset then, it is possible to eliminate both dating extremes of Matthew's gospel as implausible.

In pursuit of the most probable date of composition, a possible dilemma arises. Because the date of writing is indissoluble from the specific social context into which the Evangelist wrote, the question becomes whether the date of composition of Matthew's gospel informs the situation the Evangelist addresses, or the reverse? The answer is, both. For the purpose of moving this section along, a post Jewish War date is assumed (less than a decade after A.D. 70), the rationale of which shall become more clear and perhaps

convincing following the *Sitz im Leben* analysis of Matthew's gospel. Provisionally, three lines of evidence for this date are as follows:

1. Matthew's engagement with "Pharisaism" points to a date after the Jewish war, for only after A.D. 70 did they (the Pharisees) become early Syro-Palestinian Christians' primary opposition. Linked with this point is also Matthew's Jewish (close to that of rabbis) worldview, achieving prominence only after 70 (Keener 1997:33).
2. Matthew was dependant on Mark, and there is no evidence in Mark suggesting that he knew of the destruction of the temple, placing Matthew in the post-war period (Sim 1998:34).
3. It seems that Matthew separates the disciples' question about the temple's destruction and the world's end for his readers than does Mark, in spite of the fact that Matthew's Jewish readers would have been more familiar with the traditional prophetic perspective that arranged events according to their kind rather than their timing (Keener 1997:34).<sup>8</sup>

A common scholarly *modus operandi* for dating Matthew is the utilization of the Fall of Jerusalem as a defining point, advocating that the Evangelist reflects apparent knowledge of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (especially in 22:7).<sup>9</sup> But is this a watertight methodology? Nolland (2005:14) thinks not:

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<sup>8</sup> In addition to the three strands of evidence highlighted in-text, two auxiliary arguments in favor of a post war date are: (a) Matthew's emphasis on the delay of the *parousia* in 24:48 and 25:5, points to the fact that Jesus has been gone a long time. (b) Matthew's developed Christology and ecclesiology point to a later date of composition. However, these arguments are weak and inconclusive. Or as expressed by Sim (1998:35), they are in themselves insubstantial.

<sup>9</sup> Sim (1998:34) refers to the parable of the wedding feast as "unambiguous reference to the destruction of Jerusalem."

But while they are likely right to think that the present form of Mt. 22:7 reflects the Jerusalem focus on the judgment materials of chaps. 23 and 24 ... there is no basis for going beyond this and claiming that Matthew has written in light of what actually happened in A.D. 70. Nothing in Matthew's language encourages this belief.

It is also often maintained that some of the Evangelist's eschatological discourses (23:36, 38; 24:2, 15-19) echo the overthrow of the city. But such references are general and point to commonality in scenarios in which a city was captured, and do not amount to more than predictions that Jerusalem would be destroyed (Morris 2000:9). Furthermore, as summed up by Hagner (2000:Ixxiv), (a) the language of the parable under consideration is possible hyperbolic, and not necessarily to be taken literally, (b) the language may also be conventional stereotype for punitive expeditions (Rengstorf 1960), and (c) the language could be an allusion to Isaiah 5:24-25 (Gundry 1982). In short, it is unwise to place too much weight on dating of Matthew post 70's, based solely upon the parable of the wedding banquet in chapter 22.

Returning to the topic of *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew's community, perhaps the most crucial topic requiring dialogue concerns the question of association, namely, what is the relationship between Judaism and Matthew's community? In other words, what is the exact nature of the conflict between these two parties? Was this a conflict between two Jewish factions, or was the dispute between those who belonged to Christianity and those who saw themselves as Jewish? These are questions of crucial importance, for "it has important repercussions for the understanding of the place of the evangelist's group in the broader Christian movement" (Sim 1998:2).

There are four main hypotheses on the issue of the relationship between Matthew's community and Judaism, or more accurately, the relationship between synagogue and church.

**View 1:** Matthew wrote before A.D. 70 for Jewish Christians in Palestine.

**View 2:** Matthew wrote after A.D. 70 (utilized Mark) and he and his readers saw themselves as being *intra muros* (still within diverse formative Judaism).

**View 3:** Matthew wrote shortly in the wake of a painful separation from Judaism, and he and his readers saw themselves as *extra muros* (outside of Judaism, as a separate Christian group).

**View 4:** Matthew wrote long after the Jewish war, and the relationship between synagogue and church, or Jews and Christians, are of no interest to the Evangelist.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze each of the four views in depth. However, it is necessary to evaluate, albeit tentatively, the two most plausible views, namely, views two and three.

#### ***2.3.1.1 View three: Extra Muros***

Stanton represents the third view above in his 1992 study, entitled *A gospel for a new people*. He argues that Matthew perceives himself and his community as a Christian institution, distinct from Judaism, but in close proximity to the Jewish synagogues from which it had only recently split. He writes (1992:124):

I am convinced that Matthew's communities have parted company with Judaism and that some Gentiles have been accepted. Nearly every pericope of the gospel reflects rivalry between 'church' and 'synagogue.' Matthew's

communities are *extra muros*, but they are responding in various ways to local synagogues ... On this view the gospel can be seen, at least in part, as an apology – a defense of Christianity over against non-Christian Judaism.<sup>10</sup>

Stanton (1992:126-131) offers five bases for his conclusion that in Matthew's community the church and synagogue are two separate entities:

1. In a number of passages in Matthew's gospel, the Jewish religious leaders are placed in a negative light (8:18-21; 9:18-26, and especially the discourse of ch. 23). It seems that throughout Matthew's gospel, the Jewish leaders are always at odds not only with Jesus, but also with his disciples. "The wide gulf between scribes and Pharisees on the one hand, and Jesus and his disciples on the other, reflects the circumstances of the evangelist's day: 'synagogue' and 'church' have parted company" (Stanton 1992:128).
2. Throughout Matthew's gospel, the Evangelist explicitly associates scribes and Pharisees with synagogues (10:17; 23:6, 34). This is particularly evident in his use of the phrase "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54). In passages such as 6:2, 5 and 23:6, the word *synagogue* likewise has a negative connotation, indicating that the synagogue has almost become an alien establishment.
3. In contrast to the term *synagogue* in Matthew's gospel stands the word ἐκκλησία, a legitimate institution founded by Jesus Himself. The *church* receives divine protection (16:18). "In a series of striking passages disciples of Jesus (and their late followers) are promised that Jesus will be present with them in their community life in ways analogous to the ways God was understood to be present in the temple and synagogue (8:23-7; 14:22-33; 18:20; 28:20)" (Stanton 1992:129). Moreover, Matthew emphasizes that

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<sup>10</sup> Other scholars who have come to similar conclusions include Przybylski (1988:181-200); Hagner (2002:Ixv-Ixxi); Newport (1995:61-67); Meeks (1985:93-116).

whereas the Jerusalem temple is desolate (23:38), the arrival of Jesus signals something much more important than the temple (12:6). In short, the church “founded by Jesus continues to have a firm commitment to torah, but it has accepted Gentiles and developed its own patterns of worship and of community life. Its self-understanding is quite distinct from that of the synagogue” (Stanton 1992:131).

4. The fourth argument in favor of the view that church and synagogue are going their own separate ways comes from passages which speak about the transference of the kingdom to a new people, a people who will include Gentiles (8:5-13; 15:13; 21:41 and 43).

5. The final point is based on the climax of Matthew’s story at 28:15, where the Evangelist addresses his readers directly and refers to the relationship between church and synagogue in his own day. Stanton elaborates (1992:131):

He tells them that a rival account of the resurrection of Jesus – his disciples stole his body from the tomb – ‘has been widely circulated among Jews to this very day.’ This comment brings out into the open what has been hinted at again and again throughout the gospel. Jews who have not accepted Christian claims are set at a distance and referred to as an entity quite distinct from ‘the new people.’ They have an alternative story which, the evangelist claims, can be shown to be patently absurd.

The above five strains of internal evidence certainly seem to suggest that the *Sitz im Leben* concerning the relationship between the church (represented by Jesus and his disciples) and the synagogues (represented by the scribes and Pharisees) is one of conflict and separation.

### ***2.3.1.2 View two: Intra Muros***

The first major monograph defending the position that Matthew saw himself and his community as a Jewish sectarian group in major conflict with the parent body (formative Judaism) was J A Overman's 1990 study, entitled *Matthew's gospel and formative Judaism: the social world of the Matthean community*. He explains (pp. 4-5):

In time the descendants of the Matthean community and the tradition to which they belonged came to be called 'Christians' and saw themselves as distinct and at best only vaguely related to Judaism. At the time of the writing of the gospel of Matthew, of course, no such self-understanding existed. The people of Matthew's community did not understand themselves as 'Christians.' On the contrary they were Jews.

In his 1996 commentary on Matthew's gospel, Overman (1996:9-10) reaffirms his position:

While it may come as a surprise to some readers to think of Matthew and his church as Jewish, to others it may seem obvious. 'Christianity' as a term and even more as an identifiable entity distinct from Judaism had not emerged by the time of the writing of Matthew's Gospel. To speak of Christians or Christianity with respect to the Gospels, historically speaking, is anachronistic. ... when viewed and studied in its historical and social context, Matthew's Gospel appears quite clearly as a Jewish document, addressed to Jews who thought that they were living out Judaism in its truest sense.

Further support for this view came via D C Sim's 1998 monograph, entitled *The gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: the history and social setting of the Matthean community*. According to Sim (1998), it is of extreme importance to emphasize the clash involving those who saw themselves belonging to the traditions of formative Judaism and Matthew's community, was in fact an internal Jewish debate. Matthew and his readers were Jews who accepted without question the eternal validity of the ancient covenant



between God and the people of Israel, and the necessity of law-observance for remaining within the covenant community (p. 162).

To support of the abovementioned contentions made by Overman and Sim, three vital lines of argumentation require attention.

Firstly, although it is clear from Matthew's text that the Matthean community has parted company with the local synagogue and now refers to itself as the *church* (in contrast to *their* synagogues), it does not automatically follow that Matthew and his community sees themselves as distinct and completely separate from Judaism (as advocated by Stanton 1992:128-129). To do so simply indicates an incorrect understanding of the word ἐκκλησία within Matthew's context, and reading into the text a specific historical outcome. Or, as worded by Saldarini (1994:119), "this conclusion is based on inaccurate presuppositions about Matthew's relationship with the larger Jewish community." The possible root for tying in the interpretation of ἐκκλησία with the social setting of the Matthean community, suggests Sim (1998:144), is the assumption that Matthew and Paul (Ro 16:1 and 4; 1 Co 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 16:1; 2 Co 1:1; 8:1; Gal 1:1; Ph 3:6) used the word in the same way. However, the reality is vastly different. However, Sim (1998:145) disarms this line of argumentation by explaining that Matthew and Paul belonged to entirely diverse streams of early Christianity. Paul represented the law-free faction (rejected the essential traditions of Judaism), Matthew however remained within Christian Judaism (avowed the Jewish traditions). Therefore, it seems rather improbable that the Christian Jewish Matthew would have utilized ἐκκλησία in the same sense as Paul would have utilized the word, a word that was often used by Paul to disconnect the supporters of Jesus from traditional Judaism. "A more plausible explanation of

Matthew's use of ἐκκλησία is that he was redefining this term rather than embracing the Pauline sense" (Sim 1998:145).

The interpretation of Saldarini (1994:119) is most likely, who proposes that Matthew probably utilized the term ἐκκλησία in order to differentiate himself and his community from his opponents *within* the Jewish community. Sim (1992) concurs with Saldarini's conclusions, further stating that in all probability, Matthew utilizes the term ἐκκλησία to indicate "his Christian Jewish assembly in opposition to other Jewish assemblies and not to identify his Christian church in opposition to the Jewish synagogue" (p. 147).

In addition, assuming that Matthew rejected Judaism altogether fails to take into consideration the vast difference in Judaism before the Jewish war (stiff, uncompromising and categorical) and formative Judaism (nebulous, flexible and malleable). In other words, which Judaism did Matthew *allegedly* reject? Sim (1998:146) concedes the point that it is possible to infer from the Matthean community's desertion of the local synagogues that it rejected outright the claims of formative Judaism. However, I stand in agreement with Sim; to conclude that Matthew rejected the religion of Judaism *en bloc* as a result, would be as bizarre as arguing that the Qumran community, which left the larger Jewish society and lived in segregation from it, rejected the religion of Judaism. As with the Qumran community, Matthew rejected what Judaism stood for (rejecting the Messiah), but still considered himself and his community as Jewish Christians following Jesus (a Jew Himself). In short, the apparent conflict between Matthew's church and the Jewish synagogues is not a conflict between two different religions, but rather a disagreement between diverse Jewish religious options or brands.

Secondly, it is essential to deal with the two pillar Scripture references often utilized to support the *extra muros* view, namely, Matthew 21:43 and 28:15.

In the parable of the tenants (Mt 21:33-46), Matthew records Christ telling of a landowner who planted a vineyard, leased it to farmers and went away on a journey. After a while, the landowner sent some of his servants to collect his share of the harvest. But they were all beaten, killed or stoned. The landowner gathered even more servants, but they too met the same fate. Finally, the landowner sent his own son, whom the tenants also killed. The interpretive key, according to those who see Matthew and his community as separate from Judaism, is verse 43, “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” In other words, the kingdom of God will be taken away from the Jews, and given to a new people (Jews and Gentiles, under the banner of Christianity). However, verse 43 does not necessarily indicate a rejection of Judaism as a whole. Sim (1998:149) argues that in reality, the very opposite is true:

The people of Israel are represented by the vineyard (cf. Isa. 5:1-7), and there is no indication that the vineyard does anything wrong or is to be replaced. The only ones in that parable who are disobedient and punished are the tenants of the vineyard. These tenants lose their tenancy (21:41) and have the kingdom taken away from them (21:43), and Matthew explicitly identifies this group with the Jewish leaders (21:45). The people who are given the kingdom of God, the new tenants and the legitimate leaders of the Jewish people, are either the Matthean community alone or Christian Judaism in general.

In other words, it is rather obvious that Matthew 21:43 (or the parable as a whole) does not imply that Matthew’s community had officially broken away from Judaism. “Rather, it details God’s rejection of the Jewish leadership, and it demonstrates that Matthew’s Christian group claimed ... a leadership role within the Jewish community and within the Jewish religion” (Sim 1998:149).

Concerning the second passage, Matthew declares that “the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among *the Jews* to this very day” (Mt 28:15). The proponents of the *extra muros* hypothesis claim that Matthew’s phraseology points towards a scenario in which Matthew no longer saw himself (and possibly his community) as Jewish, but rather Christian. But once again, this is a presupposition and the evidence is to the contrary, for the circulation of this rumor is not necessarily specific to those who belong to formative Judaism. Judaism was extremely fluid after the Jewish War and it most certainly included Jewish Christians and other sects under the banner of Judaism (Overman 1996:401). Hence, “it is quite consistent with the Jewishness of the Matthean community and its placement within the religion of Judaism” (Sim 1998:150).

Thirdly, it has been suggested by Stanton (1992:126-127) that Matthew’s harsh polemic (especially Mt ch. 23) against the Jewish leadership (scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees) and their placement in such negative light, is a clear indication that Matthew no longer considers himself, or his community, as part of the Jewish religion. However, polemic against the leadership of his own original ethnic religion by no means indicates a break or a clear rejection of Judaism. In addition, “a general sociological rule of thumb is that the closer the relationship between dissenting groups, the more intense the conflict and the sharper the resultant polemic” (Coser, quoted in Sim 1992:121). By implication, this highlights the closeness of the two opposing groups (Christian Jews and Formative Judaism), not complete separation from one another.

Although the three above strands of argumentations against the *extra muros* hypothesis are by no means complete and beyond reproof, they helped place Matthew’s gospel and community within Judaism, not as a new and separate religion, but rather as *new*

alternative under the umbrella of formative Judaism (so Overman 1990; Saldarini 1994; Sim 1998). As expressed by Saldarini (1991:38), Matthew is a deviant Jew, and sees his community in the same light.

However, Stanton's (1984:266) contribution to this discussion is relevant, and forms the conclusions on the matter. In his view, the church rupture between Jews and Christians can neither be imminent (owing to a heavily Jewish slant and apologetic value of Matthew's gospel) nor in the distant past (attributable to the superfluous hostility towards Jews). Assuming a mediating position is thus more plausible, namely, the Matthean church had recently split from the synagogue. This *in-between* position, as correctly observed by Menninger (1994:23), "offers a compromise between views one and two [two and three according to my numbering] because it addresses both the Jewish and the Gentile features of Matt. without sacrificing the one for the other." Blomberg (1992:35) likewise concurs with Stanton, and states that Matthew's church... predominantly Jewish... remain[s] in frequent, vigorous, and sometimes polemical dialogue with their non-Christian Jewish families and friends. In other words, on the three fronts of ideology, inter-personality and geography, the Christians and the Jews continue to co-exist in close proximity to one another. Most likely, according to Blomberg (p. 35) some Jews are sharply condemning these 'apostate' Jewish Christians who, in their opinion, have defected from God's truth, while many Jewish Christians are struggling persistently to win their loved ones to Christ.

Keener (1999:49) agrees with Blomberg's observations, considering "the Gospel author and audience intensely committed to their heritage in Judaism while struggling with those they believe to be its illegitimate spokespersons." It therefore seems clear that these very

Christians continue to struggle to remain part of the local synagogue community, for expulsion could mean loss of self-identity.

In light of the above considerations, Matthew's Christian community not only struggled to define and defend Jewish Christianity to the Jews, but also to realize their identity within Gentile Christianity. The above two-fold challenge adequately explains the tensions encountered in the gospel of Matthew. In fact, Hagner (1993:Ixv) is helpful in pointing out that any serious *Sitz in Leben* research on Matthew's community must explain the diverse material in the gospel, especially the tension between (a) particularism (restriction of Christ's ministry to Israel) and universalism (the gospel is also for Gentiles), and (b) Israel and the church.

Therefore, with this setting in mind, Matthew's emphasis on encouragement in steadfast faith, encouragement in evangelism and encouragement through strong apologetic inferences, become logically and practically compatible with the *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew's community. This occasion, albeit somewhat inferred, melts into the purpose of the gospel rather smoothly.

### **2.3.2 The Purpose of Matthew's Gospel**

As with the occasion of writing, Matthew is silent on the specific purpose for which he wrote his gospel. The only indication is the way Matthew presents and arranges certain information about Christ (Carson 1983:22). Consequently, pinpointing any *specific* intention(s) is fruitless and borders on guesswork. However, likely hypotheses are attainable through intelligent, informed deductions and assumptions. Three observations about Matthew's gospel in general, serve as a foundation for this section: (1) the gospel of Matthew is a community-centered book (Hagner 1993:Iix), (2) the complex array of

themes within the gospel of Matthew aims to meet many needs (Carson 1983:25), and (3) the gospel of Matthew is aimed to bring together material in order to write a more comprehensive, more specific gospel than that of the gospel of Mark (Smith 2006:n.p.).

Scholars have proposed a variety of (contingent) hypotheses regarding Matthew's purpose for writing.<sup>11</sup> Having considered and analyzed these views, my conclusions regarding Matthew's purpose for writing are as follows.

The purpose of the gospel of Matthew can be clustered under one main premise—to meet the immediate needs of his church (or churches) and community in turmoil, during the interim period between the historical events narrated, and the return of Christ (Hagner 1993:lix). Keener (1999:51) concurs, seeing the gospel of Matthew functioning as “a handbook of Jesus' basic teaching, revealed to a Jewish Christian community engaged in the Gentile mission and deadlocked in scriptural polemic with their local synagogue communities.” Based upon the earlier proposed *Sitz im Leben* of the Evangelist's community, the needs are indeed manifold, often overlapping with one another. However, it is possible to list each of these in two broad categories, namely, (1) the person of Christ, and (2) converting and encouraging.

### ***2.3.2.1 The Person of Christ***

On a more general level, Matthew wished to tell the full story of Jesus. Garland's (2001:6) observations pertaining to this point deserve full mention:

Matthew records words and deeds of one he proclaims to be the long-promised messiah who was conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:18), who was perfectly obedient to God's will, who taught (5:21-54; 7:29; 21:23) and performed

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<sup>11</sup> For two brief commentary synopses of various hypotheses, see Carson (1983:22-25) and Hagner (1993:lvii-lix).

miracles (8-9) with divine authority, and who prevailed over the rule of Satan and his demons. ... Jesus was sent to save his people from their sins (9:6), and his death brings atonement for sins that make the animal sacrifices of the temple obsolete (20:28; 26:28). His humiliating death on the cross is vindicated by God through his resurrection, and God has given him all authority over heaven and earth (28:18). The ultimate destiny of the world, Jews and gentile, depends on its giving its allegiance to the one who alone has broken the bonds of death. The promise of God being with his people (*Zech* 8:23; *Jubilees* 1:26) has been fulfilled. ... Only the complete story of Jesus' preaching and deeds, his death and resurrection, will convey the whole truth about who he is.

On a more specific level, no doubt that one of the most tenacious issues in such a stressed and distraught community was the person of Christ: who was Jesus of Nazareth? Matthew wished to settle this question, both in the minds of recently converted Jewish-Christians and the *unconvinced* Jews. This particular need then is highly apologetic in nature. Hagner (1993:lix) explains that "the evangelist intends to help his Jewish-Christian readers understand their new faith as in continuity with the faith of their ancestors, as the fulfillment of the Scriptures, and as the beginning of the realization of the hope of Israel." More accurately, Matthew's purpose is to present Jesus as the long expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, as foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled presently in his or their milieu (so Wilkins 2002:7). Hendriksen (2004:97) furthermore highlights Matthew's purpose as demonstrative of Jesus' Messiaship not only to the *transformed* Jews, but also to the *unconverted* and *unmoving* Jews. This clearly points to the Hebrew character of the gospel. From the outset then, Matthew is apologetically potent and forceful, which is evident (a) in the *genealogy* (which would have meaning for a Jewish audience that required proof of Jesus' lineage), (b) the *miracles* of Jesus (which would affirm Jesus' authority not only as a spokesman for God, but as one who was ushering in the new age), and (c) the *OT quotations* (which, with their unique



introductory formula, are designed to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hope of Israel (Wallace 1997:10).

### ***2.3.2.2 Converting and Encouraging***

Winning Jews to Christ, and influencing them away from the synagogue, was ostensibly part of Matthew's agenda (Guthrie 1996:34). This aspect of Matthew's rationale is therefore evangelistic, retaining a strongly apologetic *modus operandi*. Hendriksen (2004:97) observes the two-fold nature of this purpose: "gain[ing] those still unconverted and to strengthen[ing] those already converted." Both facets deserve brief attention.

**Conversion of the Jews** - Matthew had a peculiar way of using the Old Testament. In fact, although all gospel writers quoted the Old Testament, Matthew has numerous *proof-texts* unique to him, with the specific purpose of persuading Jews (e.g., Mt 1:22-23; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 27:9-10) (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 14/02/2007). The evangelist goes to great lengths to present Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Such issues are apologetically and evangelistically imperative for any Jewish or Jewish-Christian audience. Matthew certainly "advances his evangelistic objective by memorializing Christ's missionary commission in 28:19-20" (George 2001:13). Moreover, George continues, "the text contains a thorough account of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, facts of inestimable value in spreading the gospel message to Jews" (p. 13). By achieving his purpose, the Evangelist goes a long way indeed to prove to his readers that Jesus is not a challenge to Judaism, but the culmination and long-awaited fulfillment of the Judaic faith as a whole.

Before continuing, the conclusions of Wallace (1997) and Toussaint (2005) merit brief mention. Wallace and Toussaint have both identified (independently) the nature of Matthew's above-discussed dual purpose, namely, apologetic and evangelistic. However, they have likewise recognized that Matthew's gospel also answers the question, "if Jesus is the Messiah, why did He fail to establish His kingdom?" Wallace (1997:10) views the answer as simply this: Jesus did not fail; the nation did. In other words, in spite of the nation's failure, the kingdom has been *inaugurated* for those who fully embraced him as Messiah, and it will be *consummated* at the end of the age.

Hence, in answering this question there is both an apologetic purpose and an evangelistic one: the Jewish Christians needed to have a defense before their Jewish non-believing neighbors and they also needed to understand the rationale for bringing the good news to Gentiles.

**Strengthening those already converted** - Both Romans and Jews persecuted first century Jewish Christians. The Jewish persecution gradually grew in intensity, and hence, the preaching of a crucified Messiah, whose death was publicly blamed on the Jewish leaders, was highly provocative (Wood, Wood and Marshal 1996). The persecution recorded in Acts 8:1 resulted in the martyrdom of Stephen. A decade later, Herod Agrippa executed the Apostle James (Ac 12:2). Of particular importance here is the Apostle Paul's visit (2 Co 8:1-9:15) to the church at Corinth. Inspired by widespread persecution, Paul collected offerings for remote churches to support needy saints in Jerusalem (George 2001:14). The Roman persecution of Christians was rather inconsistent and unpredictable, but intense and bloody. Moreover, it was also widespread and intense. Hence, it is logically inferable that one of Matthew's purposes was to encourage not only Gentile Christians, but also newly converted Jewish Christians. In

light of this, Matthew's gospel was certainly a welcome reinforcement to Christians witnessing to such a hostile world.

In summation then, the purpose of the gospel of Matthew seems to revolve around a three dimensional rationale. Firstly, he wanted to make clear the identity of Jesus in the minds of (a) Jews, (b) recently converted Jews, and (c) Gentiles (apologetic). Secondly, Matthew wished to influence Jews away from the synagogue, attempting to share with them the reality and life of their long awaited Messiah (evangelistic). Lastly, due to persecution of *his own beloved people*, Matthew wrote the gospel as a tool of support (encouragement). In short, Matthew wished to teach, evangelize and encourage.

## 2.4 LITERARY STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE

The purpose of this section is to tentatively inspect current structural hypotheses accentuating common structural threads as proposed by various Matthean scholars. The accomplishment of this task shall serve as a foundation for the analysis of the six ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων passages, in relation to the literary structure of the gospel of Matthew.

“Matthew's Gospel is very carefully designed indeed” (Green 2000:31). Matthew was an accomplished literary craftsman, giving his gospel structure, form and rhythm (Carson 1983:50). It seems that scholars in general concur with the above sentiments. The same is not true however concerning the gospel's overall literary structure. France (2005:56) for example explains that no two commentators ever agree on the right way to investigate the text in detail, even if they agree on the main divisions. Taking such sentiments into consideration, I have cautiously explored the scope and state of scholarship pertaining to Matthew's structure, and hence three (disputed) factors warrant consideration.

1. The five-discourse hypothesis, championed by B. W. Bacon (1930:82 and 265-335) identifies Matthew's gospel as designed or built around five blocks of teachings (chs. 5-7; 10; 13; 18 and 23-25). Each *sermon* is preceded by a contextual narrative and ends with the phrase ὅτε συνετέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους ("when Jesus had finished saying all these things," NIV) in 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1 and 26:1. In light of this, Blomberg (1992:23) suggests that these are alien sections for Matthew's outline, for in essence, they are summary statements by which the Evangelist ends each gospel section. Blomberg continues to explain that these summary statements are "designed to unite the saying material of each discourse and moves the narrative along a new segment." His view is convincing. Newman and Stine (1988:2) concur, and thus conclude with the following:

It may be reasonably argued that the Gospel of Matthew contains at least five major discourses imbedded in a larger framework and other collections of Jesus' teachings. Moreover, from both a chronological and theological perspective, the nativity and the passion narratives are properly placed within this structure.

2. Matthew ostensibly divides his gospel into three sections, using the formula ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς κηρύσσειν καὶ λέγειν ("from that time on Jesus began to," NIV) in 4:17 and 16:21. Each time this formula emerges, a total change in Christ's ministerial program occurs. Hawkins (1899) was the first prominent scholar to point out the significance of these two verses for Matthew's literary structure. It was however Pentecost (1958:456) who coined a three-fold thematic structure, which strictly focused on the kingship of Christ: (1) introduction and validation of the king (1:1-11:1), (2) the antagonism and hostility towards the king (11:2-16:12) and (3) concluding rejection of the king (16:13-28:20). Kingsbury (1975:7-25) later developed this view, explaining that

Matthew was attempting to divide his narrative into thirds, namely, introduction (1:1-4:16), body (4:17-16:20) and extended conclusion (16:21-28:20), noting that the last two sections each contain three summary passages (4:23-25, 9:35, 11:1 and 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19).

Before moving onto the next point, Keener's (1999:37) observation is pertinent, advising that "one need not choose between these two most common alternatives; the threefold chronological narrative structure and the fivefold discourse structure are not incompatible." It is however clear that the phrases *when Jesus finished saying these things...* and *from that time on Jesus began to...* are definite transitional formulas. Nevertheless, individually, they cannot be regarded as "entirely self-contained and/or as conferring a complete thematic unity on all material within each section" (France 2005:59).

3. A number of scholars have identified chapter 13 as a major turning point of the gospel. In fact, says Green, "it is the hinge on which the Gospel turns" (2000:31). This focal point is dichotomous; prior to this "break," the focus is on the crowds (public), while after chapter 13, the focus shifts to the twelve disciples (private). Blomberg (1992) sees it as a progressive polarization, later repeated in the context of Jews (outsiders, as rejecters of Christ's ministry) and Gentiles (insiders, as the new covenant people). But a second facet of the centrality of chapter 13 is noticeable due to the complex and convoluted parallel between discourses one and five (5-7/23-25), and two and four (10/18). Hence, the kingdom parables remain the possible focal point of Matthew gospel.

It is my conviction that any gospel structure hypothesis must explain, harmonize, and move beyond the three above-mentioned Matthean structural features. It is highly improbable that any rigid configuration will suddenly unchain the master plan of the

Evangelist. Attempting to move beyond the above-mentioned structures, certain considerations are essential for the proper understanding of Matthew's composition.

It is important to note that the traditional structures (the three and five-fold structure, and the centrality of ch. 13) certainly help to better understand the gospel structure as a whole. Constructing a structure that moves beyond these "established customs" in no way counteracts the value of other structural proposals, but simply attempts to approach the text with the mindset of a Jewish author and audience. In light of this, the literary structure proposed by Donald Senior (1997:31-32) deals with the aforesaid concerns in the most compelling way.

***1. The Origins of Jesus and His Mission (1:1-4:11)***

This section introduces Jesus as the long awaited Messiah through a comprehensive genealogy. Matthew continues in the contextualization of Christ's life with a birth and infancy narrative. Both sections are composed of material unique to the evangelist. Jesus' ministerial inauguration follows through His encounter with John the Baptist and His consequent great desert temptations.

***2. Jesus: Messiah in Word and Deed (4:12-10:42)***

In an extensive study on the structure of Matthew's gospel, Frans Neirynck (1991:141-182) concluded that it is vital to view 4:12-17 as the key transition moment, and not just 4:17 (as suggested by those holding to a strictly three-fold thematic structure). He explained that verse 17 is part of a narrative segment which taken as a whole, is the real turning point. Moreover, he views Christ's public ministry as commencing in 4:12, not 4:17. The phrase ἀπὸ τότε ("from that time") catches up this momentous event just narrated and moves the reader forward as Jesus initiates His announcement of the reign of

God, making 4:17 an organic part of a narrative unit, and not a stand alone structural hinge.

Matthew 4:12-17 then, seems to serve as an important link between Jesus' contact with John the Baptist (the launch of His civic ministry) and the dominant theme of the kingdom of heaven which permeates His teachings throughout His entire life. Matthew works through Christ's Galilean ministry, which he constructs around teachings (the first great discourse, chs. 5-7) and healing (chs. 8-9). Chapter 10 then gives a model for the manner in which the apostles are to carry out their mission and extend the kingdom of heaven.

It is significant to note that in this section, Matthew includes large blocks of material not found in the gospel of Mark (Sermon on the Mount and elements of the mission discourse), presumably drawn from Q or other Matthean material(s). Furthermore, Senior (1997:32) draws our attention to an interesting facet of this portion of the gospel. Matthew adopts his own thematic order of events, (aligning the miracle stories of chs. 8 and 9). From the parable discourse in chapter 13, however, Matthew follows virtually the same sequence of events as the other synoptic gospels. This again highlights the centrality of chapter 13.

### ***3. Responding to Jesus: Rejection and Understanding (11:1-16:12)***

Matthew seemingly introduces a new phase of the story with the testimony of John the Baptist. Following this, Matthew masterfully depicts the contrast between those who reject Him (Jewish opponents, especially chs. 11 and 12) and those who put their faith in Him (the disciples, especially chs. 14-16). Chapter 13, positioned in the core of this contrast, marks (a) Matthew's attempt to show Jesus taking His focus off the masses

(macro-discipleship) and onto the disciples (micro-discipleship), and (b) the beginning of intense persecution and opposition to the message of Christ.

***4. The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13-20:34)***

As with the transition from part one to part two of the gospel, the entire story of Peter (16:13-23) is the bridge between part three and four. Peter's answer marks the obvious results of discipleship themes apparent in the prior section (chs. 10; 14; 15 and 16). Moreover, Jesus transparently reveals His identity and points forward towards His journey to Jerusalem and the subsequent passion. Matthew clearly shows a further intensification of opposition (ch. 18) and further personal micro-discipleship instructions (ch. 19).

***5. In the Holy City: Conflict, Death and Resurrection (21:1-28:15)***

Jesus enters the Holy City, where opposition, especially in and around the temple, intensifies (26:1 marks the end of Christ's public teachings). Consequently, the passion story commences. The Romans arrest, mock, beat and finally crucify Jesus (chs. 26 and 27). This section is the climax of the gospel as it culminates in the resurrection of Christ (ch. 28).

***6. Finale (28:16-20)***

The vividness of this *finale* is unique to Matthew's gospel. Although it is only a single scene, Jesus brings the narrative full-term, back to His hometown. It is the central point from where He sends the disciples out into the world, promising them His steadfast presence. Senior (1997:32) comments:



The final scene does not simply conclude the preceding section but recapitulates important themes of the entire gospel and directs the reader to the continuing life of the community that is to live out Jesus' commands and example.

Having identified the abovementioned literary structure of Matthew's gospel, the chapter shall continue with an analysis of Matthew's theological emphases.

## **2.5 MATTHEW'S THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES**

By observing the manner in which Matthew redacted his sources, a clear picture of his theological emphases is perceivable. The purpose of this segment is therefore to produce a brief abridgment of Matthew's chief theological concerns and accents. In light of the research conducted, the following five emphases stand out: (a) fulfillment theologies, (b) christology, (c) righteousness and discipleship, (d) the church and the Christian community, and (e) apocalyptic eschatology. A brief discussion of each follows.

### **2.5.1 Fulfillment Theologies and Themes**

Throughout his gospel, Matthew consistently explored the theme that Christ was the completion of all Old Testament anticipations (Turner 2008:22; Puskas and Crump 2008). As Hagner (1993:ix) observes, the thesis of fulfillment is clearly one of the evangelist's favorite theological themes. Matthew is particularly *christocentric* throughout his gospel, and keeps Jesus at the forefront of his vision, thoughts, and theology. Moreover, Matthew's organizational format primarily purposes to focus the reader's attention not only on Jesus (Green 2000:39), but also to show Jesus to be the fulfillment of all that was and is to come. Not surprisingly, these fulfillment theologies are manifest in the context of three distinct dimensions.

### ***2.5.1.1 Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven***

The concept of the kingdom of heaven is a central theme in Matthew's gospel (Saucy 1994). His drive to show Jesus as the fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven (βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) is particularly evident on two axes.

Firstly, the evangelist makes use of the phrase *the kingdom of heaven* 32 times, three times more frequently than Mark. It is interesting to note that Mark never uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven”; he uses “kingdom of God.” In any case, the two terms are linguistic variations of the same concept (as Ladd [2002:32] explains, the kingdom of heaven is the Semitic form, whereas the Kingdom of God is the Greek form of the same phrase”). Concurring with Hagner (1993) and Sanders (1985), it is clear that everything in the Evangelist's gospel relates in some way to the *progressive* fulfillment of the (future) kingdom of heaven, irrespective of its various characteristics. For example, even before Christ began His public works and teachings, Matthew confirms the function of John the Baptist's ministry, namely, the announcement and fulfillment of the kingdom (4:17). Consequently, this message becomes the central theme of the twelve, whom Jesus sends out into the world (10:7). The theological thread continues to permeate the gospel in the form of kingdom parables and teachings.

Secondly, throughout the gospel of Matthew, Jesus symbolizes the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven, through His words and works. In fact, in numerous instances, Christ's miracles are verifications of the arrival and fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven (and visa versa). In Matthew 4:7, for instance, Jesus instructs the twelve to go out and proclaim that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” unswervingly followed with the attestation of the empowerment: healing the sick, raising the dead and casting out demons

(4:8). The theological filament of Jesus as the fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven is thus clear.

#### ***2.5.1.2 Jesus, the Fulfillment of Past and Future Prophecies***

An anonymous commentator ([www.theologywebsite.com](http://www.theologywebsite.com), 14/02/2007) has accurately remarked that Matthew exhibits a riveting concern and awareness of Old Testament predictions that Jesus fulfilled, usually introduced by a variation of the formula, *that it might be fulfilled*. However, not only is the evangelist's theological accent bound by his inclination to depict Jesus as the One who fulfills the Old Testament Scriptures, but he further underlines that "he [Jesus] alone now has the authority to dictate how his followers must obey those Scriptures in the new age he has inaugurated" (Blomberg 1992:30). In other words, Matthew not only points backwards prophetically but also forward, into the future. Three points are worth observing.

First, Carson (1983:27) cautions readers not to view prophecy and fulfillment as a straightforward propositional prediction and fulfillment, as it is more complex than that.<sup>12</sup>

He elucidates by giving a few examples:

In Matthew we are told that Jesus' return from Egypt fulfills the OT text that refers to the Exodus (2:15); the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem fulfills Jeremiah's reference to Rachel weeping for her child in Rama; the priests' purchase of a field for thirty pieces of silver fulfills Scripture describing actions reformed by Jeremiah and Zechariah (27:9); and, in one remarkable instance, Jesus' move to Nazareth fulfills 'what was said through the prophets' even though no specific text appears to be in mind (2:23).

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<sup>12</sup> For an excellent treatment of this topic, see Kaiser 1985, chapters 1 and 2.

Second, besides portraying Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Matthew also demonstrates to his readers that Jesus is *the* prophet, above Moses, Jonah and Isaiah (Hendriksen 2004:82).

Third, flowing from the latter emphasis, not only is Jesus *the* prophet but in Matthew, the *prophetic office* comes to the foreground very clearly. In fact, it is possible that in no other gospel does Christ's prophetic characteristic take centre stage as strongly as in Matthew. Jesus functions as a prophet with respect to His own work, principally as the prophet to His own misery and death, making Him the true prophet of Deuteronomy 18:18. This is Matthew's inductively conclusive evidence that He can and will fulfill future prophecies as well (23:37-25:30). In his commentary, France (2001:22) concludes by noting that this theme is plainly emphasized in Matthew's gospel, and no reader should miss his delight in drawing attention (either openly or by more subtle allusion) to what may occasionally seem (to the contemporary readers) rather obscure links between Jesus and the Old Testament.

It is thus plain that Jesus' fulfillment of Scripture is two dimensional in character: He fulfills Old Testament prophecies and future prophecies (those yet to be fulfilled from the standpoint of Matthew) concerning Himself, Jerusalem, the church, the world, and the *eschaton*, where Jesus will be the final judge ushering in eternal *woe's* or eternal rewards (25:31-36).

#### ***2.5.1.3 Jesus, the Fulfillment of the Long-awaited Messiah and King***

The third and final spoke in the Matthean fulfillment emphasis is that of Christ's Messiahship. Matthew references the word Messiah ("anointed one") with Jesus Christ more frequently than the other synoptic gospels (1:12; 17; 2:4; 16:16; 20, 17:10; 22:42;

43; 45; 23:10; 24:5; 23; 26; 26:63; 68; 27:17, 22) and proclaims Him the Anointed One, the true King of Israel (1:16, 18). So frequent is Matthew's use of the term Messiah for Jesus, that "very soon it becomes almost a surname of Jesus" (Green 2000:39). Interestingly, Matthew not only commences his gospel with a comprehensive Messianic genealogy (demonstrating that Christ indeed qualifies for the messianic office), but he also assigns this title to Jesus even at the very turning point in the gospel (16:18). It is clearly discernible that even from the outset, Matthew substantiates the significance of Jesus possessing the right to the throne (Wallace 1997). Sanders (1985:307) notes: "Jesus taught about the kingdom; he was executed as a would-be king; and his disciples, after his death, expected him to return to establish the kingdom." In other words, Matthew clearly portrayed Christ as the expected and anointed Messiah, the King of the House of David (as the fulfiller of the Abrahamic covenant [Ge 12:1-3]) who would rule over the people of God.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.5.2 Christology**

Approaches to the idiosyncratic fundamentals of Matthew's christology usually run along one of three lines (Carson 1983:26).

The first approach, birthed by Styler (1963:398-409), sought to identify christological emphases by highlighting the differences between Matthew and Mark, whenever the two accounts seem to run analogously. This method has been fashionable in an age ruled by redaction-critical methods of gospel study.

The second approach to Matthew's christology, lead by Nolan (1979:16-26), is the assessment of expansive themes. Some "have directed their study to particular passages

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<sup>13</sup> For a study on Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes, see Viljoen 2007:301-322.

rich in christological language and symbolism, and based broad conclusions on their findings,” explains Carson (1982:97). This approach is known as the narrative (sometimes critical) approach.

The third approach, utilized by the majority of commentators, focuses on the meaning (connotation and denotation) and function of the particular titles assigned to Jesus by Matthew (Son of God, Son of David, teacher and so on). Kingsbury’s (1975) work, entitled *Matthew: structure, christology, kingdom*, stands as the watershed study for the study of Matthean christology focused on the analysis and application of titles assigned to Jesus.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will first utilize a provisional analysis, by using the third above-mentioned approach. However, it is also valuable to consider the second methodological approach to Matthew’s christology, as represented by Luz Ulrich (2005) in an article entitled *A sketch of Matthew’s christology in the form of theses*. Ulrich identifies three main christological titles which stand out in Matthew: (a) Son of David, (b) Son of Man, and (c) Son of God. Each of these titles, however, receives their meaning from the narrative context in which they appear and function, and not the meaning of the title itself. Riches’ et al. (2001:120) elucidation on Ulrich’s framework is helpful:

For whereas before the Gospels it was the titles which served to say who Jesus was (which, as he [Ulrich] puts it, were used ‘predicatively’), in Matthew it is the other way around: ‘the Matthean story of Jesus functions as the predicate and redefines the meaning of the traditional titles.

In this section of the chapter then, I will utilize both methodological approaches, showing that the conclusions reached by these two sundry methodologies do not stand in

contradiction. In fact, if these two approaches are kept in dynamic balance, they actually define one another.

Kingsbury groups the titles assigned to Jesus by Matthew under the following two headings: (1) major titles, namely, Messiah, King, Son of David, Lord, Son of Man; (2) minor titles, namely, Jesus, Son of Abraham, The Coming One, Shepherd, Prophet, Rabbi or teacher, Servant and Emmanuel. It is beyond the scope of this study to deal with each and every one of these titles. Hence, I will highlight the four most pertinent titles which betray his christological inflections. These are (a) Son of David (υἱὸς τοῦ Δαυίδ), (b) Son of God (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), (c) Son of Man (υἱὸς ἄνθρωπος), and (d) Lord (κύριος).

#### ***2.5.2.1 Son of David (υἱὸς τοῦ Δαυίδ)***

The meaning Matthew attaches to this name has often caught the attention of researchers (e.g., Gibbs 1964; Kingsbury 1976; Jones 1994). The title *Son of David* is one of the most distinguishing titles for Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. Blomberg (1992:29) demonstrating this by commenting on the statistical usage of this title. He explains that of the nine usages in Matthew (1:1; 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22, 20, 30-31; 21:9, 15), eight are unparalleled in the other gospels. Moreover, other than a limited resemblance in Romans 1:3 (descendant of David), no other New Testament manuscript utilizes this label. In the Matthean context, it seems obvious that the title *Son of David* “points to Jesus as the royal Messiah in the line of David” (Green, McKnight and Marshall 1992:766).

It is worth noting that every occurrence of this title outside the first chapter of Matthew is in the context of Christ’s healing miracles. The mention of David could evoke many respectable and worthy connections (Duling 1992:99-116), such as great king, leader,

prophet and even poet. However, David being a healer is certainly not one of them.<sup>14</sup> Green, McKnight and Marshall (1992:769-770) think differently, advocating the hypothesis that Jesus demonstrates that He (Jesus) fulfils the messianic expectation that the Son of David would bring wholeness to the oppressed, and that those who have faith to confess that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah will experience the blessings of the eschatological age. To bring some balance, however, it seems more likely that Matthew embraces the title *Son of David* but he also develops its repercussion to incorporate the sympathy-power shown in Jesus' healings. As Paffenroth (1999:553) explicates, it is not that Matthew shows Jesus to be more than the Son of David, but rather that Matthew demonstrates Jesus to be the Son of David, who is more than David. Matthew simply depicts Jesus as the Christ, the distinctively anointed Son of David, who is exclusively capable of healing.

Matthew's use of the title *Son of David* is not aberrant but uncompromisingly Jewish, with a distinctively Jewish appeal. Matthew clearly mirrors (connotatively) the messianic *tradition* that the Messiah, a political leader, would be born from the Davidic lineage. Matthew's work is a powerful canonical writing bridging the Old Testament and the New. This is an important point and hence, my conclusion is as follows: this christological title serves a Jewish audience, exhibiting Jesus' Jewishness, and displaying Jesus' continuance from the Judaic tradition to the new messianic figure.

The conclusion reached by Ulrich (2005) further defines and focuses the function of this title as defined by the title analysis method, explaining that "its function is to characterize Jesus' coming as the fulfillment and transformation of Israel's messianic hopes and to

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<sup>14</sup> In later tradition, based in part on Biblical traditions, the king would be associated with healing. See Bloch 1973, Baxter 2006:36-50 and Novakovic 2003.



help soften the blow of division between Christian community and synagogue” (Ulrich and Selle 2005:88). Moreover, although Ulrich views the Messiah as capable of healing, the connection between the title *Son of David* and healing is purely metaphorical (2005:87): “the title Son of David is often associated with healing of the blind. Metaphorically, Jesus the Messiah heals Israel’s blindness, while the scribes and Pharisees remain blind (cf. 23:16-26).”

#### **2.5.2.2 *Son of God* (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ)**

Most scholars recognize the title *Son of God* as one of the Matthean christological titles. Puskas and Crump (2008:94) notes that Matthew deviates very little from Mark’s usage of the title *Son of God*, namely, the public title describing Jesus’ earthly authority, His suffering under the Jewish leaders and Gentiles, and His end-times return in glory.

Kingsbury (1984) is however a vigorous advocator of the supposition that not only is *Son of God* one of the many titles in Matthew, but that it is the *key* christological title the Evangelist assigns to Christ. He sees the insertion of this title to be strategic within Matthew’s narrative: at Christ’s birth (2:15), temptations (4:3, 6), recognition by the disciples (14:33; 16:16), and the passion and death (26:63; 27:40, 43). Although Kingsbury makes an interesting point, his theory does not stand up to close scrutiny, as the label is absent from large and important narrative sections (Hill 1984:37:52). Nonetheless, he may be correct that the title *Son of God* represents Matthew’s primary christological title, expressing Jesus’ authority under the Father (Keener 1999:66).<sup>15</sup>

The understanding of this title in a Jewish, Greco-Roman context requires brief focus. As with the previously discussed christological label (“Son of David”), the title *Son of God*

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<sup>15</sup> For a closer look at the nature of Matthew’s use of this title, see Mowery 1990.

similarly evokes some contradicting connotative and denotative images. It was actually common for people of the ancient world to attribute the title *son of god* to their “heroes (Grant 1986:68), sorcerers (Smith 1978:101), philosophers (e.g., Epict. *Disc.* 1.9.6), or reigning emperors (Sherk 1988: *passim*)” (Keener 1999:66). Considering each of these attributed images falls outside the scope of this chapter. What is imperative is the way Matthew understood and used the title, *Son of God*.

According to Arthur Darby Nock (1964:45, quoted in Keener 1999:66), the manner in which Matthew and early Christians adopted the title *Son of God* has little (if anything) in common with ancient Hellenistic usage(s), and the closest parallels function only by way of contrast. In existing gospel tradition, Jesus is certainly not viewed as one of the many sons of God (*a son of God*) but He is viewed as the one and only *begotten* and unique Son of God (*the Son of God*) (Hengel 1976:24). Green (2000:41) makes an interesting comment, noting that Jesus calls God *Abba* Father (twenty three times, of which fifteen are unique to Matthew [Hagner 1993:Ixi]), an address that may be utilized in a derivative way only. It seems therefore that within the context of Old Testament Jewish tradition, the title *Son of God* is applied to the righteous people who belong to the Lord Himself, in particular Israel. Keener (1999:67) may be right in concluding that Matthew’s classification of Christ with Israel is not meticulous enough to explain this title in his Gospel, and the Jesus of our sources is again not merely one son of God among many. Matthew then evidently made use of this title to show that Jesus is in a unique position of Sonship (possibly deity also) (Blomberg 1992:29) and articulate His authority and power as God endowed (28:18; cf. Keener 1999; Green 2000).

Once again, the conclusion reached by Luz further delineates the meaning of this label as defined by the title analysis method, explaining that the title *Son of God* is a confessional

title, a title by which Jesus proves Himself by walking the way of obedience to the will of the Father. In this way, according to Luz (2005:93),

Matthew adds a horizontal, ethical dimension to the vertical dimension of the Son of God title in his Jesus story.

Almost all the significant Son of God references in combine the vertical moment, i.e., the revelation of God the Son by God the Father, with the horizontal moment, i.e., Jesus' proving his divine sonship by his obedience, and the moral character of his life for the disciples.

Combining the conclusions of the two methods of christological enquiry under one single conclusion then, as the one and only *Son of God*, Jesus stands in a unique relationship to the Father, after having been given unique authority, proved Himself through His absolute obedience to the will of the Father.

### ***2.5.2.3 Son of Man (υἱός ἀνθρώπου)***

The title, *Son of Man*, represents another relatively frequently utilized Matthean christological title (Luz 1992), appearing in three diverse contexts (Green 2000:41): Jesus speaking about (a) His ministry (8:20; 9:6; 11:19; 12:8, 40), (b) the cross (17:17, 22; 20:18-19; 26:2), and (c) His future vindication and glory (10:23; 16:27-28; 24:27, 30; 26:64-65). Interestingly, the title *Son of Man* is preferred by Jesus, often employed by Him to refer to Himself (perhaps functioning as a substitute for “I”/ ἐγώ) (Marshall 1991), most likely because it is a neutral title, devoid of any attached customary misconceptions (Blomberg 1992:28).

What was Matthew trying to convey with this title, and what was Matthew's rationale behind the use of this title? It seems that once the above contexts are melted together,

Matthew intended to carry a *fairly* broad semantic range of meaning. The three contexts above give good indications as to Matthew's function and rationale.

Firstly, the title *Son of Man* in Matthew's gospel contains eschatological implications. Although disputed by a small minority of scholars (e.g., Vermes 1973; Chilton 1994), it seems most likely that the title *Son of Man* in Matthew is rooted in Daniel's exalted figure (7:13-14) (Longenecker 1970). This is significant, as it indicates Matthew employed this title in an eschatological context. Keener (1999:67) help clarify: "when the Pharisees think that Jesus 'blasphemes' because he forgives sin, Jesus demonstrates the 'Son of Man's authority on earth' (Mt 9:6; Mk 2:10); he likewise claims authority for the Son of Man as 'Lord of the Sabbath' (Mt 12:8; Mk 2:28)." He then continues to observe that Christ's allusion to Daniel 7 becomes most unequivocal in Matthew 24:30 (to His disciples) and in Matthew 26:64 (to His opponents, ending the messianic secret). In other words, Matthew, through this title, presented Jesus as a larger than life person, more divine than human (however, human nevertheless), who has the authority to judge humanity (Mt 10:23). Interestingly, some have argued that *Son of Man* is a denial of Christ's deity, as it highlights His humanity, by nature overshadowing His divinity. This view however is unfounded. *Son of Man* is not a denial of Christ's deity, but an affirmation of His humanity. "By becoming a man, Jesus did not cease being God. The incarnation of Christ did not involve the subtraction of deity, but the addition of humanity" (Rhodes 1999).

Secondly, when employed by Matthew in the context of Christ's general ministry, the humanity and frailty of Jesus come to the foreground (especially in 8:20, 11:6 and 12:40). Jesus preferred this title to all others mentioned in Matthew's gospel. Seemingly, He did

His utmost to expose His humanity and frailty to those who are willing to put their faith in Him. No doubt, Matthew attempted to portray this.

So then, according to the title analysis method, it seems that Matthew utilized the title in various ways and for various purposes. We can conclude by recognizing the irony which surfaced: Matthew's use of *Son of Man* emphasizes His humanity and frailty, but also His divinity and future eschatological role (in particular judgment), which strictly belongs to God Himself.

Luz likewise recognises the broad range of meaning the title Son of Man conveys in Matthew's gospel explaining that Matthew disclose the connotation and denotation of the phrase ... in the course of the diverse stages of his Jesus story, "from homelessness and persecution to passion, death, resurrection and exaltation, culminating in his parousia as eschatological judge. *At every stage, Son of Man reminds the readers of the Jesus story of the journey as a whole*" (2005:88).

An additional dimension however discovered by Luz could be that the title *Son of Man* is an expression utilized by Matthew in order to strongly contrast the understanding disciples and the ignorant disciples and malicious opponents of Jesus' ministry and message, "on whom, quite unprepared, the judgment of Jesus the Son of Man will some day break in" (p. 90).

Therefore, it is once again obvious that the two methods of christological inquiry define rather than contradict one another.

#### 2.5.2.4 *Lord (κύριος)*

This title is not only analogous to *Son of God* (utilized almost exclusively by the disciples) (Hagner 1993), but in all probability, it is also a title *supporting* υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (Kingsbury 1975).<sup>16</sup> What is striking about this title is its wide range of semantic usages. It can mean *sir* (the meaning in Modern Greek), *lord* (as in master to Lord), as well as the equivalent word for *Yahweh*. Entering the debate by examining the exact meaning of each passage falls outside the scope of this study. Suffice to say that in the *majority* of the occurrences, it is undoubtedly a predicate of divine majesty (Bornkamm 1963b:55). Kingsbury (1975:ch. 3) concurs and concludes with the conviction that the word *Lord* has a tone of divinity about it when related to Jesus by His disciples.<sup>17</sup> He further correctly notes that because it points to a more authoritative title, it ought to be considered not as one of the principal titles with which Matthew develops his christology (or indeed the primary one), but as an auxiliary christological title.

It is apparent from the above christological titles that Matthew offers his readers “vignettes linked together in diverse ways” (Carson 1983:27). Certainly, Matthew’s theology of Jesus is not comprehensible by mere examination of the titles the evangelist assigned to Him, as attributive titles are only part of the organic whole. His view of Christ is far bigger than that, revealing his Savior through His words and works. In showing Christ in all His splendor, Matthew clearly alludes to biblical characters (e.g.,

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<sup>16</sup> For further studies on the significance of the title *kyrios* in Matthew’s gospel, see Kingsbury 1975 (246-255).

<sup>17</sup> In an article entitled *Christological Ambiguities in the Gospel of Matthew*, Carson (1982:108-111) challenges Bornkamm’s and Kingsbury’s thesis by explaining that although Matthew has something divine in mind when attributed the title to the disciples, we cannot be 100 percent certain and strongly cautions of an anachronistic reading of the church’s mature theology back into Jesus’ day.

Moses), motifs (e.g., poetic metaphor of wisdom), portraying Jesus as a teacher and a healer (Senior 1997:61).

#### *2.5.2.5 Christ*

The title *Christ* (the rough Greek equivalent to *Messiah* or *Anointed One*) is the first title that Matthew chooses to assign to Jesus (1:1). It is utilized by Matthew in both the civic (e.g., 23:10) and private (e.g., 16:16-29) contexts and it is a title that “became one of the favorite designations of a figure who would represent the people of God and bring in the promised eschatological reign” (Carson 1982:100). Generally speaking, there are two main clusters of this particular title. The first is in chapter 1 (1:16, 17 [end of Jesus’ genealogy] and 18 [beginning of Jesus’ birth]). Tucker may be right when he said that “this cluster of references to Jesus as the Messiah strongly links Jesus to Israel’s history and hopes” (2008:32). The second cluster appears in the Passion Week in Jerusalem. “Jesus’ clashes with the religious leaders culminated in an episode that stresses his Davidic messianic connections (22:41-42). Contrasting his own view of spirituality with that of the religious leaders, Jesus affirms that no one except the Messiah should be called ‘master’ (23:10). In his answer to the disciples’ question about the signs of his return, Jesus warns them not to believe in counterfeit messiahs (24:23-26). At his hearing before the Jewish council, Jesus’ affirmative answer to the high priest’s question whether he is the Messiah takes the language of Dan. 7:13 (Matt. 26:63-64), but this only leads to mockery (26:68). Later, when he offers to release Barabbas (27:17, 22), Pilate alludes to the fact that some call Jesus Messiah. In Matthew, the Messiah is crucified, but he is raised and given all authority (28:18)” (Tucker 2008:32).

To conclude then this brief overview of Matthew’s christology, it is fitting to quote the words of France (quoted in Blomberg 1992:29):

[Matthew portrays Jesus as] ‘the man who fits no formula’ but whose authority and power (28:18), declaration and forgiveness (9:2), reception of worship (14:33), and demands for allegiance (10:37-39) all depicts him as one ‘in the place of God,’ or in Matthew’s own language, ‘Immanuel, God with us...’

### 2.5.3 Righteousness and Discipleship

Most commentators recognize Matthew’s particular theological stress on the disciples (ascribed the title υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ in 5:9 and 45) and the subject of discipleship (e.g., Gundry 1982; Hagner 1993; Drane 2001). This feature of the Evangelist’s gospel is noteworthy in the overall context of this study, since it does not stand on its own. There seems to be a special affiliation between the themes of discipleship, righteousness and judgment. More accurately, Matthew persistently contrasts true, genuine discipleship (His twelve) with false, fake discipleship (Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes). A brief synopsis of this idea follows.

1. Throughout his gospel, Matthew represents the true disciples extremely positively, as the true heirs of the kingdom of heaven, in contrast with religious Israelites, who think of themselves as the automatic beneficiaries to God’s kingdom (8:5-13). The Evangelist constantly spotlights their character, moral fiber and spiritual disposition, *but* never hides or conceals the true cost of following Christ. A true disciple openly accepts and embraces the costs, the burden, the yoke of authentic discipleship in words *and* public conduct. The moral standards or higher righteousness established by Jesus becomes the very life-essence of a true disciple. Their faith (characterized by substance) and lives (characterized by righteousness) must manifest through unashamed public testimonies of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Gundry (1982:6) highlights this Matthean theological feature, noticing the Evangelist’s emphasis on the danger of judgment for false disciples,



who confess Him as Lord in private but deny Him in public (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 28:17).

2. Matthew twice ties counterfeit disciples with false prophets (7:21-23), who claim to have been secretly taught by Christ (24:23-28). Their lives however do not replicate the life and teachings of Jesus but rather reflect arrogance, boastfulness, pride and most prominently, *hypocrisy*. This is Matthew's second divergent accent, the distinction between righteousness and hypocrisy (the word δικαιοσύνη ["righteousness"] and its cognate δίκαιος ["just or righteous"] occur 24 times in Matthew, more than the other three gospels combined). It is in the hypocrisy of the false disciples that we find the true Matthean link between discipleship/*righteousness*/rewards and false-discipleship/*hypocrisy*/judgment. Matthew makes very clear that only when people surpass the scribes and Pharisees in holiness and righteousness, can they call themselves true disciples and inherit the kingdom of heaven (5:20). Hagner (1993) additionally notes that Jesus also warns false disciples and those tempted to follow their antinomian course of least resistance, that everlasting torment awaits the disobedient, the hypocrite and the fake.

The significance of the above is enormous for this study. It is palpable that Matthew went to great lengths to distinguish false disciples from true gospel adherents. Hence, it seems the Evangelist does not hold back on the insertion of judgment passages. In fact, it seems that Matthew's judgment narratives habitually appear in the context of eschatological judgment of the *false disciples*, all of whom are characterized by pride, arrogance and hypocrisy. Whether in the form of rebuke (Matthean woes in ch. 23) or stern warning (5:20), Matthew relentlessly paints a bleak picture for those who consider themselves heirs of God's kingdom, but in reality, are of their father, the Devil. *They* will be cast into

the darkness, and *they* will weep and gnash their teeth (13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).<sup>18</sup>

#### 2.5.4 The Church Community

“No other gospel is so shaped by the thought of the Church as Matthew’s, so constructed for use by the Church; for this reason it has exercised, as no other, a normative influence in the latter church” (Bornkamm 1963:38). Only Matthew gives rules for exclusion from that community (18:15-20), and only Matthew gives Jesus’ commission to scour the ends of the earth in order to bring new members into it (28:19-20)” (Blomberg 1992:33). It seems proper to first comment on Matthew’s use of the word ἐκκλησία (“church”; 16:18; 18:17), a word that occurs in no other gospel. Although scholars still dispute the exact nature of the Matthew’s church, and although some have overstated the significance of the word<sup>19</sup> ἐκκλησία, there remains a Matthean theological stress worth brief discussion. The comment of Green (2000:47) sets the tone for this concise section: “the idea [of the church] is much more prevalent than the mention of the word.” This is evident on the following fronts.

Firstly, it is feasible to view Matthew’s use of the word *church* as an illustrative *idea*, accentuating the church as an unmistakably unique and idiosyncratic group, different from sinners, evil doers, and the Jews (Morris 1992:4). This is evident from the contextual usage in 16:18, where Matthew employs the term not only to demonstrate his interest in the church *community*, but the Evangelist “insists that Jesus predicted the

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<sup>18</sup> Matthew 8:12, the first appearance of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, was not included here because it seems (prior to exegetical investigation) to be pointing backwards in time to apostate Israel. The proceeding five references of the phrase under study are all pointing forward, serving as a dire warning to those who consider themselves genuine followers of Christ. This will be discussed in more depth later in the study (ch. 4).

<sup>19</sup> The gospel of Matthew is often described as the ecclesiastical gospel, written in and for a formal Christian organization (France 2001:20).

continuation of this small group of disciples” (Carson 1983:31). It is at this point that judgment once more receives context and limelight within Matthew’s theology. Although stressing the importance of community distinctiveness, the Evangelist correspondingly highlights that false members infiltrate the church group (13:29-30, 47-50; 22:11-14).

Secondly, Carson (1982:31) recognizes that throughout his gospel, Matthew defines the nature and character of the *ideal* church community by stressing the importance of obedience to the higher ethical and moral life-system that Jesus taught and demonstrated.

Lastly, the contextual usage of 16:18-19 and (chiefly) 18:17 takes even further Matthew’s *church-idea* by showing that discipleship, discipline, and regulation marks the true church of Christ. Sutton (1988:27) concurs, noting that the gospel writer’s intention is very clear in chapter 18 and has shaped his material in a way that teaches the disciples and the church about divinely sanctioned accountability. Carson (1982), too, recognizes that discipline (even though spoken about in general terms) and discipleship remains a vital ideological characteristic and believes that it goes back to Jesus Himself. In other words, Matthew explicates that if this church or community separates itself, lives according to the teachings (Sermon on the Mount) and example of Jesus, and does not forsake discipline, it will be the primary sphere where the kingdom of heaven (a prominent Matthean accent) will manifest.

#### **2.5.5 Apocalyptic Eschatological Awareness and Interests**

The final theological accent discussed in this section is the Evangelist’s emphasis on apocalyptic eschatology. Most scholars recognize that Matthew is not the only biblical author with eschatological interest (e.g., Hagner 1985; Mounce 1998). However, this redactional-theological topic unquestionably holds more prominence in Matthew’s gospel

than in any other New Testament book (with the exception of the Book of Revelation). “Jesus, the prince in rags, will come back as the crowned king of the universe” (Green 2000:48). Matthew’s eschatological prominence is observable on two plains.

Firstly, the nature of Matthew’s 24<sup>th</sup> chapter in relation to Mark’s 13<sup>th</sup> chapter reveals the prominence of this theme. Presupposing the two-four gospel hypothesis, Hagner (1993) points out that the length of Matthew’s chief eschatological chapter (24) is significantly longer than one of his (redacted) source, Mark 13. “Clearly, Matthew thought that Mark’s apocalyptic discourse, though worthy of duplication, left out matters of grave importance... almost triples it in length” (Mitchell 1998:204). This reveals not only an interest in the general theme of eschatology, but also a concern with the finer details of the end of history. Mitchell (p. 203) further notes two important redactional features in his article entitled *A tale of two apocalypses*:

Although there are some subtle and important Matthean alterations to the early part of this apocalyptic speech by Jesus on the Mount of Olives, most noticeable is how Matthew has expanded and lengthened its ending to emphasize both the delay of the *parousia* and the punishment which awaits the wicked.

Secondly, Matthew includes several eschatologically significant pericopes—pericopes not found in Mark. The Evangelist adds two chapters (by 24 is expanded and adding 25), expounding on the realities and intensity of the final eschatological judgment. Moreover, the parable of the weeds and their explanation (13:24-30, 36-43), the parable of the workers in the vineyard (20:1-16), the parable of the wedding banquet (22:1-14), the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13), and the last judgment (25:31-46), are all eschatological pericopes unique to Matthew. It is unambiguous therefore that “apocalyptic threads run throughout the Gospel” (Hagner 1993:Ixiii).

In conclusion, Matthew is evidently (in most part) a theological document, and therefore, must be understood, read and conceptualized theologically. The centre of his vision, his theology and his world is Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Hence, one must understand the gospel of Matthew in relation of the above-mentioned theological categories: fulfillment theologies, christology, righteousness and discipleship, the church community and apocalyptic eschatology.

However, this chapter cannot end here. Although apocalyptic eschatological issues are important to Matthew, the sub-theme of judgment runs throughout the Evangelist's gospel and his eschatological passages. The remainder of this chapter then shall focus on demonstrating that the topic of judgment permeates the gospel both thematically and structurally.

## **2.6 THE THEME OF JUDGMENT IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

In the above sections, various Matthean gospel characteristics were carefully considered. For the remainder of this chapter, the focus must shift onto the subject of judgment, within the thematic and structural framework of Matthew's eschatology. In order to place this topic in its proper academic context, this section commences with a brief literature review on apocalyptic eschatology, followed by the thematic thread of judgment in Matthew's gospel.

### **2.6.1 Survey of Literature**

The actual inauguration point of interest in apocalyptic eschatological studies is traceable to the earliest point of the twentieth century. In this period, most scholars understood and recognized the eschatological facet of Matthew's gospel. However, it was scholars such as Johannes, Weiss and Albert Schweitzer that "have put apocalyptic eschatology at the

forefront of New Testament scholarship” (Sim 2005:3). Through the works of R H Charles and others, non-canonical apocalyptic studies saw an increase of curiosity and devout attention.

#### ***2.6.1.1 Burnett Hillman Streeter***

Within this academic context, it is proper to commence this survey with the landmark work of B. H. Streeter, entitled, *The four gospels: a study of origins*. His work, published in 1924,<sup>20</sup> made an early contribution (albeit brief) to Matthean apocalyptic studies. Streeter’s long-lasting contribution is two-fold.

Firstly, not only was Streeter the first scholar of his time to accentuate Matthew’s apocalyptic theological theme, but he was also the first to explain its eminence in the gospel. Streeter’s conclusions merit full mention (1924, part 4:485-527):

The enhancement of Apocalyptic interest in Matthew is the more remarkable since in other Christian documents—whether earlier than Matthew, like the later Epistles of Paul, or later, like the Fourth Gospel—the delay in the Second Coming was obviously causing less and less emphasis to be laid on this particular element in early Christian belief. Even in the Apocalyptic chapter of Mark the emphasis is on "the end is not yet." Mark, like Paul in 2 Thessalonians, urges Christians not to mistake present or recent tribulations for the immediate prelude of the Second Coming. The real prelude will be the appearance of Anti-Christ, and even after his appearance there will still be an interval.

With Matthew it is otherwise. Urgency is the note all through his Gospel.

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<sup>20</sup> It is significant to set the context for Streeter’s work. He published his research before the onset of redactional critical methodologies, which ruled gospel scholarship for generations after World War 2. This is significant and possibly accounts for the wide-ranging contextual quality of his work.

Secondly, Streeter highlighted the probability of gospel composition in c.85 A.D. in Antioch, a time marked by intense persecution [e.g., the destruction of the Temple] and therefore imminent apocalyptic expectations (a hypothesis considered plausible even today).

Streeter further accentuates that the physical location of the Matthean community likewise had an affect on the community's apocalyptic expectations:

This fervour of expectation has, I suggest, a geographical explanation.

Antioch was the eastern gate of the Roman Empire, and, here more than elsewhere, the popular mind was constantly perturbed by rumours that Nero, at the head of the Parthian hosts, was marching against Rome. The belief that Nero had not really died but was hidden in Parthia awaiting his revenge, or, as the myth developed, that he had died but would rise again, led to the rise of false Neros across the Euphrates. Three of these pretenders, in 69, in 80, and in 88, are known to history. The fact of their emergence is strong evidence of the persistence and widespread character of the belief. Nero was not unpopular with the multitude in the provinces; but the Christians, and for good reason, regarded him as the incarnation of the hostility of Satan to the Church of God. Very soon (p. 520) they combined the popular Nero-redivivus myth with that conception of the Anti-Christ, which they had derived from Jewish Apocalyptic. This fusion is already effected in the Apocalypse, and it is there connected with invasions of the Roman Empire from the Euphrates.

In other words, "Matthew's intense concern with apocalyptic-eschatological themes is to be explained by both time and the place of the gospel's composition" (Sim 2005:4).

With the inception of the redaction-critical method of gospel study, scholars began to focus their attention on individual pericopes, hoping to discover the author's particular theological accent by studying the nature of his editorial hand. This may be the reason why studies focusing on apocalyptic eschatology took a backset for almost three decades.

### 2.6.1.2 *Gunther Bornkamm*

Over thirty years passed before another noteworthy study on apocalyptic eschatology came to the foreground, namely, Gunther Bornkamm's 1956 essay, entitled *End-Expectation and Church in Matthew*.<sup>21</sup> His contribution is two-fold:

Firstly, writing from the perspective of the coming judgment, Bornkamm recognized that the theme of judgment, a feature of apocalyptic eschatology, permeates virtually all sections of the gospel, irrespective of the structural outline one chooses to adopt. Moreover, for Matthew, eschatology steers and determines the theology of the Christian church, especially within Matthew's five-discourse literary structure. As Osborne observes about Bornkamm's work, "the church defines itself and its mission in terms of the coming judgments" (1992). In light of such strong judgment sentiments, Bornkamm stressed that Matthew saw Jesus returning to judge not only the unbelievers and the false disciples, but also His church, stressing the following truth: all will stand before God in judgment and suffer a terrible fiery fate without adherence to the Torah (governed by Christ's two-fold love commandment).

Secondly, Bornkamm also notices a title that Matthew applies to Jesus, which betrays the Evangelist's emphasis and role of the Messiah (1982:42):

Above all...it is applied to Jesus as the coming *judge of the world* (7.21f.: 25.11, 33, 44). Even where ὁ κύριος is used in a parable and where, in the first place, it denotes an earthly lord, the concept passes over from the parabolic half into the actual, and becomes the title of the Son of man. This is clear, for example, in Matt. 24.42: 'Watch, for ye know not on what day *your Lord* cometh', which (cf. 25.44) is placed at the beginning of the parable of the thief

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<sup>21</sup> The origins of this article dates back to a 1954 article, "Matthew as interpreter of the Words of the Lord," which was later expanded to "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew" (1956).



at night (where the reference is to the master of the house in earthly, figurative sense).

Thirdly, Bornkamm's work goes a long way in its attempt to establish, define, and account for Matthew's eschatological material. In his view, the intention of the judgment material is primarily *paraenetic*.

### ***2.6.1.3 Wolfgang Trilling and Georg Strecker<sup>22</sup>***

The work of Bornkamm marked another break in the study of Matthew's eschatological theme. Seemingly, gospel apocalyptic and judgment became a sideline issue, as scholars spotlighted other redactional-critical aspects of the Evangelist's gospel, namely, ecclesiology and various christological themes. Within this dry time of eschatological works, two scholars and their work deserves *some* credit, namely W. Trilling and G. Strecker.

In his 1964 study (focusing on the church as the new Israel), Trilling dedicates a small section of his paper to Matthean eschatology, concluding that the Evangelist had no genuine interest in the end-times. Rather, Trilling argues that Matthew is concerned with (a) the present experience of the Lord in the church, (b) the uncompromising faith of the present church, and (c) exhortation to extreme vigilance (as opposed to end-time expectations) in the face of the uncertain time of the *eschaton*. These are the undergirding themes of Matthew's gospel according to Trilling (Sim 2005:6).

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<sup>22</sup> The works of the next three authors (Trilling 1964; Strecker 1971 and Marguerat 1981) were originally published in German. I was not able to locate an English translation of these articles. Hence, I was reliant on Sim's (2005:6-9) interpretation of these works, as relating to their contribution to the themes of apocalyptic eschatology and judgment in general.

The work of Strecker (1971) is similar in many aspects to the views of Trilling, one of which is the little stress he places on apocalyptic eschatology. Strecker's focus is on the *suddenness* of the final judgment as opposed to the actual event proper. He reasons that if Matthew were interested in the eschatological event, surely the Evangelist would have structured his judgment narratives in a systematic and orderly manner, so his readers can have a better understanding of the theme. Strecker then concludes (like Trilling) that Matthew's rationale for his frequently present judgment narratives is entirely paraenetic. Evidently, since then, scholarly opinions have changed. Matthew was no longer a community with apocalyptic expectations but rather an ecclesiastical community of saints trying to live out the life demonstrated by Christ.

#### ***2.6.1.4 Daniel Marguerat***

The next significant study is arguably the most significant in terms of Matthew's emphasis on judgment. In 1981, Marguerat published his revised doctoral thesis, devoted to the theme of judgment within the theme of apocalyptic eschatology in the gospel of Matthew. His work took scholarship on this subject matter to a new plain and his contribution is evident on the following three dimensions.

First, the theme of judgment is an unmistakably obvious and fundamental theme of Matthew's gospel. Marguerat, using statistical analysis, explains that of the 148 pericopes that make up the Evangelist's gospel, over 60 are concerned with judgment. Moreover, Matthew adopts the allegorical idiom of judgment from his sources and accentuates it notably.

Second, Matthew is not interested in systematizing the judgment theme; instead, the criterion by which judgment arrives holds the Evangelist's attention.

Lastly, the above criteria lead Marguerat to conclude that the function of the announcement of judgment serves a rhetorical purpose. Those who hear or read the judgment passages must take responsibility for what they heard by adhering to the example set by Christ. Marguerat continues to explain that due to the replacement of Israel by the church, “the threat of judgment now rebounds on its members who should learn from Israel’s fate and take care not to repeat her mistake” (Sim 2005:8).

#### ***2.6.1.5 Graham Stanton***

Another noteworthy study relevant for this survey of literature is that of Stanton, entitled *Matthew and Judaism* (1984). He advocated that there exists a special connection or relationship between Matthew’s “anti-Jewish polemic” and the major theme of judgment. In light of the recent split in the Jewish community and the trauma experienced as a result, Stanton offers four convincing arguments to explain this feature.

1. Matthew’s community still felt gravely threatened by Jewish resistance at the time he wrote his wrote. Stanton provides a number of Scriptural references to back up his claims (22:4; 23:36 and 39; 24:9 and 28:19) (pp. 157-160).
2. Moreover, notes Stanton, the Matthean community was at odds not only with various Judaic sects, but also the Gentile world (10:10, 18; 22:18:7 and 24:9) (pp. 160-161).
3. Stanton’s third argument relates to the increased use of apocalyptic themes (pp.161-162), supported especially by chapters 23, 24, as well as other references spread throughout the gospel. “Why is there increased prominence given to apocalyptic themes in this [Matthew’s] gospel? What is the *function* of these traditions?” inquires Stanton (1993:162). He then answers the question by appealing to a sociological justification (p. 162), explaining that several writers have, in recent times, emphasized that that historical

and sociological aspects are at work whenever apocalyptic language is prominent, for in times of historical calamity and distress, and especially in times of a heightened sense of alienation from the outside world, Jewish and early Christian writers bowed to apocalyptic literary themes.

4. Lastly, Stanton recognizes similar increased apocalyptic themes (i.e., persecution, hostility and consequent alienation experienced by other Christian communities). In support, he appeals to 1 Thessalonians (a community acutely aware of the Jewish hostility) and the gospel of John (a gospel with extremely bitter anti-Jewish polemic) (pp. 165-168).

The above outline of Stanton's interpretation lays perhaps the most significant contribution to the study of the Matthean judgment since Streeter. As he so masterfully demonstrated, this theme does not make sense without the socio-historical context in which it appeared.

#### ***2.6.1.6 Donald Hagner***

Although extremely similar in conclusion to that of Stanton, an essay worth mention is that of Hagner (1985), entitled *Apocalyptic motifs in the gospel of Matthew: continuity and discontinuity*. Agreeing with Stanton's position in that Matthew slotted in his numerous apocalyptic eschatological discourses in response to hostility and persecution, Hagner further recognizes that "the apocalyptic viewpoint permeates the Gospel of Matthew. Though by no means limited to the five discourses, this viewpoint finds important place there and dominates the final discourse" (1985:68). Furthermore, Hagner sees the Evangelist's stance or context of judgment and apocalyptic eschatology as

pointing both in language and motif to the past (the story of the Messiah) and to the future (severe judgment of false disciples) (1985:73).

#### ***2.6.1.7 Lamar Cope***

The next significant contribution to this subject was by O. L. Cope, by means of his 1989 article entitled, *To the close of the age: the role of apocalyptic thought in the gospel of Matthew*. Viewing the contribution to the study of apocalyptic themes in Matthew as rather bleak since Bornkamm's (1965) work, Cope attempted to deal with issues such as the prominence of the apocalyptic judgment motif in the Evangelist's gospel. He concluded that the theme of end-time judgment is not only prominent in the gospel of Matthew, but also shapes other important Matthean themes, such as christology and especially discipleship. Then Cope turns to the question concerning the role of the apocalyptic in Matthew's gospel. In his answer, he explains that end-times' anecdotes serve various functions, amongst which one stands out in particular: "the dominant role which the apocalyptic expectation plays in the Gospel of Matthew is the role of avoiding punishment for misdeeds and receiving reward for good deeds" (1989:18). In other words, the dominant function is that of a "threat."

Although his methodology and consequent conclusions are very similar to those of Hagner and Stanton, his work is unique in that Matthew utilizes apocalyptic literature not because of his community's painful separation from their Jewish counterpart, but rather because of (a) the Jewish war, (b) persecution, and (c) inter-church divisions. In this respect, he supports and strengthens the thesis of Bornkamm (1956).

### ***2.6.1.8 David C. Sim***

His book, *Apocalyptic eschatology in the gospel of Matthew* (a revised version of his 1992 doctoral thesis, published as a paperback in 2005) is a key advancement within the field of Matthean end-time studies in that it offers a definitive and *wide-ranging* investigation of Matthew's eschatological attitude(s). Not discarding the efforts and scholarly developments of Streeter, Bornkamm and others, Sim broadens the scope of their methodological approaches. He explains that his aims and conclusions are as follows:

First, he commences with a chapter that is descriptive in nature, attempting to recognize and classify the exact nature and extent of the apocalyptic within apocalyptic literature in general.<sup>23</sup> He identifies that the end-times' speculations on judgment and apocalyptic eschatology function within the context of two primary elements, namely dualism and determinism (pp. 35-42). Consequently, Sim turns his attention to the eschatological event proper, where he identifies six design characteristics (functioning within the abovementioned contexts): (a) eschatological woes, (b) arrival of a savior figure, (c) *judgment*, (d) fate of the righteous, (e) fate of the wicked, and (f) imminent end expectations (pp. 42-52). Because he is convinced that Matthew's eschatology and end-time perspective "must be examined in the same way as that other apocalyptic-eschatological writings are investigated (p. 13), he adopts the above characteristics as universally true for both inspired and uninspired literary works and thus applies these to Matthew's gospel.

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<sup>23</sup> Sim surveys the Apocryphal writings, documents written by the Qumran community and the Protestant canon for his general conclusions.

Next, Sim probes the social setting that prompted Matthew to scatter end-time narratives throughout his gospel. Advocating the view that the Evangelist's pronounced apocalyptic-eschatological scheme does not arise in a vacuum, but has a concrete social setting, Sim concludes that world-end and judgment passages are in response to a crisis situation (perceived or real) and resultant alienation with the purpose of presenting a new symbolic reality and state of affairs (pp. 181-219).

In his last chapter, Sim finally turns his attention to the function of apocalyptic eschatology and judgment in the gospel of Matthew. Once again, he clearly points out that the function of the apocalyptic in *any* document directly relates to the social setting that underlies it, and it is a mechanism of response to such setting. Matthew is no exception to this overarching rule (p. 222). Moreover, in his view, the Jewish war is in the not-too-distant-past (p. 241). With this context in mind, Sim highlights the five roles that apocalyptic eschatology serves in Matthew (p. 223-241): (a) identification and legitimation, (b) explanation of current circumstances, (c) encouragement and hope for the future, (d) vengeance and consolation, and (e) group solidarity and social control.

To conclude, his overall study and analysis is rather convincing, certainly contributing to pre 90's scholarship. However, I find his conclusions too general. Matthew is an inspired book. It is a portion of God's written special revelation to His people. Applying social and economic factors as revealed through the study of other non-inspired Christian writings certainly ignores the supernatural element of God's function and purpose behind Matthew's eschatological pericopes. It is my opinion that the special revelatory character of the Bible must be addressed in relation to other apocalyptic writings.

### 2.6.1.9 Vicky Balabanski

The final mention belongs to Viki Balabanski's work, entitled *Eschatology in the making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache*, in which she argues that the "eschatological expectations of early Christian communities were primarily shaped by the particular historical situation of each community in determining the use of inherited eschatological traditions rather than by any general developmental trajectory that affected the entire Christian movement" (Webber 2000:136). Moreover, Balabanski (p. 207) likewise recognizes that Matthew gave prominence to the eschatological horizon of judgment, noting that "Matthew's eschatological perspective was not of secondary importance, nor simply a disciplinary stick, but integral to this evangelist's theology" (p. 147). In light of this, she points out that the imminence of the impending eschaton is not delayed. Rather, it is much more pronounced in Matthew's theology than previously assumed, and hence, the function of the apocalyptic in Matthew is to focus the attention of Matthew's community on the imminence of the *parousia*. She concludes (pp. 207-208) by saying that the delay of the *parousia* was not a major issue and did not play as big a role as often believed. However, once the delay into their framework of expectation was affirmed, the specific societies found themselves "face up to with more pressing influences on their eschatology—stress from without and within, the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem" (p. 208).

The above survey, albeit brief, was an attempt to give due credit to scholars within the thematic field of apocalyptic eschatology and judgment. With the current state of scholarship in context, the final section of this chapter serves to examine the theme of judgment in the gospel of Matthew. This is attainable by (a) exploring the Evangelist's judgment passages (in relation to his structure) and placement of the phrase *weeping and*



*gnashing of teeth*, and (b) his atypical language and use of symbolism pertaining to judgment. The preceding section is concerned with these two theological aspects.

### 2.6.2 Judgment Passages in Relation to Matthew's Five-discourse Hypothesis

Matthew's references to the final event of judgment are numerous. It is the hypothesis of this section that Matthew did not infuse *his* judgment narratives arbitrarily, but rather systematically and uniformly, insuring their presence throughout the entire gospel. Because the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων appears to function within the confines of the theme of judgment and apocalyptic eschatology, it is necessary to survey and systematize all judgment narratives within the Evangelist's gospel. While Matthew's gospel is somewhat structurally mixed, the five teaching discourses seem to be of primary importance to Matthew. This is potentially significant, for a connection appears to exist between the predominance of the five-discourse motif and the ever-present character of the theological theme of judgment. Hagner (1985:63-64) interestingly notes that each discourse ends on an unambiguously apocalyptic note. For this important motive, the descriptive survey of judgment passages commences within the structural context of the five-teaching discourse.

**Matthew's Opening Chapters (1-4)** -- The opening judgment passage occurs in 3:7-12, prior to the first discourse teaching, and strengthens the notion that Matthew's gospel contains a saturation of judgment passages. In publicizing the imminent advent of the Messiah, John the Baptist urgently calls for genuine, authentic repentance. As the Pharisees and Sadducees arrive on the scene, he stoutly rebukes them for their unfounded confidence in their salvation: *who warned you of the coming wrath...* (3:7b), *the axe is already at the root of the tree, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire* (3:10), *his winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear*

*his threshing-floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire* (3:12). Even before the first teaching discourse, the theme of judgment is immediately recognizable and powerfully present in Matthew's gospel.

**Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7)** -- With the beatitudes, Matthew marks the commencement of his first discourse. The Evangelist initiates judgment almost flippantly and fleetingly (5:19), moving onto more intense language and imagery by mentioning the *fire of γέννα* for the first time (5:21-26). Matthew again employs this term in 5:29 and 30, utilizing it seven times in his gospel. The other gospel writers however make use of the term only four times combined, perhaps signifying the substance of this term to the Evangelist's apocalyptic eschatological motif. In the opening verses of chapter 7, Matthew highlights Christ's teaching the action-reaction nature of judging others (7:2) and the reality of future judgment (7:13-14). The Evangelist concludes by recording Christ's *stern* warning (using the imagery of fire) to those who do not bear the fruit, which characterizes kingdom citizens (7:19). They will fall with a great crash (7:27).

**Chapters 8-9** -- Subsequent to discourse one, Matthew narrates the story of Jesus and the centurion, emphasizing the danger of arrogantly presupposing that salvation is automatic for the descendants of Abraham. Accentuating the magnitude of this error, Matthew records Jesus pronouncing that "the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (8:12).

**Discourse 2: Missionary Instructions (ch. 10)** -- Within the second discourse, the sending of the twelve is immediately proceeded by the explication of the fate of those who reject the message of the disciples, directly highlighting the theme of judgment with the apocalyptic eschatological phrase ἐν ἡμέρα κρίσις ("on the Day of Judgment") (10:15

and later in 11:22 and 24). This expression is possibly original to Q and it is noteworthy that Luke uses two different terms (“on that day” and “in the judgment”), whereas Matthew combines them into one form, “on the day of judgment” (Sim 2005:114). A few verses later, Matthew clearly returns to this theme (vv. 26-33). He points out Jesus elucidating that it is wise to fear not those who have no power outside the physical realm but *the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell* (v. 28). Hagner (1985:65) describes Matthew’s final allusion to judgment in the second discourse:

Verses 34-39 also have an apocalyptic quality in the idea of division between disciples and non-disciples even in the same household. One’s future welfare depends precisely on costly discipleship. The discourse ends on the apocalyptic note of the future receiving rewards.

**Chapters 11-12** -- It is again obvious that judgment passages cannot be confined only to the five-discourse corpus. As with the previous narrative sections, Matthew continues to insert judgment account(s) into the narrative portion of his gospel. In the third narrative division, Jesus recognizes that many people in the cities continue to reject the message of the disciples. Once again, a harsh eschatological fate of these people emerges as Matthew narrates the words of Jesus “...it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ...you will go down to the depth. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you” (11:22 and 24). A little further, the judgment of individuals who (a) blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (12:31-32), (b) speak careless words (11:36-37), and (c) seek signs as basis for faith (12:41-42), is highlighted. Thus far, the theme of judgment is present in every section of Matthew’s gospel.

**Discourse 3: The kingdom Parable collection (ch. 13)** -- Chapter 13 contains eight parables of Jesus (four of which are unique to the Evangelist) as *arranged* by Matthew.

These parables are central to Matthew's theological motif and add further credence to his theological accent of future judgment. For example, Senior (1998:148) rightly underlines this by recognizing the thematic evolution present in this third discourse. He explains that the first half primarily (not exclusively) focuses on accounting for the mixed reception given to Jesus and His message. The second half of the discourse turns to motifs of discipleship, recalling the total commitment as demanded by Jesus, boldly proclaiming victory for the righteous and retribution and judgment for the wicked. Moreover, two commentators (Green 2000; Blomberg 1992) view chapter 13 as the primary hinge on which the entire gospel swings. With this in mind, two significant details merit consideration.

Firstly, the Evangelist again betrays his editorial hand by placing future-judgment narratives in the very hinge-chapter of his gospel. Whether focusing his attention on the masses, or teaching the disciples in private, the theme of judgment relentlessly permeates Matthew's gospel.

Secondly, in the heart-chapter of the gospel, Matthew twice (vv. 42 and 50) chose to insert parables containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. It is clear that chapter 13 is an apocalyptically intense chapter.

Hagner (1985:65) binds together the eight parables with thematic thread of future-judgment: The harvest time, with its apocalyptic judgment yet lies in the future (13:30); the interpretation in deliberately apocalyptic language in 13:39-43; the harvest is, in a phrase unique to Mt, "the close of the age" (13:39, 40); "evildoers" are punished while "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Matthew ends the third discourse with the parable of the net (vv. 47-50) (unique to his gospel), a parable in which Jesus pronounces the certainty of the future (though delayed) judgment.

**Chapters 14-17** -- In Matthew's fifth narrative section, the thread of judgment is virtually absent. This is rather uncharacteristic of the Evangelist. The only judgment thread appears in chapter 15. Rebuking the scribes and Pharisees for their false and baseless accusations, Matthew records Jesus stating that "every plant which my Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots" (v. 13). According to Keener (1993), *uproot(ment)* is standard Old Testament judgment language and therefore, judgment in this Matthean segment is again confirmed. One of the clearest apocalyptic passages however occurs in 16:26: *For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.*

**Discourse 4: Community instructions (ch. 18)** -- In his second-last discourse, Matthew yet again presents apocalyptic end-time anecdotes. As he draws attention to Christ's teachings on relationships within the kingdom community, he employs particularly sturdy apocalyptic vocabulary (αἰώνιος πῦρ ["eternal fire"] in v. 8 and γέεννα πῦρ ["hell fire"] in v. 9) in order to unambiguously illustrate the fate of those who are on the *outside*. These phrases communicate both the *certainty* and *severity* of the final judgment. I stand in agreement with Hagner (1985:65), as he observes that the concluding parable (the king wishing to settle the account with his servant), emphasizing the king's amazing mercy and grace, is exceptionally appropriate in recounting the apocalyptic viewpoint of Matthew's eschatological motif. Unless we forgive others in the same way as illustrated by the master, punishment is inevitable.

**Chapters 19-22** -- Between chapters 19 and 22, Matthew once more inserts numerous apocalyptic references. In chapter 19, after brief teachings on divorce (vv. 1-12) children (vv. 13-15) and money, Jesus reveals to his disciples that in the New Age, they will help in the task of judging the twelve tribes of Israel and dispense rewards to the faithful (vv. 28-29). Those who seem to have wealth and riches in this life might discover that they have nothing at judgment. Inversely, those who have forsaken all physical wealth for the sake of the kingdom will enjoy eternal rewards. In 20:16, Matthew introduces Christ's narrative of the workers in the vineyard. In this passage, the end-time judgment is not explicitly noticeable but nonetheless plays an important role in the narrative in the form of wages paid to the workers, *when the evening came* (v. 8).

The cursing of the fig tree by Jesus in 21:18-21 is a further clear apocalyptic undertone. Barbieri L A (1985, vol. 2:69) explains the possible Matthean connotation, in that by *cursing* that generation (1<sup>st</sup> century Israel), Jesus was showing that He rejected them and foretelling that would never bear fruit. Moreover, within days, that cohort would snub and kill their King (Jesus). Such actions then led to the judgment of that entire generation.

Apocalyptic judgment imagery is particularly intense in the parable of the tenants. In 21:40, Jesus posed a rhetorical question, inquiring what the owner of the farm would do to *those wretched* (NIV) in response the murder and assault of his servants and his son. The obvious answer Matthew portrays Jesus to be leading to is that the farmer would bring hasty and severe *judgment* on them for their heinous actions. Swiftly following Jesus making this point through the aforementioned allegory, Matthew recounts Christ telling a further parable with eschatological judgment implication, namely, the parable of

the wedding banquet (22:1-14). This parable contains the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (22:13).

**Discourse 5: Eschatological Sermon (chs. 23-25)** -- The incessant agnosticism, hostility and hypocrisy of Israel's religious leaders (accented in ch. 22) provoked a strong warning message of impending judgment from Jesus. Chapters 23-25 are concerned with the various characteristics of the future (παρουσία) as Matthew brings this theme to a distinct climax. Ostensibly, the Evangelist intended chapters 23-25 to be viewed as a single unit (so Morris 1992), due to the thematic unity with the two chapters that follow (Nolland 2005:920). It is structurally evident however that the three chapters have two potential subdivisions.

1. After a few introductory words, Matthew tells of Jesus uttering a series of publicly proclaimed woes with reference to the religious leaders of Israel (ch. 23) and/or false disciples. Here, Matthew dramatically portrays the certainty of the future judgment, as the Pharisees and scribes become the object of vivid apocalyptic woes.

2. Matthew then gathers a sequence of private parables spoken by Jesus (on the Mount of Olives) concerning the future final judgment (chs. 24-25), culminating in the final separation and judgment of the sheep and goats by the Son of Man. In this section, apocalyptic imagery is strong and distinctive (Πόλεμος [24:6], λιμός, σεισμός [24:7] and a range of astronomical incidents [24:29]). Hagner (1985:67) aptly draws attention on a central Matthean apocalyptic *advice* in chapters 24-25: remaining in a constant state of readiness, watchfulness and vigilance (24:34, 42, 44, 46 and 25:1-13), for a terrifying fate awaits those who fail to do so. He continues to observe correctly that the apocalyptic separation of the righteous and the wicked is garishly set forth in the material of 24:36-25:46, which is a theological unity because it points to the importance of present conduct

in view of the final judgment. So then, what is important is not speculation about, or knowledge of, the exact time, as in typical apocalyptic, but the need for being constantly prepared for the *parousia* whenever it may occur (p. 67).

Chapter 25 concludes the life of Christ (prior to the passion) with the sheep and goats illustration of the final judgment. This parable, more than any other, brings home the absolute awfulness and reality of *that* day. *They* [the unrighteous] *will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life* (25:46). It is on this note that Matthew ends his gospel prior to the passion of Christ, a fitting ending to an eschatologically intense discourse.

The placement of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is once again considerable and noteworthy. Twice Matthew reports Jesus making use of this phrase in the very climatic eschatological chapters of his gospel, first utilized in the context of discipleship (24:51) and in the context of readiness and faithfulness subsequently (25:30). Both appearances fit within the wider end-time judgment theme of chapters 24-25, as Matthew illustrates the doom of the unfaithful and the unprepared at the final judgment.

The above analysis served to demonstrate that Matthew's gospel is laden with apocalyptic eschatology and judgment narratives. Judgment of the wicked, the unfaithful and the unprepared infuse not only the five discourses, but also the gospel in its entirety. The phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων is carefully and strategically placed to materialize in structurally and thematically relevant gospel sections, namely, chapter 13 (the hinge chapter of the Matthew's gospel) and chapters 24-25 (Jesus' eschatological discourse and final hours prior His arrest and passion).



Before concluding this section, one last task remains, namely, a brief investigation of terms pertaining to the motif of judgment utilized by Jesus.

### 2.6.3 Matthean Expressions Pertaining to Judgment

In the preceding section, the concentration of judgment pericopes and the strategic placement of the idiom ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων was manifest. Because Jesus makes use of a fairly wide number of expressions in referring to eschatological judgment of the wicked, the following section is a brief synopsis of Sim's (2005) analysis of Matthew's apocalyptic language. In other words, this final section of this chapter sets out a fuller picture of the theme of judgment by revealing Jesus' apocalyptic expressions and language. In terms of terminology, Matthew records Christ utilizing six primary expressions in referring to apocalyptic judgment.

The most popular Matthean idiom for recounting Christ's judgment narratives is the term ἡμέρα κρίσεως ("the day of judgment," NIV), utilized in 10:15, 11:22, 24 and 12:36. As revealed earlier, this expression seems to be a combination of terms ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (on that day, Lk 10:12) and ἐν τῇ κρίσει ("in the judgment," Lk 10:14). In 10:15 and 11:24, the phrase *in the day of judgment* appears within a powerful symbol for sin and destruction, namely, Sodom and Gomorrah, stressing the extreme aggression of those who reject the offer of salvation. In Matthew 12:36, Jesus teaches that all who speak idle words are in real danger of being held accountable in the Day of Judgment. It is worth noting that the pericope (of which v. 36 is part), has no synoptic parallel (Sim 2005:114).

Συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος ("end of the age," NIV) is another preferential Matthean term (13:39, 40, 49; 24:3 and 28:28). Interestingly, all three occurrences of the phrase in chapter 13 and the single occurrence in chapter 28 are without parallel in the other

gospels. This is significant, for Matthew not only favors the term *the end of the age*, but also, it is an expression that is rather exclusive to him. Further evidence of this is chapter 23, where Matthew inserts the phrase redactionally (Sim 2005:114). The disciples in Mark ask Jesus *what will be the sign that they are about to be fulfilled* (13:4), while Matthew narrates καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος (“and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age”).<sup>24</sup>

The Evangelist furthermore utilizes the phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ (“on that day,” NIV) in 7:22 (a variation in 24:36). Sim (2005:114) explains that this idiom is often found in the Old Testament prophetic literature in reference to the day of the Lord (Is 10:20; Hos 1:5 and Zec 12-14) and passes into both Judaism and Christianity from there. In 10:22 and 24:6, the Evangelist also employs the term τό τέλος (“the end,” NIV), an expression found elsewhere in the New Testament (Mk 13:7; Luke 18:5; Ro 13:7; 1 Co 15:24). In addition, Matthew makes use of two supplementary phrases in referring to apocalyptic judgment.

Therefore, Jesus frequently makes use of the following five expressions with reference to the final judgment: (a) the Day of Judgment, (b) end of the age, (c) on that day, and (d) the end. Such discoveries will certainly prove helpful in better understanding the individual terminological identity of each pericope containing the expression, *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

## 2.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

By way of summarizing this chapter, a few important points need reiteration. The gospel of Matthew is a *histo-theological biography*. It is historical in the sense that it recounts

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed look at Matthew’s eschatological discourse and his redaction of Mark 13, see Taylor 2003.

accurately the history of the words and works of Jesus Christ. It is theological in that it offers a theological discourse for faith in the Son of God. It is a biography in that it centers on and around the words and works of a main character, Jesus Christ. Throughout his document, Matthew never loses sight of his overall purpose as he teaches, evangelizes and encourages all those who put their total faith in the Messiah.

Matthew's gospel is saturated with specific theological accents that plainly betray his theological bearings. Irrespective of the theme the Evangelist utilizes to weave his account, Jesus Christ is indeed the centre of all his theological inflections. For Matthew, Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah, and the King of the Jews.

Matthew on no account keeps undisclosed the heavenly rewards that lie ahead for the faithful, the disciples whose lives illustrate the beatitudes and the truth revealed in the Sermon on the Mount. However, Matthew is also unyielding and uncompromising in revealing the fate of those who opposed the Lord. More than any other gospel writer, he understood the realities and horrors of the imminent apocalyptic judgment. No portion of his gospel is without this theme. All through his account, Matthew describes in vivid language, what awaits counterfeit disciples. All who have hardened their hearts to the message of Christ shall partake in a harsh, severe and perpetual punishment, forever weeping and gnashing their teeth in hell.

With a better understanding of the various structural, thematic and theological studies in Matthew's gospel, the word study sections of this thesis may commence. In the following chapter, I will conduct a study on both the connotative and denotative meanings of individual words, namely, ὁ κλαυθμὸς and ὁ βρυγμὸς. Also, I will conduct a brief survey of biblical imagery (both Testaments) containing the metaphorical use of ὁ δόρυ.



## CHAPTER 3

### WORD STUDIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The next critical step in this study is to conduct a synchronic and diachronic study of the individual terms within the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. This section shall begin with a thorough diachronic analysis of the terms (a) κλαυθμὸς and (b) βρυγμὸς, in order to investigate firstly the meaning (connotation and denotation) of each term as employed in both extra-biblical and biblical literature (LXX and NT), and secondly, to observe the semantic range of meaning of these words within the gospel of Matthew.

The term ὀδόντων requires a dissimilar approach, namely, an analysis of biblical imagery containing the metaphorical use of ὀδόντων, in both the New and Old Testaments.

These two abovementioned steps will produce some tentative conclusions regarding the connotation and denotation of the complete apocalyptic expression, so often uttered by Jesus, ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

Before commencing, it is perhaps important to acknowledge the nature of the task ahead. Understanding both the connotation and denotation of single word units is extremely significant to New Testament interpretation and exegesis. Because words function within

a particular context, individual words rarely embody the basic unit of meaning that a phrase represents or suggests. In light of this, Tate (1997:14) cautions the exegete to be aware of the danger of overemphasizing the importance of the single word. But at the same time, he acknowledges that although the text communicates its message through the relationships of its phrases, sentences, and larger lexical units, single words must receive careful attention. In other words, although solitary words should not occupy the hermeneut's primary point of focus, ignoring the meaning of single words is nonetheless unwise. Fee (1993:100) for example explains that the aim of a word study in exegesis is to try to understand, as precisely as possible, what the author was trying to convey by his use of the particular word in a particular context (see also, Mickelsen 1972; Fee 1993; Kaiser and Silva 1994). Tate (1997) further explains that a plausible explication of a larger passage may hinge upon the meaning of a word which appears vague to us. When such a word is correctly understood in the way it would have been understood by the original author or audience, the entire larger unit may assume a sharper focus (p.17). Thiselton (1985:75) is of help in articulating the sentiments underlining this chapter:

Semantics is a study of meanings; but not simply the meaning of words. What is at issue is the varied meanings and kinds of meaning which belong both to words and to sentences as they occur within a context that is both linguistic and extra-linguistic.

The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to determine the semantic range of meaning of each of the smaller units of speech within the phrase under scrutiny. Each word study shall cover the following four aspects, as recommended by Fee (1993:102-103).

Firstly, establish the history of the word (vertical), by carefully analyzing the established meaning of the word before its New Testament usage. The posed exploratory questions include: What is the earliest established meaning of the word outside of the Bible? What

does the word denote and connote in its secular usage? Does it change meaning as it moves from classical to the Hellenistic period? For this thread of this chapter, I will rely extensively on Kittle's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Walter Bauer's *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament* and various other lexical works.

Secondly, determine the semantic range of meaning (horizontal) found in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world *contemporary* with the New Testament. What are the various meanings in different kinds of texts (Classical, LXX and NT)? Are the words found in *Philo* and *Josephus* and if so, what meanings are ascribed to the words? For the following three steps, the most essential tools include *The NIV Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Verbrugge 2000), *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittle 1964) and *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Brown 1976).

Thirdly, determine the extent to which other biblical authors made use of the words in other parts of the New Testament. Is Matthew the most frequent user of this phrase? Does it have parallel or idiosyncratic shades of meaning when used by other New Testament writers?

Lastly, establish the author's usages elsewhere in his writings. What are the ranges of meaning as used by the author himself? Is the usage of the word, phrase unique to Matthew or the New Testament?

The above investigation will undoubtedly set a firm foundation for further exegetical and literary analysis.

### 3.2 ΒΡΥΓΜΟΣ -- DIACHRONIC RANGE OF USE

The words βρυγμὸς and βρύχω (also spelled βρύκω) are cognate words. They appear 15 times in the Old and New Testaments and are utilized by at least 8 ancient (pre-New Testament) secular authors in Classical literature. This also includes its various cognates and contexts.

At the commencement of word studies, finding the root meaning of a word is extremely important and lays the foundation for a successful result. However, Rengstorf (1976, vol. 1:641) cautions students: “the co-existence of several roots βρυχ- makes it extraordinarily difficult to review the development of the term.” In other words, because of the several different spellings, it is difficult to discern whether one is dealing with the correct word. Suffice to commence this study understanding that the spelling of βρύχω often changes to βρύκω in the LXX and some classical passages.

#### 3.2.1 Extra-biblical Literature

In Classical Greek literature, βρύχω seems to have a similar denotation as its occurrences in the Old and New Testament Greek, but interestingly, it communicates a relatively different connotation. Homer (Il., 13, 393; 16, 486) used the perfect tense βέβρυχα, connoting and/or portraying the braking out of sufferers into open lamentation” (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 1:641). Also, in Ps.-Oppian Cyn. (2, 273), it describes the cry of pain of a stag mortally wounded by a snake-bite.

There are ostensibly two mainstream usages of the word throughout the ancient world.

1. Firstly, βρύχω was “used metaphorically, in the sense of gnawing or eating away as in the case of a disease (Sophocles)” (McComiskey 1976, vol. 2:421). In other words, the context of use is medical. This was common, as other medical writings have made use of



βρυκω in the sense of “chattering of teeth in chills and fevers” (Bauer 2000:184). This is affirmed by Rengstorf (1976, vol. 1:641): “‘to gnash’ first appears in the expression βρύχειν (τοὺς ὀδόντας) with which Hippocrates (Mul., 1,2, 120 [VIII, 16, 262]; Epid., 5, 86 [V, 252, Littré]) characterizes especially the ague [fever].” In this sense, the dynamic equivalence of the word is “chattering of teeth.” Rengstorf observes that it has sometimes occurred without τῶν ὀδόντων (of teeth).

2. Secondly, βρύχω described the act of eating noisily or greedily (Verbrugge 2000:232), hence, gnashing or grinding ones teeth.

Within the corpus of classical Greek literature, therefore, the words βρύχω and βρυγμὸς appear in two different contexts, giving them a fairly wide range of semantic meanings, namely, chattering of teeth due to a fever, as well as chattering of teeth caused by noisy eating. In light of this, some perceivable points of congruity between classical and biblical texts is perceivable.

### 3.2.2 Old Testament (LXX)

In the Greek Old Testament, there are five instances (Job 16:9; Ps 34:16; 36:12; 111:10 and La 2:16)<sup>25</sup> where the biblical writers utilize the word βρύκω (always translating the Hebrew word *ḥāraq*). It is interesting to note that its use is limited to poetic literature however. The context of the phrase is always *to gnash with the teeth*. It seems that its range of use is rather regular and consistent, always symbolizing an idiom of hate of the sinner or unrighteous towards the righteous, a hate that harbors a strong desire to destroy the godly. This undertone later surfaces in the New Testament, where the listeners are described as gnashing their teeth at Stephen’s speech (Ac 7:54).

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<sup>25</sup> These verse references are from the LXX. Their numbering is different to the English and Hebrew Bibles.

Job in particular extends the imagery and likens *hāraq* to the gnashing of teeth of a wild beast before eating their prey, conveying a strong imagery of inescapable death caused by uncontrollable rage. Clines (1989:382) elaborates:

God’s attack on him has been that of a wild beast. It is a conventionality of the psalmic lament to depict one’s (human opponents as animals, the point of comparison being their superhuman power and death-threatening assault. Not for the first time, Job borrows cultic language depicting enemies to apply to God. It is God’s anger that motivates this assault upon him, tearing him as a lion or wolf tears its prey, making his attack incessant, grinding his teeth, a sure threat to the prey of its eminent devouring (the gnashing of teeth in rage, not elsewhere attributed to animals).

This illustration of gnashing of teeth is particularly important because it is unique and shows an uncommon usage, expanding its semantic range of meaning.

Lamentations 2:16 depicts Israel’s enemies laughing antagonistically. Dyer (1985) clarify the context and meaning of this verse by explaining that the fourth sketch pictured the victorious enemy mocking the vanquished people. The once-majestic and secure city of Jerusalem was now the object of scoffing and derision. People taunted her, poking fun at her former beauty and joy, which were now gone, and her enemies scoffingly rejoiced in their victory (cf. 3:46) (p. 1215).

Its usage therefore denotes *contemptuous mocking* (Verbrugge 2000:232), signifying “an expression of rage that has burst out” (Keil 1996:503), having “taken on a vicious, violent character” (Provan 1990:297). A foreign word is helpful in understanding the undertone of Lamentations 2:16. In Hungarian, the word *kárörvendő* is an appropriate word which depicts the tone of the above reference. It communicates the idea of joyous fascination with dark deeds and events, especially with reference to the misfortune of others.

The term βρύκω appears three times in Psalms (35:16; 37:12 and 112:10)<sup>26</sup>, all conveying strong antipathy, bitterness and anger. However, Psalm 37:12 and 112:9 add yet another dimension to the semantic range of meaning, namely, jealousy. Pertaining to Psalm 37:12, VanGemeran (1991, vol. 5:301) observes that the “futile are the activities of the wicked. They ‘plot’ in an attempt to get the upper hand. Their godlessness finds expression in an obsession with evil and hatred of good. They ‘gnash their teeth’ in bitter jealousy.”

VanGemeran (1991, vol. 5:712) singles out jealousy and envy as related to *gnashing of teeth*. He continues to explain the blessedness of the wise (due to his righteousness) leaves behind a legacy. In contrast, the wicked man sees God rewarding the righteous and will “melt away... he is filled with anger, bitterness and jealousy.”

The noun βρυγμός makes only two appearances in the LXX. In Proverbs 19:12, translating *naham* (Heb.), denoting the wrath of a king (adopted figuratively) as he groans and growls as a lion (McComiskey 1976, vol. 2:421).

In Sirach 51:3, the writer gives thanks for deliverance from the *gnashing of teeth* which is about to devour him. In other words, the word is attributable to human enemies, depicted as wild beasts with the imagery of gnashing teeth prior to attack or prior to them biting (Job 16:9 also adopts this imagery).

In essence, then, the Old Testament equivalent of “gnashing of teeth” is a set of colorful illustrations which convey extremely negative, depressing and treacherous images of

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<sup>26</sup> These references are from the Heb/Eng numbering.

- Anger (Ps 35:16)
- Hate, bitterness and a desire to destroy (Job 16:9)
- Envy and jealousy (Ps 37:12 and 112:9)
- A malevolent joy at the hardship of others (La 2:16)
- Wrath (Pr 19:12) and imminent death (Sirach 51:3)

### 3.2.3 New Testament

The verb βρύχω appears only once (Ac 7:54) in the New Testament, and according to McComiskey (1976, vol. 2:421), it is recounting the “angry reaction of those who listened to Stephen’s speech.” In other words, βρύχω symbolizes a particular reaction of rage, fury and anger so intense that one consequently grinds one’s teeth, a seemingly uncontrollable, involuntary reaction. Bullinger (1999:324) puts it this way: “to roar or howl, especially the death cry of a wounded hero.” According to the above passage, it would not be a far stretch of the imagination to associate βρύχω with a *need* or a strong desire for murder. Rengstorff (1976, vol. 1:641) correctly connects this passion of hatred with a desire to destroy. Moreover, according to the Old Testament customs and traditions, the recipients of βρύχω are sinners who are opposed to righteousness, whose removal is vital by any means necessary. This is clearly manifest in later passages, as the Sanhedrin’s desire to kill Stephen finally succeeded (Ac 7:50).

The noun βρυγμός is used seven times in the New Testament, once in the gospel of Luke 13:28, and six times in the gospel of Matthew (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51 and 25:30). One can easily see that this phrase is important to Matthew.

It is particularly interesting to note that the only pertinent and applicable use of the word βρυγμός is in the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων (“there

will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” NIV), an expression describing “the condition of the wicked in their future existence” (Verbrugge 2000:232). There is no New Testament example in which the word βρυγμός stands on its own as a single noun. McComiskey (1976, vol. 2:421) explains that due to the rare appearance and usage of this phrase in secular Greek and Jewish literature, its precise meaning “can be derived only from its usage in each context.” This makes any meaning derived from context partially subjective to interpretation. However, because of its regular appearance in Matthew’s gospel, it remains “the solid place of formula” (Rengstorf 1976) for the actual phrase, not the individual words necessarily. Consequently, scholars have not disconnected βρυγμός and ὀδόντων but treat it as a single unit, as in the first gospel. At this point, I will not deal in detail with the six occurrences of *brugmos* within the Gospel of Matthew. For these references, a contextual, grammatical and exegetical analysis of *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is necessary. This is the focus of the upcoming chapter. For now however, a preliminary (superficial) analysis of the connotation of the term βρυγμός will commence.

Because of the rarity of usage in the ancient literature, it has become evident from the surveyed commentaries that scholars seem to have different opinions on its range of semantic meaning, belonging to two opposed camps in terms of the six Matthean texts:

(a) Some associate gnashing of teeth with only pain and suffering. Rengstorf (1985:111) represents the view of this camp by arguing that the phrase “weeping and *gnashing* of teeth” does not refer to despairing rage or even physical reaction but rather to the remorse of those who are outside the kingdom. Although Keener (1999:268) considers that gnashing of teeth *might* indicate anger or strong emotion associated with anger, he acknowledges that it is *primarily* representative of anguish. Hagner (1993:206) is of the

same opinion, adding the adjective, *self-reproach*. McComiskey (1976, vol. 2:421) similarly sees the word to represent only extreme remorse and suffering.

b) Others associate the phrase with physical pain, suffering, anger, and resentment towards God. Hendriksen (2004:398) for example suggests that the word *gnashing* (of teeth) denotes excruciating pain and *frenzied anger*. Nolland (2005:358) concurs but adds an additional facet to the meaning by saying that it is an “aggressive expression of hostility and anger.” Dixon (2003:169) similarly perceives that the gnashing of teeth as an imagery of angry, hysterical resentment towards God. In other words, this outlook views the expression *gnashing of teeth* not only as a consequence of pain and unimaginable suffering, but also eternal resentment, bitterness and anger toward the Judge, with the resultant act of shaking the fist and gnashing the teeth.

### 3.2.4 Concluding Annotations on Βρυγμός

As a basis for this brief analysis, I will make use of the logical classification framework, which is “based on the results the changes produce, or, more specifically, on the range of new meanings being considered” (Silva 1983:77). In other words, is the observed metamorphosis in the word under study wider, narrower or simply altered in relation to its “old” or “original” meaning?

It is obvious that the word denotes a fairly wide range of semantic meanings. The above section traced diachronically (commencing with classical literature, ending with the New Testament) the semantic scope of usage of the word “gnash.” The following has emerged.

The word βρυγμός always communicates the meaning to *gnash* (the teeth) because of (a) suffering associated with sickness and disease or (b) because one is eating noisily. The emotional or expressive context of eating noisily is of course neutral. This changes fairly

significantly when the word is used in the context of chattering (of teeth) due to a fever. The emotion associated with the word is therefore outwardly negative, connoting sentiments of sadness, misery and even pain.

In the LXX, the word takes on a relatively different connotation. Although still denoting a chattering of teeth, the source has clearly changed to a more negative, downbeat origin, namely, bitterness, jealousy and *potent* anger. A widening of scope and meaning is apparent, intensifying from implicating a superficially negative emotions to a far more harmful, defensive and distrustful feelings of hostility. In other words, gnashing (of teeth) took on a wider set of qualitative characteristics. Hence, the first semantic development of βρυγμός is perceptible.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3 ΚΛΑΥΘΜΟΣ -- DIACHRONIC RANGE OF USE

Κλαυθμός is the word translated *weeping* in the Matthean texts under study. It is significant to note that κλαυθμός shares its semantic range with its cognate verb κλαίω, and I shall treat them together in this section.

#### 3.3.1 Extra-biblical Literature

Throughout the classical period, the meaning of the verb κλαίω (used by Philo, Josephus, Justin Martyr and several pseudepigraphic authors) is to cry aloud, to weep, and to bewail (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416). Κλαίω is not associated with emotional stimuli (remorse or sorrow), but rather physical and/or mental pain that is outwardly visible (Verbrugge 2000:687). Like κλαίω, the use of κλαυθμός dates back to the time of Homer as a term for weeping, and/or for lamentation for the dead (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:725).

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<sup>27</sup> Although the semantic expansion observed between the classical and Old Testament literary periods is again observed in the New Testament, no concrete conclusion can be drawn until an exegesis of all relevant passages is conducted (ch. 4).

It is therefore noticeable that not only does the word κλαυθμός connote a narrow semantic range, but also that there is nothing peculiar or atypical about the context(s) of use by ancient non-biblical ancient authors. Whenever this word appeared, it served the purpose of describing the mournful outburst of an individual afflicted by physical or mental pain too intense to contain. Hence, weeping in this semantic context is “audible and involves more than tears... it is outright bawling... involving facial contortions, shortness of breath, feelings of angst” (Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman 1998:939). It is an outward expression of grief (Bullinger 1999:862).

### 3.3.2 Old Testament (LXX)

In the Greek Old Testament, the word κλαίω occurs 165 times, mostly translating the Hebrew word *bākā*, meaning *weep* (Bauer 2000:546) or “cry aloud” (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416).

Κλαυθμός (noun), a cognate of the verb κλαίω, makes no less than 40 appearances in the LXX, standing most frequently for the Hebrew word *bekî* (“weeping,” the nominal form of *bākā*). Like *bākā*, *bekî* is a common Hebrew word for weeping (Haarbeck, 1976, vol. 2:416). “It is thus combined with θρήνος, Ἱερ. 38:15φ. (cf. Jos. Ant., 20, 112), πένθος, Bar. 4:11, 23, κραυγή, Is. 65:19, κοπετός, ξύρησις and ζῶσις σάκκων, Is. 22:12” (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:725). Additionally, κλαυθμός also comes into view in an emphatic religious usage, discussed in a later paragraph.

Together, these two associated words appear 205 times in the LXX. A comprehensive breakdown of every occurrence is not practical. Rather, the concise thematic and connotative classification of κλαίω and κλαυθμός is the more viable route forward. The following has emerged.



In the LXX, κλαυθμός and κλαίω occur in six different contexts.

Firstly, people weeping due to intense personal loss, associated with mourning the death of a loved one. In Genesis 50:1, Joseph mourned the death of his father Jacob, by *weeping over him* (NKJV). Abraham wept over the death of Sarah (Ge 23:2). *The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days* (Dt 34:8). David also wept after the Lord has taken his son because of his adulterous sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12).

Secondly, weeping is also associated with profound grief (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416), shame and remorse (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:723). This context is unmistakable in Lamentations, where “it refers not merely to the events which occurred at the capture of the city, but to the sufferings of the citizens (the penalty of national sin) from the very beginning of the siege” (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown 1997). *For these things I weep*, reads Lamentations 1:16, depicting the plight of Israel in the face of God’s judgment and exile by her enemies. In 1 Samuel 1:7, this intense anguish, sorrow and heartache is again portrayed through Sarah, a barren woman who wept year after year in the house of the Lord for the removal of this curse.

A third category of weeping links with expressing a dependence upon God by addressing ones cries and complaints to Him in prayer (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416). David expressed this emotionally as he demonstrated dependence upon God to relieve him of his suffering. In Psalm 6, he showed reliance on God, acknowledging that unless God delivers him from his enemies, he will die. 2 Maccabes 13:12 describes the outlook of the people in its prayer to God for assistance and help. Samson makes obvious his reliance in his last cry for help, that the Lord would strengthen him one last time (Jdg 16:28). Isaiah 30 depicts God as a God of justice, giving blessing to those who depend on Him. *O people of Zion*,

*who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help* (Is 30:19)! Hezekiah too wept bitterly; expressing reliance upon God's righteousness (Is 38:3). In the above instances, κλαυθμός represents an inclination to surrender to God's will in the assertion that God does only that which is best for the salvation of His people.

Fourthly, an even more emotionally charged (uncommon) sub-category, is weeping out of anger. In Judges 9, upon escaping the killing spree of his brother Ambimelech, Jotham *went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried* (v. 7, KJV).

Fifthly, a rather common and interesting facet of κλαυθμός and κλαίω is their connection with the cultic lamentation of the whole people before Yahweh, usually accompanied by a general fast (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416). In Judges 20, particularly verse 3, the Israelites wept before the Lord in an attempt to inquire of the Lord whether or not to fight the Benjamites. Three verses later, the people of Israel again *sat weeping before the Lord... they fasted that day until evening and presented burned offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord* (v. 26).

Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:723) makes reference to this same context saying that "the crying of Ps 126:5 may be mentioned in this connection if it is correct that we are to see in weeping at sowing a widespread cultic rite." Furthermore, the singular context is detectable. Leland (1998:940) recognizes the weeping and the tears of a prophet over the sins of the people (Lam 1:16) as well as the tears triggered by a sense of spiritual loss or hunger (Ps 42:3).

Lastly, weeping connotes a context of joy, as in the case of Jacob reuniting with Esau: *But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept* (Ge 33:4). This of course is altogether dissimilar in undertone to the previous four groups, in that its implication is one of happiness and not one of sorrow. It is here that the semantic diversity of κλαυθμός and κλαίω are especially evident. The significance of this connotation is not of interest to this study, as no New Testament passage uses “weeping” to denote joy or happiness. However, further observation requires the mention of two additional points. The biblical use of κλαυθμός is connotatively different and diverse in context from its secular counterpart. Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:724) elucidates:

This is... the point where the biblical use necessarily diverges from that of the world outside the Bible. For the idea of manifested remorse which is occasionally present in *klaiein* is quite alien to the Greek world, just as the whole idea of guilt before God is alien... *Klaio* seems to be used more for outward grief than for grief in general. It thus seems to refer to manifest grief of a physical; rather than a spiritual kind.

He continues to correctly note that the full dissimilarity between the biblical and extra-biblical use is evident when considering the metaphorical use in both cases. For on the one side it is a powerful description of the need to endure a painful situation which we may well have brought on ourselves; on the other it denotes the acceptance and affirmation of dependence on God. The basis of the distinction is that non-biblical *klaiontes*, in and with their grief, stand in no relation to a God who according to an eternal plan directs the destinies of men to their salvation (p. 724).

With this distinction in mind, the focus must now shift to the New Testament.

### 3.3.3 New Testament

In the New Testament, κλαίω appears 40 times, meaning to weep, wail or lament, implying not only the shedding of tears but also every external expression of grief and sorrow (Zodhiates 2000, s.v. κλαίω).

It is not necessary to re-categorize κλαίω within the New Testament Scriptures, as its transferred meaning from the Old Testament usage remains within the same range. In fact, there is no new shade, tone or semantic range of meaning. A brief analysis of the various nuances is however still necessary.

The appearances of the word κλαίω may be summarized as follows: the verb is used of strong sentiment and passion: for mourning and wailing over a death (16 times), something that has been lost (6 times), or the ache of disconnection or separation (Acts 21:13) and for the expressive response to one's own lost state or the detachment of another (3 times). It can also be used metaphorically of trepidation (John 16:20), remorse (5 times) or of generally unfulfilled and unhappy existence (6 times) (Balz and Schneider 1993:293).

Κλαίω appears sixteen times in the context of mourning and wailing over a death of another person (as in the Old Testament). In Mark 5, Christ sets off to the house of the ruler of the synagogue. On his arrival, Jesus *saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly* (v. 38). Similarly, Martha, the mother of Lazarus went to the tomb of his dead son *to weep there* (v. 31). Luke 7 accounts the narrative of the woman whose only son had died. Prior to Jesus raising the son back to life, He had compassion on her, saying, *do not weep* (v. 13).

Κλαίω moreover appears as depicting or describing the enemies of Christ. This perspective has great theological significance and worth, deserving elaboration.

In the third Beatitude of Lk. *hoi klaiontes nyn*, ‘those that weep now’ (6:21), are contrasted with those who are rich and full, who laugh now and of whom all men speak well (6:25 f.). The latter are self-righteous pharisaical persons, ‘who need no repentance’ (15:7), who think highly of themselves, going through life full of self-assurance and with no sense of guilt. ‘Those that weep now’, on the other hand, live humbly in complete dependence upon God. (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:416).

In both the Old and New Testament, laughter sometimes expresses an attitude which articulates human self-confidence in the face of God. When used in contrast to this kind of laughter, weeping expresses reliance, trust and confidence in God and His ways. Thus in weeping one acknowledges God and His way is fundamentally accepted (Rengstorf 1976, vol. 3:723).

Weeping moreover occurs as a result of realizing ones weaknesses and sinfulness. For example, in Luke 7:38, the woman was crying profusely as she encountered Jesus. Luke tells us that she wet Jesus’ feet with her tears. Peter too wept when he realizes that he denied Jesus three times (Lk 22:62).

Rengstorf (1976, vol. 3:726) makes a further important observation. Κλαίειν is always in convoy with a softer word intended to communicate and express grief in the narrower sense. A few examples: πένθειν (Lk 6:25; Jas 4:9; Rev 18:11, 15, 19), θρηνεῖν (Jn 16:20), τάλαιπωρεῖν (Lk 4:9), ὀλούζειν (Jas 5:1), κόπτεσθαι (Rev 18:9) and λυπεῖσθαι (Jn 16:20). In other words, “only this combination yields the full severity of what is intimated in the sayings” (Rengstorf 1976 vol. 3:725).

As stated above, the only context that weeping never denotes in the New Testament is joy. Weeping due to joy is a strictly an Old Testament connotation.

Κλαυθμός appears nine times in the Greek New Testament. It is remarkable to note that seven of the nine appearances occur appear in the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. I will not address these pericopes here, since it is the object of the remainder of the study (ch. 4). For now, I shall proceed to briefly discuss both remaining New Testament occurrences.

In Matthew 2:18, κλαυθμός denoted the literal meaning of the word, namely, to bewail the death of a loved one or loved ones. In this context, “it is associated with *odyrmos polys* (‘loud lamentation’) in the quotation from Jeremiah 31:15, which is seen as being fulfilled in the slaughter of the innocent at Bethlehem” (Haarbeck 1976, vol. 2:417).

In Acts 20:37, κλαυθμός describes the weeping of the elders due to Paul’s departure. Here, the context is that of weeping out of sadness or out of an intense, deep grief. Although it is not in the same context as that of the Old Testament (grief associated with death), it would not be far stretch of the imagination to understand and possibly assign similar connotations to κλαυθμός, as the elders obviously did not know if they would ever see Paul again.

Having investigated the semantic range of meaning of κλαυθμός and βρυγμός, attention must now shift to the third word within the phrase; ὀδόντες (“teeth”). Because the word *teeth* is a semantically static word, tracing its semantic evolution, development or range of denotation is not an essential step. Rather, the next step is surveying the Bible for images, symbols or metaphors which utilize the word teeth or tooth.

### 3.4 THE METAPHORICAL USE OF ΟΔΟΝΤΕΣ IN THE BIBLE

Leland, Wilhoit and Longman, in the *Dictionary of biblical imagery*, explain that the Bible is a book that *images* the truth as well as stating it in abstract propositions (1998:xiii). Niebhur (quoted in Leland et al. 1998:151) correctly observes, “that we are far more image-making and image-using creatures than we think ourselves to be and ... are guided and formed by images in our mind... Man... is a being who grasps and shapes reality... with the aid of great images, metaphors, and analogies.”

Given ground to the above observations, as well as to the denotative and connotative nature of words, the importance of this section is clear. Reaching into the connotative worldview of the biblical authors, it is my hope to better understand the literal levels of ὀδόντες, and possibly discover concrete images and figurative levels of meaning which lie behind the word.

The word for *tooth* in the Bible is ὀδόντος (nominative singular) or ὀδόντες (nominative plural), appearing fifty seven times in the LXX and twelve times in the New Testament.

As in our post-modern world, teeth in the Old Testament are icons and emblems of beauty and attractiveness. Solomon, in a song simply entitled *beloved*, describes the groom praising the beautiful bride by remarking, *your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them* (SS 4:2 and 6:6). Possibly, the correlation of clean, white teeth with beauty is, in part, “related to their fragile nature, heightened in ancient times with the lack of modern dental restoration” (Leland, Wilhoit and Longman 1998:847).

It is remarkable that the Law in Exodus addresses the knocking out of another’s teeth. In chapter 21, the Law commands that if a man knocks out another man’s tooth or teeth, he

is to *return the favor ... then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand...* (vv. 23-24, also in Mt 5:38). Although this phrase connotes the symbolical idea of exact repayment of wrongs committed as punishment, it also signifies its extreme literal meaning, namely, for every action, there must be an equal and opposite reaction.

Throughout the Bible, teeth are always associated with images of power, both good and bad, and of a seemingly unconquerable state (Leland et al. 1998:847). In Job 41:14, for example, God's power over the Leviathan becomes the focus, asking rhetorically, *who can open the doors of his face, with his terrible teeth all around*. The small, vicious and destructive locusts unleashed at the second woe have *hair like woman's hair, and their teeth were like lion's teeth* (Rev 9:8). The symbolism in Daniel's vision is likewise rich (7:5): *And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'*

The imagery persists, as Daniel describes the fourth beast as one of who is *dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong... it had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, braking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet* (7:7).

Again, this same imagery surfaces in Joel, *when the Israel is invaded and laid waste, the destruction is likened to that which comes from the teeth of a lion*" (Leland et al. 1998:847). Joel laments, *An army of locusts has attacked our land; they are powerful and too many to count; their teeth are as sharp as those of a lion* (1:6).

Teeth are also symbols of power in the context of the evil (people) consuming and destroying the weak, vulnerable and defenseless (Ps 3:7; 37:12-13; 58:6; 112:10 and 124:6). In Psalms, David writes, *I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts-*



*men whose teeth are spears and arrows* (57:4). But, the Lord often contrasts this imagery by breaking the teeth of the wicked, rendering them useless and ineffective as antagonizers; *The wicked roar and growl like lions, but God silences them and breaks their teeth. Like lions with nothing to kill and eat, they die* (Job 4:10-11a). Here, the graphic subliminal image communicated is of the lions (the wicked men) that can merely taste the food but not digest it. *The Lord promises to take the forbidden food out of the mouths of Israel's enemies* (Zec 9:7). Here food gotten by sinful means is tasted but will never reach the belly” (Leland et al. 1998:847).

In light of the above brief survey, teeth symbolize persistent, dominant and relentless supremacy.

The final context conveys the connotation of violent anger and resentment, as in to gnash or grind the teeth at another person. Numerous Old Testament passages depict Israel's enemies as ones who taunt by gnashing their teeth (dealt with in connection with the phrase *gnashing of teeth* in the previous sections).

ὈΔΟΝΤΕΣ appears in the New Testament once symbolizing revenge (Mt 5:39), once denoting the gritting and gnashing of teeth of a demon-possessed man, possibly in violent pain (Mk 9:18), once signifying violent rage and anger of one person(s) toward another (Ac 7:54) and once to symbolize the horrors of the courses of the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:8). All other seven occurrences are in the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. At this time, however, I shall reserve drawing early conclusions on these passages prior to extensive exegetical analysis, which follows in the next chapter.

### 3.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The preceding chapter attempted to bring some order and classify the findings with reference to the semantic range of meaning of the words κλαυθμός, βρυγμός and ὀδόντες. Some interesting facts have emerged.

Firstly, the semantic range of meaning of the word βρυγμός is rather fascinating, initially connoting emotional neutrality; chattering of teeth as a result of sickness and/or eating loudly. In the LXX, this connotation evolved to an emotionally charged verb implicating anger and resentment and finally ending up signifying an inconceivable physical pain and frenzied rage. This further discloses the word's uniqueness as recorded by Matthew.

Secondly, the word κλαυθμός also demonstrates a fairly wide array of meanings, denoting crying for a variety of reasons; death, grief, anger, mournful dependence, lamentation and even joy. The connotative range of meaning could not be wider.

Thirdly, although semantically static, ὀδόντες is the object of rich biblical imagery, symbolism and metaphors, related to images of beauty, power (good and evil) and revenge. Again, a semantic widening is observable.

Lastly, although the words κλαυθμός, βρυγμός and ὀδόντες all have a particular scope of connotation and denotation, collectively, they form a very unique and particular phrase virtually unheard of in classical or Hebrew literature. The phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων is then strictly a New Testament idiom, or more specifically, a symbolism seemingly very important to Jesus. Hence, further exegetical probing of the six Matthean (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:45 and 25:30) passages is essential. This follows in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### EXEGESIS OF SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of the preceding chapter was lexical, with the purpose of attempting to categorize and ascertain the semantic range of each of the smaller units of speech within the phrase under scrutiny. While the word study of the terms κλαυθμός, βρυγμός and ὀδόντες does not *alone* constitute the climax of the study, it has revealed invaluable connotative and denotative information, forming a solid foundation for the present exegetical chapter of relevant pericopes. The phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων appears six times in Matthew's gospel (8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:45<sup>1</sup> and 25:30), and only once in the rest of the New Testament, namely, the gospel of Luke (7:1-10).

In this chapter, I anticipate to accomplish the following two goals. Firstly, I will analyze each of the above passages with the hope of identifying the nature and character the phrase contributes to theme of judgment in Matthew's gospel. Secondly, I shall attempt to classify the nature and function of this particular idiom within the Evangelist's gospel. The layout of each pericope exegesis will follow this outline: (a) examination of the discourse unit, its setting, background and structure of the macro literary unit, (b) a brief identification of major textual variants which may influence exegetical outcomes, (c)

form, structure and redactional analysis of the micro literary unit, and (d) a verse-by-verse analysis and exposition. A tentative conclusion concerning the contribution each judgment pericope makes to the broader theme of judgment will wrap up each of the six exegetical units.

## 4.2 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 8:5-13

### 4.2.1 Discourse Unit, Setting, and Macro Structure

The textual boundaries of this unit of Scripture are not in dispute. In chapters 5 to 7, Matthew carefully arranged his sources to present Jesus manifesting God's authority in His preaching. What follows is a lengthy segment on this *theoretical* authority manifested practically by means of mighty works and wonders. Or as Ironside (2005:57) notes,

having listened to the instruction of the King as He proclaimed the laws of His kingdom, we are now called upon to consider His works. We may think of these as His royal credentials, proving Him to be very truth the promised Messiah who was to bring healing and plenty to Israel, reigning in righteousness and peace (Ps 72:7).

Matthean scholars have suggested various thematic constructs for this macro unit. Davies (1963) for example argues that the ten miracles in this passage are representative of the ten plagues, drawing attention to Jesus as the new Moses. Brunner (2004:371) likewise counts ten miracles, but assigns these miracles into four segments: (a) the three outsider miracles (8:1-17), (b) the two chaos miracles (8:18-34), (c) the three religion-critical controversies and one miracle (9:1-17) and (d) the two sets of society-giving miracle (9:18-34). Kingsbury (1978) assigns a fourfold structure to the passage: (a) christological issues (8:1-17), (b) discipleship issues (8:18-34), (c) separation issues (9:1-17), and (d) faith in the *Son of God* (9:18-34). Although the three-fold structure (Thompson 2006) is most convincing (8:1-17; 8:18-9:17; 9:18-35), the caution by Carson (1984:197) is

relevant. He explains that these chapters cannot be broken down so simplistically. Matthew seems to juggle many themes all at once (faith, discipleship, the gentile mission, christological patterns etc.), and therefore, the inductive approach is the best option for understanding structure. Assigning any *inflexible* structure is hence unwise and limited. It is wiser to look for spiritual meanings behind Matthew's inclusion of these particular miracle stories, for they have more significance than mere history.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is immediately followed by three healing miracles: the healing of a leper (8:1-4), *the faith of the Centurion* (8:5-13) and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-16), all part of the ten miracles or wonders demonstrating the power and might of the king (Schnackenburg 2002:80). More accurately, all three narratives unflinchingly demonstrate Christ's power over sickness and disease and may be treated as a connective whole, "in that here, in contrast to the following two groups, there is a concluding general summary of Jesus' work of healing (v. 16) which then prompts Matthew to add a formula quotation (v. 17) encapsulating the motif of deliverance which underlines these healings" (France 2007:304). *The faith of the centurion* narrative then is miracle number two in the first set of three miracles (of seemingly similar in form) demonstrating the authoritative deeds of the Messiah (8:1-9:35).

In addition, according to Kingsbury (1978:566), chapters 8 and 9 fall into both a wider and narrower context and deserve brief attention. He argues the wider context extends from 4:17 to 11:6, the latter bridging the two sections (9:35-10:42 and 11:1-12:50). He continues to explain that in these summary passages, Matthew depicts Jesus unfolding his ministry as He teaches, preaches and heals the sick. The narrower context of chapters 8 and 9 is marked off by the summary-passages of 4:23 and 9:35 (Jesus went about teaching, preaching and healing many [paraphrase]). As France (2007:300, quoting

Weaver n.d.:67) concludes, “chapters 8-9 thus present ‘a slice of life’ view of Jesus’ overall ministry.””

#### 4.2.2 Textual Variants

The pericope of Matthew 8:5-13 possesses no serious difficulty concerning textual variants. While some scholars (e.g., Hager 2002; Nolland 2005) identify over twelve variations in total, only one has the potential to affect exegesis. Similarly, of the four textual *concerns* highlighted by the UBS3, only one remained worthy of citation in the fourth edition (vv. 8, 9, 10 and 12). The four variants are as follows:

**V. 8** An overwhelming majority of the manuscripts testify that this verse concludes with the phrase ὁ παῖς μου (my child or son or my servant).<sup>28</sup> Only a marginal number of manuscripts omit the phrase completely, hence rendering the sentence with the ending, καὶ ἰαθήσεται (“and he will be healed”). According to Hagner (2002:201), this is evidence of simple abbreviation and should pose no serious difficulty for the exegete.

**V. 9** The majority of manuscripts bear witness to the fact that the centurion declared himself as a man *under authority*. Nolland (2005:252), for instance, explains that a small number of copyists preferred the rendering, *having authority*, while other manuscripts add τασσόμενος, resulting in the centurion being a man *set under authority* (possibly added by a few copyists who were influenced by Lk 7:8). Hence, a small number of manuscripts marked by a narrow geographical location poses no difficulty.

**V. 12** Some copyists have substituted ἐκβληθήσονται (“will be cast out”) with ἐξελεύσονται (“will go out”). Metzger (quoted in Willker 2001:115) explains the

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<sup>28</sup> Although the UBS(3) committee felt a considerable degree of doubt whether the text contains the superior reading, the uncertainty clearly evaporated by the next edition.

possible rationale for the replacement: “the reading ἐξελεύσονται seems to have been substituted for ἐκβληθήσονται, either in order to avoid the passive verb when the agent remains unexpressed or to provide a more appropriate counterpart for the verb ἤξουσιν in the preceding verse (will come... will go out).”

In any case, perhaps the rendering *will be thrown out* is more likely for Matthew, for as Nolland (2005:352) observes, perhaps a scribe noted the difficulty of throwing out those who have not gone in. Whichever rendering one adopts, its affects are nominal on exegesis.

**V. 10** This seems to be the only mildly significant variant, which *may* affect exegesis. The variant οὐδὲ ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τοσαύτην πίστιν εὑρον (“I have not found such faith in Israel,” NIV) appears in a notable number of early and late manuscripts. The geographical dispersion of these manuscripts is also quite significant. However, it seems that this rendition of the text is, in all probability, an adaptation to the Lukan parallel in 7:9 (Hagner 2002:201), and hence, it is not necessary to spend further time on it.

The NA27 points out two additional negligible variants, namely (a) omission of ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ and (b) εὑρον ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ). However, both seem to have arisen “through inadvertence on the part of the copyist” (Metzger 1994:17).

Apart from the above-mentioned textual variants, Matthew 8:5-13 contains no significant textual difficulties.

#### **4.2.3 Form, Micro Structure, and Redactional Considerations**

This Matthean narrative is an easy-to-follow dialogue between Jesus and the centurion, comprising of five parts: (a) The introduction (v. 5), (b) The request for a healing and

subsequent approval (vv. 6-7), (b) the centurion's appeal for an authoritative word healing (parallelism [vv. 8-9]), (c) Christ's favorable reaction and consequent praise of the centurion's faith (v. 10), (d) the eschatological inclusion of *outsider* vs. violent exclusion of *insiders* (vv. 11-12), and (e) the healing of the centurion's servant (v. 13).

The story also appears in Luke 7:1-10. Although the essential features of the story in the two gospels are virtually identical, the two gospel writers narrate the two stories in very different ways (Marshall 1985:253).<sup>29</sup> Matthew arranged his gospel thematically and hence, the placement of the miracle passages in this section (8:1-9:35) is important to Matthew. Keener (1999:258) fittingly observes that Matthew "narrated previously only general miracles."<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Luke is a chronological coordinator of his sources and made certain his readers get a sense of linearity of the gospel events. For example, in the context of the narrative in 7:1-10, Luke inserts<sup>31</sup> a temporal marker ἐπεὶ δὲ (v. 1), showing "that Jesus' going to Capernaum followed not too long after the conclusion of the Sermon on the Plain" (Schaffer 2006:39).

The two parallel narratives also differ in their account of the *modus operandi* of the healing request by the centurion soldier (Matt. 8:5//Luke 7:3, 6). This is a significant difference. In the Lukan version, the centurion sent Jewish leaders to request the healing, and later his friends, to urge Jesus not to come into his house. In contrast, Matthew plainly records the centurion making the request *in person*. By omitting the entourage, Matthew may have attempted to avoid blurring the sharp Jew and Gentile contrast (a

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<sup>29</sup> For a convincing harmonization of these two accounts, see Shaffer 2006:35-50 and Hodges 2006:321-332.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson's (2006:370-371) research concluded that the style and vocabulary of this section is undoubtedly a typical Matthean formulation, for at least six reasons. See Thompson 2006:365-388.

<sup>31</sup> Luke may also have left the tradition (presumably Q) unchanged. In both cases, whether Luke redacted or left the temporal clause, it seems to betray his literary intentions.



prominent feature in Matthean theology), coming into sharp focus in verses 11-12 (Marshall 1983:255 and Carson 1984:200).

Although a little oversimplified, Morris (1992:191) harmonizes the two versions of this hurdle by noting that it is better to assume that Matthew abbreviated the story by leaving out particulars superfluous for his intentions. Matthew gives the substance of the centurion's communiqué to Christ, Luke (in larger specificity) gives the real progression of the events as they unfold. From the narration of the messengers, it is possible then that Matthew's primary concern was the centurion's faith and ethnic group (a purpose for which the messengers were immaterial and perhaps even a disruption). But Luke's interest lay in the man's character and in particular his meekness, both critical aspects of the account.

Two further observations merit reference.

Firstly, Καταβάντι δὲ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί (8:1) ("When Jesus had come down from the mountain," NIV), clearly suggests that Matthew intended to link the subsequent cluster of miracles explicitly to the Sermon on the Mount (in Luke, to the Sermon on the Plain).

Secondly, the beneficiaries of the first three miracles were the outcasts in the eyes of the Jewish faith (leper/Gentile/woman). As Blomberg (1992:137) points out, "Jesus ignores cultural taboos and lavishes compassion upon the ostracized." Matthew seemingly endeavors not only to validate Christ's claims of authority made on the Sermon on the Mount ("You have heard it said... but I tell you..."), but also to demonstrate that Jesus, the Son of God, is the unifying variable in any situation. "Christ removes barriers between God and man *and* also the barriers that separate men" (Deffinbaugh 2004:7).

This theme is then further developed in later verses, where Matthew inverses the common belief that the Jews are automatic heirs of God's kingdom. Although Jesus unites all under the banner of *faith*, He also rejects and severely punishes under the banner of *unbelief*. The introduction of verses 11-12 by Matthew<sup>32</sup> is pertinent here (. As Hagner (1993:202) notes, the insertion of this phrase, prompted by v. 10b, clearly turns this narrative from a miracle story into a severe judgment oracle against unbelieving Israel. France's (2007:310) elucidation of this deserves full mention:

Whereas "Not even in Israel have I found such faith" (Luke 7:9) suggests that there may be great faith in Israel but that this man's is even greater, "I have not found anyone in Israel with faith like this" (Matt 8:10) is far less complimentary to Israel. And following that pronouncement Matthew introduces (vv. 11-12) a saying which makes explicit the salvation-historical significance of this Gentile's faith in relation to the unbelief of the "sons of the kingdom." All this indicates that what for Luke was a story of a good and humble man whose extraordinary request was granted is in Matthew more a paradigm for the extension of the gospel of Israel's Messiah to include also those who had no natural claim on him.

#### 4.2.4 Exegesis

**Vv. 5-6** According to Matthew's account, a second petitioner, other than the leper (vv. 1-4) approached Jesus, urgently beseeching (παρακαλῶν) Him to heal a close acquaintance. The word παρακαλῶν, when used in the sense of asking for help, "occurs particularly in the Synoptic tradition, where those in need of aid turn to Jesus with their requests" (Schmitz 1976, vol. 5:774). Hence, it is a clear indication that the centurion (a Gentile)<sup>33</sup> was not only aware of Christ's healing power, but also trusted in it

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<sup>32</sup> "Presumably a Q saying which Luke records in a quiet different context (13:28-29)" (Marshall 1985:254).

<sup>33</sup> Bruner (2004:378) thinks it may have even been a Syrian man, not necessarily a Roman.

unreservedly. So sure was this man's faith, that he risked certain ridicule and scoff by his entire regiment, had he sown his trust into mere myth and legend.

The centurion's nationality (and faith) is essential for Matthew's theological accent. The focus of the Lukan parallel however is on the centurion's character and moral fiber (Marshall 1985). Moreover, the centurion addresses Jesus honorifically as κύριε, meaning *Lord* (Bruner 2004:378). In light of his incredible faith and respect for Jesus, he "probably meant more than merely 'sir'," even though the "centurion may not have shared the high christology of the Matthean community" (Hagner 1993:203). In all likelihood then, it is an attempt by the Evangelist to tie the story more closely to the preceding healing narrative, in which the leper likewise addresses Christ as κύριε (Gundry 1982:142).

The object of the centurion's request was his *suffering* παῖς (δοῦλος in Lk), meaning *servant* (e.g., Shaffer 2006; Blomberg 1992; Buchanan 2006) (France sees *pais* to mean "a soldier detailed to act as personal aide to the commanding officer, though the terms could also cover a domestic slave" [2007:312]). Servant however is more likely since παῖς μου always refers to a servant in the LXX. In fact, only one in twenty four requires the translation of *son* (Carson 1983:200).

It is obvious that the centurion had an unusually strong concern for his servant, noticeably beyond economic concern (Verner 1983:61). The servant, who was paralyzed<sup>34</sup> (παραλυτικός, "a paralytic," used here as a predicative noun) and in terrible pain, may have even been the centurion's only *family* according to Keener (1999:266).

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<sup>34</sup> Most commentators (e.g., Ironside 2002; Wilkins 2002; France 2007) agree that the description *paralyzed* was in fact describing poliomyelitis or polio.

Whatever the case, the centurion is clearly represented as a man of humility and concern for the manner in which he approaches Jesus. “But the assumption of Jesus’ unique authority in the centurion’s words in vv. 8-9 makes it clear that it is more than mere politeness” (France 2007:312). This character trait, displayed by a *mere* Gentile, comes into the spotlight (as it measures up against the *sons of the kingdom*) in later verses [11-12]).

**V. 7** Although this verse is seemingly straightforward, it presents a significant dilemma, requiring contextual and grammatical analysis. Is verse seven a promise by Jesus to go and heal the servant, or, a question probing the level and quality of the centurion’s faith?

A prominent linguistic mark of this verse is the emphatic ἐγὼ (I), and it provides a clue as to the answer to the above question. I stand in agreement with the conclusion of Marshall (1983:256; so too Blomberg 1992; Hare 1993; Chouinard 1997; Morris 1992) as he explains that Greek does not usually include personal pronouns (in addition to the person indicated by the verb-inflection) unless there is need to emphasize the person. When the pronoun is first in the sentence, the prominence is instantly recognizable. So if the words are viewed as a proclamation, the ἐγὼ becomes a dilemma. It becomes either superfluous, or aberrantly ostentatious (I myself will come and heal him). However, if it is viewed exclusively as a question, the resounding ἐγὼ has a real purpose, namely, “Shall I come and heal him?” It is worth noting that Matthew also commences verse seven in the historical present tense (λέγει). In connection with this grammatical feature, Gundry (1982:142) detects an interesting Matthean redactional feature: throughout chapters eight and nine, the Evangelist often makes use of λέγει and Jesus is *always* the subject, pointing to His authoritative words. This is clearly the case, since the larger

section to which this pericope belongs is primarily about the authoritative works of Jesus the Christ.

McNeil (quoted in Carson 1983:193) adds a further facet by observing that if Jesus' words "are a direct statement asserting to the request that He would come, the humble answer, with its profound faith, is called forth by no apparent cause." This grammatical construction therefore shapes the meaning of the narrative. In addition, it is important to remember that Jesus performed two Gentile healings (Syro-Phoenician woman in Mt 15:21-28), both from a distance and without touch. Although Jesus was never recorded as having entered the house of a Gentile, it is important to note that the structure of Christ's response (as a question) was not *only* rooted in fears of ritual defilement (Carson 1984:193). The response and request of the centurion in the next verse (v. 8) however *may be*. In both cases, the faith of the subjects came under stringent scrutiny, yet impressively confirmed to be of an astonishing caliber. For Matthew, faith is vital and once again serves to reinforce the contrast between the unbelieving Jews and the faith-filled Gentile in later verses (11-12).

**Vv. 8-9** For the second time, the centurion respectfully responds to Christ by addressing Him as κύριε. Was this reply given due to racial perception (Jewish and Gentile separation and customs) or, as Marshall (1985:257) puts it, "is it the thought more of his personal unworthiness in contrast with the greatness of Jesus?" Commentators stand divided.

In favor of arguments for racial awareness, Hagner (1993:204) and Blomberg (1992:141) both consider the emphatic μου (following οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς) within the phrase ἵνα μου ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην εἰσέλθῃς a clear Matthean confirmation of ethnic sensitivity (also France 2007:314; Bruner 2004:380; Wilkins 2002:55; Schnackenburg 2002:82). They

believe that this is consistent with Luke's account (7:5), for he is careful to make clear that the centurion had a good knowledge of Jewish mores ("he loves our people and even helped build our synagogue for us"). Marshall (1985:257-258) likewise recognizes the importance of the theme of authority and the words ἱκανὸς, explaining that

His [Matthew's] words are all concerned with the supreme *authority* of Jesus, and his ability to heal. In the face of such authority, he both feels his personal unworthiness to receive Jesus, and regards a personal visit unnecessary... This argument from context is reinforced by the Greek word used, ἱκανὸς, which means at root 'sufficient,' and thus suggests consideration of character rather than status.

In favor of personal feelings of unworthiness, Morris (1992:193) notes that the centurion simply "disclaims worthiness to have Jesus *come under my roof*; he was not great enough to have Jesus as his guest." Hendriksen (2004:395) describes the centurion as becoming overwhelmed with the sense of unworthiness (so Ironside 2005:60), for he is in the presence of the *Exalted One*.

In light of the two above-mentioned rationales, I see no reason why it cannot be both (also Turner 2008:232). The centurion was indeed aware of Jewish ritual customs, and out of reverence and respect, he would not have allowed Jesus to defile himself by entering a Gentile home. This admiration and esteem was then manifest in sentiments of unworthiness and inadequacy in the presence of such a *man of God*. Nolland (2005:355) correctly concludes that it is better to understand the centurion's statement of unworthiness within the Jewish context of clean and unclean.

The phrase μόνον εἰπὲ λόγῳ, καὶ ἰαθήσεται ὁ παῖς μου ("just say the word, and my servant will be healed," NIV), is a conditional imperative and seems to further aid to demonstrate the depth of the centurion's extraordinary faith in Jesus and His authority.

The addition of *μόνον* may further accentuate the miraculous constituent in the healing requested. Not only did he comprehend the stature of Jesus as a holy Jew (natural realm), but he also correctly assumed His authority to extend to the next level (the spiritual realm) (France 2007:315). As best as he was able to understand, the centurion draws an analogy between his own authority in getting things done, and Christ's authority to accomplish all in both the seen and the unseen realm (so Buchanan 2006:382). "When he says 'Go,' sickness will go, and when He says 'Come,' health will arrive" (Hendriksen 2004:396).

**V. 10** In previous verses, the faith of the centurion was indirect and somewhat embedded in the text. However, the Evangelist directly reveals the amazing faith of the centurion by recording Jesus Himself marveling (*ἐθαύμασεν*) at the man's level of belief. The remarkable faith of the centurion must not be understood in the Pauline sense of a soteriological assurance, but as the practical assurance that Jesus has the authority and power to heal. It is in this sense that he outshines everyone in Israel (France 2007:315). This brings to full light the quality of the centurion's faith (*τοσαύτην* may indicate measure and/or eminence of faith, again drawing attention to this matchless faith). In fact, as Bruner (2004:381) notes, this verse (v. 10) "has the NY's first explicit mention of 'faith.'" It is both interesting and relevant to note that only once outside this passage is Jesus *ever* recorded as being in a state of marvel and amazement. Mark (6:6) tells his readers that Jesus leaves his hometown marveling at the lack of belief in Nazareth (His own people). Yet in Matthew's gospel, we find the antithesis to this doubt in the most unanticipated individual: a Gentile centurion. This was an outrageous concept to Jews for at least two reasons. Firstly, not only was this man a Gentile, but he was a Roman centurion, directly enforcing the perceived unjust rule the Roman empire exercised over

the Jewish people. Commending an enemy of the people of God was extremely offensive. Secondly, Jews identified themselves as automatic heirs of the kingdom. In their minds, *some* Gentiles would partake in the blessings of the kingdom, but only once Israel receives her full blessing and rewards. However, it is important to stress that “Jesus is not saying that he has failed to find faith in Israel, but he is saying that he has not found faith on the level of the centurion’s” (Nolland 2005:256). The emphatic *παρ’ οὐδενὶ* also enforces the outstanding character of the Gentile’s faith.

Two essential omissions occur, shedding further light on Matthew’s redactional rationale. The omissions are *ταῦτα* (“these things”) and *αὐτόν* (“him”). The former steers attention away from the centurion’s words, and the latter from the centurion himself (Gundry 1982:114). This is consistent with Matthew’s endeavor to record Jesus commencing to conclude the lesson on faith by means of bringing it to a dreadful culmination. Christ emphatically declares disappointment at Israel’s unbelief and suddenly introduces the universal nature of His mission, which leads to the shocking anecdote of verses 11-12.

**Vv. 11-12** Luke also records the words found in Matthew 8:11-12, but in the context of the narrow door (Lk 13:28-29). The inclusion of this serious judgment maxim into this pericope clarifies the Evangelist’s editorial hand. In the initial part of verse 10, Matthew brings to climax the dual-theme of faith and authority. In the same verse (10b), however, he unexpectedly introduces the second dual theme of blessing/judgment, namely the inclusion of Gentile into the kingdom (blessing) and exclusion of unbelieving Israel (judgment). In correlation with the latter theme, Deffinbaugh (2004:4) notes that it was mainly the Old Testament ceremonial food laws that divided Gentiles and Jews, but in spite of this, Jesus tells all those around Him that in the kingdom, the centurion



(representing Gentiles) will be sitting at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In other words, while many Gentiles will be present, a number of Jews will not.

In other words, Israel will be there, just not all of her. Consequently, Matthew describes (in the most vivid imagery) the *apocalyptic* fate of those who think of themselves as insiders of the kingdom, yet in reality, find themselves eternally expelled from God's presence. As Hagner (1993:205) observes, "exclusivism is turned on its head in an apparent reversal of salvation-history."

Matthew again displays his redactional hand by means of (a) inserting λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ("I say to you," NIV) and (b) πολλοὶ ("many") in verse 11. Seemingly, he does so in order to attempt to renew emphasis placed on Jesus' authoritative words, and possibly to increase the emphasis on the salvation of the Gentile. Turner (2008) does not contest this interpretation outright, but explains that the theology of reversal of the roles of Israel and the Gentiles in redemptive history is not as absolute as some maintain, for only the *many* Gentiles who believe are to be included, and only Jews who do not believe will be excluded (p. 233).

The Evangelist furthermore recognized that the name τὰ ἔθνη ("the Gentiles") was tinged with contempt in Jewish minds, and thus, exchanges it with the inoffensive equivalent, πολλοὶ ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἥξουσιν ("many from the east and west," NIV) (Lenski 1964:330). Morris (1992:195) interestingly notes the words here used of Gentiles are similar to Old Testament passages referring to Jews (Ps 107:3; Is 43:5-6 and 49:12). Although πολλοὶ ("many") does not *explicitly* mean *Gentile*, it parallelism with υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ("sons of the kingdom") of verse 12, it can have no other meaning (Marshall 1985:261). The declaration of Christ regarding the unique faith of the centurion, contrasted with the unbelief of Israel, confirm this. In any case, Lenski's

point mentioned above is significant, for in this section of the passage, Matthew unequivocally shows Jesus presenting Gentiles not only in the most constructive light possible but also in relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In connection the presence of Gentiles' presence at the banquet, France (2007:316-317) probes the following important question: does the language justify a reference to the messianic banquet? His answer is positive, offering the following two strands of contextual evidence: (a) an important strand of usage of the term *entering the kingdom of heaven* can function as a term for ultimate salvation (// in 26:29, where Jesus envisages drinking new wine with his disciples, *in the kingdom of my Father* after his death, and (b) the presence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob makes this meal no ordinary meal, for the three are often portrayed as playing an important role in the messianic banquet. In any case, this image of Gentiles ἀνακλιθήσονται (reclining) at the end-time banquet with those, to whom the covenant in Christ was made, is deplorable to Jewish ears and, in fact, seems to be without equivalence in the whole of Jewish apocalyptic outlook (Jeremias 1971:246). The distinctive imagery does not end here though. The worst is still to come!

The conjunction δὲ (v. 12) has an adversative force, compellingly contrasting the paradoxical *sons of the kingdom* (Israel), with those from the *east and the west*. Jesus outrageously reverses roles and the υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας ("sons of the kingdom") turn out to be the *sons of hell*. The insiders have become outsiders, not only unworthy to partake in the Messianic banquet, but also legally deserving to be thrown into *the outermost darkness* (a distinctly Matthean expression that draws a powerful contrast between the brilliantly lit banquet hall blazing with light and the utter darkness outside).

In terms of the forensic nature the expulsion, Jeremias (quoted in France 2007:319) interestingly notes that according to a fashionable view in the days of Christ, Israel's

superiority over the Gentiles consisted in the fact that Israel, by virtue of its lineal descent from Abraham, enjoyed the benefits of the vicarious merits of the patriarchs, and the subsequent guarantee of salvation. It was the current belief that no progeny of Abraham could be lost. In verse 12, Jesus chooses to use υἱοὶ instead of τέκνα, for *son* conveys the idea of legal, covenantal standing. Ironically, the *sons of the kingdom* do receive what is legally theirs.

Also in verse 12, one finds the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Christ's description of the eschatological fate of the wicked (especially favored by Mt). It is the most dramatic and ghastly imagery of judgment in the entire gospel. As Turner 2008:233) observes, "this frightening imagery marks one of the most sobering moments of Matthew's story of Jesus." Jesus makes his theological point and brings this pericope to an absolute climax, explaining that the subjects of His rejection will weep and gnash their teeth. However, this is no *ordinary* weeping and no ordinary gnashing of teeth. The terrible fate of those who find themselves outside will eternally experience *the* weeping and *the* gnashing of teeth (ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων) (Turner 1963). The definite article(s) disclose the exclusive nature and horrific character of the effects that convey the outer darkness. There simply is no weeping like this weeping and no gnashing like this gnashing!

Hendriksen (2004:398) writes:

The tears of which Jesus speaks here in Matt. 8:12 are those of inconsolable, never-ending wretchedness, and utter, everlasting hopelessness. The accompanying *grinding* or *gnashing of teeth* denotes excruciating pain and frenzied anger. This grinding of teeth, too, will never come to an end or cease.

It is a physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological suffering affecting every part of the human existence. It is a suffering in the fullest sense of the word.

*Weeping and gnashing of teeth* is a favorite Matthean linguistic tool in portraying judgment and clearly has theological purpose. However, this does not necessarily mean that Christ made use of the imagery once and since it appealed to Matthew, he employed it on a number of other occasions. Jesus may well have used this imagery on numerous occasions and in diverse contexts. Matthew, whose heart ached for the Jews to come to know their Messiah, felt that this warning was important to Jesus and therefore, ought to be important to him as well. He therefore recorded the actual events in which his Lord uttered these words as often as he remembered them.

The heirs of *the* judgment described in such vivid terms in verses 11-12 are unbelieving Jews (Israel). Yet, all later occurrences of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων seem to be warning against false disciples. Hence, the destiny of unfaithful Israel (false disciples) becomes a forewarning to the church (true disciples) in later passages (e.g., Gundry 1982; Hagner 1993). As Bruner (1987:306) so provocatively warns, “hell is not a doctrine used to frighten unbelievers; it is a doctrine used to warn those who think themselves believers.” Although Jesus did not only aim the anecdotes of verses 11-12 towards the centurion but towards all who could hear, the closing verse of this pericope (v. 13) was intended only for the centurion.

**V. 13** While Matthew’s abrupt and immediate return to his narrative may seem like a sudden anticlimax, it is in fact the finale to the previous section of this same passage. After an audacious request, a rigorous faith examination, an unmatched edification, the centurion finally hears the outcome of his request. Jesus assures him that his servant shall receive healing. France (2007:320) elaborates:

The third person imperative , “so let it be done for you,” indicates not merely a prediction but, like Jesus’ other words of healing and exorcisms, an effective pronouncement. It is what the philosophers call a “performative utterance,” not stating that something will happen ... but making it happen.

However, the granted healing was not in proportion to the centurion’s faith but rather a fully granted request (*what you trusted for is what you will receive*) (e.g., Lenski 1964; Morris 1992).

#### **4.2.4 Conclusion and Contribution to the Theme of Judgment**

In his gospel, the Evangelist introduces an important judgment narrative in which he dexterously juggles two noteworthy dual-themes. The first is faith/authority. The centurion’s boldness, confidence and audacity are truly astonishing. The leader of 100 men humbles himself and submissively requests that Christ heal his suffering servant. As Jesus probes the man’s faith, Matthew dramatically discloses not only the matchless superiority of the centurion’s faith as recognized by Christ, but also his understanding of the nature of Christ’s exclusive authority. Jesus articulates his utter amazement at the centurion’s belief and immediately follows with one of the most severe judgment warnings against unbelieving Israel recorded in the gospels. This brings to light the second dual-theme of judgment/acceptance. Israel’s unbelief deserves judgment, yet the faithful Gentiles (represented by the centurion) deserve invitation and reward at the last banquet.

It is apparent from the above exegetical considerations that this pericope contributes one major truth to the topic of judgment in the gospel of Matthew. The Evangelist makes it plain that there is no salvation or reward outside of faith and acceptance of Christ’s authority. Ethnicity is of absolutely no consequence. Those who think of themselves as

automatic heirs of the kingdom (and its rewards), for *whatever reason*, are in for a terrible surprise; they will find themselves *violently* thrown *outside*, into the *outermost darkness*. In this inescapable place and state, utter suffering awaits the faithless, as they experience the ultimate awfulness of *the* weeping and *the* gnashing of teeth. The message of faith-based merit is an essential theme in Matthew and reverts to anecdotes accentuating this throughout his gospel.

### 4.3 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43 AND 47-50

#### 4.3.1 Discourse Unit, Setting, and Macro Structure

The discourse unit considerations of the parables of the tares (vv. 24-30/36-43) and the parable of the dragnet (vv. 47-50) are part of one major discourse unit, namely, the kingdom parables of Matthew 13. Both are judgment parables. Hence, they are contextually inseparable and merit analysis under one heading.

The boundaries of the parable of the tares (vv. 24-30), its explanation (vv. 36-43) and the parable of the dragnet (vv. 47-50) are not in dispute. The former is the second, the latter the seventh parable in a series of eight, collectively known as the *kingdom parables*. Although some scholars count only seven parables (e.g., Gundry 1982 and Morris 1992), David Wenham (1979:517) sees verse 52 as a brief concluding parables, hence counting eight, all arranged in a chiastic order. For the purposes of this chapter, I will adopt Wenham's eight-part structure. In any case, both parables are unique to the Evangelist's gospel (also, the parables of the hidden treasure [13:44], the pearl merchant [13:45-46] and the householder [13:52]) and fall within the thematic category of judgment parables (Hultgren 2000). Their split positioning is noteworthy and holds particular significance for this study. As Gundry (1982:251) hypothesizes, Matthew's rationale was probably to

employ them as a framework for the other two parable pairs, causing the main stress to fall on the separation of true and false disciples at the eschatological judgment.

In the preceding section, I have endeavored to demonstrate the prominent nature of the theme of judgment in Matthew's eighth chapter. In the Evangelist's thirteenth chapter, the theme of judgment is likewise prominent, but with various contextual and thematic developments. Namely, the warning of chapter 8 has become a stern pronouncement, as Jesus unambiguously draws away from the crowds (a mixture of true and false disciples) and focuses on the faithful (true disciples). Giving prominence to the centrality of Matthew 13, Green insightfully presents the context of the Evangelist's focal chapter:

The person of Jesus has been brought very clearly before us, together with a variety of responses to him. And those responses have been sharpening in intensity. At the end of this section on accepting or rejecting him (11:2-12:49), Matthew brings together seven parables to form the third great teaching block of the Gospel. They reinforce the need to decide about Jesus, which is, of course, the burden of the previous two chapters. Fittingly, this, the middle teaching block of the five contained in the Gospel, is all about response to Jesus, and skillfully brings to an end this whole section about commitment which began in chapter 11.

Matthew's *kingdom chapter* (labeled Matthew's "parabolic chapter" by Schnackenburg [2002:121]) then is an exposé of the schism between true and false disciples, via a series of parables which demonstrate the nature of Christ's response to unbelief. Bruner adds that it "is not only doctrine *about* the kingdom; it is teaching bringing membership *in* it" (2004, vol. 2:1). The overarching context is the kingdom of heaven (Turner 2008:334; France 2007:499).<sup>35</sup> At this phase of Matthew's gospel, Jesus is still in the process of offering new revelation to *all* His listeners concerning the *present* and *future* (already/not

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<sup>35</sup> For the correct understanding of the *kingdom of God* idea, see Stallard (2001).

yet tension) character of the kingdom. Yet, in the middle of his kingdom chapter, Matthew begins to make it exceptionally clear that the full spiritual grasp of its mysteries are for genuine followers *only*. The context of the latter chapters (13:53-16:20) testifies to this, as Matthew portrays Jesus “applying this same principle to more than just his teaching ministry; ultimately he leaves Jewish territory altogether, in order to find a more responsive audience among various neighboring Gentiles” (Blomberg 1990:211).

What literary outline best displays the content of Matthew’s thirteenth chapter? Although scholars have proposed various *ingenious* structural interpretations for Matthew 13, no scholarly consensus yet exists. For example, Gerhardsson (1973:16-37) proposes that the parable of the sower actually introduces the kingdom parables. The consequent six parables are explanations of the four types of people mentioned in the introductory parable (parable of the wheat and tares = seeds that fell by the wayside; parables of the mustard seed and leaven = seed that fell on stony ground; the parables of the treasure and pearl = seed that fell among thorns; the parable of the dragnet = the seed that fell on good seed). Wenham (1979:516-22) regards verse 52 as the eighth parable, and views Matthew 13 as a chiasm with four parables in each half. Davies and Allison (1991, vol.2:370-371) propose a three-dimensional structure. Part one consists of the parable of the sower, ending with its interpretation (vv. 1-23). Part two commences with the parable of the tares and ends with its interpretation (vv. 24-43). Part three begins with the parable of the treasure, ending with the saying on treasure (vv. 44-52). Still Bruner (2004, vol. 2:2) offers an outline that sees seven parables forming three sets of two parables, completed by a solemn seventh (1. the two big field parables of the sower and weeds; 2. the two little seeds parables of the mustard seed and leaven; 3. the two gem parables of the hidden treasure and pearl; 4. the concluding warning parable of the net).



It seems that no matter how one juggles these parables, a symmetrically perfect discourse outline *seems* unattainable. However, the transitional character of verse 36 must receive serious acknowledgement by any scholar attempting a structural outline for Matthew chapter 13. In other words, he/she must recognize that prior to verse 36, Matthew reveals Jesus as fully committed to teaching the crowds. Subsequent to verse 36, Christ progressively withdraws from the crowds, as He begins to focus on the private teaching of His disciples. This marks a definite turning point in the flow and social context of Jesus' teaching ministry.

Davies and Allison (1991:370) however do not agree, arguing that "if one divides the chapter into two halves, so that one section is addressed to the crowds (13.1-35), the other to the disciples (vv. 36-52), then one must ignore 13.10 ('then the disciples came to him') as well as place in different sections the parable of the tares (13.24-30) and its interpretation (13.36-43)" (also Hare 1993:148). With regards to the latter objection, I do not think it is an issue. Placing the parable and its interpretation in two different sections poses no structural challenges. An oversimplified explanation may be that the crowds showed no interest in the meaning of the parable and left. The true disciples however showed hunger and commitment and hence, stayed and received further revelation and teachings from Jesus. With regards to the former challenge, they raise an important point. However, the answer is not to dismiss the centrality of verse 36 outright, but rather to acknowledge that in the first section of the chapter (13:1-35), Christ's withdrawal from the crowds had begun, perhaps not as distinctively as some may suggest in their two section structural analysis. Perhaps 13:10 is a brief introduction to things to come. In any case, verse 36 certainly marks the end of Christ public teaching ministry, and hence, the significance of verse 36 cannot be ignored altogether.

To continue then, I am in favor of the view adopted by scholars such as Kingsbury (1975) and Hagner (2002), on the grounds that they recognize the key structural role that verse 36 plays in Matthew chapter 13 and the gospel as a whole. As stated by Hagner (1993:364), no structural analysis can afford to overlook or ignore this contextual alteration. Thus, Matthew 13 consists of the following three components:

- (a) The introduction (the parable of the sower in vv. 1-9).
- (b) The body (the six parables, all starting with the formulaic ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν [“the kingdom of heaven is like,” NIV]. These are divisible into two sets of three:
  - *Set one*: the parables of the weeds (vv. 24-30), the mustard seed (vv. 31-32) and the yeast (v. 33), preached to the crowds.
  - *Set two*: the parables of the hidden treasure (vv. 44-45), the pearl (vv. 45-46) and the dragnet (vv. 47-50), together with the explanation of the parable of the weeds (vv. 36-43), preached privately to the disciples only.
- (c) The conclusion (the parables of the householder and the treasure in v. 52).<sup>36</sup>

In light of the above proposed structural skeleton, the exegetical analysis of the two parables may follow.

### **4.3.2 Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43: The Parable of the Tares**

#### ***4.3.2.1 Textual Variants***

There are no significant textual variants in the parable of the tares, its interpretation, or the parable of the dragnet. Some minor, rather insignificant variants are however present.

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<sup>36</sup> For an apologetic of the view that verse 52 in Matthew 13 constitutes a parable, see Toussaint’s (1964) article called *The introductory and concluding parables of Matthew thirteen*.

In verse 24, for example, some manuscripts (e.g., C, D, K, L) read σπείροντι, while others σπεύρω. In addition, καί of verse 26 is missing from various manuscripts (D W 1424 etc.), probably due to a scribe's failure to see the point of the καί (Nolland 2005:543). It seems textual critics are confident in the credibility and accuracy of the Matthew 13 textual *corpus*.

#### 4.3.2.2. *Form, Micro Structure and Redactional Considerations*

Matthew's opening parable tells of a farmer sowing seed. His second parable (the parable of the tares and wheat) seems to further develop the context, alluding to an auxiliary problem consequent to sowing—the sowing of weeds by the evil one. Although the parable of the tares and wheat does not contain the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, it is necessary to make various provisional observations, in order to grasp effusively the significance and context of its explanation (vv. 36-43).

The parable of the tares is without parallel,<sup>37</sup> opening with the idiosyncratically Matthean formula, ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (“the kingdom of heaven is like,” NIV). The main parable seems to cover three scenes (Bailey 1998:266-279).

- In the *sowing scene* (vv. 24-25), Jesus introduces two sowers, two sowings and the two types of seed. Three inferences surface: (a) the first sower rightfully owns the field, the good seed and the consequent harvest, (b) the bad seed is sown in secret, and (c) the desire of the enemy to destroy the good crop sown by the owner of the field.

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<sup>37</sup> Concerning the uniqueness of the parable of the tares, France (2007:524) makes the following important comment: “Only a very restricted understanding of Matthew's access to source material could justify the view of some interpreters that this parable is Matthew's own adaptation of Mark's parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29), even though in other cases where Matthew follows Mark in telling a parable his version is closely similar.”

- In the *growth scene* (vv. 26-29), soon after the two seeds began to sprout, the presence of the tares becomes unmistakably visible. The owner, however, commands his servants (with an emphatic negative) not to uproot the tares before the harvest. Three implications merit notice: (a) the tares and the wheat will produce their fruit in the same field, (b) although the fruits of both the good and the bad will stand clearly visible, the master will not permit his servants to uproot (ἐκρίζωσῃτε) before the appointed time, and (c) an early *uprootment* (judgment) before the appointed time will not actually benefit the wheat.
- In the *harvest scene* (v. 30), the master vividly illustrates the *modus operandi* of the harvest. The allusion: the pronouncement and timing of the harvest belongs solely to the master.<sup>38</sup>

The nature of the thematic thrust then seems to be apologetic, attempting to answer questions such as, “If Jesus is the true Messiah, how can His arrival correspond with such an outburst and attack of evil?” and, “If Jesus is the Son of God, why is there such resistance to Him?” (Bruner 2004:28). The parable gives an urgent and pleasing answer to Matthew’s audience, as Jesus assures his listeners that delayed judgment is certainly not judgment overlooked. Green (2000:157) hits the nail on the head by calling the delay of judgment a silent revolution. The patience of the *farmer* adds further tension to this parable. As noted by Bailey (1998:276), “since Jesus has the prerogative to judge who will enter His kingdom, the disciples are not to prejudge the people of this world. They good and the bad will coexist until the judgment takes place at the end of this age.”

Five verses later, however, the parable of the weeds again enters the picture, receiving further attention as Jesus offers the interpretation<sup>39</sup> to his disciples *only*. This

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<sup>38</sup> Turner (2008:343) splits the parable somewhat differently: 1. the enemy’s plot (13:24-26); 2. the landowner’s response (13:27-30).

enlightenment takes place away from the crowds, for seemingly a private setting was required (Hagner 1993; Carson 1983). In His explanation, Jesus deals only with the opening (sowing) and closing (reaping) scenes, leaving out the growth scene.<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to note that Jesus also leaves various elements of the parable un-interpreted (e.g., sleeping, the servants' question, and the fate of the good seed), as if to make sure the hearers do not miss the heart and thrust of the parable. Moreover, the wheat does not feature in the title, perhaps as an endeavor to demonstrate that Jesus categorically underpins and highlights only the elements that contribute towards the theme of the coming judgment and separation (Boring 1995:310). Conversely, Christ also articulates an expanded exaltation segment, ending a judgment passage on a positive note for the very last time.

The structure of the exposition of the parable is thus similarly three-fold: the request for explanation (v. 36), (a) the sowing scene and identification of the parable elements (vv. 37-40), (b) the reaping and judgment scene (vv. 40-42), and (c) the augmented praise of true discipleship (v. 42).

#### ***4.3.2.3 Exegesis***

**V. 36** The second section of this chapter marks a change in Matthew's social context (from the crowds [public] to the disciples [private]), opening with the phrase, Τότε ἀφῆς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. France (2007:534) rightly cautions interpreters of this parable not to automatically assume that the *leaving* of v. 36 is final,

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<sup>39</sup> The literature dealing with the interpretation of parables is vast. For a detailed evangelical survey of all major parables, see, McArthur and Johnston (1990), *They also taught in parables*, and Blomberg (1990), *Interpreting the parables*.

<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Hare (1993:155) was right when he said that maybe "Matthew was less pleased than Jesus with God's long-suffering."

so that the remaining parables are addressed only to the disciples. He rightly proposes that the “general rubric of v. 34 to cover what follows as well as what precedes it: parables are for the crowd, explanation for the disciples. Once he has made that principle clear, he does not need to spell out the audience changes which it entails.”

The temporal τότε (favored by Matthew) moves on the sequence of the parables. In connection with the article in the phrase ἀφείλς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (“leaving the crowds, he came into his house,” NIV), Wallace (2002:216) brings attention to the possibility that the article is either anaphoric, pointing back to the previous reference in verse 1, or that Jesus is merely returning to His own home (the house is possibly a symbol of the inner realm of the community in contrast to what is out there [Schnackenburg 2002:132]). In any event, the true disciples inadvertently demonstrate their authenticity, *not* by their immediate understanding, but rather, by their requested explanation (διασάφειν)<sup>41</sup> of the parable of the tares. Without hesitation, Matthew commences the new era of his gospel, by (again) unmistakably demonstrating Christ’s final rejection and abandonment and of counterfeit disciples. Carson (1994) recognizes that the phrase τότε ἀφείλς τοὺς ὄχλους may be translated *he sent the crowds away* or *he left the crowds*. The choice is evenly balanced. As Morris (1992:355) highlights, the vital point to observe is that Jesus purposefully retired into quietness.

The theme of desertion and judgment of His opponents played an important role in the previously analyzed discourse (8:5-13). Yet again, this theological accent receives further consideration in this pericope, as Jesus’ interpretation likewise focuses on the sobering detail of the burning of the tares (Turner 2008:350). Nonetheless, as Hagner (1993:392) points out, this parable is not only about judgment, but also judgment delayed. To

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<sup>41</sup> The verb is used only here and in 18:31.

understand this truth, special revelation and explanation is required. His true followers have certainly understood this.

Bruner (2004, vol. 2:40) makes an interesting observation: "...where the Parable focuses on the present problem of evil, the Interpretation focuses on the final destiny of the evil." Or as Schnackenburg (2002:132) terms it, verses 40-43 depict a "mini apocalypse." This then perhaps highlights the prominence of the theme of judgment even from an interpretive perspective. Judgment is at the heart of this parable (France 2007:535).

**Vv. 37-39** In verses 37-39, the Evangelist records Jesus commencing to illuminate to His true followers the allegorical meaning of the seven referents cited in the parable itself. They are as follows:

Parable Element	Meaning
The sower of the good seeds	The Son of Man
The field	The World
The good seed	The sons of the kingdom
The tares	The sons of the evil one
The sower of the bad seeds	The devil
The harvest	The judgment at the end of the age
The reapers	Angels

**The sower of good seed --** In response to the request for the deeper meaning of the parable, Christ's self-disclosure is candid and immediate, revealing that *He*, the Son of Man (the *Son of Man* language was possibly chosen by Matthew here for the sake of the eschatological role to come in verses 41 and 42 [Noland 2005:559]), is responsible for the planting of the good seed (v. 37).

Perhaps it is worth noting, as observed by Bailey (1998:271) that the usage of the present participle may reflect that the planting by Christ will continue throughout the present age until the final eschatological harvest. The many sowings will lead to one final harvest. For those whom Jesus excludes from the banquet, there will be one weeping and one gnashing of teeth.

**The field** -- Two prominent commentators (Blomberg 1992; Hagner 1993; France 2007) caution against the error of reading into the text the idea that the hearers of Jesus, or readers of the gospel, understood the world as representing Israel (Jews) or the church (evangelized Jews). Jesus defines the field simply as ὁ κόσμος (“the world”),<sup>42</sup> corresponding to Matthew’s universalist view (Schnackenburg 2002:132). As France (p. 533) notes, “the field is identified in v. 38 not as the church but as “the world,” suggesting that the parable has a wider perspective than simply the professing disciple community.”

**The good seed** -- The identification of the καλὸν σπέρμα, representing the *sons of the kingdom*, is imperative. The phrase υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας appears only twice in the gospel of Matthew. In 8:12, the *sons of the kingdom* label is, ironical, representing the Jews who expected mechanical inclusion into the kingdom of heaven. In reality though, they remain forever excluded, unless they repent and put their faith in Jesus. Here, in 13:38, however, “the phrase reappears in a positive context, describing a new set of ‘sons of the kingdom’— those who have rightly responded to the message and became part of the family who will inherit the kingdom” (Bailey 1998:271). In other words, the phrase *sons of the kingdom* in Matthew 8:12 incongruously represent unbelievers (Jews), but in

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<sup>42</sup> A major theological error is avoided if the caution is heeded, namely the abandonment of church discipline and excommunication.



13:38, it signifies true discipleship (converted Jews and Gentiles). The irony has come full circle,<sup>43</sup> and the warning of judgment and separation proclaimed by Jesus in chapter 8 has materialized. It seems that the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὁδόντων (amongst other functions), may serve to link Matthew chapters 8 and 13. Once again, the studied phrase appears in a thematically and structurally important section; “the climax of the parable is, indeed, the final judgment” (Lenski 1964:535).

**The tares** -- Shown to stand in contrast to the sons of the kingdom, the ζιζάνια represent the υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ (“sons of the evil one”). The phrase υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ may be translated *sons of the evil one* or *sons of evil*. Nolland (2005:558), for example, prefers the latter, arguing that the phrase precedes the role of the devil, and the translation *sons of the evil one* would make anticlimactic the significance of the consequent equation. Nolland continues to explain that the translation ought to be contextually softer, communicates the idea that the behavior of the tares is characterized by evil. In any case, the forensic connotations associated with υἱοί remains, as the *sons of the evil one* will likewise receive their rightful inheritance at judgment.

**The sower of the ζιζάνια** -- The sower of the bad seed, the enemy, is plainly identified by Jesus as ὁ διάβολος (“the devil”). Boring (1995:310) observes the following important recurring theological theme:

Christians are the result of the ‘sowing’ of the Son of Man. Unbelievers and opponents are the result of the activity of Satan. Matthew’s dualistic perspective appears here once again, as in the conflict of kingdoms, which pervades his presentation (13:38 ‘sons of the kingdom’/‘sons of the evil one’).

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<sup>43</sup> The irony is deeper than it first appears, for Jesus did not use the term τέκνα (“children”) but υἱοί (“sons”), for it connotes legal right and inheritance.

Moreover, the choice of verb for the devil's sowing is aorist, but present for the sowing carried out by the Son of Man. Perhaps, as noted by Nolland (2005:559), "the difference would fit with an interest in unresponsiveness to the ministry of Jesus being explained in terms of many in Israel being the devil's sowing rather than God's."

**The harvest** -- Jesus omits the growing scene (13:26-30a) and moves directly to the harvest scene, in which Matthew highlights the core thesis of the kingdom parables, namely, judgment of the wicked. The harvest is identified as representative of the συντέλεια αἰῶνος ("the end of the age"), a distinctly Matthean expression for the *eschaton*.

**The harvesters** -- The last element identified by Jesus (possibly in anticipation of v. 41) is the harvesters, representing the angels who will play the role of gathering the wicked at τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος ("the end of the age").<sup>44</sup> "The identification of the harvesters as angels is no surprise, given their eschatological role in Matthew, generally in association with the Son of Man," observes Nolland (2005:560).

With all the relevant elements discovered, readers may infer that the disciples were ready to hear the exposition of the parable.

**V. 40** Jesus shifts from the present state of affairs, to future judgment, as He divulges the final analogy. The gathering of the tares embodies the act of gathering *the sons of the evil one* for the final judgment (τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος). As the valueless tares are burned in the fire, so will be the fate of the false disciples and the rejecters of the message and person of Christ. The message is plain: "there will be a Judgment Day" (Burner 2004:42).

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<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that this is the first time Matthew utilizes this phrase in referring to the final judgment (again in 13:40; 49; 24:3 and 28:20).

Πυρὶ [κατα]καίεται is important, serving to link verse 40 to verse 42, perhaps giving the impression that Jesus prepares His hearers for what they about to hear. In other words, the fire of verse 40 is a prelude to the vivid imagery proclaimed by Jesus in verse 42. This seems consistent with the build-up and intensifying character to the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων throughout Matthew's gospel.

**V. 41**<sup>45</sup> Two issues merit attention. Firstly, Matthew records Jesus changing *angels* (v. 39) to *His angels* (v. 41), in order to underscore His claim to authority as the eschatological judge (Bailey 1998:273). Also, “the field now becomes not the world but the kingdom (v. 41)... [but] because ‘kingdom’ does not equal ‘church,’ v. 41 does not contradict v. 38” (Blomberg 1992:222).

France points out an additional issue that is worth noting. His observation deserves full mention (2007:536):

Even more remarkably, the Son of Man is himself the king in *his* kingdom (v. 41). The “kingdom of the Son of Man” is a distinctively Matthean concept... It is a natural corollary of the enthronement of the “one like a son of man” in Dan 7:13-14, but it is only Matthew who explicitly extends the “kingdom of God/heaven” proclaimed by the Son of Man to be also the kingdom of the Son of man Himself.

Linguistically, verse 41 is apocalyptically charged (also vv. 40 and 42) (Schnackenburg 2002; Bruner 2004; France 2007). According to Hagner (2002:393), Jesus depicts the judgment of the wicked using the language of the apocalyptic (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and τοὺς ἀγγέλους), serving as the final loudening before Jesus elucidates on the true

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<sup>45</sup> As observed by Nolland (2005:560), this verse (and the two that follow) utilizes chiefly future tense verbs, in order to bring it in line with the previous verse (v. 40).

horrors of judgment. *His* Angles will gather<sup>46</sup> πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα (“all stumbling blocks”) and τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν (“those who commit lawlessness”)<sup>47</sup> “as part of what the Son of Man does to establish his rule” (Nolland 2005:560). The readers and hearers are now prepared and ready for the high point of the judgment pronouncement. All of Matthew’s literary devices in this pericope point to verse 42.

V. 42 The attitude expressed by Christ in such vivid imagery indicates that verse 42 symbolizes the culminating sentiment of the entire pericope. The everlasting consequences resulting from the separation of the false from true disciples become the focus. After all the thematic and linguistic upsurges, Jesus emphatically declares judgment on those associated with the *evil one*. The subjects of such dreadfulness at judgment are not only those who directly oppose Christ and His work, but also those with hardened hearts and numb spirits towards the gospel message. Noting and emphasizing Christ’s apocalyptic phraseology, Matthew records Jesus declaring the following: after the separation (harvest), the wicked shall experience *the* weeping and *the* gnashing of teeth, in *the* furnace of fire. Matthew most likely drew the imagery τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός from Daniel 3:6; 11; 15; 20 and Malachi 4:1-2. In fact, *the furnace of the fire* and *weeping and gnashing of teeth* imagery unequivocally provides the most expansive and extensive set of links between the explanation of the second parable and the explanation in verses 49-50 and the parable in Matthew 13:47-48 (Nolland 2005:561).

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<sup>46</sup> “Based on this verb [συνάλλεξουσιν] in the Septuagint in Zephaniah 1:3, Hill [235-37] says the verb means to gather together for judgment. This is strengthened by the Hebrew of Zephaniah 1:3, where the obscure phraseology, ‘the stumbling block along with the wicked’ is used as a reference to those in Judah under the threat of God’s judgment. This Old Testament imagery may have been the basis for Jesus’ metaphor in Matthew” (Bailey 1998:273).

<sup>47</sup> Both these issues are extremely important to the Evangelist. Interestingly, the word *lawlessness* is unique to Matthew amongst the gospels, and forms part of Matthew’s special apocalyptic language.

It is important to note that in chapter 8, the proclamation served as an admonition. Here, in chapter thirteen, it is a prophetic declaration of the certainty of a particular state of affairs at (or after) the final judgment. “The repetition [also in v. 50] adds force to the warning against the antinomian behavior of false disciples” (Gundry 1982:274).

The extremity of the warning is unmistakable, and the outcomes unimaginable. As noted in the preceding pericope, *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is a thematic intensifying phrase, purposed to increase and deepen the impact of the main point. In the case of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus utilizes the phrase to spotlight the true horrors to be experienced by the wicked *at* and *after* the judgment.

Although Matthew, the redactional artist, successfully delivers the sober message to his readers, he chooses to end on a positive note. The positive note, however, aimed at the true disciples. For the wicked, there is no return from the finality of judgment decreed in the previous verses.

**V. 43** Consequent to the stern warnings articulated in such stunning language, Jesus concludes this pericope on a positive note, contrasting the fate of the righteous and the fate of the wicked. *Then* [τότε, typically Matthean] *the righteous* [οἱ δίκαιοι, a favorite forensic term in Matthew] *will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*<sup>48</sup> It is necessary to note that ἐκ is part of the verb (ἐκλάμπουσιν, appearing only in Matthew’s gospel), possibly connoting a shining *out*, from *within* (Lenski 1964:540). This signifies that the righteous are labeled so due “to their acceptability, not meritorious achievements” (Morris 1992:358).

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<sup>48</sup> The phrase τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν is contextually unique, for this is the only place that Matthew links God’s fatherhood with the kingdom (Morris 1992:358).

It is interesting to note the typically Matthean dualistic allusion. Turner (2008:351) elaborates:

The people of Satan are characterized as lawless ones (cf. 7:23; 23:28; 24:12) who cause people to sin, an allusion to Zeph. 1:3. The pain of their judgment is vividly described (Matt. 13:41-42, 50; cf. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). IN an allusion to Dan. 12<sup>”</sup>3, the glorious bliss of Jesus’s disciples, the righteous ones (Matt. 10:41; 13:49; 25:37, 46), is portrayed as the shining of the sun (13:43; cf. 17:2; Judg. 5:31; 2 Sam. 23:3-4; Sir. 50:7; 1 En. 39.7; 1004.2). Both of these allusions show how Jesus’s parabolic imagery and teaching content are rooted in biblical apocalyptic.

Jesus’s interpretation of his second parable has a more dualistic and eschatological tone than the first one. Instead of describing people (soils) who bear fruit and those who do not, as in the former parable, this parable vividly stresses the destinies of two groups... The contrasting ethical qualities (lawlessness versus righteousness) that lead to the opposite destinies are also brought out (Matt. 13:41-43). There is also a clear contrast of the roles of Jesus (13:37) and the devil (13:38-39; cf. 13:19)...

This positivistic conclusion to the passage also seems to be significant. In pericopes one (8:12) and two (13:42), the Evangelist records Christ concluding the passage by highlighting a positive aspect of the story (the healing of the servant and the shining of the righteous in God’s kingdom respectively). However, in the subsequent passages (13:50; 22:13; 24:51 and 25:30), Jesus utilizes no such positivistic sentiments to conclude any of the remaining *weeping and gnashing of teeth* passages. In fact, the last pericope in which ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων appears (25:30) not only ends on the unenthusiastic note of suffering, but Matthew records Christ actually continuing with the theme, verbalizing the most dramatic and lengthy pronouncement of judgment (at the final judgment) in the gospel. This seems to add further legitimacy to the hypothesis referred to in chapter two of this study, namely, the theme of judgment in Matthew’s

gospel moves from strength to strength and from intensity to intensity with each citation of the studied phrase. Even halfway through his gospel, Matthew clearly demonstrates Jesus beginning to intensify, accent and add potency to the theme of judgment at the End of the Age.

The pericope ends with the phrase, *He who has ears, let him hear*, which seems to be a brief exhortation, perhaps even a “crosslink with the first parable of the chapter by repeating the words of v. 9... Just as the crowds have been challenged to open themselves to new insights, now the disciples are so challenged” (Nolland 2005:562). Furthermore, comments Nolland, when a parable and the explanation are contrasted, the parable receives a life of its own from the interpretation, each making a point that the other misses.

#### ***4.3.2.4. Conclusion and Contribution to the Theme of Judgment***

The parable of the tares and wheat, along with its illuminating counterpart, is an essential judgment parable utilized by Jesus to make two principal points.

Firstly, the righteous and the unrighteous are to co-exist together until the harvest. Secondly, in vivid eschatological language, Jesus makes the future fiery fate of false disciples unambiguous. At judgment only, shall the Son of Man give orders to *His* angels to gather the *sons of the evil one* and throw them into the furnace of fire. In the interim, however, the *sons of the kingdom* are to stand firm in the kingdom of their Father, trusting in the justice of God. As Ladd (quoted in Keener 1999:390) so astutely concludes, “the point is that the kingdom remains obscure in the present world, and only the final day will bring God’s true children into their vindicated glory and banish the wicked from among them.”

From the above exegetical reflections, the pericope of Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43 seems to contribute two major truths to the topic of judgment.

Firstly, Jesus makes clear that the *sons of the evil one* and the *sons of the kingdom* will *co-exist* in the physical kingdom of the fields' Owner, who is solely responsible for the sowing of the good seed. Whether the context of the amalgamation is broad, as in the world, or narrow, as in the church (the epicenter of kingdom growth), the cohabitation is deliberate and purposeful. The co-existence of the true and false disciples in the world and church becomes a favorite theme for Matthew in later gospel segments. This parable therefore seems to serve the function of a thematic launch pad for Matthew's theme of cohabitation.

The second contribution follows out of the first, namely, the resolute and permissive cohabiting is for the benefit of the righteous (τοῦ σίτου). One of the motives behind delayed judgment is the Father's love and concern for *His* sons and daughters. The love of the Father for the righteous abounds even in the midst of such vivid judgment passages.

No other *parable* achieves the goal of making the certainty and possibly even severity of judgment as tangible and real as this one. Matthew records Christ prefacing the *weeping and gnashing of teeth* idiom with fire, signifying that the unrighteous shall weep and gnash their teeth in reaction to the pain and suffering inflicted by the fire. At this stage of the gospel, linking ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων with physical pain is certainly unique not only to the theme of judgment but also to the gospels *en bloc*. The question posed in chapter two of this study, pertaining to whether the gnashing of teeth is due to emotional rage or physical pain, has seemingly been answered.



### 4.3.3 Matthew 13:47-50: The Parable of the Dragnet<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.3.3.1 Form, Macro Structure, and Redactional Considerations

The parable of the dragnet is the sixth and final parable enclosed within the body of Matthew chapter 13.<sup>50</sup> The similarity between this current parable and the parable of the tares (outside of the fact that both are judgment parables) warrants consideration.

First, only three verses after pronouncing the most severe warning in the gospel (dramatic images of torment still fresh in the minds of his reader), Matthew “returns to the motif of the eschatological separation [and judgment] of the righteous and the evil” (Hagner 2002:398). Moreover, it also echoes the motif of the mixture of good and bad until the time of the final separation (France 2007:542).

Secondly, the parable of the dragnet is structurally analogous to the parable of the tares, in that an exposition was required. However, this parable is also unique, since the interpretation is in-built.

Lastly, the closing refrain in verse 50 is identical to the closing refrain in verse 42. It seems that the closing sentiments articulated by Jesus to His disciples in the parable of the tares was so precise and so specific, that Matthew felt its repetition was fundamental to the overall profile of his message in chapter 13.

Hence, the three aforementioned characteristics accentuate the link and similitude between the two strategically placed parables. As Nolland (2005:567) rightfully notes, the connections between these salient parables “signal Matthew’s intention to begin

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<sup>49</sup> There are no significant textual variants in this parable. However, one small variant appears in manuscript D (700), containing the word καλλιστα (“best”) instead of καλα (“good”). Neither the location, spread nor frequency of this lone variant is significant for the consequent exegetical study.

<sup>50</sup> The parable of the soils = introduction; the parable of the homeowner = the conclusion.

rounding off the theme of the major section, 13:1-53.” Judgment and separation inaugurates *and* closes the body of Matthew’s thirteenth chapter.

Structurally, the parable of the dragnet is thus as follows: (a) Matthew’s comparison formula (v. 47), (b) the real world sowing, reaping and separation scenes (v. 48), (c) Matthew’s interpretation formula (v. 49), and (d) reaping and separation or judgment (v. 50). This outline underscores a very interesting thematic construction. In the explanation of the parable of the tares (vv. 37-43), Christ excludes the sowing scene. Similarly, Christ also omits the sowing scene from the present parable. Furthermore, in the parable of the tares, the emphasis is on the *judgment* of those whom Christ labels the *sons of the evil one* (separation implicit and/or secondary). In the parable of the dragnet, the emphasis is on the *separation* of the wicked (judgment is implicit and/or secondary). In other words, one highlights *judgment* and separation, while the other *separation* and judgment. Or, as France (2005:230) sees the relationship, “the [parable of the] net echoes the last ‘act’ of the parable of the weeds, the sorting out of good from the bad.”

The two parables are also structurally analogous and thus, not only does the latter parable repeat and reinforce the message of the former, but the two parables also thematically complement one another. With the aid of these two parables, Matthew successfully discloses the indivisible dual nature and *modus operandi* of Christ’s *eschaton*, namely, separation and judgment. To understand fully the message of this parable, and its contribution to the theme of judgment, an exegetical analysis shall follow.

#### 4.3.3.2 Exegesis

V. 47 Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν is typically Matthean, utilized verbatim in verse 45, but also in various other places and constructions in his thirteenth

chapter (vv. 24, 31, 33 and 44) alone. Interestingly, the noun σαγήνη (“dragnet”) is unique not only to the gospels but also to the entire New Testament, perhaps indicating that Matthew’s fisherman friends may have had a hand in the final inclusion of such a trade specific tool (Hagner 2002:399). This was a large, weighted net dragged along between two boats, catching all types of fish along the way (Carson 1993; Wilkins 2002; Nolland 2005). An additional point to which Christ may be drawing attention to, is that the net (possibly resembling the preached Word of God [Lenski 1964:547]) gathers fish arbitrarily (Matthew favors παντός, which modifies γένους, accentuating the presence of a mixture of true and false disciples in the kingdom of God [Gundry 1982:279]) and “the exaggerated inclusiveness of this phrase may be an intentional reflection of the universality of the invitation to accept the good news of the kingdom” (Hagner 1993:399). Whether valuable or worthless, Jesus alludes to the following certainty: all fish have a day of reckoning ahead of them. In the interim, however, those who consider themselves sons of the kingdom must become fishers of men (Mt 4:19).

**V. 48** In the preceding verse, Jesus tells of the casting of the dragnet. In this present verse, He promptly alludes to the success of the cast, for the dragnet was full, bringing about the sorting process. Concurring with Hagner (2002:399), the phrase ὅτε ἐπληρώθη (“when it was full”) corresponds to ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος (“at the end of the age”), strongly hinting at a future apocalyptic, eschatological realization. The emphasis of this parable, then, is on the fate of the catch after the separation (Nolland 2005:258), the situation or the state of affairs that exists at the end (Carson 1983:330).

It seems that there is both a thematic (judgment) and a literary (the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth”) connection between the story of the centurion’s servant, the parable

of the tares and the parable of the dragnet. In Matthew 13, three additional features surface, further testifying to the above association.

1. The phrase ἐξω ἔβαλον (“threw out or away”) seemingly reverberates the language and the thematic sentiments of Matthew 8:12 (ἐκβληθήσονται/thrown out) (so Hagner 2002:399).
2. Morris (1992:361) notes a potentially significant thematic connector to the parable of the tares. He writes that “it is not without its interest that the same verb is used of gathering the evil ‘out of’ the scene in v. 41 and of the good ‘into’ their place here.”
3. As observed by Nolland (2005:568), the natural sequence prevails in both parables (tares/dragnet), namely, the gathering of the good before the disposal (judgment and punishment) of the bad. Although some commentators translate the words σαπρὰ as *rotten* and/or *decayed*, I tend to agree with Lenski (1963) and Carson (1983), both translating the word to mean *worthless*. This clearly reflects the sentiments in the parable of the tares, as the *worthless* tares are burned in the furnace of fire. In connection with this particular translation, Gundry (1982:280) makes the following relevant grammatical observations: “The neuter shows that he [Matthew] has in mind the similar image of the good tree and bad tree... (See 7:17, 18, 12:33).”

Whether the context of the sorting is wheat or tares, good fish and bad fish, the separation *only* makes sense once the wheat and tares or good and bad fish reach full maturity, or as France (2007:543) puts it, “there will be no premature separation; it will wait until everything is ready in God’s good time.”

As soon as the story of the parable sank into the minds of the disciples (contra to the splitting of the parable of the tares [parable/interpretation]), Christ immediately reveals the enigmatic meaning of the parable of the dragnet.

**Vv. 49-50** Utilizing the phrase οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος, Christ brings about the exposition of the parable of the dragnet. Two important issues surface.

Firstly, the angels are once again the agents who carry out the separation. “The verb is ἀφορίζω, ‘to mark off by boundaries,’ but here it signifies taking the wicked out from among the righteous” correctly notes Morris (1992:36).

Following the instructions of the Son of Man, they place some into the ἄγγῃ (“container” or “barn” in v. 30) and throw others into the κάμινον τοῦ πυρός (“furnace of fire,” NIV). The authority of the Son of Man is clearly identifiable, for He commands the angels of the *eschaton*.

Secondly, two prominent commentators (Hill 1972; Strecker 1975) have promoted the thesis that verses 49 and 50 are Matthean insertions and cannot belong to the original parable, citing the imagery of fire as inappropriate for the disposal of worthless fish. This view, however, is merely the result of the failure to recognize that verses 49 and 50 are an eschatological interpretation of the parable itself (Mounce 1998). In support of the view that the parable and its interpretation are original to Christ as a dynamic whole, Carson (1983:330) cautions such commentators not to confuse the symbol with what it symbolizes. He continues to explain, that if one objects to the disposal of fish in the fire, one must similarly object to the reaction of the tares, for tares do not weep or gnash their teeth.

Moreover, it is remarkable that the interpretation of the parable of the dragnet is virtually identical to verses 41 to 42 of the parable of the tares. Verse 50 is identical to verse 42. Although verse 49 is identical in meaning and sentiments to verse 41, three subtle differences arise: (1) the angels/His angels, (2) collect into/collect out of, and (3) separate evil from the righteous/collect... all causes of sin and all evil doers. In fact, verse 50 is an exact repeat of verse 42 (καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων). This reveals an essential point. Matthew not only favors the idiom *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, but he also appears to go the extra mile to document every occasion in which Christ utilized this vivid phrase. In light of the close relationship of these two key parables, it seems that the phrase played an important role in the eschatological revelation of Jesus to His church. Matthew identified this theological accent and faithfully recorded it for the church. Therefore, this clearly challenges the belief that this phrase is purely a Matthean addition to the words of the Messiah, at least in his thirteenth chapter.

The repetition of the imagery of verse 42 in verse 50 then functions as an extremely serious, heightened warning, or, as Lenski (1963) describes it, “a mighty warning.” One would think of parents who utter a warning to their child. The second time that warning is uttered, the tone is far more serious, almost certainly labeling the end of talk and the beginning of action. Once again, the repetition of this vivid judgment metaphor validates the hypothesis that the theme of judgment in the Evangelist’s gospel moves from intensity to intensity, with each citation of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. Matthew is clearly in the epicenter of his theological emphasis, as he continues to intensify, inflect, and strengthen the theme of judgment in his gospel.

#### ***4.3.3.3 Conclusions and Contributions to the Theme of Judgment***

The lesson of the parable is rather straightforward. As the fishermen separate the good fish from the worthless fish, so Christ, with the aid of angels, will separate the true disciples from the pretenders. “The stress falls upon the judgment of the false disciples at the end” (Gundry 1982:280), sounding a loud and clear caution to all those who consider themselves righteous. Separation and the consequent awful retribution of the wicked are inevitable. The three dimensional message of the parable is obvious: (a) judgment of all, (b) further use of the righteous, and (c) discarding of the worthless (Blomberg 1992:224). Hagner (2002:400) rightly concludes by noting that Matthew never tires in warning his reader of the reality of judgment and hence the importance of genuine discipleship.

Is there a unique message communicated by this parable? From the above exegetical reflections, the parable of the dragnet certainly contributes to the theme of judgment. However, the unique message communicated lies in the very repetition of verse 42 in verse 50. It appears that Matthew arranges the vivid imagery communicated by Christ in a way that his readers would immediately perceive the purposeful replication of a fundamentally central theological thought. I therefore concur with Hendriksen (2004), as he dexterously expresses his final thoughts on the parable’s contribution to the theme of the final judgment:

Does it not mean that the Savior is impressing upon his disciples, both for their own good and for the good of those to whom they were to bring the message, the absolute certainty, the irrevocable decisiveness of the coming judgment, in order, as far as possible, to prevent everlasting despair? Does not the fact that from parables about sowers, mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure and pearls, illustrations with which they and most people were familiar, he now closes his series with one in the realm of fishing, with which the disciples were even more familiar, support this conclusion? Is he not telling them, ‘What you yourselves have been doing many a time, or have seen *your* fellow-disciples doing, namely

picking out the bad from the good and discard them, will be done once and for all by the angels at my order?’ Is he not implying, ‘Therefore warn men everywhere to repent?’ And in the light of what precedes is he not, as it were, adding, ‘In view of the irreversible decisiveness of the coming judgment impress upon men the exceeding preciousness of the kingdom of heaven and the necessity for everyone to take possession of it here and now?’

Although the above questions are somewhat rhetorical, the answer deserves loud proclamation with an unambiguous *yes!* The distinctive message of the parable of the dragnet lies in the repetition of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, the very phrase Christ utilized to describe the utter dreadfulness at the final judgment.

#### 4.4 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 22:1-14

##### 4.4.1 Discourse Unit, Setting, and Macro Structure

Midway through chapter 13, Jesus of Nazareth begins to distance Himself from the crowds, focusing His teaching ministry chiefly on the truly faithful (His true disciples). Green astutely comments on the thematic flow of Matthew’s gospel, noting that all through the entire explanation, there seems present a gradualness which cannot be ignored. Moreover, despite the formal end of Part 1 in the rejection of Jesus [Matthew 13], there is no abrupt catastrophic change. God’s offer of salvation to the nation of Israel remains open during the chapters that follow, despite Israel’s dismissal of the Messiah.

In chapters 14-21, the Messiah continues to perform healings, exorcisms, and miracles of every kind, elevating the anger and aggression of His opponents to new heights. Shortly following His triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21) (and to some degree in response to hostility), Jesus tells a trilogy of parables, namely, the parable of the two sons (21:28-32), the parable of the tenants (21:33-43), and the parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14).



Hendriksen (2004:791) sheds light on both the unit divisions, and the thematic context of this parable section:

Not only will those who disobey God's command and reject his messenger (John the Baptist) never enter the kingdom if they continue in this state of impenitence (see the parable of The Two Sons, 21:28-32); and not only will the dreadful scoundrels who maltreat and murder God's ambassadors (the prophets) and even kill his only Son be brought to a dreadful end, while the privileges and opportunities of which they could have taken advantage are given to others (see the parable of The Wicked Tenants, 21:33-44); but far more definitely, the 'city' of these impenitent will be destroyed by fire (A.D. 70), and the Gentiles will come pouring into the church [the parable of The Wedding Banquet, 22:1-14].

A further contextual dimension is highlighted by Bruner (2004:386), who notes that the previous parable was a survey of salvation history from the time of the OT to the time of Jesus and the church. However, the present parable begins with the time of Jesus and looks forward to salvation history into the first century, to Matthew and his church and into the last judgment (so Ironside 2005:180). In any case, it is clear that this parable contains a number of shared themes with the three parables in its group. "Most prominently, these parables portray the failure of the religious leaders to respond to god's call through the second son (21:30), the wicked tenants (21:35-39), and those originally invited to the wedding feast (22:3-7)" (Turner 2008:521). As noted by Hagner (2002:626), the concluding parable in this intimately interconnected sequence of three parables (beginning in 21:28), again speaks with reference to the lack of response among the Jews to Jesus and His message. It seems that the Evangelist has gone about his task by assembling the three parables *climatically*, evidencing a gradual climax in literary intensity. The gradual intensification of the theme of judgment, aided by *weeping and gnashing of teeth* passages, is unambiguous. In pericope one (Mt 8:1-13) and two (13:36-

43), both discourses end on a constructive and encouraging note (“And the officer’s servant was healed that very moment” and “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” NIV). In pericope three (13:47-50), the passage concludes on an extremely negative connotation (“there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”), making no attempt to *warm-down* the story. In the fourth pericope (22:1-14), the force of the judgment theme not only increases (demonstrated below), but it is further reinforced by Jesus with the stern note (“For many are invited, but few are chosen,” NIV). Thus, it seems clear that the theme of judgment in Matthew’s gospel has undergone yet *another* intensification.

Briefly, considerations must shift to the macro literary unit that encompasses the parable of the wedding banquet.

In 1982, Billingham and Billingham conducted an appealing structural study of Matthew’s gospel, arguing (amongst other things) that the above-mentioned trilogy of parables (21:28-22:14) essentially forms part of a larger macro literary unit, that is, Matthew 19:3 to 26:2 (of Matthew’s second gospel section 14-28). Concurring with their analysis, the macro discourse unit is therefore as follows:

*Judgment- by Jesus, of Jesus and the final judgment (19:3-26:2)*

1. Reversal of human values (19:3-20:16)
2. Many are invited, but few are chosen (20:17-22:14)
3. The Pharisees attempt to trap Jesus into condemning himself (22:15-23:39)
4. Teachings on predictions and parables about the time of the final judgment (24:1-25:46)

5. Concluding the section: *When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ‘...the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be... crucified.*

In light of the above structural hypothesis, the judgment motif is not only present in both the micro and macro units of this portion of Matthew’s gospel, but in addition, they are also climatically arranged (Hendriksen 2004:791). The parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14) and the teachings on the realities of the final judgment (24:1-25:46) are climax passages, communicating and highlighting the Evangelist’s meticulous recording of Jesus’ message of judgment. This seems to add additional weight to the hypothesis of this study, as once again, the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* appears in a highly eschatologically charged and climatically significant section of Matthew’s gospel.

#### **4.4.2 Textual Variants**

The parable of the wedding banquet contains no significant textual variants. Minor variants are nonetheless present. For instance, Nolland (2005:882) gives detail, explaining that ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς (the king) in verse 7, was lengthened to *when the king heard, he* in C D W 0102. Additionally, the UBS3 shows verse 10 to contain two variants of *the wedding*, namely ὁ ἄγαμος (C) and ὁ νυμφῶν (B L 0138 892 1010). However, in light of the manuscript testimony (in number, date and geographical spread), the UBS3 committee felt considerable degree of certainty ({B}) that the text contains the superior reading of ὁ γάμος. However, none of these variants is serious enough to affect exegesis.

#### **4.4.3 Form, Micro Structure, and Redactional Considerations**

Whether the parable of the great banquet (Lk 14:15-24) is a parallel account of the parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14) is a contentious issue. Those viewing the

two parables as variations of the same tradition (probably originating from Q)<sup>51</sup> argue so based upon Matthean redaction (e.g., Gundry 1982;<sup>52</sup> Huber 1992;<sup>53</sup> Hagner 2002; Schnackenburg 2002). As noted by Jeremias (in Keener 1999:517), Matthew has both allegorized and expanded this parable from an earlier version (referring to the Lukan account). It is under this umbrella presupposition that the equivalence position rests. After some careful analysis, the rival position seems more plausible, namely, that the two parables are not parallel accounts, but different parables altogether (e.g., Bruner 2004; France 2007). Five lines of evidence support this thesis.

#### ***4.4.3.1 Literary Context***

The context of Matthew's parable was subsequent to Christ's arrival in Jerusalem, while Luke's context was on Christ's journey to Jerusalem (Morris 1992:546). Additionally, while the Lukan parable is set amid a Lukan symposium of dinner material (possibly depicting an aristocrat inviting others of some social standing to a banquet), the Matthean parable more closely resembles the format of a standard rabbinic parable<sup>54</sup> in which God as a king throws a wedding banquet for His son, Israel (Keener 1999:517). Lastly, the occasion which prompted the parable in each gospel is vastly different. In Luke, Jesus was responding to a question concerning eating bread in the kingdom of heaven. While in

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<sup>51</sup> The original source of the parable is believed to be Q. Some commentators (e.g., Hagner 2002) however view verses 11 to 14 as an appended conclusion to the parable from some source other than Mark or Q.

<sup>52</sup> For a thorough redactional analysis, see Gundry (1982:432-441). *Matthew: A commentary on his literary and theological art*.

<sup>53</sup> For details of this line of argumentation, see Huber (1992). *The "outer darkness" in Matthew and its relationship to grace*.

<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that this parable is one of only two parables (Mt 18:23-35) in which a king represents God. "This is in striking contrast to the rabbinic parables a very large majority of which use the figure of a king to represent God" (Bauckham 1996:483). For similarities and differences between the between the parables of Jesus and those of the earliest rabbinic parables, see Blomberg's (1990) *Interpreting the parables* (pp. 59-68).

Luke, the occasion is the attempt by the Jewish authorities to trap Jesus by questioning His authority (Hanko 2004:345). The individual contexts in which the two stories appear are especially dissimilar (although individually, the three points cannot stand as evidence for independence, together, they form a rather convincing line of argumentation).

#### ***4.4.3.2 Linguistic Context***

Although various syntactical constructions *may* typify Matthew's style, these are merely circumstantial. In light of the aforementioned contextual considerations, the language of the present parable more closely resembles the language of the preceding parable (of the tenants), than the Lukan narrative.<sup>55</sup> If Matthew redacted the parable of the wedding banquet from the same source as Luke, it would be more rational to assume that it would resemble the Lukan version more closely in function, context and language, than it does the preceding Matthean parable. Hence, the parable of the wedding banquet is contextually bound to a micro pericope, into which Luke's parable of the wedding feast cannot fit. Redaction is therefore less plausible than assuming equivalence.

#### ***4.4.3.3 Story Elements***

There is very little verbal agreement between the two accounts. Moreover, various elements of the story are incongruent and inconsistent. The summary observations of Morris (1992:546-547) deserve full mention:

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<sup>55</sup> Some verbal overlaps are as follows: "βασιλεια ('kingdom') in 21:43; 22:1; υἱόν/υἱῷ ('son') in 21:37, 38; 22:2; ἀπέστειλε τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ('he sent his slaves') in 21:34; 22:3; πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους ('again he sent other slaves') in 21:36; 22:4; δεῦτε ('come') in 21:38; 22:4; ὃν μὲν/ὃς μὲν... ὃν δὲ ('one... one') in 21:35; 22:5; λαβόντες... τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ... ἀπέκτειναν/κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ... ἀπέκτειναν ('having seized... the slaves... killed/having seized the slaves they killed') in 21:35; 22:6; κρατῆσαι/κρατήσαντες ('seize'/'having seized') in 21:46; 22:6; ἀπολέσει/ἀπώλεσεν ('will destroy/destroyed') in 21:41; 22:7" (Nolland 2005:884).

Matthew's parable concerns a king making a wedding feast, it speaks of the kingdom of heaven, it lists oxen and fattened beasts as food items, it refers to many slaves as going with the invitations, has no equivalent of the excuses that form the central feature of Luke's story, has slaves insulted and killed by the potential guests, has the king sending armies to deal with the rejecters of his invitation, and has an addendum about a man with no wedding garment. Luke's story... refers to a man (not a king) who put on a big dinner, it says nothing about food, has only one slave inviting guests to turn up, makes a feature of the excuses the guests made... and has slaves going out twice to bring out the outcasts.

In terms of elemental inconsistencies, it is worth considering the following question: for whom was the feast or banquet held? If the feast was for a man's son (Luke), eschatological implications are absent, or at best, a matter of subjective interpretation. However, if the banquet was in honor of the king's son (Matthew), eschatological implications become obvious and perhaps even necessary. Both the macro and micro contexts of the Matthean pericope would not only allow, but in fact *require* an eschatological interpretation. The Lukan account would certainly not fit this context, for "the nature of the plot requires a king" (Bauckham 1996:483). Hence, it seems more probable that the two accounts are different stories utilized by Christ, than assuming aggressive Matthean redaction that sees the Evangelist altering the context, the thematic thrust, and most pillar elements that give the story its very identity.

#### ***4.4.3.4 Motif***

Some have argued that the presence of a common motif shared between the two parables proves equivalence. However, it seems more likely that the existence of a shared motif demonstrates the opposite. Arguing for a shared pattern does not add enough weight to the debate to conclude that the two accounts present the same story (Keener 1999:517). Keener continues to explain that "the story's thrust in each represents a common theme in

Jesus' teachings in general, and he may have told more than one story about a custom as common as invitations to a banquet." France (2005:311) further drives the point home, concluding that in light of the fact that rabbis had a frequent tendency of telling one story in different settings, it is possible that during the many times Jesus preached and taught, He may have also utilized different versions of a similar theme.

#### ***4.4.3.5 Context of Application***

Lastly, and perhaps less importantly, the two accounts make contextually divergent applications. Hanks (2004:345) elaborates:

In the final application of the parable of the great supper, the Lord makes the point that the house was at last filled with guests: '...that my house may be filled' (Luke 14:23). While this is evidently implied also in Matthew 22:10, the emphasis in the Matthew parable is that the servants were sent out twice to call to the guests who had been officially invited first. And the application is finally made in verse 14: 'for many are called, but few are chosen.'

Moreover, in Luke's story, the invitees merely make excuses for not attending. Matthew on the other hand draws the readers' attention on the irrational uprising on the part of those whom the king invited, a message unique to Matthew's theme of judgment.

In summary then, although there are a number of obvious similarities between the parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew) and the parable of the wedding feast (Luke), they are not significant enough to conclude that these are variations of the same tradition (so France 2007:821). The differences are simply too large and the similarities too petite. Besides, if the gospel writers did not record exact historical events, but embellished in creating fairy-tales about Jesus, why would Matthew go through aggressive redactional gymnastics (as some propose), instead of *creating* a new story to communicate his point? "It fits the facts better to take this as another parable embodying features Jesus had used

before than to take it as a second form of the same parable, modified in transmission” (Morris 1992:547).

On the micro structural level, this parable consists of two major parts, namely, the story of the guest without a wedding garment (vv. 11-14), and the illustration of the victory of the gospel (vv. 1-10). “The first part of the parable speaks of those whom God calls into the joy of this wedding feast. The second part of the parable discusses the reason why those who are called are able to have a place at the feast” (Hanko 2004:356). This two dimensional character is somewhat conspicuous, in spite of Matthew’s mastery in affixing episode two to episode one. The parable is nonetheless a dynamic whole. The structure of the parable is therefore as follows:

***Section 1: The unequivocal victory of the gospel***

(a) The king and the formal invitations (vv. 1-6): (1) the first invitation and the passive rejection and (2) the second invitation and the proactive rejection. (b) The righteous reaction of the king (vv. 7-8): (1) the judgment and (2) the justification. (c) The new invitation and the consequent filled hall (vv. 9-10).

***Section 2: The wedding robe (vv. 11-14)***

(a) The evaluation of the king (vv. 11-12), (b) the righteous reaction of the king (v. 13), and (c) the grand conclusion (v. 14).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Turner’s (2008:521-522) structural outline represents the rough outline which commentators, who treat 22:1-14 as radical whole, assign to this parable: (i) the first cycle of invitation and rejection (22:1-3); (ii) the second cycle of invitation and rejection (22:4-6); (iii) the king’s response: punishment of rejecters (22:7); (iv) the third cycle: invitation and repentance (22:8-10); (v) the king’s response: punishment of an improperly dressed man (22:11-13); (vi) the lesson of the parable (22:14).



Before the exposition of each verse, it is necessary to touch on the rationale and nature or taxonomy of this parable. However, the purpose of this parable becomes clear once the thematic context is considered.

The parable of the wedding banquet is the final confrontational parable in a series of three, each communicating particular truths towards an overall message. Knight (1994:217) explicates the thematic context of this parable:

Each parable has its own lesson, and together they have a cumulative effect. All three parables are aimed at the Jewish leaders, and all are concerned with who is acceptable to God. These three parables pick up a theme more prominent in Matthew than in the other Gospels—the failure of official Israel to accept Jesus as the Messiah and the resultant rejection of Israel by God.

It is interesting to note that every pericope analyzed in this chapter so far ties back to the initial passage (8:1-12), via the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. This pericope is no different. However, another connection exists, namely, “the dual theme of Israel’s rejection and the outcasts’ acceptance of the Messiah” (Knight 1994:216). These two aspects seem to be the common denominators.

It is within this contextual framework that the point of this parable becomes apparent, namely, to answer the question that was undoubtedly on the minds of his disciples: since the nation of Israel is rejected, has the Word of God failed to accomplish its purpose, and has the Word of God become of no effect” (Hanko 2004:345)? Jesus offers those close to Him an unambiguous answer through the parable of the wedding banquet.

Although somewhat oversimplified, the parables fall broadly into three groups, namely (a) parables discussing various ethical and moral issues pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, (b) kingdom parables, and (c) parables focused primarily on judgment (Hanko

2004). Whatever classification one applies to the parables, it is wise not to rigidly apply any particular categorical framework. Whatever the case may be, the parable of the wedding banquet is therefore classifiable as a judgment parable. In addition, it is the only parable focused on judgment that contains strong allegorical properties.

#### 4.4.4 Exegesis

##### 4.4.4.1 Part one -- *The Victory of the Gospel (vv. 1-10)*

**V. 1** Matthew moves his gospel story along, explaining that once again (πάλιν), Jesus answered them (αὐτοῖς) in parables. It seems that the use of the verb ἀποκριθεὶς (answered or having responded) makes the parable a response to a situation or attitude present within the chief priest and Pharisees (“them”) in 21:45-46 and 22:15 (Hultgren 2000; Nolland 2005). Also, Matthew further narrates the story by highlighting the fact that Jesus responded ἐν παραβολαῖς (emphasis on the plural). In contrast to Hendriksen (2004) who views the plural as an inconsequential and idiomatic, it is in fact noteworthy and potentially significant, for it may point to the separateness of verses 11-13 as a second parable (Hagner 2002:629). In part one of the parable proper, Matthew clearly details Christ’s synopsis of salvation-history. “...there can be little doubt that this [parable] portrays the religious leaders, who do not believe God’s prophets and who ultimately reject God’s Son, Jesus, and his kingdom...” confirms Turner (2008:522).

**V. 2** As in chapter 13, Matthew initiates this parable with his formulaic *the kingdom of heaven is like*<sup>57</sup> (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ ὅστις) a man, a king,<sup>58</sup> who *made arrangements for* (ἐποίησεν) a wedding banquet for his son. The wedding

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<sup>57</sup> Lenski (1964:847) views the aorist as “spoken from the standpoint of the end of the world when the earthly history of the kingdom will be complete as here portrayed.”

<sup>58</sup> Morris (1992:547) rightly notes the Matthew’s use of ἄνθρωπος as equivalent to the indefinite pronoun.

feast that the king held for his son is a momentous occasion and its significance must not be understated. Perhaps Bauckham (1996:483) is right when he said that few interpreters have done justice to the political nature of the story that follows.

The king is to be understood as representing God, the son as Christ the Messiah,<sup>59</sup> who is the bridegroom (Hagner 2002:6290), and the wedding banquet as the eschatological consummation at the end of the age (Carson 1983; Blomberg 2001). With reference to the banquet as a metaphor for the messianic banquet, Morris (1992) disagrees, saying that no wedding feast has yet been found as part of the eschatological expectation. However, as elaborated by Wainwright (1988:188), the firm kingly image is supplemented by this parable with that of a gracious host, which automatically bring to mind the great eschatological feast on the mountain of God (Is 25:6-9; so Gundry 1982). She continues to explain that furthermore, “the banquet as a wedding feast for the son shares in Christian eschatological imagery of Revelation, the wedding feast of the Lamb (19:7-9). This imagery draws us into the table companionship that God desires with humanity.”

**V. 3** In first century Israel, it was customary to send out two invitations for wedding banquets (Bailey 1980:94-95; Rohrbaugh 1991:139-141). In this verse, Matthew narrates Jesus detailing the second<sup>60</sup> invitation, in which the king “had long ago honored the guests with an invitation, and they have appropriately responded with a promise to come” (Keener 1999:519). Nolland (2005:886) rightly points out that the Greek in fact has a play on two meanings of καλεῖν (“call and invite”), translatable as *call the called*. This calling of the called, or the *sons of the kingdom* (identical context in Mt 8:12), is carried

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<sup>59</sup> Hultgren (2000:343-344) interestingly notes that even if one does not ascribe an allegorical meaning to the son, a king (as a metaphor for God) giving a wedding feast (a metaphor for the kingdom) would still have to be for someone important, which would most likely be a son.

<sup>60</sup> Because the king sent out the message that the time for the banquet was at hand, a previous invitation and acceptance may be presupposed (Morris 1992:548).

out by the slaves, perhaps representing the messengers of the gospel (e.g., John the Baptist and the prophets of old). Wainwright (1988:188) underlines the missionary language of this section (also vv. 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10) by pointing out that the verb *apostello* (to send) is used by Jesus in the missionary dialogue to his disciples (10:5, 16) and also with allusion to his own missionary work (10:40; 15:24). Hence, the greatest clustering of the word, however, is in chapter 21-23, where it occurs ten times, indicating the urgent concern in this section with the question of mission- both to Israel and the merging communities of Christians. The mission of the servants consequently is not a new mission. The guests have previously acknowledged the preliminary summons of the host.

However, in spite of the previously accepted invitation, Matthew shocks his readers as he discloses the utter disregard of the summons.<sup>61</sup> As Hagner (2002:629) explains, the imperfect tense of the rejection emphasizes repeated unwillingness, leaving the rejecters without excuse. The unresponsiveness of Israel (the called) and the continued patience of God are at the vanguard of this verse.

**V. 4** Echoing the first invitation, a second set of servants<sup>62</sup> go out proclaiming the second *calling of the called*. But this time, the instructions are more detailed. “The king not only graciously repeats his invitation but describes the feast’s greatness in order to provide an incentive to attend it” (Carson 1983:456). The perfect tense (ἤτοιμακα) indicates the readiness of the feast, perhaps reminding “the reader of Jesus’ opening words in the

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<sup>61</sup> Gundry (1982:434) may be right when he says that the refusal to go to the feast is reminiscent of 21:29 (I do not want [to go]), thus linking the trinity of parables together. In any case, the utter shock value of refusing such a prestigious invitation to first century ears cannot be overstated. The impending punishment of the *culprits* was certainly no surprise to the hearers of this parable, for ignoring the King’s invitation warranted severe punishment (Keener 1999:520).

<sup>62</sup> These servants may represent the twelve, Stephen and Paul (Hendriksen 2004:794), basically “those who bring the message of eschatological readiness” (Hagner 2002:630).

gospel: ‘Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Wainwright 1988:189). Afresh, the shock value of the king’s reaction cannot be overstated (France 2007:824). As the audacity to dismiss the invitation astounded hearers in verse 3 (Bailey 1980), so did the king’s longsuffering, patience and continued generosity in the face of such offense. Morris (1992:458) draws attention to the perfect κεκλημένοις (“having been invited”), which unambiguously indicates that the invitation still stands. Surely, the repeated offer would not be taken lightly, for the second time! Such an eventuality was unimaginable to the hearers of this story.

**Vv. 5-6** Yet, in spite of the king’s kindness evident in the magnitude of the feast (fatted calves and oxen), the invited guests offend the dignity of the king anew, as they reject the invitation to the banquet.

For the king graciously to extend the honor of an invitation to a banquet and be rebuffed [twice] as if his benefaction were meaningless was a traumatic breach of the social order. The king could salvage some honor only by getting others to eat the banquet and by punishing those who had insulted his kindness.... Hearers of the parable would marvel at the treasonous foolishness and imprudence of those who would insult a king (Keener 1999:520).

“At the level of the story, the rejections are just barely conceivable” (Blomberg 1990:234) and “tantamount to rebellion”<sup>63</sup> (Bauckham 1996:484).

Jesus explains that some (representing Israelites) ἀμελήσαντες (“made light of it” or “paid no attention to”) the invitation. Two attitudes come to the fore in these verses. The first is the attitude of *indifference* in the face of such gracious and undeserved generosity,

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<sup>63</sup> See parable in *Exod Rab 18:10*: “God was like a king who made festivities in honor of his son and slew his enemies. The king then announced ‘He who rejoices with me may come to the festivity of my son, but he who hates me shall be slain with my enemies.’”

an attitude all too often exemplified by false disciples (a Matthean favorite). Patte's (in Wainwright 1988:189) words are relevant here, as he observes that "the good that they prepared for themselves through their own work in their farm or business is incomparably better than any good the king might have to offer, so much so that the feast appears to them as totally valueless."

The second attitude is *aggression*. From apathy to antagonism, the negative response turns inanelly vicious, as the emissaries of the banquet (kingdom) are mistreated (ὑβρίσων) and murdered (ἀπεκτείνων) (Turner [2008:523] may be right in assuming that the distinction between indifference and violent hostility is intended to portray the varying responses of Israel to Jesus). "The applicability of the language to the fate of John the Baptist, Jesus and eventually the disciples is obvious," correctly notes Hagner (2002:630).

Chouinard (1997:n.p.) is perhaps right when he underlines the probability that such an overreaction to an invitation may seem totally unrealistic to the hearers and readers of this parable. But even so, "If the story verges on the absurd, why not? It is after all, a parable, not a sober historical narrative, and parables are designed to convey lessons, not to mirror real life" (France 2001:312).

In the next few verses, the focus shifts to the recovery and restoration of the king's honor and glory, as the perpetrators suffer the consequences of their actions.

**V 7** With the escalation of the participle *becoming angry* to the finite verb *became angry*, the portrayed divine wrath is accentuated (Gundry 1982:436), as the king no longer

restrains his anger and disappointment. Sending his troops<sup>64</sup> to destroy the murderers and burn their<sup>65</sup> city is an absolute contrast to the king's longsuffering and fortitude in the preceding verses. Yet, it is essential to remember that "Matthew's readers, who have just finished (21:38-41) [reading the parable of the tenants], would not find 22:6-7 out of place" (Carson 1983:457). Keener (1999:521) is less dogmatic on the issue, referring to the violent retaliation of the king as both realistic and unrealistic. He clarifies his sentiments:

It is realistic in that after an insult like the one the invitees had made against the king's honor, nothing less than such vengeance as verse 7 depicts would satisfy his honor. Yet it is unrealistic to suppose that the king would engage in a military expedition while the food is getting cold! Because the story is meant to climax on the second group of invitees, however, it must narrate the annihilation of the rebels at this point.

Various commentators (e.g., Davies and Allison 1997; Hultgren 2000; Hendriksen 2004; Turner 2008) have concluded that the burning of the city is an allegorical allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. However, although it is rather easy and perhaps even convenient to view it as so, it is less hermeneutically and contextually straining to view it as pointing to Matthew's habitual allusion to the Old Testament. Concurring with the conclusion of Gundry (1982:436), his words deserve full mention:

Here, the allusion is to Isa 5:24-25... We know that Matthew was thinking about the OT passage, for he brought that parable closer to the text in Isaiah. The prophet's parable leads to a threat against Jerusalem that climaxes in 'fire'

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<sup>64</sup> Wainwright (1988:191) notes that the "action of the king is not carried out by 'his servants' but rather 'his troops.' This is an indication that we are dealing now with a different type of text, namely a judgment text."

<sup>65</sup> Gundry (1982:436) makes a very interesting observation. He does not view *their city* as implying a city different from the one where the king resides, but points to the separation of the church and Judaism, a separation typical in Matthean theology.

and ‘flame... for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts.... On this account the anger has burned against his people... and their corpses were like refuse in the middle of the streets.’ We have no need, then, to suppose that Matthew is retrospectively the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If he were, his distinctive ‘then’ at the beginning of vv 8-9 would clearly imply that the mission to the Gentiles represented in those later verses did not begin till A.D. 70 or shortly afterwards. Therefore, 22:7 does not point backward to A.D. 70, but is a dramatic figure of judgment drawn from Isaiah’s prediction of a past destruction of Jerusalem, a judgment consisting in God’s rejection of the Jewish leaders residing in that city.

**Vv. 8-9** With the use of the present tense (λέγει) in verse 8, the narrative becomes more vivid and dramatic. For the third time, the king proclaims that ὁ μὲν γάμος ἑτοιμός ἐστιν (“the wedding feast is ready,” NIV). This time however, his response reveals a change of heart, proclaiming the initial invitees unworthy (of such a great honor). Clearly, in Matthean sentimentalism, explains Wainwright (1988:191), they have not received the Christian missionaries (10:11, 13); and as the parable itself has shown they have set another love before the gracious love of God (10:37; 22:5). The mission, therefore, on which the king now sends out his servants breaks the bounds of all traditional customs and render expectations: ‘Go, (πορεύεσθε [“be going”]) is a durative present tense implying that the slaves are to keep going until the wedding was provided with guests [Lenski 1964:853] therefore, to the thoroughfares<sup>66</sup> and invite to the marriage feast as many you find’ (22:9).

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<sup>66</sup> *Outlets*, according to BAGD (194A), as opposed to *street crossings* or *main streets*, as advocated by many (e.g., Carson 1982, Morris 1992, Hultgren 2000). Lenski (1964:853) astutely adds that if διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν is translated as *street corners*, the genitive is left unexplained. He elaborates: the first noun in this combination is used to designate the outcome of a trial and, when it is applied to roads, refers to their terminals, when all the traffic that passes along the roads is bound to arrive. Yet these are not the roads that come to an end in the open country but the roads as they come in front of the outlying districts to the various cities of the king’s great realm.



By means of the attitude expressed in verses 9-10, Jesus is in the process of answering an all important question that in all probability perplexed the disciples, namely, does the rejection of the invitation mean that the gospel message has failed and is of no affect?

In terms of first century social context, a host may lose some honor by inviting those of much lower social status (Keener 1999). But Jesus clearly demonstrates that nothing could be further from the truth. In light of this, three theologically significant points merit notice.

Firstly, the king risked all, including his honor, for those with whom he shall consume the wedding meal.

Secondly, as observed by Hagner (2002:630), “This open invitation serves in this parable as the counterpart to the letting out of the vineyard to other tenants in the preceding parable (21:41, 43).” In both, Israel loses her position of privilege.

Lastly, an all important theological connection with a previously analyzed pericope comes to the fore. Hendriksen (2004:796) explains that although the invited Jews refused to accept Jesus, other people (probably Gentiles, although Jews are not hereby excluded) in great numbers are brought in. The fact that both righteous and unrighteous are brought into the kingdom is explained *in connection with the parable of The Dragnet*.

**V. 10** Although Hanco (2004) feels that the parable may end here, Hendriksen (2004:796) points out that this cannot be, for both the good and the bad had entered the wedding banquet hall. Nonetheless, *good* and *bad* has reference only to human standards of judgment. “It does not mean that in the final analysis those who in God’s eyes are and remain ‘bad’ are destined for the joys of the new heaven and earth. Verses 11-14, ‘the missing wedding robe,’ will make this clear.”

Gundry's (1982:438) sentiments are likewise relevant here, viewing "both evil and good" as pointing to the mixture of true and false disciples (obedience vs. disobedience) in the church, a theme prevalent in all previously expositied pericopes. For Matthew, the expression πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ("bad and good") designates a mixed body of persons both bad and good, at least in its outreach efforts (Hultgren 2000:346).

The "invitation or summons language of v. 9 is replaced with 'gathered' (συνήγαγον). 'As many as you find' now becomes 'all (the emphatic *all* may indicate that it includes both Jews and Gentiles) whom they found, both good and evil'" (Nolland 2005:888). Or, as elaborated on by Hanks (2004:354), the first are bidden, then called and called again. But the last are simply found by the king's servants and gathered. The focus of this verse shifts from the required personal response (as in the previous verses) to the filling of the wedding hall (emphasis on the venue, not the event as in previous verses), verifying the accomplished work of the gospel message. "In the end the king's purpose was worked out, and Jesus leaves his hearers to see that God's purpose will take effect; in the end those he calls will be present at his heavenly feast" (Morris 1992:551). The very point, on which the first section of the parable concludes, is simply that the wedding was completely *filled* with *the called*. The gospel message has therefore *not* failed!

The verses that follow however (vv. 11-14) answer a different question, namely, who are worthy to attend the feast of the king?

**4.4.4.2 Part two -- The wedding robe of righteousness (vv. 11-14)**

**V. 11** It seems that in this final section of the parable, Christ drives home another crucial point (perhaps even the main point),<sup>67</sup> namely, “the very great importance of righteousness of those who would enter the kingdom. This seems to bring balance the point made in v. 10 concerning ‘both good and bad’” (Hagner 2002:631).

As was customary, the king entered the hall to see the invitees (Jeremias 1972:187). Lenski highlights the impartiality of the king, explaining that “infinitive *θεάσασθαι*, ‘to view,’ ‘to behold,’ the aorist to indicate one complete act of viewing, suggesting nothing of a judicial nature” (1964:855). In other words, the king entered the wedding hall not to find fault but as the glorious king who was about to enjoy the feast with his guests.

One guest however was without the appropriate attire (*ἔνδυμα γάμου*). The fact that the king considered this as *imprudence* suggests that “some care and preparation is demanded before one can legitimately partake of the blessings of God” (Chouinard 1997:385). In light of this, it is necessary to discuss briefly the following two questions: (a) why was the king so indignant over the guest’s attire? and (b) what is the connotation or allegorical significance of the wedding garment (if any)? The answer to these questions may assist to discover the concluding thoughts of the parable.

In terms of the former question, the answer is of no little consequence. After all, “do not verses 8-10 create the impression that these guests have been rushed from streets and street corners to the wedding hall, where the food was standing *ready*” (Hendriksen 2004:797)? Commentators have put forward various explanations. For example, some

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<sup>67</sup> Morris (1992:551) narrates Pate’s (1987:301) observations, noting that tensions like that between verses 10 and 11 occur elsewhere in the gospel, signaling major points and convictions that are startling to the readers, for they involve a view known to them. Hence, verses 11-14 should be considered an integral part of the parable proper.

(e.g., Carson 1983; Hagner 2002) view the answer to this question as irrelevant to the point Matthew was trying to make. But this cannot be, for the king's disappointment and consequent retaliation is crucial to the storyline and the perpetuation of the king's fairness and honor.

Others justify the host's anger on the basis that the man took the invitation and the consequent requirements lightly, or, simply did not make use of the opportunity (e.g., Nolland 2005; Morris 1992). This view is certainly compelling, but it is not the whole story, for this underplays the significance of certain cultural practices.

Some other commentators (e.g., Bruce 1979; Gundry 1982; Blomberg 1990; Turner 2008) highlight a relevant cultural practice, namely, that wealthy and prosperous first century host's supplied the proper attire for those who had none.<sup>68</sup> Hendriksen (2004:797) elaborates:

By the command of the king and from his bountiful supplies, at the very entrance of the wedding hall a wedding robe had been afforded to each guest. All except this one person had accepted the robe. This one man, however, had looked at his own robe, had perhaps lightly brushed it off with his hand, and had then told the attendant, 'My own robe is good enough. I don't need the one you're offering me.' Then, in an attitude of self-satisfaction and defiance, he had marched to the table, where he was presently reclining.

Hanko (2004) concurs, citing evidence from the text. He writes (p. 358) that "in the text the passive voice is used to convey the impression that the garment was furnished to the guests and that this man did not have a garment because he had refused it (v. 12 in the

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<sup>68</sup> The evidence is listed by Gundry (1982:439): "(cf. 2 Kgs 25:29; Esth 6:8-9; Rev 19:8; Josephus J. W. 2.8.5 §§ 128-31). Cf. Isa 61:10 with Isa 61:8 and the rabbinic parable in *b. Sabb.* 153a; *Midr. Prov.* 16.11; *Midr. Qoh.* 9.8." In addition, Lenski (1964:857) also lists Gen 45:22; Jdg 14:12; 19; 2 Kgs 5:22; 10:22 and Esth 8:15.

Greek reads literally, ‘not having been clothed with a wedding garment’).” With this likely practice inferred into the context of this parable, the king’s retort in the final verses will pose less difficulty.

In exploring the question concerning the connotation of the wedding robe, it is not necessary to go into arduous discussion. Briefly then, some view it as an emblematic element indispensable for salvation, namely, righteousness (Hagner 2002), repentance (Keener 1999), the deeds of Christians discipleship (Donahue 1988), or even a life lived in consistency with Christian moral laws. While others (e.g., France 2005;) are less allegorical in their approach, viewing the wedding garment simply as clean garments as opposed to soiled ones. Perhaps the allegorical interpretation is more suitable for a parable with strong allegorical properties. It is highly unlikely that an element of such effect represents no secondary meaning. Hence, in light of Matthew’s (a) meticulous accent on righteousness elsewhere (5:6, 10, 20; 6:33), (b) the reference to the *bad* being brought in at 22:10, and (c) the fact that other Matthean parables close with a note on judgment and the casting out of the bad (Hultgren 2000:347), the wedding robe can very well symbolize righteousness (*justitia Christi*, Lenski 1964:857). Hanko (2004:359-360) adds further weight to this view, noting that in Scripture, robes are common figures representing righteousness (Ps 132:9; Rev 19:7-9). Such robes of righteousness, often worn by the saints, alone make it possible for anyone to come into the presence of God. Apart from such a robe, no one has the right to enjoy the presence of God at the heavenly banquet.

In light of the above considerations, the absence of the wedding garment may therefore denote the fatal assumption that one can come to the wedding banquet on one’s own terms and evade culpability. Perhaps, as supposed by Hanko (2004:362), the man may

have even put on his best and most expensive suit, convinced that it would do. In the verses that follow, Jesus again garishly describes the horrific penalty of such an assumption.

**V. 12** Upon entering the hall, the king's attention lands on the man without a wedding garment, whom he questions over his *inappropriate* attire. The address ἐταῖρε ("friend") appears only in two other places in the New Testament (20:13 and 26:50). In both instances, including this one, the addressees are always false disciples (interestingly, as *the sons of the kingdom* of Matthew chapter 8 inversely represent *the sons of the devil*, *friend* in this parable represents *foe*. Irony seemingly connects the parable of the wedding banquet and the healing of the centurion's servant [8:1-12]). As Morris (1992:552) notes, "in all three passages there is something ironical about the greeting, for the 'friend' in each case is doing something short of a friendly action." This seems to contradict the view of some commentators (e.g., Nolland 2005; Hendriksen 2004) who view the address of *friend* as kindly. Rather, the address is ironic. The king's question may therefore be paraphrased as follows: "Fellow" (Lenski 1964), "How did you manage to slip by the porters at the doors (Keener 1999)? This question thus "deals with the right of entrance, not means of entrance" (Gundry 1982:441). Although the opportunity was available to the robeless man to clear his name, he was *made* speechless. Lenski (1964:858) notes that no answer was actually possible, for ἐφιμώθη ("was speechless") is passive, meaning not that the man *was speechless* but rather that he *was made speechless* by the question. Any attempt to answer would simply condemn. Clearly, false disciples are always without excuse. Only harsh judgment remains for such a person.

In the verse that follows, lacking the usual build-up, the theme of apocalyptic judgment appears suddenly, with new intensity and force (perhaps the response of the king in verse

7 was intentioned to prepare for the utter force of the retort in verse 13 [so Nolland 2005:890-891]). Jesus “abandons any attempt to retain a meaningful story line at the literal level and speaks purely allegorically” (Blomberg 1992:329; see also Keener 1999), describing in vivid language the dreadful destiny of the unrighteous.

**V. 13** The king’s orders are clear and direct: they are to bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Nolland suggests that the binding of the hands and feet had a practical purpose, namely, to guarantee that he will not slip in again (2005:891). Lenski argues that tying his hands and feet highlights the simple fact that this man is a criminal (1964:858). However, taking Matthew’s context into account, I concur with Gundry (1982:440), who views the image of “hands and feet” as emphasizing the severity of judgment (as in 1 Enoch 10:4). See Sim (1992), Matthew 22:13a and 1 Enoch 10:4a: A case of literary dependence?

At this time, two issues require attention.

The first is the change of vocabulary. Here, it is the king’s servants (διακόνους) that carry out his bidding, not his slaves (δούλους) as in verses 3, 4 and 8. Hultgren (2000:348) suggests that the change from slave to servant is due merely to the fact that the servants spoken of are table servants. While this line of thought is feasible, it seems more likely that Matthew had in mind linking the angles in the parable of the tares (Mt 13:36-43) and the servants in the Parable of the wedding banquet. Angels are servants after all. Gundry observes: “the servants are distinct from the slaves and represent the same angels that do the judgmental work in the parable of the tares and bad fish, both of which are peculiar to Matthew” (1982:440). A further relationship becomes apparent, namely, the link through the emphatic phrase ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἑξώτερον (“cast...into the outer darkness”) in 8:12 and later, in 25:30. It appears

therefore, that the expression καὶ ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων in Matthew 22:13 is unique, ostensibly serving the particular purpose of *uniting* and *clustering together* the three previously analyzed *weeping and gnashing of teeth* pericopes. This perhaps serves as an indirect summation prior to the final judgment discourse of the gospel (Mt 23-25).

Secondly, in light of the latter point, the theme of judgment once again intensifies. In previous passages containing the expression *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (8:12; 13:42 and 50), the axiom fits the linguistic flow of the pericope. Here, in verse 13, this is no longer the case, as “the figurative language of the parable is frankly abandoned because it is unable to picture the reality” (Lenski 1964:858). France likewise makes a similar observation, stating that “the weeping and gnashing of teeth also appears ... in each case to draw out the significance of the parable of ultimate rejection” (2007:827). The strength of this apocalyptic eschatological pronouncement reaches a new level of intensity and strength. This consistency of intensification has been gradual throughout the four previous instances in which the Evangelist had recorded Christ uttering the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

Before considering the Evangelist’s concluding sentiments in verse 14, one last observation is in order. Matthew records Jesus utilizing the expression *cast... into outer darkness* in 8:12,

in reference to ‘the sons of the kingdom’ who exhibit no faith, and in 25:30, where it is spoken of to the ‘worthless servant’ who is described as ‘wicked and slothful’ in 25:26. The sentence of judgment in both these passages (8:12 and 25:30) also contains the second formula from Matthew’s stock of apocalyptic imagery, ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, ‘there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,’ which is found verbatim also in 13:42, 50, 24:51, where it is applied to the unrighteous wicked (Hagner 2002:631-362).



As with all earlier passages, the theme of unrighteousness again takes centre stage. The severity of the terrible judgment imposed upon the man who was not wearing the robe of righteousness. As Hanko (2004:365) points out, “behind this [man’s] sin lies the sin of despising the cross of Christ and of exalting oneself in arrogance and pride above God and his Son.”

V. 14 With the words, *for many<sup>69</sup> are called, but few are chosen*, Jesus brings together the two parable episodes (vv. 1-10 and 11-13) (and possible the two parables that precede it as well [France 2007:827]). Nolland (2005:900) highlights the ambiguous meaning of πολλοί (“many”) and ὀλίγοι (“few”), correctly concluding that the aforesaid closing statement is rather obscure. Meyer’s (1990:89-97) interpretive suggestions however may address such concerns, explaining that by reading the language alongside a Semitic milieu, the phrase may be translated as “more are called (indeed all), but fewer are chosen.”

It is perhaps necessary to cautiously note that the above phrase is not a proof text for the doctrine of election. In reality, it is more accurate to assume that Jesus was simply communicating the absolute magnitude of a worthy response to the call of God. Or, as Hagner (2002:632) expressed it, “the notion of election here works together with, rather than against, the reality of human responsibility...” Without a response, there can be no salvation.

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<sup>69</sup> The adjective πολλοί (“many”) seems to be a universalizing Semitism, which may be translated, *everyone* (Hagner 2002:632) or *all* (Gundry 1982:440). It is a reference to both the good and the bad, the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one, the righteous and the unrighteous, those who will recline at the table and those who will weep and gnash their teeth. The second adjective ὀλίγοι may similarly be viewed as a Semitism, implying “nothing about how many are saved except that the number is noticeably *less than all*” (Blomberg 2001:329).

#### **4.4.5 Conclusions and Contributions to the Theme of Judgment**

In response to hostility, Jesus proceeds to disclose and illustrate the utter corruption and general unresponsiveness of Israel's religious leaders by telling three parables. The first is the parable of the two sons (21:28-32), the second is the parable of the wicked tenants (21:33-46) and the last, the parable of the wedding banquet (22:1-14). In the first part of this third story, a king (God) prepares a banquet (the Messianic feast) for his son (Jesus). Having sent out numerous invitations to the invited (Jews), unpredictably, no one responds (the rejection of the Messiah). In response, the king punished those who refused or ignored the call, and invited all who were willing to come, both good and bad alike (Gentiles and Jews). Consequently, the hall was filled with guests (the called). In this first section of the story, the history of salvation is unambiguous.

In the second episode, the story reaches its conclusion and climax. To the king's and the reader's surprise, a man (false disciples) attempted to enjoy the benefits of the feast without putting on the provided wedding clothes (the righteousness of Christ). He attempts to enter the celebration on his own terms. Intolerant of such insolence, the king commands his servants (angels) to bind the impostor hand and foot, and cast him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (hell).

By means of the parable of the wedding banquet, Jesus convincingly assures his hearers that the gospel message has not failed. It will, in fact, accomplish precisely that which God intends. "Even though the nation of the Jews and the majority of those who hear the Word of God reject it, still the gospel is always victorious in accomplishing the purpose of God and saving the elect," concludes Hanks (2004:345-346). The parable has illustrated three truths: (1) the call to partake in the Lamb's Feast is universal, no longer

exclusive to the nation of Israel, (2) but to all who are willing to *respond* on the King's *terms*. (3) Insufficient preparation and response makes one liable for eternal punishment.

In light of this, the tension between true and false discipleship once again comes to the fore. Hagner (2002:632) observes: "Matthew never tires of the theme of discipleship... it constitutes a dividing point for all humanity and it is the sole demonstrating criterion for membership among the elect." This is true on the literarily subconscious level as well. Bruner (2004:386, quoting Boring p. 417) notes that the "one remarkable feature in all three Polemical Parables, binding them together as a unit, is that the Father-Son relationship is at the centre of each." In other words, the relationship feature undergirds this parable section, subtly focusing the reader's attention on their relationship with Christ; are they true disciples representative of a true relationship, or false disciples, representative of a false and fake relationship?

As earlier analyzed pericopes, this parable too contributes two unique elements to the theme of judgment in the gospels. Firstly, the *willful* rejection and refusal of the invitees to attend to a wedding banquet is clearly unique to this parable. The comments of Boice (2001:471) will serve as a suitable conclusion for this section of the study:

It was not that they *could* not come. Rather, they *would* not. If the invited guests felt that way toward the servants, they obviously felt that way towards the king. . . In other words, they would not come because they actually despised the king and were hostile to him.

Secondly, this parable seems to adjust the attitude that the troubles in the life of those who are the true disciples of Christ always comes from the outside. To the contrary! Turner (2008:525) likewise stresses this theme, writing that through the utterance of this parable, Jesus warns His readers and hearers that troubles will not come merely from the

outside. He continues to explain that in the future, “outsiders will bring many troubles to the disciples (24:9-11), but defectors from within the church will also be problematic...

Moreover, the current pericope (containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*) yet again seems to intensify and perhaps even magnify the significance, weight and force of the ever-present theme of eschatological judgment.

#### 4.5 EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 24:45-51 AND 25:14-30

##### 4.5.1 Discourse Unit, Setting, and Macro Structure

The textual boundaries of either of these units of Scripture are not in dispute. Immediately following the pronouncement of the parable of the wedding banquet (22:1-14), the persecution of Jesus by Israel’s religious leaders continued to intensify even further. Commencing in 22:15, Matthew records four confrontation narratives,<sup>70</sup> instantly trailed by the first segment of Christ’s fifth teaching block (23:1-39), notorious for its bitter denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Structurally, this first section of the final Matthean teaching block consists of three easily recognizable sections, in which Jesus (a) warns the crowds against imitating the religious figures of Israel (vv. 1-12), (b) denounces their (Scribes and Pharisees) hypocrisy (vv. 13-36) and finally, (c) laments the coming destruction of the Temple (vv. 37-39). Prior to proceeding with the setting and unit structure, however, it is necessary to give brief attention to the content of the fifth teaching discourse of Matthew’s gospel.

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<sup>70</sup>(a) Taxes to Caesar (22:15-22), (b) marriage at the resurrection (22:23-33), (c) the great commandment (22:34-40), and (d) Christ’s genealogy (22:41-46). In the final *war of words*, Jesus turns the table by posing a theological question to the Pharisees. Matthew brings his chapter to a close, recording that “no one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions” (22:46).

Some commentators do not consider chapter 23 as part of the fifth discourse (e.g., Hagner 1993; Morris 1992; Hendriksen 2004; Nolland 2005). Hendriksen (2004), for example, argues that Matthew's gospel consists of six discourses, not five. He views the combining of chapter 23 to chapters 23 to 25 as manipulation, in order to align it with the five books of Moses. Secondly, he argues that the address of chapter 23 was delivered in the temple, and the one recorded in chapters 24-25, on the Mount of Olives. Thirdly, the audience of chapter 23 were the crowds, whereas the audience of chapters 24-25, the disciples alone. However, on closer inspection, these objections are not compelling.

To answer his first objection, it is essential to note that espousing a five-discourse view is not manipulation to fit a particular structural scheme (five books of Moses). Numerous prominent commentators (e.g., Blomberg 1992; Boring 1995; Keener 1999), who view the fifth discourse as composed of chapters 23-25, reject a strict alignment to the five books of Moses. After all, why assume Matthean imitation of the Pentateuch, and not the five books of the Psalms, or the five scrolls? The two views are therefore not mutually exclusive by necessity.

Secondly, the five discourses are not geography-bound. Matthew's third discourse (kingdom parables of ch. 13), for example, plays out in two geographically detached locations (the lake side [13:1] and indoors [13:36]). It is therefore necessary to apply the criterion across the board. In other words, if one separates chapter 23 from chapters 24-25 based on geography, one must do the same in Matthew's thirteenth chapter.

Lastly, the individual discourses are likewise not audience bound or addressee specific. Again, utilizing Matthew's third discourse as evidence, the parables of chapter 13 have as their audience the crowds in sections one (vv. 1-35), and the disciples in sections two (vv. 36-58). Yet, Hendriksen applies the criterion to the fifth discourse, but not to the third.

Based upon the overarching theme and flow of chapters 23-25, it is more plausible to view them as one single discourse unit, namely, Matthew's fifth and final discourse.<sup>71</sup>

Blomberg (1992:339) adds further weight to this conclusion. He writes:

He omits Mark's passage about the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44), which otherwise more clearly separates the two discourses and changes the topic. He includes the Q material instead, describing Jesus' lament for Jerusalem (23:37-39), as the climax of the "woes," material that clearly provides a bridge to chap. 24. "Your house is left to you desolate" (23:38) anticipates the destruction of the temple, which is explicitly predicted in 24:1-2. Matthew 23:39, with its reference to Christ's return, equally explicitly ties in with the discussion about the sign of Jesus' coming beginning in 24:3. ... The repeated woes of chap. 23, finally, balance the numerous beatitudes (5:3-12) of the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7), suggesting that this chapter forms part of Jesus' final discourse in Matthew even as chap. 5 introduced his first major discourse.<sup>72</sup>

In the second segment of the fifth teaching block (24:1-25:46), Matthew records Christ as He discloses both the reality and severity of judgment against Israel and the nations (Blomberg 1992:338-39). Both the parable of the good and wicked servant (24:45-51), and the parable of the talents (25:14-30) fall within the second section of the fifth discourse (positioned number two and four respectively), part of a cluster of five parables or warnings (24:32-25:46).

The second segment of the fifth discourse is effectively a retort to questions posed by the disciples concerning the timing and the preceding signs of the destruction of the temple and the end of the world (24:1-3). It consists of two categories of material: firstly, teaching material concerning both the destruction of the temple and the *parousia* of Jesus

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<sup>71</sup> Other prominent scholars who view chapter 23 as part of the fifth and final discourse include Boring 1995:428-429; Gundry 1994:453; Keener 1999:535.

<sup>72</sup> On further work on the unity of chapters 23, 24 and 25 of Matthew's gospel, see Via 1987:83-84.

Christ (24:4-35),<sup>73</sup> and secondly, various parables of judgment, warning and exhortation (24:36-25:46). And so, after some analysis, the four-fold thematic structural division suggested by Hagner (2002) seems most plausible:

1. A period of suffering and proclamation of the gospel, referring in the first instance to the period prior to the devastation of Jerusalem, but applicable also to the entire period foregoing to the *parousia* in 24:4-14.
2. The fall of Jerusalem, not itself the end of the age, and the unmistakable character of the *parousia*, applicable also to the entire period preceding the *parousia* in 24:15-28.
3. The *parousia* of the Son of Man in 24:29-36.<sup>74</sup>
4. Parables and teachings on the importance of perpetual vigilance and faithfulness in 24:37-25:46.<sup>75</sup>

The macro structure of Matthew's judgment discourse therefore stands as follows:

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<sup>73</sup> The most intricate interpretive questions relate to the structure of the Olivet Discourse. More precisely, which sections relate to the fall of Jerusalem and which to the Second Coming? For an excellent synopsis of the various interpretations, see Carson 1984:491-495.

<sup>74</sup> Although Hagner places the end of the section in verse 36, it is perhaps better to view the end of the micro section to end at verse 35. Verse 36 best functions as part of the introduction to the parable section, which deals with the unknowable time of the end of the world and the importance of faithfulness in the interim period.

<sup>75</sup> The structural interpretation of Carson and Wenham (1984) is similar in many respects, recognizing the exegetical tension between verses alluding to the fall of Jerusalem and those alluding to the *parousia*. Carson and Wenham view the disciples understanding of the eschatological end and the fall of Jerusalem as a single complex web of events. "Jesus warns that there will be a delay *before* the End—a delay characterized by persecution and tribulation for his followers (vv. 4-28), but with one particularly violent display of judgment in the Fall of Jerusalem (vv. 15-21; Mk 13:14-20; Lk 21:20-24). Immediately after the days of that sustained persecution characterizing the interadvent period comes a Second Advent (vv. 29-31). The warning in vv. 32-35 describes the whole tribulation period, from the Ascension to the Second Advent" (p. 509).

**1. Christ's public teachings and warnings against Israel (23:1-39)**

- (a) Warnings against Israel's religious leaders (vv. 1-12)
- (b) The seven woes against Israel's religious leaders (vv. 13-36)
- (c) Christ's public lament for Israel (vv. 37-39)

**2. Christ's private teachings and warning against Israel and the Nations (24:1-25:46)**

***2.1 Teachings about the destruction of the temple and the parousia (vv. 1-35)***

- (a) Introduction- the fall of Jerusalem and the disciples' question (vv. 1-3)
- (b) Suffering, false signs and the proclamation of the Good News (vv. 4-14)
- (c) The destruction of the Temple and the great tribulation (vv. 15-28)
- (d) The Second Coming of Christ and concluding implications (vv. 29-35)

***2.2 Five parables of the parousia (24:36-25:46)***

- (a) Introduction and thesis- no one knows the day or hour (vv. 36-41)
- (b) The parable of the householder and the thief (vv. 42-44)
- (c) *The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant (vv. 45-51)*
- (d) The parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13)
- (e) *The parable of the talents (vv. 14-30)*
- (f) The parable of the sheep and the goats (vv. 31-46)

In terms of the positioning of the two parables (with regards to the theme of judgment), three observations are in order. Firstly, the two parables containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* again surface not only in an apocalyptically charged gospel section, but also in the very heart and pinnacle of Christ's teaching ministry. Green (2000:259) correctly spotlights the true weight of this parable section:

The world is headed not for ultimate chaos and disaster but for the return of the King and his coronation. We do not know when it will be, but it is certain, as



certain as the fall of Jerusalem. It [this hope] is based fairly and squarely on the cross and resurrection of Jesus to which the Gospel story inexorably leads. That is the ground of Christian optimism. Christian hope rides high, because the grave was not able to hold down the author of life. But what difference does such hope make to daily life? Jesus shows us the difference in five powerful parables, *which form the crown and climax of his teaching ministry* [emphasis mine].

Yet again then, it seems that the Evangelist has gone about his task by assembling the five parables climatically, evidencing another gradual climax in the theme of judgment. A brief outline of this intensification follows below.

**1. The parable of the householder and the thief (vv. 42-44)** -- In this short passage, the theme of watchfulness takes centre stage. *Keep watching, so you don't get caught unaware*, Jesus urges His followers.

**2. The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (vv. 45-51)** -- Jesus builds on the theme of watchfulness by explaining that He is looking for watchful servants who remain as faithful in the absence of the Master as in his presence. *Vigilance* and *faithfulness* are marks of true discipleship, the two central criteria utilized to separate true disciples from the sons of the devil. When dealing with false disciples or discipleship, Matthew follows his usual motif: demonstrating guilt and vividly (more harshly here than elsewhere) describing the punishment befitting those who are on the outside (they will weep and gnash their teeth in the fires of hell). The use of the word ὑποκριτῶν (“hypocrite”) to describe the false disciples is relevant in terms of demonstrating an increase in literal intensity, for it seems that Jesus brings to a climax theme of hypocrisy from chapter 23 (the hypocrisy of Israel’s religious leaders) (so Keener 1999:594). Moreover, the use of the expression διχοτομέω (“to cut in two”) likewise amplifies the force of judgment. It seems therefore, that this parable may serve as an introductory climax to the larger

parable passage. Once again, the phrase under study (ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὁδόντων) aids the prominent theme of judgment as it reaches its climax.

**3. The parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13)** -- The escalating theme of judgment takes a breather, as Jesus pauses to exhort watchful faithfulness. He explains that a true servant (the virgins/true church) who is *watchful* and *faithful* is always *prepared* for the Master (the bridegroom/Christ). Although the theme of judgment is less intense, the theme of false discipleship is still robustly present. As a lamp without oil may look authentic, a non-Christian too, may look like a genuine disciple.

**4. The parable of the talents (vv. 14-30)** -- Jesus returns to repeat the key character component that He had highlighted in the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (vv. 45-51), namely, faithfulness. Faithfulness is what separates the good from the bad, the sons of the kingdom from the sons of the devil, true disciples from false disciples. At the final accounting, those who are not faithful will certainly weep and grind their teeth. This intense eschatologically charged note sets the stage for the final judgment parable, the *parable* of the sheep and the goats (vv. 31-46).

**5. The sheep and the goats (vv. 31-46)** -- Matthew records Jesus concluding His final teaching discourse with a somber note on the final judgment, with the theme of true versus false discipleship at the fore.

The gradual intensification of the theme of judgment aided by *weeping and gnashing of teeth* passages in the gospel is once again evident (as shown above). However, this is observable on another front. In pericopes one (Mt 8:1-13) and two (13:36-43), both discourses conclude on a constructive and encouraging note (“And the officer’s servant was healed that very moment” and “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom

of their Father”). In pericope three (13:47-50), the passage concludes on an extremely negative note (“there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”), making no attempt to *warm-down* the story. In the fourth pericope (22:1-14), the force of the judgment theme not only increases, but it is further reinforced by Jesus with the stern note, *For many are invited, but few are chosen*. The fifth (24:45-51) and sixth (25:14-30) pericopes function together in Christ’s final teaching segment.

Lenski (1964) makes a potentially valid observation. He explains that “the three parables recorded in 24:45-25:30 belong together and should be studied together. The observation is correct in that the first deals with both faithfulness and wisdom, the second with wisdom alone, and the third with faithfulness alone. The first is intended especially for the ministers of the church, the second and third for all members; the second deals with the spiritual life, the third with spiritual gifts and good works. In the first, hypocrites are exposed; in the second, the formal Christians; in the third, the slothful Christians” (p. 961).

In any case, the passages move from intensity to intensity, not only highlighting the importance of faithfulness, but also setting the stage for the final judgment discourse in Matthew’s gospel. In other words, the final *weeping and gnashing of teeth* phrase not only builds intensity but also aids in finishing the message of judgment on the strongest possible note (the sheep and the goats in 25:31-46).

### **4.5.3 Matthew 24:45-51 (/Luke 12:42-46): The Faithful and Unfaithful Slave**

#### ***4.5.3.1 Textual Variants***

There are no significant textual variants in the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants. Some minor textual variants are present. In verse 45, a number of manuscripts (e.g., W Θ *f*<sup>13</sup> TR lat sy<sup>h</sup>) add αὐτός, rendering the reading as *his master* instead of *the*

*master* (e.g., NIV). With several dissimilarities in word order, ἐλθεῖν (to come) (in v. 48) is added by C L D W Θ f<sup>(1)</sup>,<sup>13</sup> 067 1342. Neither of the above variants is significant enough to affect exegesis.

#### ***4.5.3.2 Form, Micro Structure, and Redactional Considerations***

In the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants, Jesus contrasts the character of two servants, giving the parable its structural basis. Blomberg (1990:191) elaborates:

As with the other triadic, monarchic parables, an authority figure judges between two types of behavior or (sic) his subordinates. Here Jesus uses the imagery of master and servant. A variation in pattern occurs since the same individual is used to depict both good and bad behavior ('it will be good for that servant ... but if that servant is wicked'—Mt 24:46, 48; Lk 12:43, 45). The tone of judgment is harsher here than elsewhere, probably because the original setting of the parable was most likely Jesus' eschatological discourse.

Hence, the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (24:45-51) seems to consist of two segments (Hagner 2002:722). The focal point of the first section is the faithfulness of the first servant (vv. 45-47), further dividable into (a) the rhetorical inquest (v. 45), (b) the recognition (v. 46), and (c) the reward (v. 47). The second segment of the parable, centers on the unfaithfulness of the second servant (vv. 48-51), likewise separable into (a) the recognition (vv. 48-49), (b) the unanticipated return of the landlord (v. 50), and (c) the horrific retribution for unfaithfulness (v. 51).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hagner's grammatical observations concerning the parallelism between the two pericope halves merits citation in full (2002:723): "Syntactical parallelism may be seen in the two sentences composing v. 45 and the beatitude of v. 46, both with the subject δοῦλος, 'slave,' and relative clauses beginning with ὃν, 'whom.' In vv 48–51a we encounter one of the most complex sentences in Matthew, with three parallel main verbs in the future tense, ἔξει, 'he will come,' διχοτομήσει, 'he will cut,' and θήσει, 'he will put,' as well as an extended ἐάν, 'if,' clause with four parallel verbs, εἰπῇ, 'say,' ἄρξηται, 'begin,' ἐσθίη, 'eat,' and πίνῃ, 'drink.' V 50 contains the striking parallel construction ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἣ οὐ προσδοκᾷ καὶ ἐν ὥρᾳ ἣ

On the macro redactional level, the essential features of the story (e.g., wording, structure and judgment sentiments) are virtually identical in Matthew and Luke (Nolland [2000:997] is perhaps right, suggesting that most differences are likely to be Lukan modifications, as the language is in the direction of a more classical and complex use). Moreover, it appears that the two accounts have undergone no significant redaction by either of the gospel writers (the only significant difference is the final clause of Matthew's account [v. 51b], where the Evangelist records Christ elaborating on the final fate and state of the wicked [where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth], which will be address later in this section). In fact, the two accounts are similar enough to conclude that they originate from one common source, possibly Q (Hultgren 2000; Richards 1987; Sellew 1987). However minor the differences may be, changes are nevertheless observable on two tightly intertwined levels, namely, parable application and intended audience. A brief discussion on these two issues follows below.

The quest to discern the intended hearers of this parable is an important one. Was Jesus addressing the disciples, His opponents, or the crowds in general? The answer to this question has consequences not so much on the essential message of the parable, but rather on the nature and meaning of the duties stressed by the parable (Hultgren 2000:159). Perhaps the answer lies in the specific location each gospel writer chose to insert the narrative. Both the Matthean and Lukan accounts appear within the context of Jesus teaching and instructing His disciples. In this regard, there is uniformity between the two gospels. However, the placing and occasion of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants in the two gospels is rather unlike. In the Lukan account, the parable is a response by Jesus to Peter's question about the intended recipients of the preceding

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οὐ γινώσκει, 'in a day he does not expect and in an hour he does not know.' V. 51b contains a common Matthean formula."

parable (the expectant steward [12:35-40]), with the crowd somewhere in the background. In the Matthean account, the parable appears in the Evangelist's eschatological discourse (chs. 24-25), aimed specifically at His disciples. Moreover, the setting in Matthew is also private (24:3), and the brake from the crowds distinct. Each of the above three contextual elements is consistent with Matthew's mega theme of true versus false discipleship in all passages containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. To answer the question of reciprocity then, it is sensible to allow the clearer passage to interpret the less clear, i.e., allow Matthean passage to interpret the Lukan. Due to such verbal, structural, and contextual similarities between the two accounts, it is feasible to infer that Luke, like Matthew, intended the parable for the ears of the disciples.

Some (e.g., Jeremias 1971; Beare 1981) have come to different conclusions, namely, that Jesus spoke the parable to His opponents. But as Hultgren (2000:160) points out, such conclusions are "based on the general view of those interpreters considering the function of the parables in general." Others (e.g., Weiser in Blomberg 1990:123-124), view Luke as restricting the application of the parable to Christians leaders, based upon Luke's use of the more specific term *stewards* (as opposed to *servant* or *slave* in Matthew) and his change to the future tense ("who will set him ...") from the present tense ("set him over his household ..." in Matthew). However, as Blomberg (1990:124) observes, this is no more than stylistic, designed to smooth out an awkward tense change, because Matthew also goes on to use the future tense for the rest of his gospel narrative.

In light of the conclusion that views the parable as spoken to the disciples, the responsibility highlighted by the parable(s) is now with context. Hultgren (2000:161) elaborates:

In the present instance, it is certainly possible that Jesus spoke the parable to his disciples. In such a situation he would be pressing upon them the necessity of caring for the people of Israel—a ministry of proclaiming, healing, and casting out demons—in the time before the end, when an accounting before God will inevitably take place. ... The parable exhorts the disciples to conduct responsible, faithful ministry. The reward for fidelity, by which the faithful slave is set over all of the master's possessions ... cannot be allegorized, but its metaphorical significance cannot be missed. The imagery belongs to the story, and it signifies the eschatological blessedness of the faithful one.

Also Blomberg (1990:190):

While the good and bad servant originally no doubt stood for faithful and faithless Jews, with faith being defined in terms of allegiance to Jesus, there is no reason not to reapply the imagery in an evangelistic context to Christian disciples as over against all those who reject the Gospel, or in an ecclesiastical setting to genuine vs. spurious Christians within the membership of a local church.

It seems therefore, that the universal significance and application of faithfulness in the ministry of the authentic disciples takes centre stage.

Prior to concluding this sub-section, attention must shift tentatively to a remarkable similarity between the two gospel accounts, namely, the punishment of the unfaithful servant. Both Matthew and Luke employ the verb διχοτομέω (“to cut into two”), a word utilized only twice in the entire New Testament (i.e., the two accounts of this parable). The connotation of punishment is severe and extreme, strengthening the thesis of this study on the following three levels.

Firstly, the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* emerges in Matthew's gospel in an eschatologically charged judgment pericope.

Secondly, the theme of judgment reaches an entirely new pinnacle of intensity. This time, however, the acme of the linguistic force in Matthew's account is preceded by the unique verb διχοτομέω.

Thirdly, both the former and latter points seem to suggest that the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is a linguistic intensifying *apparatus*, utilized by Christ (recorded by Matthew, possibly left out by Luke)<sup>77</sup> to reveal the severity and horrific nature of the punishment meted out to false disciples. And as the readers gasp at the declaration that the unfaithful will be *cut into two*, Matthew vigilantly records Jesus restating the fate of the unfaithful with His preferred eschatological judgment phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.

#### 4.5.3.3 Exegesis

**V. 45** Christ introduces the parable narrative via a rhetorical question (characteristic of other parables recorded by Matthew, e.g., 12:11, 18:12 and 21:28), “by which the hearer’s attention is arrested” (Hultgren 2000:162). Matthew however seems to omit Peter’s question (Lk 12:41), possibly to avoid a narrative interruption (Gundry 1982:495). In this verse, two words merit attention, namely, ἄρα (“then”) and φρόνιμος (“wise”). ἄρα serves as “a marker of an inference made on the basis of what precedes” (Bauer 2000, s.v. 1). Here it links the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (vv. 45-51) with the parable of the householder and the thief (vv. 42-44), showing a link between the themes of readiness and faithfulness. Φρόνιμος is possibly utilized here to

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<sup>77</sup> The opposing view holds that Jesus may have utilized the phrase on one occasion, but it was Luke who recorded this phrase in its original context. Due to Matthew’s emphasis on the apocalyptic, he found it useful and intense enough for his redactional purposes and added the phrase to a number of parables. However, due to various factors mentioned throughout this study, it is more feasible to interpret the evidence differently, namely, Matthew faithfully recorded each occurrence of the phrase, whereas Luke did not omitted it.



describe “appropriate discipleship” (Hagner 2002:723; see also Mt 7:24; 10:16; 25:2, 4, 8 and 9). Seemingly, even from the outset, Matthew carefully records Christ warning false disciples, a Matthean mega theme present in all passages containing the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

Some (e.g., Lenski 1964; Hultgren 2000) have strongly advocated the view that by portraying one slave in charge of other slaves, the parable signifies that it is particularly the church leaders who are to care for others (feeding the household = proclaiming and teaching the gospel), until the master returns. Although this is possible, it is not wise to limit the application of this verse only to ecclesiastical leadership, for the true disciples would naturally include both church leaders and lay believers (Brunner 2004:537). This parable charges all disciples to stay actively watchful (Schnackenburg 2002:248), which requires “exemplary conduct and precluding harshness and lording over others” (Carson 1983:510). “After all, the duty of faithfulness applies not only to leaders but also to followers” (Hendriksen 2004:872). It is such authenticity that deserves the beatitude bestowed upon genuine disciples, which is highlighted in the next verse.

**Vv. 46-47** The servant (οἰκονόμος in Luke) found faithfully carrying out his/her bestowed duties is μακάριος (“blessed”), possibly indicative that such a servant is a delight to his master. “The clause ‘whom his master shall find *so doing*’ shows that the proper attitude on the part of the one who awaits the master’s return is active service in the interest of those whom the master has entrusted to him” (Hendriksen 2004:872). In light of such active faithfulness, the faithful servant’s reward is certain (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν<sup>78</sup> ὅτι ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτοῦ καταστήσει αὐτόν). Brunner (2004:538)

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<sup>78</sup> This Matthean formula (“I tell you the truth,” NIV) undoubtedly gives weight and substance to the promised reward (so Hagner 2002:724; Morris 1992:616).

explains in more depth: “The Amen-Word makes this promise emphatic. The ‘all’ (‘over *all* his possessions’) makes the promise expansive.” As Morris (1992:616) rightly observes, “the reward for faithful service is the opportunity of serving in a higher and more responsible place (not ease and rest forevermore)” (so France 2007:944).

**Vv. 48-49** The servant who lacks faithfulness and the associated actions of the wise (v. 45) now receives prophetic consideration. In contrast to the dynamic authenticity that characterizes the wise, the unfaithful servant is careless, cruel and carousing (Hendriksen 2004:873). Moreover, he “may conceive himself that the master ‘is staying away a long time’—perhaps a subtle hint that the *parousia* could be considerably delayed” (Carson 1983:510).<sup>79</sup> Nolland (2005:999) agrees, but explains that

χρονίζει does not mean a delay beyond an expected time (though in the right contexts that can be applied), but simply to take considerable time over something. In the parable the sense ‘My master [characteristically] takes his time’ is unobtrusive in the context and offers the necessary framework for the slave’s action.

In the Matthean edition, Jesus details that *that* wicked servant (ὁ κακὸς δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος // ὁ δοῦλος in Lk 12:45) begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with drunkards. Hendriksen (2004:873) comments that “these present subjunctives are no longer dependant on ‘begins to,’ but, in co-ordination with ‘shall say’ (verse 48) and ‘shall begin’ (verse 49a), are governed by ‘if’ (ἐάν). By now the wicked servant has been eating and drinking with drunkards for some time, and he *continues* (note *present* tense) to do so.” Hence, those who will weep and gnash their teeth are not those “caught in sin

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<sup>79</sup> Various commentators have concluded that the phrase, χρονίζει ὁ κύριος μου ἐλθεῖν, cannot be original to Jesus. Rather, it is a late insertion by the early church fathers, in light of Christ’s Second Coming. For a thorough refutation of this view, see Blomberg 1987.

and suddenly damned” (Blomberg 1992:368), but rather perpetual, unrepentant sinners, chancing on the return of the master.

Hagner (2002:724) claims Matthew’s insertion of κακὸς before δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος clearly indicates that Matthew “directs the reader to another contrasting servant rather than, as in Luke, the same servant who is thought of as entertaining an altogether different train of thought and engaging in a different behavior” (so Schweizer 1976; Donahue 1988).<sup>80</sup> This is a pertinent observation, for the Evangelist carefully differentiates between a true and a false disciple as two different and separate people. Perhaps it is this merit and emphasis that motivated the Evangelist to painstakingly record every occasion on which Jesus articulated the awfulness experienced by the unrighteous after judgment.

**V. 50** Both gospel writers are indistinguishable in their words. “The slave in temporary charge has failed to reckon with the fact that his charge is indeed temporary. His conduct is on the basis that the master’s absence will continue indefinitely” (Morris 1992:617). But, as Christ so dramatically reveals, nothing could be further from the truth. “It is only the irresponsible who need to worry about the *parousia*, and yet it is precisely they who do not worry about it...” observes France (2007:945). Moreover, Jesus has stressed the unexpected time of His return so many times in this parable section (vv. 39, 42, 44 and

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<sup>80</sup> Hultgren (2000:163) disagrees, viewing both the Lukan and Matthean accounts as clearly referring to one person, two choices. He argues that “what is portrayed is a second way of behaving on that part of ‘that slave’ (ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος), as he is called already in 34:46. The same slave has two ways set before him: to be faithful and wise, or to be wicked. A striking element in this verse is that the slave carries on a brief ‘interior monologue’ (saying to himself ...).” However, Hultgren seems to ignore the introductory anecdote of the parable (v. 45), in which Jesus asks (rhetorically), “who (emphatic) then is a faithful and wise servant ...?” (Τίς ἄρα ἐστὶν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος). Surely, it is clear that the readers/hearers must chose between two people (who), not two actions, or else the singular, nominative pronoun (τίς) would not only be superfluous but also bad Greek.

50) that most ideas of premonitory and calculable signs should be set aside (Bruner 2004:541).

The contrast between the faithful and unfaithful, between the prepared and unprepared,<sup>81</sup> and between the true and the false disciple is now in full view of Christ's listeners. Moreover, the language of ἡμέρα ("day") and ὥρα ("hour") is almost certainly purposed to revert the attention of Jesus' hearers to the central theme disclosed earlier (v. 36), Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατὴρ μου μόνος (so Nolland 2005). As so eloquently expressed by Boring (1995:448), "the 'wise' servant is the one who obeys, not the one who calculates." As Bruner (2007:541) so eloquently put it,

the less speculatively and the more *practically* we interpret Jesus' Sermon on the End of the World the closer we come to Jesus' spirit. Jesus' purpose in this sermon as a whole is not so much to supply us with an end-time calendar as it is to evoke in us a living hope that the Lord really *could* come today...

**V. 51** The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants reaches its climax by means of a vivid and bizarre exposition of a two-part judgment of the unrighteous slave. In the first portion of the verse, Jesus makes known that the master shall *cut in two* the unfaithful servant, a unique expression requiring analysis.

There is no scholarly consensus concerning the meaning or nature of the disloyal slave's initial doom as expressed by Matthew. Jeremias (1972, 57 and n. 31) for example proposed that the expression *to cut in two* is simply a mistranslation of the underlying

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<sup>81</sup> The connection between the slave's lack of preparedness and unawareness in light of the masters' unexpected return is both important and pronounced in Matthew, highlighting the reality that the wicked servant is truly caught off-guard (Nolland 2005:999).

Aramaic (“he will apportion to him” was incorrectly translated as “he will divide him”).<sup>82</sup> Jones (2004:444) suggests that the expression *cut to pieces* is a separation from spiritual grace. In Matthew’s case, it is expressing excommunication from the Christian community (Harrington 1991). Or, as suggested by Harrington (1991), it is merely a way of expressing excommunication from the community in general. As an advocate of a metaphorical interpretation, Harrington notes that a literal interpretation makes little sense since a literal dissection would leave nothing to punish for eternity (p. 344). However, as Sim (2002:176) points out, the dichotomization of the slave takes place after the return of the master (post Christ’s *parousia*), and therefore this activity must have an eschatological referent. Others still, based upon the improbability that a severed body would receive additional punishment, have opted for a metaphorical interpretation of the servant’s dissection. Betz (1964) for example suggested that the meaning of διχοτομήσει has undergone evolution, and in light of such, he proposed that the underlying verb for correct translation is *to cut*, a verb which shifts the readers’ attention to *representing* the dramatic punishment (death) that appropriately launches the wicked into eternity (so Gundry 1982).<sup>83</sup>

Commentators in general seem to advocate one of the interpretive schemes from above (literal or metaphorical), with varying differences (e.g., Blomberg 1990; Scott 1990). As observed by Sim (2002:177), the common thread of the abovementioned interpretations of this Matthean passage is the assumption,

that the evangelist could not have intended the reference to the dissection of the servant to be taken literally. ...it seems that scholars have made decisions about

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<sup>82</sup> Sim (2002:173-74) elaborates further, explaining that other scholars are prepared to let this odd motif stand, motivating their view on the grounds that Jesus was familiar with and influenced by the story of Ahiqar, a story which contains many parallels to the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants.

<sup>83</sup> For a more thorough historical survey of the history of interpretation, see Sim 2002:172-184.

the beliefs of the evangelist on the basis of their own standards and worldviews. Since the scenario presented in Mt 24:51 seems both impossible and bizarre to modern readers, it is immediately assumed that Matthew must have thought in similar fashion.

Standing in accord with the above sentiments, the cutting into pieces of the wicked is not connotative of excommunication, or an unfortunate mistranslation, but a *literal* dissection of the false disciple (“cut in two of the dismemberment of a condemned person,” BDAG),<sup>84</sup> a most awful and ghastly form of punishment often alluded to in other portions of Scripture (1 Sam 15:32; 2 Sam 12:31; Dan 3:29; 1 Chr 20:3 and Heb 11:37).<sup>85</sup> This position however raises two potential difficulties. Firstly, how can a dissected (presumably deceased) body be fit for further punishment? Secondly, if the returning master represents Jesus, will Jesus be the agent of the gruesome eschatological punishment, as the master in the parable proper? Sim’s (2002:182) conclusions answer both difficulties and deserve full mention:

Matthew accepted the tradition, found in both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic circles, that avenging angels would play an integral part in the eschatological punishment of wicked Christians (cf. 18:34). In 24:51 the evangelist makes the point that Jesus would cause the angels to punish these disobedient Christians by slicing them in two. A similar story of angelic tormenters who dissect the wicked is found in the story of Susanna, one of the additions to the canonical book of Daniel and a text that was known to and revered by Matthew and his community. In light of this and other close parallels between the parable and in Mt 24:45-51 and the tale of Susanna, it can be deemed very probable that Matthew read the Q tradition he inherited in the light of the Susanna story. Just as the evil elders abuse their positions of power and responsibility and were cleaved in two by avenging angels as a result, so too would those leaders in the

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<sup>84</sup> For a brief apologetic for a literal translation, see Friedrichsen 2001:258-264.

<sup>85</sup> Moreover, such forms of punishment are likewise recorded in non-canonical literature, e.g., the execution of Mettius in Livy, i. 28, Horace, Sat., I. i. 99, Herodotus 7.39, and Suetonius *Caligula* 27.

Christian community who abused their positions be given the same eschatological punishment.

Hence, the cutting in two of the unfaithful is a literal punishment of the most severe kind. France (2007:945) elaborates, explaining that there is no verification for its use in another places as simply an allegory for ruthless chastisement. In all probability then, it is to be taken literally as a particularly brutal execution (cf. 1 Sam 15:33; Jer 34:18; Dan 3:29; Heb 11:37), which goes far outside the parameters of the account and is intended (like the ‘torturers’ of 18:34) to shock the reader into a response.

The Evangelist records Christ’s disclosure of an entirely new facet to the scheme of judgment at the End of the Age. Not only will the wicked weep and gnash their teeth for eternity as a result of judgment at the eschaton, but the manner in which they shall meet their eternal destiny is equally bizarre and gruesome. With such brutal language, it is apparent that Matthew’s gospel has reached yet another high point, as the theme of eschatological judgment is reinforced with more intensity, vigor and strength. In fact, it is entirely possible that this verse (51) is the very climax point of the judgment theme of the entire gospel. In a single verse, Jesus discloses a terrible dissection, and then returns to the theme of hypocrisy by elaborating on the nature of the unfaithful. Finally, Christ concludes with the most vivid illustration of the final fate of the wicked, ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. All previous judgment passages (containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*) pale in comparison to this verse, as Jesus exponentially amplifies the theme of judgment.

#### ***4.5.3.4 Conclusions and Contributions to the Theme of Judgment***

The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants in Matthew’s gospel (24:45-51/Lk 12:42-48) is the second in a series of five parables pertaining to the *parousia* of the Son of

Man (24:36-25:46). In this particular parable, Matthew records Christ explaining that He is looking for *faithful* and *actively* vigilant disciples (possibly referring to Christian leaders, but applicable to all true disciples), the character traits that separate true disciples from the imposters. As Carson (1983:510, emphasis mine) so concisely sums it up by explaining that

the good servant is prepared for his Lord at any time, is faithful throughout his delay, and in the end is *highly rewarded*. The wicked servant is faithless in his responsibilities, abusive to fellow servants, lax in waiting for his masters return, and ultimately *earns the punishment* that is due.

The central issue requiring notice in this parable is plain: the unexpected and sudden return of the master. It is this surprising homecoming that causes such sentimentally diverse consequences for the participants, namely, blessing and reward or punishment and judgment. However, not only will the hypocritical wicked receive eternal torment for his unfaithfulness, but Christ brings to the fore a future reality in which the wicked enter the dreadful place of eternal torment in a horrendous fashion. The act of cutting into two signals the arrival of the absolute pinnacle and climax of the judgment theme in Matthew's gospel. Barton (1996:486) hints at this facet:

Everywhere in the Bible Jesus is presented as the loving Lord of all who come to him in repentance and faith. But on a few pages, the Bible also points to the holiness side, the side of God completely intolerant to sin, utterly unwilling to compromise with evil.

The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants yields three lessons: (1) God rewards and punishes people at the final judgment on the basis of their stewardship of the tasks assigned to them. (2) Faithful stewardship requires perseverance and consistency, for the end could come at any time. (3) Those neglecting and postponing their responsibilities, doing evil in the interim, may sadly discover that it is too late for them to make amends



for their errors (Blomberg 1992:369). In light of these teachings, the tension between true and false discipleship once again comes to light.

Concerning the contribution that this passage makes to the theme of judgment, the answer seems obvious. Assuming the hypothesis of Sim (2002) is correct, this is the only passage in the gospels, or the New Testament for that matter, that teaches a factual (possibly post-mortem) dissection of the false disciples. The expression *he will cut into two* (διχοτομήσει) seems literal, not symbolic or metaphorical. This unique theme finds place only in Matthew's gospel. At first glance, it seems this disclosure is the only contribution Matthew makes to the theme of judgment. The themes of faithful stewardship during the time of his absence, the unexpected and non-imminent timing of his Second Coming, and even the horrors of the final fate of the wicked, are all themes explored not only by Matthew, but also by the other gospel writers. Upon closer inspection, however, it is this very forceful, strong and vivid language that reveals, more so than all other passages previously analyzed, the absolute, unconditional and horrendous fate that awaits the wicked. It is this concentration of dreadfulness that leaves Matthew's readers shocked. No other Scripture reference in the New Testament surpasses the terrible realities of the final judgment that the unfaithful shall experience. This intensity is surely a unique Matthean contribution.

#### **4.5.4 Matthew 25:14-30: The parable of the Talents**

##### ***4.5.4.1 Textual Variants***

There are no significant textual variants in the parable of the talents. Some minor textual variants are however present, the first and possibly the most significant of which occurs in vv. 15-16. Hagner (2002:731) explicates:

Many mss ( $\kappa^2$  A C D L W  $\mathcal{F}^3$  TR; aur 1 vg sy<sup>p,h</sup>) insert the connective δέ (“but”) after πορευθείς (“having gone”), thereby indicating a full stop after εὐθέως (“immediately”), so that it modifies the preceding ἀπεδήμησεν. Thus, *immediately went away*. (Θ  $f^1$ ) have δέ after εὐθέως, indicating that it initiates a new sentence. The accepted text (without δέ altogether) is found in  $\kappa^*$  B  $b g^1$

Although it is not altogether obvious which sentence εὐθέως (“immediately”) belongs with, UBS4 felt that it is almost certain ({B}) that the correct reading of the text is ... καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν. εὐθέως πορευθείς ὁ τὰ πέντε... Other variants appear as inserts for clarification (e.g., γὰρ in v. 14, [missing from D W vg<sup>mss</sup> bo<sup>ms</sup> etc], τάλαντα at the end of v. 17 [present in  $\kappa$  A C D W  $f^{1,13}$  TR sy<sup>h</sup>], and ἐν before τῇ γῇ [A [C<sup>2</sup>] D W Θ  $\mathcal{F}^{13}$  TR]), but none of the above affect exegesis.

#### 4.5.4.2 Pericope Form, Micro Structure, and Redactional Considerations

In the parable of the talents, Matthew documents Jesus more completely defining the meaning of faithfulness in the master’s absence, focusing predominantly on actions of responsibility (Turner 2008:598). “The parable views life in relationship to service and the proper use of the opportunity as evidence of preparedness and expectation of the return of the Lord” (Walvoord 1972:206). Although the responsibilities of the servants are presented in terms of money, the talents in actuality represent the idea of concrete responsibilities and opportunities in the kingdom to serve Christ (Hanko 2004:383). Blomberg (1992:371-372) elaborates on the context of this parable:

In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, the foolish young woman thought the task was easier than it turned out to be; in the parable of the talents, the wicked servant thinks it is harder than it turns out to be. In addition, this passage expands on the nature preparedness to which the previous parables were

pointing, defining the task with which believers are to be occupied until Christ returns, namely, stewardship for his benefit of all that he has loaned us.

In this parable, then, Jesus declares unequivocally that readiness does not mean *passive* waiting, but *proactive* actions. As France observes (in Morris 1992:627), “the period of waiting is not intended to be an empty, meaningless ‘delay,’ but a period of opportunity to put to good use the ‘talents’ entrusted to his ‘slaves.’” Moreover, Jesus also contrasts three subordinate figures (not the usual two): two slaves representing ideal conduct and one representing inappropriate behavior. “The structure remains triadic but the position of the good subordinate is subdivided into two examples. The three characters are thus the master, the two good servants taken together and the wicked servant” (Blomberg 1990:214).

Before discussions concerning the literary structure of this parable, two issues require closer examination. The first is the relationship between the parable of the talents in Matthew and the seemingly parallel Lukan account in 19:12-27, the parable of the pounds. The second issue concerns the identification of a much disputed story element, namely, the real-life referent to the talents. Such considerations are important, especially in light of the allegorical nature of this parable.

### *1. The relationship between Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12:27*

At first glance, it may seem plausible to assume that the parable of the talents (Matthew) and the parable of the pounds (Luke) are parallel accounts of the same story, conceivably redacted by the two gospel writers. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes plain that these two accounts are in fact two separate parables. The brief synopsis of the differences is as follows:

(a) The leading figure in Matthew is a man going on a journey (v. 13); in Luke, it is a nobleman who went off to have himself appointed king (v. 12).

(b) The three servants in Matthew receive five, two and one talents respectively (v. 15); in Luke, ten servants receive ten minas (one sixtieth of a talent [Hagner 2002:733]) each (v. 13).

(c) Luke's parable includes a third group, namely, a group who do not want the noble man as their king (v. 14); this group is absent from Matthew's parable.

(d) Luke gives some details as to what the slaves did with the talents entrusted to them ("put this money to work", vv. 16-18, NIV); this feature is absent from Matthew's account. Moreover, Matthew's faithful slaves double the master's amount (vv. 20, 22); in Luke, the first two servants earn ten and five times the initial amounts respectively (vv. 16, 18).

(e) The reward of the faithful slaves in Matthew was more responsibility (vv. 21, 23); the servants in Luke received cities as their reward (vv. 17, 19).

(f) The punishment of the unfaithful slave in Matthew is expulsion into the darkness, where he will weep and gnash his teeth (v. 30); in Luke, the unfaithful servant merely loses his minas and, consequently, receives no positive reward but is left with nothing (v. 24).

(g) Matthew's parable teaches faithfulness with the talents, while Luke's emphasis is on living out one's faith. Moreover, Luke clearly spells out Christ's purpose for the parable of the pounds, namely, to correct the false assumption that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately (v. 11). Matthew gives no such reasons.

(h) The parable of the pounds was spoken before the triumphant entry and the hearers included Christ enemies; Matthew's parable was spoken on Mt. Olivet on Tuesday evening after Palm Sunday and was spoken to the disciples and not to the multitudes.

In light of the above, the differences are far too significant, while the similarities are easily explicable in terms of common design. In other words, it is far more plausible to assume that the two parables are indeed different, having in common merely the motif in which a king or rich man leaves his slaves or servants in charge of his wealth (see also Mt 24:45-51//Lk 12:42-46 and Mk 12:1-12//Lk 20:9-19). Hence, I concur with Morris (1992:626) as he concludes by writing that "the differences in the two accounts are formidable; therefore, it is better to see them as two distinct parables, though with the same basic theme of servants trading with their master's money" (so Lenski 1964; Carson 1983; Lachs 1987; Hanks 2004). Jesus told two *different* parables, on two different occasions, in two different geographical locations, emphasizing two different lessons.

Three other conclusions are worth brief mention. The first, proposed by Davies and Allison (1997), suggests that Matthew's version of the parable is due to his own tradition, while Luke derived his version from Q. The second hypothesis is somewhat similar; Matthew and Luke both relied on their special sources, L and M, rather than Q (Hagner 2002:733). Blomberg (1992:217) further highlights the possibility that the nature of Luke's special source may in fact constitute of two conflated parables, namely, the parable of the talents and a parable about a *throne claimant* who is opposed by his citizens and who ends up destroying them. Although such hypotheses are with merit, they border on speculation. As Hultgren (2000:273) observes, "either is possible, but neither can be demonstrated."

## *2. Identifying the talents*

Several parable elements are easy to identify; the master represents God,<sup>86</sup> the servants symbolize people of varying character, and the accounting or reckoning refers to the account each person will give at the final judgment. However, in order to better understand the message of the parable, and prior to a verse-by-verse exposition, it is necessary to consider tentatively the meaning of the talents. Chenoweth (2005:62) sets the context of this brief investigation:

It is widely recognized today that Jesus' parables contain elements that were intended to be interpreted allegorically. This does not mean that they are allegories in the full sense such that all characters and events, right down to the tiniest detail, have equivalents in the real world. Rather, there are only a limited number of allegorical connections. The issue for the interpreter is, of course, which ones can be made legitimate.

With reference to the overall message of the parable, there is scholarly consensus. This however is not the case concerning the exact meaning of the talents. For example, "Augustine equates the talent with salvation... (1979) For Jeremias, the talents represent the Word of God (1963). For Lane C. McGaughy (1975), the talents represent the Law" (Chenoweth 2005:66).<sup>87</sup> Beasley-Murray (1986:217) gives in to allegorizing, assuming the talents to represent God's sovereignty in saving others. But perhaps the most frequent

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<sup>86</sup> Matthew's readers would have almost certainly identified a wealthy man or any other authority figure (e.g., king, master, nobleman) as God or Jesus Christ. Chenoweth (2005) explains that of the two options, it is more likely that the master represents Jesus, given the context in which the parable appears. In other words, Matthew places the parable "in a section dealing with the unexpected coming of the Son of Man, following on directly after the parable of the Ten Virgins in which the central authority figure, the bridegroom, refers to the Son of Man, and immediately preceding an account of the Son of Man performing the final judgment" (p. 63).

<sup>87</sup> Some commentators (e.g., Carson 1984; Carpenter 1997) do not view the talents as having any particular meaning. Rather, "the talents are necessary to demonstrate the faithfulness of the first two servants and unfaithfulness of the third" (Chenoweth 2005:67). This view however has very few supporters and will not receive further attention in this thesis.

interpretive view is that the talents represent general gifts and aptitudes (both natural and spiritual) endowed to man by God. Gundry (1982:734), for example, a strong advocate of this view, argues that “since the different ‘amounts’ entrusted to the disciples (five, two, one talent), the ‘talents’ probably symbolize personal gifts and abilities... This is supported by the phrase ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, ‘to each according to his own ability.’” Similarly, Tasker (in Carpenter 1997:167) writes, “The moral of the story to be drawn is that, in the interval between the two comings of Jesus ... the disciples must make continuous, practical use by the efforts of their wills of those gifts of the Spirit with which they are endowed.” Young (1998:82) is somewhat broader in his perspective, suggesting that the talents are in fact everything that person possesses (resources and abilities). On closer scrutiny, however, the talents cannot represent natural and/or spiritual gifts for the following four reasons:

- (a) In the parable, both the faithful and the wicked servants receive talents. “Yet the wicked are never endowed with spiritual gifts” (Hanko 2004:385).
- (b) Natural talents and abilities cannot be taken away, given to another or swapped.
- (c) In the parable, the one talent of the wicked servant is confiscated and given to the faithful servant. “Here too, the ‘gift’ interpretation falls down. How can one man’s ‘gift’ be transferred to another? This is just inconceivable” (Keddie 1994:239).
- (d) The parable clearly distinguishes between the talents and abilities. As Deffinbaugh (2004:n.p.) notes, “the talents were distributed on the basis of ability, not as bestowing of ability.”

What then do the talents represent? Some exegetes have subjectively attributed a number of particular referents to the talents, but without concrete exegetical basis. Carpenter

(1997:169, emphasis mine) affirms this: “The fact that the talents are *reflexively* allegorized as ‘spiritual’ endowments reveals the often unconsciously held assumption ... that it is only the ‘spiritual,’ narrowly defined, that is important to God.” Taking such sentiments into account, how is an exegete to determine objectively the real-life referent to the talents, an element seemingly so essential to the parable’s overall message?

Chenoweth’s (2005) interpretive suggestion is rather appealing. In his articles entitled “Identifying the Talents,” he sets out an interpretive thesis, by which he carefully considering the literary context of the parable. This makes apparent that the parable of the talents (also the preceding parable of the ten virgins) is closely linked with the kingdom parables in Matthew 13. This connection is most apparent in Jesus’ reply to the disciples’ question about His rationale for speaking in parables; “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have in abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Mt 13:11-12). Chenoweth (p. 68) explains the significance by noting that the penultimate verse of the parable has a parallel earlier in Matthew’s gospel in the context of the giving of the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples or the righteous. Hence, such verbal recurrence is Matthew’s way of saying that the two passages are related in some way. The parable of the Talents then develop Matthew 13:12.

He continues to explain that once such connections are recognized, other connections become apparent. He writes (p. 69):

In Matthew 13 we have Jesus entrusting the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples; in the parable of the Talents we have the master (the Son of Man) entrusting talents to his servants (the disciples). If we complete the parallelism it appears that it was Matthew’s intention that the



talents be identified with the ‘knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.’ This identification is further supported by noting that later in Matthew 13 the kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure and a pearl of great value (Matt. 13:44-46); equating the kingdom of heaven with talents—large amounts of money also fits this pattern. ... they [the disciples] have been given what could be described as ‘inside information.’

The above hypothesis certainly seems to provide an *objective* referent to the talents, without running into the various logical difficulties underlined earlier. Consequently, the interpretive key to the parable of the talents becomes less general and allegorically subjective. Therefore, “the talents of the parable are not gifts themselves; rather, they refer to the fact that God assigns to each man a place in his kingdom where this man has certain responsibilities in a certain calling” (Hanko 2004:386), namely, the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven.

The final tentative consideration concerns the literary structure of this pericope. The parable of the talents can be divided into four segments: (a) the entrusting and distribution of the talents to the three servants (vv. 14-15), (b) the faithful and unfaithful use of the talents (vv. 16-18), (c) the accounting (reckoning [Hendriksen 2004:879]) (vv. 19-28), and (d) practical consequences and judgment (vv. 28-30).<sup>88</sup>

It is important to note the climactic nature of this parable, in terms of the theme of judgment. Turner (2008:598-599) explains tentatively that the layout of the parable

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<sup>88</sup> According to Hagner (2002:734), this pericope lends itself to syntactical parallelism. He elaborates: “Syntactical parallelism may be noted in v. 15 in the giving of the money to the three servants but even more conspicuously in vv 16-18 where the work of the three is described. Here all three sentences have a parallel subject clause, and the first and third sentences (vv. 16, 18) have adverbial participles and compound predicate clauses. Similarly, the report of the three is initiated by the three parallel sentence forms (vv. 20, 22, 24, each with the adverbial participle προσελθών, ‘having come forward’). Syntactical parallelism is also apparent in the imperative clauses of v. 28 and the future passive clause of v. 29.”

shows that the structure of this parable is symmetrical, with each of the three scenes dealing with the three slaves in the same order. Each of the successive three scenes is longer than the preceding one, with the most stress placed at the end of the punishment of the wicked slave. Thus the parable, despite its positive element in 25:21, 23, is primarily a warning...

It seems therefore, that the last of the *weeping and gnashing of teeth* passages certainly ends on a high note of intensity, with the theme of judgment expressed emphatically. This will become more obvious post-exegesis.

#### 4.5.4.3 Exegesis

**V. 14** The words ὡς γὰρ (“for as”) move the story along by linking the parable of the talents with the preceding parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13),<sup>89</sup> resuming not only the theme of the kingdom of heaven<sup>90</sup> (faithfulness), but also setting the stage for its further development (active faithfulness). In this first verse, Jesus sets the scene with a brief introduction by which He illustrates the nature of God’s kingdom with the story of a certain master, who made an investment arrangement with his servants in anticipation of a long journey. Because household slaves often held managerial positions in wealthy homes, the practice of a householder entrusting his estate to slaves to oversee was not unusual (Keener 1999:599). The account in Matthew’s gospel is somewhat unique, for the evangelist records Christ emphasizing that the servants were his (ἰδιος), putting “some emphasis on the fact that they were ‘his’ servants” (Morris 1992:627, also Bruner

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<sup>89</sup> Lenski (1964) takes it a step further, viewing the connective γὰρ as indicating that the parable of the talents is an exposition of verse 13 of the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13).

<sup>90</sup> The parable does not give context to the words *again, it will be like* (NIV). Morris (1992) however is confident that one may safely assume that the parable of the talents takes on the context of the previous parable. He (p. 627) notes: “But since the story follows on a parable explicitly said to refer to the kingdom of heaven (v. 1), there is no reason for doubting that it carries on the teaching about the kingdom.”

2004:552). This may indicate that the entrusting of talents by the master was a sign of “honoring them with great trust” (Lenski 1964:973).

**V. 15** It is unnecessary to spend too much time on the economic value of the talents. Suffice to say that (a) a talent represented an enormous amount of money, equivalent to a lifetime worth of work and (b) the sheer enormity and unrealistic value may simply imply the greatness of God’s gift to His people (Davies and Allison 1997:405). In any case, the master called three servants, entrusting to each a different amount (five, two and one talents respectively),<sup>91</sup> representing different capabilities or abilities (κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν) (Turner 2008:600). Carson (1983:516) points out that Matthew’s detail concerning the distribution according to the master’s evaluation of the servants’ capacities may indicate “laying emphasis on the principle ‘to whom much is given, from him also shall much be required.’”

With the words, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν εὐθέως (then he went on his journey), the master’s departure anticipated in verse 14 takes place, without any specific instructions concerning the preferred handling of the entrusted talents. This may indicate the master’s desire for the servants to use their initiative (Morris 1992:627).

**Vv. 16-18** In these three verses, the Evangelist, “in the parallelistic style that typifies his writing” (Gundry 1982:503), records Christ disclosing what each of the three servants did with their talents. The servants with the five and two talents ἡργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς (“he traded with them”)<sup>92</sup> and doubled their master’s capital.

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<sup>91</sup> Blomberg (1990:214) points out that “the decreasing quantities simply serve to build to a climax.”

<sup>92</sup> Hultgren (2000:275) observes that the verb has the specific connotation of one engaging in business in the LXX, in places such as Proverbs 31:18, Revelation 18:17, and also the related noun from *business* at Acts 16:16, 19 and 19:24-25.

The use of the adverb ἐὺθέως (“at once,” [emphatic] NIV) is important. Since the oldest manuscripts contain no punctuation marks, ἐὺθέως may belong to verse 15, describing the urgency with which the master left on his journey. Alternatively, it may fit as the first word in verse 16, describing the urgency with which the servant(s) went about their investing. The latter seems more likely, for as Metzger (1994:53) notes, “there is no point in the master’s departing immediately; there is much point in the servant’s immediately setting to work” (so Nolland 2005; Hagner 2002). Hence, it is essential to take note not of how the first two servants put the money to work, but the fact that “the slave, and not just the money, is on the job” (Nolland 2005:1015), and that they “made good and effective use of what had initially been given” to them (Hagner 2002:734).

The third servant however buried his master’s money (possibly for safekeeping). “The wrong feature of this action is indicated by the genitive: this is how he treated the gift ‘of his lord,’” explains Lenski (1964:976). In any case, it is this action that stands in total distinction to the actions of servants one and two. “The word *but*, which introduces this section of the story, has adversative force” (Morris 1992:628), heightening the true intensity of the contrast. It is worth noting however that the practice of burying capital for safekeeping was not uncommon in the times of Jesus (Hultgren 2000; Nolland 2005). Hence, it is the striking contrast between the faithful and unfaithful servants that brings about the first tension in the parable, not the actions of the third servant. Hendriksen (2004:880) hypothesizes about the rationale for such action:

What motivated this man in deciding to do this? Was it love for his master, lest some burglar might come along and steal what belonged to the absent one? Was it timidity perhaps, a feeling of inferiority strengthened by the consideration that less had been entrusted to him than to the others? From verses 24-27 we learn that it was neither of these, but rather unjustified suspicion and laziness.

**V. 19**<sup>93</sup> Christ continues by narrating the return of the κύριος. “At the Matthean level at least, a term capable of an allegorical meaning, in which ‘lord’ is heard and read as ‘Lord,’ and his return ‘after a long time’ is heard and read as the Parousia of Christ, which has been delayed,” notes Hultgren (2000:276). Μετὰ δὲ χρόνον πολὺν does not necessarily teach the delay of the Son of Man, although some would disagree (e.g., Carson 1983; Blomberg 1992). However, συναίρει μετ’ αὐτῶν λόγον (he settles account with them) is clearly a figure for eschatological judgment (Hagner 2002:735).

**Vv. 20-23** Except for details specific to the level of trust the master put into each of the faithful servants, namely, the number of talents, verses 20-21 almost exactly<sup>94</sup> mirrors verses 22-23. The verb προσελθών (“brought,” NIV) is significant, for it connotes a slightly formal and respectful word. Nolland (2005) prefers the word *present*, for it may reflect something of a sense of occasion (p. 1016). Gundry (1982:505) concurs, viewing it as Mattheanism, connoting the dignity of Jesus, whom the master represents.

In both cases, the faithful slaves (a) doubled the master’s money,<sup>95</sup> (b) are labelled δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ (good and faithful servant), and (c) are invited to enjoy the master’s happiness. In both cases, the master (a) exclaims approval with εὖ (“well done” or

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<sup>93</sup> Nolland views this verse as the climactic point of the parable. He explains that “the two verbs of this verse are historic presents, marking the point of accountability at the return the key moment of the parable” (2002:1016). However, verse 19 is not the climax moment of the parable. The climax of the parable is the final verse (v. 30), where Jesus reveals the horrific fate of the unfaithful servant. The return of the master in verse 19 merely initiates the upward climax, steadily heading towards the awful outcome of the parable.

<sup>94</sup> In Matthew 25:22, Christ somewhat abbreviates the parallel verse (20) by excluding (but implying) λαβὼν (“who had receives”) (Nolland 2005:1017).

<sup>95</sup> In both instances, there is a seeming emphasis on the amount of talents gained. As Morris (1992:629) explains, the servant speaks of five ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα (“five other talents”); the word ἄλλα preceding πέντε τάλαντα gives the expression some emphasis. In other words, not only did the servant return the original five talents, but in addition, he brought to his master five other talents that he had gained.

“excellent”) and immediately addresses both as ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ (“good and faithful”),<sup>96</sup> (b) acknowledges the two servants’ faithfulness over a few things,<sup>97</sup> and (c) rewards the faithful servants with the opportunity to εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου (“enter into the joy of you [their] master”). This expression is somewhat unusual. Some translate it as “share your master’s joy” (REB), or “festive dinner/a state of joyfulness” (BAGD 1979, s.v.). Others view it as praise and reward of greater responsibility together with the deserved company of the master (Blomberg 1992:373). As verbalized by Schweizer (in France 2001), the servants are rewarded not with more money, “but an even greater responsibility” (2005:353). What is definite, however, is the presence of eschatological motif. Hagner (2002:735) rightly recognizes such a theme by saying that for Christian readers (both in the first century and in the present) the language clearly connotes the joy of eschatological blessing, just as the judgment of the iniquitous servant (v. 30) points to eschatological judgment. Lenski (1964:979) contributes a further observation, stating that if Matthew reached the limit of the imagery in the preceding word, he certainly goes beyond this perimeter: ‘Enter into the joy of thy lord!’ It is not strange that in several parables the imagery is too weak to present the full reality that Jesus wishes to convey.

The build up towards the judgment proclamation has clearly commenced. The expression εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ (“well done, good and faithful servant”) carries implications for the intensification of the theme of judgment (via the aid of contrast). This is inferable by taking note of the rarity of a master praising the work of a slave, however excellent the

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<sup>96</sup> The *good and faithful* may mirror the *good and wise* of the previous chapter (Mt 24). It seems there is a building up towards a contrast between the *good* and the *bad*.

<sup>97</sup> Hultgren (2000:276) incorrectly notes: “the fact that the amounts entrusted are called ‘little,’ when in fact talents are huge, indicates that Matthew has inflated the amounts given in an earlier version of the parable.” However, Hagner’s (2002:735) suggestion is more plausible, recognizing the presence of irony. He writes: “ὀλίγα, ‘little,’ here is ironic, given the large sums of money in question, but it also emphasizes the contrasting greatness of the divine generosity in eschatological blessing.”

servant's performance (Nolland 2005:1016). Lenski (1964:979) elaborates, "No higher commendation can come to any believer from the lips of Jesus." Nowhere previously in his gospel has Matthew recorded Christ distributing such elevated praise. Such an exceptional commendation evidently builds towards an extreme contrast between the reward of the faithful and the horrific judgment of the unfaithful. To be more precise, such an *absolute* contrast widens the (already immense) perceived conceptual gap between the theme of remuneration and punishment in Matthew's gospel, escalating the theme of judgment to its highest possible level of expression. This contrast will reach its climax in the next two verses, evident in the actions of the unfaithful slave.

**Vv. 24-25** In these two verses, Matthew records Jesus narrating the part of the parable in which the unfaithful servant makes a rather feeble attempt to justify his wicked actions. Προσελθὼν δὲ καὶ ὁ τὸ ἓν τάλαντον εἰληφώς ("then he who had received the one talent") is repeated as in verse 22, changing only the number of talents given to the servant. Gundry (1982:506-507) highlights a significant point with reference to the use of the verb εἰληφώς, in relation to its forms in verses 20 and 22. He observes that "Matthew draws from v. 20a to fill the ellipsis of λαβὼν that he allowed in v. 22a. But here he uses the more graphic perfect participle εἰληφώς. Thus the responsibility of the slave gets greater emphasis." This emphasis adds credence to the abovementioned contentions (vv. 20-23), amplifying the contrast between the actions of the true and false disciples. It seems the justification for the awful punishment of the wicked servant subtly surfaces in the very midst of the slave trying to justify himself. The irony is obscure, but present.

The build up towards the punishment persists as the slave continues to justify his actions. A subtle irony again surfaces, as the slave's words of justification (labeling the master as a σκληρὸς εἰ ἄνθρωπος, *and* accusing the master of reaping where he did not sow and

gathering where he did not scatter seed) further validate the impending judgment proclamation against him. As McNeil (in Hultgren 2000:276) observes, “the metaphors [synonymous parallelism] of reaping without sowing and gathering without broadcasting seed indicates that the master enriches himself at the cost of others.”

In verse 25, Matthew records Christ as He continues to narrate the story; the servant again attempts to justify his actions. This time, however, he blames it on fear.<sup>98</sup> He explains that he buried the money for safekeeping, then abruptly returns the money to its owner, declaring, ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν (“See, here is what belongs to you,” NIV).<sup>99</sup> Carson (1983:517) deduces:

What this servant overlooks is his responsibility to his master and his obligation to discharge his assigned duties. His failure betrays his lack of love for his master, which he masks by blaming his master and excusing himself. Only the wicked servant blames his master.

The servant’s reprehensible disloyalty sets the stage for the master’s culminating rebuttal and pronouncement of equitable judgment. In fact, “the very way in which he is addressed is a judgment and a verdict upon this slave” (Lenski 1964:983).

**Vv. 26-27** The conjunction δέ (“but”) in ἀποκριθεὶς δέ (“But his master replied,” NIV) is adversative, serving to contrast strongly the master’s reply with the servant’s excuses. Preceded by πονηρὲ δοῦλε καὶ ὀκνηρὲ (“you *wicked* and *lazy* slave,” NIV, emphasis mine), showing complete contrast to the actions of the good and faithful servants in verses 21 and 23, the master proceeds to “condemn the servant on the basis of the

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<sup>98</sup> Σκληρός with reference to a person can mean harsh, hard, austere, strict or unmerciful (Schmidt and Schmidt 1995:816-818).

<sup>99</sup> The phrase, ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν, according to Gundry (1982:508), is Jewish commercial language that disclaims responsibility.



servant's own words, which prove his guilt" (Carson 1983:517). In reality, the slave simply did not act in line with his affirmed observation about the master. Had he shown some righteousness by at the very least investing the talents with the *τραπεζίταις* (bankers or money-changers) for some return, his vindication would have been assured.<sup>100</sup> But as it turns out, it was but an excuse ("cunning reasoning" according to Walvoord [1972:209]), through which the master could see clearly. "In 22:12 the man is dumb and by his inability to furnish a real answer damns himself. The parable [of the talents] uses both: dumbness and self-condemnatory answers" (Lenski 1964:983). Whether the false disciples keep silent or whether they speak and make excuses, they are without hope at the time of judgment. Either way, their punishment is certain. Jesus, communicating a unique character of the end-time judgment, perhaps subtly implies this point.

The main point of the parable, "the reckoning" as Hendriksen (2004:882) puts it, takes place in the next two verses, with the climactic declaration in verse 30.

**Vv. 28-29** The decree to have the talent removed from the *πονηρὸν* and *ὀκνηρὸν* slave and handed over to the faithful servant with ten talents (initially five), marks the inauguration of judgment. Jesus continues to elaborate, making clear that *everyone who has will be given more, and he will have in abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him*. Scholars have long debated whether this statement is an authentic segment of the parable (e.g., Donahue 1988; Carson 1984) or an editorial insertion (e.g., Jeremias 1972; Davies and Alison 1997). Discussing this issue is beyond the scope of this section. Suffice to say that verse 29 fits in well with the overall coherency and thematic flow of the gospel (Hultgren 2000:277). Moreover, as pointed

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<sup>100</sup> The imperfect verb *ἔδει* connotes necessity, not an option. The master is not thinking of something that might possibly be done, but something that needs to be done or *must* be done (Morris 1992:631).

out by Carpenter (1997:168), “the inspired author uses this saying of Jesus as the key to unlock the meaning of the parable.” In any case, this statement is somewhat difficult to interpret. Some view it as a clear representation of the truth that God removes gifts from those who do not use them faithfully (e.g., Hagner 2002; Carpenter 1997). However, as demonstrated earlier in this section, any interpretation identifying the talents as natural gifts and/or spiritual abilities ought to be considered unfounded. Identifying the talents as referring to God assigning certain responsibilities within a certain calling (namely, the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven) allows for a better contextual interpretation of this obscure verse. Hence, Jesus was in all probability laying down a central spiritual principle (so Morris 1992), namely, faithful living is never inert or stagnant. Faithful use of our responsibilities with the secrets of the kingdom leads to increase, more opportunities and opens the door to greater effectiveness in our faithfulness. The reverse is likewise true: lack of faithfulness equates to exploitation and abuse of such privileges. As Blomberg (1992:374) puts it, “v. 29 refers to what a given servant has or has not accomplished with the original loans.” Perhaps it is this principle that connects verse 29 to the pinnacle judgment pronouncement in verse 30, namely, this very principle will be applied more consistently in a once-for-all fashion at the final judgment (Blomberg 1990). Verse 30 then, gives a final peek into the horrors of this imminent event.

**V. 30** The master labels the slothful slave ἀχρεῖον, meaning worthless (Swanson 1997:§945), a term literally applicable to the slave’s use of the talents entrusted to him (Nolland 2005:21). The contrast between the wicked, lazy *and* worthless servant again comes to the fore. However, the contrast continues to sharpen, as Matthew records Jesus pronounce for the last time, the final fate of the wicked: ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων. This idiom stands in *total* contrast to εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου

(“come and share your master’s happiness”). Deffinbaugh (2004:n.p.) makes the point, “the ‘joy of the master’ must, in some way, equate to enjoying the bliss of heaven, with our Lord. ‘Weeping and gnashing of teeth,’ in outer darkness must, on the other hand, involve spending eternity without God, and without joy” (see also Hultgren 2000). The reference to the eschatological fate of the wicked is clear, amplified with the aid of the numerous contrasts between the true, faithful and the false, faithless disciples. As France (2007:956) explains, “there is thus a fundamental division between good and bad disciples, between the saved and the lost, and the language of ultimate judgment is deployed again to warn the reader to take the parable’s message seriously.”

#### 4.5.5 Conclusion

This parable is the final build-up-parable (prior to the final judgment pericope in Matthew’s gospel [25:31-46]), in which Jesus addresses the issues pertaining to active and dynamic faithful “conduct in the lengthy time that the Son of Man is ‘away’” (Hagner 2002:736). Within the plot of the parable, Jesus tells of the action each servant took with the assigned talent(s). The first two servants, those entrusted with five and two talents respectively, were actively faithful by investing their master’s money. Their faithfulness yielded not only more talents (100% returns), but also great praise (“Well done, good and faithful servant”) and an even greater reward (“come and share your master’s happiness” [at the *eschaton*]). In sharp contrast to the faithfulness of slaves one and two, servant three buries the entrusted talent. Such faithless and disloyal actions receive strong condemnation and punishment of the severest kind; thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. As Schweizer (quoted in Morris 1992:631) rightly concludes, “Jesus is saying that a religion concerned only with

not doing anything wrong in order that its practitioner may one day stand vindicated ignores the will of God.”

This parable teaches three lessons, one per each main character: (1) Like the master in the story, God entrusts each of us with certain responsibilities and obligations pertaining to the secrets of his kingdom revealed first to the disciples and consequently to the readers of the parable. (2) Like the two servants, God generously (somewhat of an understatement in the context of this parable) rewards those who dynamically utilize such responsibilities, but likewise (3) horrifically (another understatement) punishes those who rebelliously misuse and waste what God has given them for faithful exercise.

#### **4.5.6 Contributions to the Theme of Judgment**

The contribution that this passage makes to the theme of judgment is somewhat indirect but nonetheless important. Nowhere in the gospels has the contrast between true and false disciples appeared so stark and severe. Not only is the build-up to the final judgment pronouncement and final judgment discourse of Matthew’s gospel obvious, but the contrast between the sons of the kingdom and sons of the evil one, those who will enjoy eternity with their Master, and those who will weep and gnash their teeth for eternity, is as sharp as language permits. Judgment will be extreme, severe, painful and dark, in *absolute* contrast to the fate of the righteous. As the expression *the joy of thy master* is an imagery for something words cannot describe (Lenski 1964), so is the state of *weeping and gnashing of teeth* an illustration for a state of judgment that words cannot express. Nowhere in the gospels are such extremely contrasting states described so graphically. Surely, the theme of judgment has reached its thematic pinnacle and climax.

Moreover, it is also important to note that the last parable Matthew chose to incorporate into his gospel contains the most heinous judgment pronouncement on false disciples as they stand in contrast to the bliss the righteous experience at the eschaton. What is Matthew's possible rationale for bringing Christ's parabolic teaching ministry to a close with this parable? It is certainly conceivable to assume that this parable holds a place of special prominence to Matthew, as he understood and handles the theme of judgment alluded to by Jesus so often in His earthly ministry. It seems that the parable of the talents is the ideal *kingdom type parable* to prelude the final judgment pericope in Matthew's gospel. With the parable fresh in the minds of his readers, Matthew wraps up the theme of judgment with a final note on the final judgment, perhaps to taper off or warm-down the judgment theme, in preparation of Christ's arrest, trial and passion.

#### 4.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this exegetical segment of the study, an exposition of each of the six passages containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (8:5-13; 13:36-43; 13:47-50; 22:1-14; 24:45-51; 25:14-30) was conducted, with the hope of discovering (a) the unique facet that the six passages may contribute to the broader theme of judgment within Matthew's gospels, and (b) the function of the phrase within Matthew's gospel *en block*.

##### 4.6.1 Contributions to the Theme of Judgment

Matthew seems to have recorded six instances in which Christ describes the final and eternal state of the wicked using the unique idiom, *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Four of the six passages (13:36-43; 13:47-50; 22:1-14; 25:14-30) are unique to Matthew, and hence, they probably contribute a specific message to the theme of judgment. The initial hypothesis was that each pericope contributes a specific message to the broader theme of judgment, a hypothesis that seems to be accurate. Additionally, each pericope containing

*weeping and gnashing of teeth* seems to take the theme of judgment to a higher level of intensity.

First, the Evangelist demonstrated that weeping and gnashing of teeth is avoidable only if one accepts Christ's authority as the provider of salvation. False hope in one's ethnicity leads to a horrific fate (8:1-14). The platform for the theme of judgment is set at an extreme intensity. Secondly, the coexistence of both true and false disciples does not indicate evaded judgment. On the contrary, an awful destiny awaits the wicked (13:24-30, 36-43). Matthew then immediately underpins the severity and harshness of the final judgment by again restate the truth that such false disciples will weep and gnash their teeth in the furnace of fire (13:24-30; 36-43 and 47-50). The theme of judgment receives centre-point attention within the teaching heart of the gospel (kingdom parables). The imagery of a fiery furnace as an associated imagery to judgment is unique to Matthew's gospel, again elevating the intensity (possibly the physical aspect) and force of the final judgment at the End of the Age. Thirdly, the Evangelist records Jesus disclosing the intensity of the hostility and antagonism false disciples have for the King (22:1-14), as they willfully reject the open invitation to eternal bliss. Such a rejection earns them an eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The truth communicated is again extreme and intense. Lacking the usual build-up, the theme of apocalyptic judgment however appears suddenly, with new intensity and force. Fourthly, the theme of judgment reaches yet another intensification, by means of a vivid and bizarre exposition of a two-part judgment of the unrighteous slave, namely, the literal, postmortem dissection of false disciples (24:45-51). Finally, in the last parable of his gospel, Matthew inserts a story in which the contrast between true disciples and their eternal reward stands in total and absolute contrast to the fate and eternal punishment of false disciples (25:14-30).

A *less significant* observation deserves brief mention. It is evident on both the structural and grammatical levels that the theme of judgment truly comes to an absolute climax with the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant (24:45-51) and the parable of the talents (25:14-30). This may be significant to some extent. It is clear upon reading the gospel of Matthew that he favors groupings of threes. It was clearly observable that *all* occurrences of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* appear within the structural context of a larger *triadic* structure. The only *partial* exception is the parable of the tares, in which it is the explanation of the parable that contains the phrase (vv. 36-43), and not the parable proper (vv. 24-30). Nonetheless, they are closely related thematically and contextually. The table on the next page demonstrates this more clearly.

The Pericope	The Triadic Literary Structure
The faith of the Centurion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the healing of a leper (8:1-4)</li> <li>• <i>the faith of the Centurion</i> (8:5-13)</li> <li>• the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-16)</li> </ul>
The Parables of the Tares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the parable of the tares</i> (13:24-30)</li> <li>• the parable of the mustard seed (13:31-32)</li> <li>• the parable of the leaven (13:33-34)</li> </ul>
The Parable of the Dragnet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the parable of the hidden treasure (13:44)</li> <li>• the parable of the costly pearl (13:45-46)</li> <li>• <i>the parable of the dragnet</i> (13:47-50)</li> </ul>
The Parable of the Wedding Feast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the parable of the two sons (21:28-32)</li> <li>• the parable of the tenants (21:33-43)</li> <li>• <i>the parable of the wedding feast</i> (22:1-14).</li> </ul>
<p>The Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants</p> <p>The Parable of the Talents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant</i> (24:45-51)</li> <li>• the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13)</li> <li>• <i>the parable of the talents</i> (25:14-30)</li> </ul>



In light of the above tabulation of the structural context of the phrase (in all six occurrences in Matthew's gospel), it may be significant that the concluding triadic parable cluster of Matthew's gospel contains the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* twice.<sup>101</sup> If it is deemed significant, it may point to an additional structural tool to point his readers to the final intensification of the judgment theme, for no other parable cluster in Matthew's gospel comes close to the intensity and strength of the theme of apocalyptic judgment. This is true particularly in terms of the horrific content and description on the final judgment of the wicked. Thus, the concluding triadic parable assemblage may serve as an auxiliary reinforcement for the theme of judgment. In other words, the theme of judgment, with the aid of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, has intensified the theme of judgment with each occurrence, ending on a strikingly somber and intense note.

This contention is also supportable by identifying the use and function of the historic present in Matthew's final parable cluster (24:42-25:46). In an article analyzing Matthew's use and function of the historical present, Wilmshurst (2003) concludes that Matthew's usage should be understood as selective and versatile, a tool for drawing special attention to particular narrative elements for a variety of reasons (p. 269). He continues to explain (p. 286) that

Because these stories [parables] are simply quoted speeches of Jesus, rather than forming part of the narrative framework, their relevance to Matthew's overall theme has to be brought out in different ways. Here, the historic present plays a *crucial* role of *spotlighting key themes or ideas* [emphases mine]...

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<sup>101</sup> For a convincing argument for the thesis that the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant (24:45-51), the parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13) and the parable of the talents (25:14-30) ought to be viewed as a single unit (the three major polemical parables of chs. 24 and 25), see Harrington (1991:287-298).

Matthew makes use of the historical present twice (ἔρχεται and συναίρει) in his final triadic parable cluster, in the parable of the talents (25:19). On the micro literary level, they come at a fundamental point in the parable of the talents, “as the master returns for a reckoning with his servants, and immediately following the disastrous action of the third servant in *hiding* his one talent” (Wilmshurst 2003:286). On the macro thematic level, the parable of the talents is the final parable within the triadic parable cluster agglomeration, not only accentuating, but intensifying, for the final occasion, the motif of judgment in Matthew’s gospel. This thematic spotlighting then becomes the final meridian of judgment in Matthew.

It seems clear then, that each parable containing the idiom *weeping and gnashing of teeth* contributes a unique message to the broader theme of judgment. Moreover, each such story or parable signifies an intensification of the force, strength and significance of the theme of judgment. It is possible to support this conclusion further by drawing attention to Matthew’s use and function of the historical present in the parable of the talent, and the theological force and intensity of the final parable cluster which containing the phrase under study two times. In light of such discoveries, it is now possible to comment on the main question of the study, namely, what is the nature and function of the idiom *weeping and gnashing of teeth*?

#### **4.6.2 The Nature and Function of “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth” in Matthew’s Gospel**

It seems that the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* serves four possible functions (not listed in order of prominence).

1. Matthew's inclusion and careful emphasis on the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων seems to serve as a mnemonic system or method by which the Evangelist hopes to make the message of the particular parable unforgettable.<sup>102</sup> It seems clear that Jesus made his teachings easy to memorize (Riesner 2004:193). (Hagner (2002:xlix) broadens and adds historical context to this function:

To a very large extent, the shape of the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew reflects the parallelism and mnemonic devices of material designed for easy memorization. It is estimated that 80 percent of Jesus' sayings are in the form of *parallelismus membrorum* (Riesner), often of the antithetical variety ... In its Aramaic substratum, the teaching of Jesus regularly contains such things as rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and paronomasia (see Jeremias, 20–29), and the evangelists (esp. Matthew) try sometimes to reflect these phenomena in Greek dress. All this we take to be the sign not so much of Matthew's imitation of the oral tradition (although Lohr rightly indicates that this happens) as of the actual preservation of oral tradition very much in the form in which it was probably given by Jesus.

In other words, a study of the forms of Jesus' teaching reveals that a majority of them (as much as 80 percent) is phrased in a way that facilitates memorization (*parallelismus membrorum*), such as parallelism, rhythm, alliteration, *catchwords and striking figures of speech* (Riesner 2004:202). In fact, posits Riesner, "even the form of the sayings of Jesus included in itself an imperative to remember them" (p. 202), and hence, it seems that such succinct phrasing exercised mnemonic functions in the memorization process (Kelber 1997:13). In the context of Matthew's gospel, the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is indeed the ultimate towering mnemonic catchphrase, drawing attention to a key theological emphasis, namely, the assured eschatological reckoning of false disciples.

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<sup>102</sup> The reality of Gentiles replacing Jews at the final banquet is fully developed and concluded as a theme in later passages (21:33-44 and 22:1-10).

In the case of the first pericope, for example, the focus is on the theme of faith. In order to avoid judgment, one needs to have faith superior to Israel's religious leaders. Marshall (1985:264) alludes to this Matthean feature:

The healing of the Gentile's servant provides him with an excellent paradigm of the universal application of the work of Jesus, and he makes sure by his telling of the story and in particular by his insertion of Jesus' devastating saying that the message is not missed.

This functional aspect of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is likewise applicable to the other five pericopes, for each communicates an important message about judgment. In the second (the parable of the tares) and third pericopes (the parable of the dragnet), the focus is two dimensional; although judgment is delayed, its occasion is assured. This message is firm and clear, sure to stick in the minds of both true and false disciples. In the parable of the wedding banquet, the focus shifts to the reality of the a strong Gentile presence at the final banquet, a theme intertwined with the assured judgment of the false disciples who view themselves as rightful heirs of the kingdom. Lastly, the fifth (the parable of the good and wicked servant) and sixth pericopes, the thematic center of attention is on active, dynamic faithfulness ("economic faithfulness" according to Carpenter [1997]). Therefore, the first conceivable function of the phrase is thematic highlighter. With the aid of the idiom *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Matthew highlights the message of each parable and ensures that the message is *haunting*.

2. Because of the early insertion into the text, "8:11-12 may [also] be intended to function as a prophetic anticipation of an aspect of the larger shape of history" (Nolland 2005:257). As noted by Hagner (1993), the destiny of unfaithful Israel (false disciples) becomes a forewarning to the church (true disciples) in subsequent judgment passages. It seems, therefore, that in each occurrence of the expression, the reader receives a vivid

reminder of the dreadful fate of Israel's religious leaders (false disciples). However, the Evangelist appears strategic in his placing of such dramatic *reminders* within his gospel.

The first and second reminders come into view in chapter 13, a chapter that is of fundamental significance, for it is the hinge chapter of Matthew's entire gospel. It is this chapter that Matthew places the commencing of Jesus' parabolic teaching ministry, in addition to a complete alteration in the recipients of His teachings. Moreover, the abovementioned contentions find further support on a micro level, namely, the prominent seating position of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* as the first (13:24-30 and 36-43) and last (13:47-50) parable teachings outside the introductory (13:1-23) and concluding (13:51-52) narratives.

The third reminder receives limelight in chapter 22, where Matthew again brings to the attention of his readers the destiny of unfaithful Israel (false disciples) as forewarning to the church (true disciples), using the parable of the wedding banquet (vv. 1-14). Matthew's strategy in placing the parable of the wedding banquet (containing the expression under study) is noticeable. In the preceding chapters (commencing at ch. 13), the Messiah continues to perform healings, exorcisms and miracles of every kind, *elevating the anger and aggression of His opponents to new heights*. It is in response to such *heightened hostility* that Jesus proceeds to disclose this final judgment parable. The abovementioned thesis also seems to fit with the fourth pericope.

Lastly, Matthew's two final strategic reminders occur within the body of the largest eschatological discourse in the Bible, outside of the book of Revelation. The parables of the good and wicked servants (24:45-51) and the parable of the talents (24:14:30) represent the two most eschatologically charged parables of the Olivet Discourse (also known as the Synoptic Apocalypse). More strategically significant in its positioning is

the final *weeping and gnashing of teeth* parable (the parable of the talents), which Matthew utilizes as the final build-up narrative to the ultimate judgment pronouncement in 25:31-46 (the judgment of the nations).

In light of the above, it seems clear that the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* also functions as a vivid reminder to the church. In each occurrence of the phrase in Matthew's gospel, the reader's attention is focused backwards, to Israel, as forewarning to the church of the impending final judgment on all false disciples.

3. It appears that this Matthean phrase is also a linguistic device, which increases the degree of emphasis or heightens the force given to the message of eschatological judgment, a theological theme often accented by Jesus. Riesner for example explains that Jesus often formulated strong contrast and did not hesitate to use hyperbolic speech<sup>103</sup> and laconic phrasing as a kind of *shock treatment phrases* to help people see the truth (2004:201). In other words, the expression *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is an eschatological *thematic intensifying idiom*,<sup>104</sup> utilized in order to express an extremely intense attitude concerning a particular future reality. For example, in the story of the centurion, Matthew purposefully records verses 11 and 12 to make clear the future awfulness experienced by those rejected and excluded from the final reward ceremony. Matthew clearly saw and understood that with such intense language and sentiments, Christ was trying to communicate something of extreme importance, weight and

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<sup>103</sup> As demonstrated in this study, although Jesus did make use of hyperbolic speech techniques, the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is by no means a hyperbola, but rather, an eschatological prophecy of future judgment of the wicked.

<sup>104</sup> Although there are some similarities in function, this is not necessarily the same as an English intensifier, which is a word, especially an adjective or adverb, which intensifies the meaning of the word or phrase that it modifies (www.freeonlinedictionary). In the Matthean-biblical context, *weeping and gnashing of teeth* is an intensifier that intensifies a particular theme, not a word, and appears rather at the end of the phrase or sentence (possibly for heightened emphasis).

significance. Concerning the parable of the wedding banquet, France likewise makes a similar observation, stating that “the weeping and gnashing of teeth also appears ... in each case to draw out the significance of the parable of ultimate rejection” (2007:827). What better way to accomplish this, than by recording each instance in which the final Judge utters *one of the most* disturbing expressions to appear in the New Testament, describing the final fate of the wicked!

4. Lastly, it appears that the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* may also function as a literary connector that holds together a number of specific passages of Scripture. In Matthew’s case, the phrase glues together the specific judgment passages that communicate a holistic theology of end-time judgment. Most major themes important for a correct understanding of the theme of apocalyptic judgment of the false disciples is incarcerated within the corpus of the six passages, containing the phrase weeping and gnashing of teeth. This may be demonstrated as follows:

	The question being answered	The answer to the question
8:5-13	How does one avoid judgment?	Faith in Jesus, not faith in ethnicity.
13:36-43	What will happen in the interim?	The true and false disciples will co-exist.
13:47-50	Who will be judged?	All will give a final account.
22:1-14	Why will some be punished?	They have rejected God’s grace.
24:45-51	How is faith demonstrated?	Vigilance.
25:14-30	How is faith confirmed?	Active service.

Within the aid of the six passages then, Matthew gathers all the important aspects pertaining to judgment, explaining that *faith is required to avoid judgment. In the mean*

*time, both the sons of God and the sons of the devil will co-exist, but ultimately, there is no escaping judgment, for all will stand before the Lord and give an account at the final judgment. Those who reject God's grace will be severely punished. Those who accept it will receive eternal blessings, for they understand that faith, the very essence of salvation, is demonstrated through active faithfulness, not passive neglect.*

The strategically scattered expression *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, (a) *points* the attention of the readers both to past unrighteousness of Israel as a nation worthy of future judgment, (b) *guarantees* and anchors the thematic intensity of judgment, (c) *makes unforgettable* the dreadful descriptions of the future realities of judgment, and (d) *glues* together all the fundamental characteristic of apocalyptic judgment.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 A BRIEF REITERATION OF THE PROBLEM**

The phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων appears seven times in the New Testament, of which six find their place in Matthew's gospel. This study has attempted to discern the function and role of this phrase within the thematic and literary corpus of Matthew's gospel. It was stated in the introduction that since no specialized study had been dedicated to the discovery of the role this phrase plays in the Evangelist's work, the present work is an attempt to fill this gap. The main question investigated was thus, *what is the nature and function of the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων in the gospel of Matthew?* The following sections will demonstrate that (1) the objective of this study has been met, and (2) the hypothesis was correct, but incomplete.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS**

##### **5.2.1 Part One (ch. 2)**

It was necessary to devote the first section of the study to answering two general questions, namely, (a) *what is the expansive literary context and nature of the Evangelist's gospel*, and (b) *how does the theme of judgment fit such a design, especially in terms of Matthew's apocalyptic emphasis?*

Concerning the former question, it was determined that the gospel of Matthew cannot be rigidly restricted to any particular literary genre. Because he based his gospel on the uniqueness of the person, character, and life of Jesus, the genre of Matthew's work is therefore without *clear* parallel, straddling three genres (history, theological discourse, and biography). Hence, the gospel of Matthew is a Greco-Roman historical-theological biography.

Matthew's rationale for writing was likewise considered. It seems that the Evangelist had a threefold justification for writing his gospel: (1) to elucidate Christ's identity in the minds of orthodox Jews, recently converted Jews, and Gentiles (apologetic), (2) to influence Jews away from the synagogue, in order to share with them the veracity and life of their long awaited Messiah (evangelistic), and (3) to hearten and support all who have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus. In short, Matthew's gospel was the means by which he taught, evangelized and encouraged.

An analysis of Matthew's theological emphases revealed that the Evangelist has particular interest in (a) fulfillment themes (Jesus as the fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven, future prophecies, and the Messiah), (b) strong christological inclinations (Jesus as the Son of David, Son of God, Son of Man and Lord), (c) emphasis on righteousness and discipleship, (d) the church community, and the most important facet for this study, (e) apocalyptic eschatology (the theme of end-time judgment).

With the theme of apocalyptic, eschatological judgment clearly identified as essential to Matthew, considerations shifted to further analyze Matthean judgment passages and the placement of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (in relation to Matthew's literary structure). The research results revealed that no portion of the Evangelist's gospel was without the theme of eschatological judgment. His language supports this conclusion (*day*

*of judgment, end of the age, on that day, the end and the end of the age*). Judgment of the wicked, the unfaithful and the unprepared permeate not only the five discourses, but also the gospel *en bloc*. Moreover, Matthew has tactically positioned the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* in structurally and thematically relevant gospel segments (chapters 8 [commencement of Jesus healing ministry], 13 [the major hinge chapter of the gospel], 22 [Christ's triumphant Jerusalem entry], and 24 and 25 [the eschatological heart of Matthew's entire gospel]).

### 5.2.2 Part Two (ch. 3)

Part two of this study was concerned with the investigation of the meaning of individual word units, an important step prior to the exegetical analysis of the six passages containing the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. The chapter commenced with the diachronic analysis of the words κλαυθμός and βρυγμός, in order to explore firstly the meaning (connotation and denotation) of each term as employed in both extra-biblical and biblical literature (specifically the LXX), and secondly, to observe the semantic range of these words within the proposed literary corpus.

Within the Greek extra-biblical literary landscape, the words βρυγμός/βρύχω denote a grinding of teeth, as a result of either noisy eating (neutral emotional undertone) or gnashing or grinding of teeth caused by a chill or a fever (a moderately negative emotional undertone). In the LXX, the word retains its denotative meaning, but its connotation changes to a gnashing of teeth due to potent anger, bitterness and even jealousy (a downbeat emotional undertone). A widening in semantic range of meaning had occurred. In the New Testament, βρύχω denotes a gnashing of teeth due an uncontrollable rage and fury (an extremely negative emotional undertone). Again, the semantic range of meaning had widened. The word βρύχω appears only once in the New

Testament and it connotes a grinding of teeth as a result of uncontrollable rage, fury and anger (emotional undertone exceptionally negative). The word βρυγμός appears only within the context of the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός, ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων. However, because of the uniqueness of the phrase, the meaning is bound exclusively to the context in which it appeared, and hence, an exegetical analysis was required in order to investigate further (if at all) widening in the semantic range of usage of the word βρυγμός from the usage in the LXX. Interestingly, it was discovered in the exegetical chapter (ch. 4) that the context of the word *gnashing* seems to denote a gnashing (of teeth) more violent and aggressive than observed in the LXX, namely, extreme anger, severe rage, tremendous resentment *and* terrible physical pain. The imagery of a furnace of fire certainly testifies to this. In other words, the range of connotative usage in the New Testament has widened to also include a physical dimension. A word that connoted a chattering of teeth due to noisy eating had widened in its semantic range to presage an exceptionally negative emotional state and physical pain by the time it appeared in the New Testament.

The words κλαυθμός and κλαίω together appeared in Greek extra-biblical literature and it usually denotes *loud crying, wailing* and/or *weeping*, generally as a result of physical or mental pain that is externally manifest, too intense to contain. In the LXX, the meaning is *to cry* or *weep* as a result of either (a) personal feelings of grief and loss of a loved one, (b) expressing a deep dependence upon God by addressing ones cries and complaints to Him in prayer, (c) anger and rage, (d) customary lamentation of the whole people of a nation before Yahweh, and (e) exceeding joy. Clearly, the semantic range of usage had widened to include the absolute antithesis, weeping for joy. Although this connotation is alien to the New Testament usage, κλαίω and κλαυθμός retains the same semantic range

as in the LXX. It denotes wailing caused by either (a) the death of a loved one, (b) losing something, (c) pain of separation, (d) an emotional response to one's own lost condition, (e) remorse, and (f) a feeling of an unhappy existence.

As with the word βρυγμός, the range of meaning has likewise widened to include physical pain. It was thus possible to conclude that ὁ κλαυθμός and ὁ βρυγμός communicate an number of connotations between two sentimental extremes, namely, (1) a positive or zero emotional undertones, and (2) extremely negative emotional undertones caused not only by extreme emotions but also physical pain and suffering.

The word ὀδόντες required a different approach, namely, a survey of biblical imagery (both Testaments) containing the metaphorical use of ὀδόντες. It was discovered that ὀδόντες is the object of rich biblical imagery, symbolism and metaphors, related to images of beauty and magnificence, power (good and evil), revenge and vengeance. Again, a semantic widening is observable, as its connotation is associable with positive sentiment, or particularly negative sentiments characterized by evil.

At this stage of the study, it was obvious that the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυγμός τῶν ὀδόντων communicates a very specific message. In order to discover that unique message and meaning contained within the text (as governed by context), further exegetical analysis of the six Matthean passages was conducted.

### **5.2.3 Part Three (ch. 4)**

Part three of the study was exegetical in nature, purposed to determine the conscious, speaker and/or author-intended nature and function of the phrase within Matthew's gospel, and the contribution the phrase makes to the broader theme of judgment within Matthew's gospel.

The chapter highlighted that each passage containing the phrase ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων contributes a specific dimension to the broader theme of judgment in the gospels. These contributions are tabled below.

	Thematic Contributions to the theme of judgment
<b>8:5-13</b>	Christ's authority as the provider of salvation is based solely on faith. False hope in one's ethnicity leads to a horrific fate.
<b>13:36-43</b>	The coexistence of both true and false disciples does not indicate evaded judgment. On the contrary, an awful destiny awaits the wicked.
<b>13:47-50</b>	Matthew immediately underpins the severity and harshness of the final judgment by yet again reiterating the truth, that such false disciples will weep and gnash their teeth in the furnace of fire.
<b>22:1-14</b>	Jesus disclosing the intensity of the hostility and antagonism false disciples have for the King, as they <i>willfully</i> reject the open invitation to eternal bliss.
<b>24:45-51</b>	The unrighteous will experience a terrible fate, namely, a literal dissection.
<b>25:14-30</b>	Matthew inserts a story in which the theme of contrast takes centre stage. The contrast is between true disciples and their eternal reward and the fate and eternal punishment of false disciples.

Moreover, each such story or parable signifies an intensification of the force, strength and significance of the theme of judgment in Matthew's gospel. Two observations supported this contention: (1) Matthew's specific use and intended function of the historical present in the parables, namely, to spotlight important theological themes, and (2) the clustering together of two parables that contain the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*, under one triadic parable cluster (Mt 24:45-51 and 25:14-30).

The main question was likewise answered in this section of the study. It was discovered that the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth* has four possible functions, namely, (a) a method or system by which the Evangelist hopes to make the message of the particular parable unforgettable, (b) a prophetic anticipation of an aspect of the larger shape of history, (c) a linguistic device, which increases the degree of emphasis or heightens the force given to the message of eschatological judgment, a theological theme often accented by Jesus, and (d) a literary connector that holds together a number of specific passages of Scripture. In Matthew's case, the phrase glues together the passages that communicate a holistic theology of end-time judgment.

In conclusion then, the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων is extremely important, for it communicated many of the central messages pertaining to the theme of apocalyptic judgment. The phrase also occurs in structurally relevant sections and seems to be increasing in literary potency with each occurrence. The phrase is almost always uttered in the context of false disciples, who stand in total contrast to the righteous in this life, and the next.

#### **5.2.4 The hypothesis**

My hypothesis entering into this study was that the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων is a literary device, by which the Evangelist hoped to call attention to the perceived reality of the final judgment in the minds of his hearers.

This hypothesis was accepted. However, the phrase has three further functions within Matthew's gospel (as noted above).

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The tentative conclusion of this study is that the phrase ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων serves four possible functions. However, these roles are general. My recommendations for further research relate to the further definition of these roles. To be more precise, it is necessary to explain and identify the nature and essential qualities of each proposed function. For example, Matthew's *weeping and gnashing of teeth* phrase functions as a system by which the Evangelist hopes to make the message of the particular pericope (narrative or parable) unforgettable to his readers and hearers. However, it is necessary to further define the nature and character of this method of recollection of important information. What other biblical authors utilize similar techniques? Was such a method unique in first century Israel and hence unique to biblical authors and/or Matthew? In more general terms, how effective was this technique within Matthew's community. In other words, how did Matthew's community react (in their teachings and evangelism) to Matthew's emphasis on the theme of judgment and its terrible reality, as compared with communities dependant solely on another gospel?

Perhaps a starting point for the above recommendation would be the landmark works of the Uppsala scholars, Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson, who suggested that Jesus taught his disciples to memorize his teachings in the same way as other rabbis of His time, in a formal, controlled manner.<sup>105</sup> Kenneth Bailey's (1991) study on the

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<sup>105</sup> Blomberg's (1990:95) list of the work of these two authors is helpful here: Harald Riesenfeld, "The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings," in *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970 [art. orig. 1959]), pp. 1–29 (for his specific treatment of the parables cf. "Parables in the Synoptic and in the Johannine Traditions," pp. 139–69); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961); Birger Gerhardsson, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1964). For an update of Gerhardsson's views, see Birger Gerhardsson, *The Origins of the Gospel Traditions* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).



reliability and accuracy of Middle Eastern culture came to similar conclusions, differing only in that he believed the oral traditions are in fact informal and controlled. In any case, would their conclusions add additional dimensions to the possible functions of the phrase *weeping and gnashing of teeth*? Also, what additional essential theological themes does Matthew attempt to highlight other than the theme of eschatological judgment, utilizing his *thematic intensifying idiom*?

The second function likewise requires further definition. What is the character of the prophetic anticipation relating an aspect of the larger shape of history within Matthew's gospel? Within the context of both Testaments, is the prophetic anticipation of positive aspects of the larger shape of history equally intense and passionate, or is such intensity of language characterizes only judgment passages?

Concerning the function of an *eschatological thematic intensifying idiom*, it is necessary to investigate the nature and presence of such literary devices in the writings of extra-biblical authors. Again, it is necessary to enquire concerning the way in which Matthew utilized this literary tool in relation to the way others apocalyptic writers have.

With regards to the final function (the glue that binds together the most important judgment passages), it remains necessary to investigate and highlight similar linguistic devices which bring together specific passages of like themes or emphases.



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