

A Biblical-Theological Analysis of Matthew 6:19–34 to Clarify the Relationship between the Christian Disciple and Money

Darrell O'Donoghue and Dan Lioy

Abstract¹

This essay conducts a biblical-theological analysis of Matthew 6:19–34 to clarify what it teaches about the relationship between the Christian disciple and money. One major finding is that Jesus presents money as a rival god that challenges for the allegiance that rightly belongs to the Lord. Jesus also draws attention to the way a proper allegiance to God can be expressed. A second major finding is that money and the Lord are radically different gods. Moreover, there are significantly different consequences to the believer that result from devotion to either money or God. The third major finding shows that the consequences of allegiance to either God or money, needs to be understood in terms of how one's actions affect ones' community.

Introduction

To understand what Matthew 6:19–34 teaches about the relationship between Jesus' disciples and money, it is important to examine the historical and literary contexts, as well an examination of the major

¹ This journal article is based on Darrell O'Donoghue's MTh thesis, under the supervision of Dan Lioy. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

theological motifs found within the text. Once this task is carried out, there can be a synthesis and clarification of the study's major findings.

Matthew 6:19–34 is found within the first of Matthew's five discourses. This discourse is known as the Sermon on the Mount (hereafter referred to as the SOM). That the text is found within the SOM creates the first problem related to the interpretation of the passage. Specifically, while there are five main views as to how the SOM is to be read, there is no scholarly consensus concerning any of these options.

First, there is the Lutheran view of the SOM (cf. Blomberg 1992:94; Carson 1994:165; McArthur 1978:17). This view maintains that the demands of the SOM are impossible to follow, and are in place to make people aware of their sinfulness and push them towards Christ. This view, however, will not suffice. While the SOM may in fact make clear a person's sinfulness and thus, the need for salvation, the SOM is presented as one of five discourses in Matthew that followers of Christ can and are expected to obey (cf. Hendrickx 1984:6). Matthew 28:19–20 instructs and expects Jesus' disciples to obey his teachings, which surely relates back to the five discourses in Matthew.

Second, there is the view held by Weiss (1971:84), which says that the SOM is apocalyptic in nature. Weiss (91) argued that what Jesus taught about the Second Coming only makes sense if he believed he would return within the lifetime of the people among whom he worked. One result of this view is that Jesus would have been incorrect in his thinking (cf. Blomberg 1992:94; Carson 1994:163; Pelikan 2001:45). A second result of this view is that the SOM presents a temporary or interim ethic so radical in its demands, that it was only expected to be obeyed for a short while—in this instance, before the end of the world (cf. Carson 1994:163; Pelikan 2001:45). The major problem with this view is that the rest of the canon affirms that Jesus would not have

made such a radical error in judgement. Also, Matthew recorded the SOM after the death of Jesus, with the expectation that its hearers follow its demands (cf. Matt 28:19–20).

Third, dispensationalists hold that the SOM teaches an ethic adhered to in Jesus' millennial reign (cf. Blomberg 1992:94; Carson 1994:167; Chafer 1976:98; Lloyd-Jones 2006:18). In this view, the SOM's demands are not an ethic for today. Carson (1994:169) addresses the problem with this view when he argues that the writer expects the readers to live out the SOM in a sinful society, and not in an idyllic setting. A supporting example is that the SOM ends with an exhortation to put disobedience aside and obey the teachings of Christ (cf. Matt 7:24–27).

Fourth, the SOM is an ideal social and liberal agenda (cf. Kissinger 1975:40). Allegedly, all one has to do is hold to the SOM's demands, and a peaceful society will ensue (cf. Blomberg 1992:94). This view ignores human sinfulness and their need for God's help to obey his demands. Further, the two world wars of the previous century cast significant doubt on the legitimacy of this view.

Fifth, there is the Anabaptist view, which holds that the SOM is to be obeyed literally in all civic and social aspects of society (cf. Blomberg 1992:94; Carson 1994:165). One major problem with this view is that it fails to recognize that the SOM is not meant to be the final word on all matters about which it teaches (cf. Carson 1994:164–165). Jesus' didactic style needs to be taken into account, as well as the biblical teachings of the rest of the canon.

In light of the preceding analysis, the most prudent approach is to accept the SOM's place in Matthew as the teachings of Jesus, in which he shows his disciples what it is like to live as citizens of his kingdom

under his reign. Furthermore, these are teachings that can and should be adhered to by all believers, in all places, through all ages. The implication, then, is that the SOM, being one of the five discourses in Matthew, is practical in nature (meant for application by all believers). As Carson (1994:166–167) argues, it is acknowledged that conformity to the SOM is expected now, even though perfection will not be achieved until the Second Advent. Now, that the preferred approach to reading the SOM has been determined, the historical and literary analysis of the biblical text can proceed.

1. Historical Analysis

Two important tasks precede the historical analysis of the SOM, namely, (a) the exploration of the religious, cultural, and sociological context of the origin of Matthew (cf. Lategan 2009:65), and (b) the exploration of the purpose of Matthew and the SOM (cf. Lategan 2009:65; Smith 2008:172). The outcome of both tasks will affect the understanding of the SOM.

1.1. Origin

1.1.1. Date, author, audience, and geographical location

Many modern scholars favor a late dating of Matthew—around AD 80–90. These scholars assume that Matthew was dependent on Mark, and Mark was written somewhere around AD 65 (cf. France 1989:83). Mark would have been in circulation for several years to become well known enough for Matthew to have used it as a source. Carter (2000:916) claims that Matthew's reference to the destruction of the temple proves the book was written after AD 70, since Matthew gives a theological interpretation of why the events occurred. It is likely that both Ignatius

and the Didache referred to Matthew, implying that Matthew wrote after AD 100 (cf. Senior 1997:81).

It is assumed in this essay that Matthew (and the accompanying SOM) was written earlier than the AD 80–90 dating. One could argue that the prophecies relating to the destruction of the temple make a strong case for a dating before AD 70, since, if the prophecies were already fulfilled, one would expect to find references to their fulfillment (cf. France 1989:85). There are also references in Matthew to suggest that the temple was still intact. Also, while modern scholars generally accepted that Mark was written around AD 65, this assumption in fact may not be true (82–83). The early church's belief, that Matthew was written first, would place the gospel in the early 60s. For instance, Irenaeus dates the gospel in the early 60s. There is no evidence available to contradict his belief (88).

In conjunction with the dating of the book is the issue of authorship. The orthodox Protestant view is that the former tax collector, named Matthew, wrote the first Synoptic Gospel that bears his name (cf. Lioy 2004:11–12). This would coincide with an earlier dating. A late dating and thus a move away from Matthew as the author, is based on the assumption that the book could not have been written by an eyewitness of the events (cf. Derickson 2003:87). However, the early church fathers all attributed the first Synoptic Gospel to Matthew (97). These men were recognized scholars who would have based their conclusions on 'widespread testimony and not isolated personal theories'. Thus, it is correctly assumed that Matthew can be attributed as the author of the first Synoptic Gospel (and the accompanying SOM).

Of particular interest to the main problem of this essay is that 'Matthew was a tax collector, who left everything in his life for Jesus' (Green 2000:25). Nevertheless, it remains unclear from where this gospel

originated, and who were the initial intended recipients (cf. Keener 1999:49). What seems certain (at least to some degree) is that Matthew's primary audience were Jewish Christians (cf. Keener 1999:49; Long 1997:2). This view is based on the amount of specific Jewish and Old Testament references found in Matthew. Admittedly, Gentile Christians are also addressed in the text (cf. Wilkins 2001:39). While scholars do not know with certainty Matthew's place of origin, the consensus view is that the original recipients were probably located in a prosperous urban area (cf. Long 1997:2).

1.1.2. Jesus' context: audience, location, and economic climate

The assumption has been made that the apostle Matthew is the author of the first Synoptic Gospel. Thus, it could be that some of the original recipients of the SOM would have heard or read Matthew. These are people who would have known that to follow Jesus, Matthew would have given up everything to do so (cf. Matt 8:20).

There is some debate around who were the initial intended recipients of the SOM. Matthew 5:1–2 mentions Jesus addressing his disciples, while 7:28 refers to the amazed crowds. Ervast (1983:12, 15) comments on the issue of how one is to reconcile 5:1–2 and 7:28, saying that it is not a matter of either one option or another, but that the recipients of the SOM are both the disciples and the crowd. Senior (1997:102) sums up his own position, by affirming that the SOM is addressed to the crowds through Jesus teaching the disciples.

Having made the above observations, it is not necessary to reconcile Matthew 5:1–2 to 7:28. Clearly, Matthew 5:1–2 tells the reader that Jesus is addressing the SOM to disciples, and Matthew 28:20 affirms that the discourses found in Matthew are for training in discipleship. The fact that the crowds heard what Jesus said in the SOM does not

mean that they were in any way the intended primary recipients. So, while Jesus may have simultaneously addressed both the crowds and the disciples, his followers were indeed the intended primary recipients.

There are several suggestions as to where Jesus delivered the SOM. Nonetheless, 'the exact location where Jesus taught his Sermon remains uncertain' (Lioy 2004:90–91). Jesus' going up a hill or mountain to teach his disciples could create a direct conceptual link to Moses, who received the law on a mountain. Jesus, fulfilling the role of prophet and, thus, executing the right to speak prophetically about the ways of God, is a theological motif found in Matthew (cf. Dunn 2009:54).

Of significance to the central issue being explored by this essay is that Galilee was a 'monitised economy' (Esler 1995:41). The use of money was commonplace for all classes of people, from the poorest of society to the very wealthy. People would have been aware of concepts such as 'maximizing resources,' 'keeping production costs low,' as well as 'manipulating demand to keep prices high'.

In Jesus' context, there was a large financial gap between the rich and the poor (cf. Wenham and Walton 2001:21). There was a middle class, but it was nominal in size (cf. Davids 1992:702). The implication is that the Lord's teaching on money was coming to a society that inhabited all sorts of social and wealth classes.

The financial well-being of some of the wealthy class would have come at the expense of the poor (cf. Davids 1992:702). For example, landowners exploited the poor, which led to the AD 70 revolt, in which Jewish debt records were destroyed. Tax collectors also added a lofty percentage above Rome's required tax (cf. Green 2000:25). The Jewish community classified tax collectors (like Matthew) in the same category as murderers—hated as 'social pariahs'.

Many of the Jewish religious leaders formed part of the elite that maintained the status quo—keep the Roman societal structures in place (cf. Carter 2001:35). Their conflicts with Jesus were considered, amongst other things, an assault on their wealth.

Jesus' own financial disposition at the time of his birth was one of poverty (cf. Davids 1992:702). This is supported by the fact his parents offered the sacrifices of poor people in Luke 2:24. It could be that their business in Galilee may have eventually been successful, in which case, they would have achieved a modest level of existence. As an adult, Jesus did not own any land (704). Further, the Lord's disciples were considered a 'ragtag bunch.'

There was a view held by some in Jesus' time that material riches were a sign of God's favour, and that to be poor was a 'sign of God's displeasure' (Lioy 2004:166–167). This attitude and worldview is contrary to the teaching of the tenth commandment (167). Further, scripture reveals that Jesus, whose life pleased God, was not considered wealthy. Jesus' life was one lived simply and free from the concern of material possessions (cf. Keener 1999:230). The prevalent philosophies of the day, some of whom, like Plato, taught on the worthlessness of wealth, would have respected such a stance; but the general attitude would be to acquire as much wealth as possible.

1.2. Purpose

Several theories have been put forward concerning why Matthew wrote his gospel (and the accompanying SOM). The fact that scholars argue for several possible reasons, confirms Blomberg's (1992:34) argument, that Matthew had more than one intention in mind when writing. First, Kilpatrick believes that Matthew is a reworking of liturgical material (cf. Guthrie 1976:26). Keck (2005:34) points to the well-structured

material in the text to make for easy memorisation. However, as Guthrie (1976:27) argues, these features do not need a liturgical purpose to justify their place in Matthew. Thus, it cannot be said with certainty whether this was the intended purpose. This essay affirms that the teaching on money in the SOM is well-organised and easy for memorisation, regardless of whether it was planned to be so.

Second, it was previously argued that Matthew had instruction in discipleship for at least one of his reasons in writing. Again, the comparison to Moses here would be helpful, but this time, as the corresponding role of a teacher. Specifically, the SOM begins with Jesus going up the mountain and ends with Jesus coming down, thus promoting Jesus as the new Moses (i.e. amongst other roles, as the new teacher of Israel) (cf. Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 2001:100). The theme of discipleship in Matthew requires discipleship to be lived out in community. In particular, discipleship requires concern for the social well-being of the community to which believers belong (cf. Guthrie 1985:153–154).

Third, because Matthew gives details about the person and work of Jesus, the gospel can be viewed as a biography (cf. Nolland 2005:19). The difference between Matthew and other biographies of antiquity is that, while the latter were concerned about the kind of ideal taught, Matthew was concerned with Jesus' theological identity and eschatological mission. Humphries-Brooks (1996:4) shows that in learning about the person of Christ, readers also learn about appropriate action in their own world. One can therefore say that Matthew, as a biography, strengthens the role the gospel plays in fostering discipleship.

Fourth, Matthew provides definition for the Christian movement. Specifically, Matthew attempted to help the church distinguish its

identity amidst a plethora of philosophical options (cf. Long 1997:2–3). Matthew's church, as already noted, was probably located in a prosperous urban area, where there were both Jews and Gentiles—and a variety of worldviews.

The emphasis placed in Jewish interest and Old Testament references are to be taken into account when considering the purpose of Matthew (cf. Guthrie 1976:25). Matthew attempts to show the pertinence of the Jewish Scriptures and more particularly how these ancient sacred texts find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus and the church (cf. Keck 2005:38). It seems that the teachings of the Torah and the Christian Gospels are in fact compatible (Drane 2001:206).

Lioy (2004) argues convincingly for the continued relevance and application for God's moral law in the life of the New Testament Church. In fact, Jesus is portrayed as fulfilling the law in its truest sense (cf. Leske 1998:1257). The SOM affirms the on-going validity of the moral law. In the SOM, Jesus unpacks the pertinence of the moral law for his followers (cf. Lioy 2004:189–193). In this regard, the Ten Commandments may be viewed as a summary of God's moral law (6). Moreover, an incorrect attitude towards money can lead to a violation of the first and fifth commandments.

Finally, Matthew is seen to have a universal theological purpose, for it is a gospel to all people (cf. Drane 2001:206). As a proclamation of the gospel, Jesus is portrayed as one who leads his people from the captivity of sin (cf. Wright 1992:385–386). The pertinence for this essay is that in the SOM, Jesus leads his followers from an allegiance to money as a god and the degenerate experience that worship of money brings.

2. Literary Analysis

2.1. Literary structure of the text

Of the several proposals concerning the formal division and subdivision of the SOM, Talbert's (2006:120–121) will be adopted in this essay. The reason for this is as follows. Brooks (1992:27–28) argues that, in light of the considerable disagreement over the literary structure of the SOM, it may be that Matthew did not have as rigid a structure as scholars are seeking to find. Most likely, Matthew favoured triads and therefore, grouped broad theological concepts in threes but, at times, in order to fit his argument, he may have deviated from this literary arrangement. Thus, to understand the structure of the text purely in triadic form could result in missing some of what Matthew sought to portray.

Talbert's (2006:26) structure groups the major thought units of the SOM by way of scholarly consensus, including 6:19–34, but allows for 'innovation' in the subdivision of the major thought units of the SOM. So, for example, while he breaks down 6:19–24 into three parts, the latter can vary in the structural outline. Talbert's approach, then, enables him to follow the natural argument of the text. For example, by allowing for some innovation in the subunits and not enforcing a strict triadic formula, he can acknowledge a prohibition in part one of his first subunit, without having to find another prohibition in part two of the second subunit.

2.2. Talbert's formal division of the text

Subunit one of Matthew 6:19–24 breaks down as follows (cf. Talbert 2006:121):

Part One: 'The Two Treasures' (6:19–21)

- A prohibition is found in 6:19 to not lay up treasures on earth.
- A command is found in 6:20 to lay up treasures in heaven.
- A reason is found in 6:21 that in one's heart will be where their treasure is.

Part Two: 'The Two Eyes' (6:22–23)

- An assertion is found in 6:22a with Jesus stating that the eye is the lamp of the body.
- An inference is found in 6:22b and 23a saying that if the eye is good, then the body will be full of light and, conversely, if bad, will be full of darkness.
- A conclusion is found in 6:23b, in which Jesus says that if the light in you is darkness, then how great is that darkness.

Part Three: 'The Two Masters' (6:24)

- An assertion is made in 6:24 with the statement that no one can serve two masters.
- The reason is found in 6:24b,c, namely, that a person will love one master and hate the other.
- There is an application in 6:24d with the statement that one cannot serve both God and mammon (or wealth).

Subunit two of Matthew 6:25–34 breaks down as follows (cf. Talbert 2006:126):

Part One (6:25–30)

- A prohibition is found in 6:25a for the disciple to not worry.
- Four reasons relating to the prohibition then follow in 6:25b, 26, 27 and 28–30.

Part Two (6:31–33)

- There is a prohibition found in 6:31 to not worry.
- Two reasons are related to the prohibition and found in 6:32a and 32b. The reasons are that this is Gentile behaviour and God knows the disciples' needs.
- There is a command found in 6:33a to seek God's kingdom.
- There is a promise found in 6:33b relating to the command in 33a.

Part Three (6:34)

- There is a prohibition against worrying found in 6:34b.
- Two reasons related to the prohibition are found in 6:34b (i.e. tomorrow will worry about its own things) and 34c (i.e. sufficient for the day is its own trouble).

2.3. The three sayings of Matthew 6:19–24

2.3.1. Part one—the two treasures

Jesus used antithesis in Matthew 6:20–21 by giving a prohibition and command, stated in the absolute, to show that his disciples must stop prioritising the accumulation of wealth over and above service to God and his kingdom (cf. Hendrickx 1984:129; Lloyd-Jones 2006:396). This stylistic feature is important to note, for a surface level reading of 6:20–

21 can appear to suggest that the Lord was instituting an outright ban on the accumulation of material possessions. There are motivating factors given with the prohibition and command, namely, the eternal and imperishable value that comes from a life lived in service to Jesus, as opposed to the perishable and temporary value of possessions amassed on earth (cf. Guelich 1982:326–327).

According to Talbert (2006:121), the rationale for this command/antithesis is in 6:21 (cf. Talbert 2006:121). The heart is the controlling point of a person's desires and motivations (cf. Ridderbos 1987:137), and the affections of the disciples' heart set the course of their life. Thus, the disciples must direct their allegiance and affection of their hearts towards Jesus, over and above the accumulation of wealth.

3.3.2. Part two—the good and bad eye

This saying continues the theme of affection and loyalty of the disciples' heart that began in the first saying. This is confirmed when it is understood that the heart and eye were used synonymously (cf. Stott 1998:157). A good eye referred to generosity to others (Talbert 2006:122). A bad eye referred to a stingy disposition towards others. There is some debate about the assertion found in Matthew 6:22a. What remains unchanged is that the goal is the same for the disciple to be full of light. Since the good eye points to a generous heart, one achieves it by having a generous attitude.

In scripture, light is used as a metaphor for truth, revelation, and blessing (cf. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 1998:510–512). It is also used as a symbol for purity (cf. Carson 1994:87). Therefore, one may conclude that the inference in 6:22b is as follows: should Jesus' disciples express obedience to God through generosity, their lives will

be characterised by purity, revelation, blessing, and truth. The other inference found in 6:23a shows that the stingy disposition would lead to a degenerate experience for disciples, the details of which are explored below.

2.4. Part three—the two masters

This saying, like the previous two, continues the theme of allegiance to God over money. By Jesus asserting in Matthew 6:24 that no one can serve two masters, he is stating a fact. 'To be a slave is to be attached to a Master' (Spicq 1994:381). Stott (1998:158) maintains that 'slavery by definition demands fulltime service of the slave and a belonging to one Master.'

The reason for this in 6:24b and 24c is that the disciple will love one master and hate the other (cf. Talbert 2006:121). In Semitic language, to hate something or someone over another is a way of denoting strong preference (cf. Carson 1994:88; Talbert 2006:123). Thus, the application of 6:24d shows that a disciple's allegiance, which should belong exclusively to God, will suffer, should one decide to serve mammon (or wealth). There is debate around whether to consider mammon a personal name for a known pagan deity (cf. France 1985:139; Kapolyo 2006:1123). Regardless, the gospel presents it as something that challenges the disciple's allegiance and is thus a potential idol.

2.5 Matthew 6:25–34

2.5.1. Part one—Matthew 6:25–30

It is fitting that the second subunit begins with the prohibition, 'Therefore do not worry', inferring that when the disciples accept the

truth of 6:19–24, they could find themselves overly anxious concerning their financial state (cf. Schmidt 1988:172). By addressing the disciple's life, Jesus is referring to one's very existence (cf. Brown 1975b:683). Thus, the kind of worry Jesus is talking about relates to human survival. This kind of worry obscures the disciple's priorities (cf. Carson 1994:92).

Jesus' four reasons for prohibiting worry in 6:25b–30 is as follows.

First, the essence of life is more than food and clothing (cf. Hagner 1993:1630).

Second, by arguing from the lesser (i.e. nature) to greater (i.e. humans), the Lord shows that the heavenly Father will care for his own (cf. Blomberg 1992:125; Carter 2001:177). That God is a 'heavenly' Father carries the implication that he is intimately involved with their lives and cares for their needs (cf. Traub 1967:520–521).

Third, Jesus equates worrying to an attempt to change one's height. Just as one has no control over one's height, Jesus is saying that worry is useless (cf. Lioy 2004:170). Further, worrying about areas of life where God is sovereign is an attempt to overthrow God's authority rather than trusting him (cf. Carter 2000:177). Finally, Jesus again argues from nature to show that since God cares for nature, he will do even more for his own. At this point, Jesus teaches how the disciple can move from anxiety to trust. Jesus told his disciples to consider the lilies of the field. The Greek term rendered 'consider' comes from *katamanthano* (cf. Hill 1977:144). The implication is that one pays close attention with the aim to learn.

2.5.2. Part two—Matthew 6:31–33

In Matthew 6:31, Jesus gives another prohibition (cf. Talbert 2006:121), this time ruling against worry over questions of what the disciples will eat, drink, or wear. There are two reasons related to the prohibition. The first reason, found in 6:32a, is that this kind of worry is typical of Gentile behaviour. This is not a racial reference, but rather, a religious one (cf. France 1985:141). It was characteristic of pagans to live in anxious fear, for they believed the fortunes of their lives were dependent on the whims of different gods and goddesses, whom they needed to please in order for things to go well (cf. Packer 1975:161). The second reason, found in 6:32b, is that the Lord is a very different God from the deities venerated by pagans. Hence, Jesus' disciples did not need to worry.

The command in 6:33a is for the disciples to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness (cf. Talbert 2006:121). The Greek term rendered 'first' comes from *proton*, and should be considered as primacy of priority, though not in a chronological way (cf. Schmidt 1988:177). The Greek term rendered 'and', which appears between the phrases 'kingdom of God' and 'his righteousness', is *kai*. Here, *kai* is 'explicative rather than continuative' (Schmidt 1988:176). Thus, the respective phrases *kai* connects are parallel in that they define each other (i.e. to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness amount to doing the same thing).

The promise of 6:33b relates back to the command in 33a (cf. Talbert 2006:121). This promise creates something of a conundrum. What is to be made of Jesus' followers who are both commended for their radical discipleship, while at the same time, described as destitute (cf. Heb 11:37)? Dray (1998:80) responds to this query by arguing that the passage is taught in the vein of Old Testament wisdom literature (i.e. it

makes observations that are generally true, but there are exceptions to the rule, especially should God have another purpose in mind).

2.5.3. *Part three—Matthew 6:34*

Once again, there is a prohibition not to worry (cf. Talbert 2006:121). As for the two motives that follow the prohibition, a slight amendment to Talbert's (2006:121) outline is required. The two motives found in 6:34b and 34c make the same point. Thus, there are two separate sayings, but one motivation related to the prohibition. The first reason for not worrying about tomorrow is that tomorrow will worry about its own things (cf. Talbert 2006:126). This first reason can be understood by realising that the next reason states clearly what this statement means (cf. Hagner 1993:166), i.e. 'each day has its own share of trouble and anxiety ... let tomorrow (and all future days), so to speak, worry about itself.'

The Greek term rendered 'trouble' comes from *kakia*, and in this context, it denotes the 'evil of trouble, affliction' (Unger and White 1985:212). *Kakia* is used throughout the rest of the New Testament to denote evil in the moral sense of the word (cf. Hendrickx 1984:147). Having shown that worry related to food and clothing amounts to idolatry, it is legitimate to consider *kakia*, in the moral sense of the word. Thus, the disciple, by worrying over money, adds the moral evil of idol worship to the day.

3. Theological Motifs

The SOM makes reference to several major theological motifs without explicitly defining what they are. For example, Jesus makes reference to seeking the kingdom of God. However, the reader is left wondering what this kingdom is and how it would look when it finally arrives.

Thus, it will now be helpful to expand on the meaning of four of the major theological motifs found in Matthew 6:19–34.

First, of the available views regarding the kingdom of God, the idea of the kingdom being an already-present and still-to-come reality, often referred to as the 'already but not yet' view, will be adopted (cf. Young 1995:76). Jesus believed and proved the divine kingdom to be a present reality (cf. Bowden 2005:690). Jesus also taught the kingdom as being a future/still-to-come reality (cf. Matthew 25:34). Metzger (1992:148) resolves the apparent contradiction of present and future realities by examining the Greek verbs associated with the kingdom in the gospels. The verbs show that God's kingdom refers to the 'reign' or 'kingly rule' of God, and not necessarily to a physical territory, i.e. there is no point in asking whether the kingdom is future or present, since the kingdom includes both realities.

A brief survey of the kingdom theme in scripture shows what the nature of this kingdom looks like that Jesus commanded his disciples to seek. It is universal and everlasting (cf. Lioy 2004:87). It grows supernaturally, progressively, and uninterrupted (cf. Young 1995:77–88). It is worth giving up everything for (cf. Matt 13:44–46). Once one gains entrance, one is a spiritual son (cf. Matt 13:38). The sons are people who bear spiritual fruit, that is, their lives display transformed character and they participate in good works that change the lives of other people (cf. Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9). The kingdom advances without having to adhere to the principles that govern this world (cf. John 18:36). Knowledge of the kingdom is seen to be of great value (cf. Matt 13:52). Finally, living under the reign of God is to experience righteousness, peace, and joy (cf. Rom 14:17).

The second major theological motif is that of the person of God found in the SOM. Marshall (2004:121) notes that after considering the

kingdom of God, it is logical to consider the nature of the 'God of the Kingdom.' The preceding literary analysis mentioned that God, as a heavenly Father, is intimately involved in the lives of his disciples. Unlike the Judaism of the day, Jesus' ministry taught his disciples to relate to God as father in a warm, familiar, affectionate, and intimate way (cf. Metzger 1992:145).

God, presented as the believers' heavenly Father, has the connective idea that followers of Christ are also sons of God (cf. Combrink 1983:90). For example, in Matthew 5:9, Jesus refers to the disciples as 'sons of God.' In Matthew, followers of Christ are also taught to relate to one another as brothers. The theme of the 'brotherhood' of God's people is a central conceptual link in the theme of covenant as taught in Deuteronomy, i.e. the Father-son relationship means Jesus' disciples are a spiritual family type of community who are all united through faith in Christ.

The third theological motif is that of discipleship and community. In Jesus' day, discipleship was understood to be lived out in the context of community (cf. Carson 1994:166–167). The SOM itself expects an application of discipleship to include generosity expressed to others. When one becomes a follower of the Saviour, they do not just learn from him, but also, become his adherents (cf. Unger and White 1985:171). Senior (1997:63) echoes this view when he says that Matthew presents Jesus as the ultimate example of how the Christian life is to be lived. The actions and responses of Jesus are, in essence, 'models for authentic discipleship.'

By following Jesus, their master, disciples affirmed the goal of becoming like him (cf. Wilkins 1992:187). Being a follower of Jesus differed from that of discipleship to other rabbis, in that while other rabbis adopted the goal of eventually obtaining disciples who would

follow them, Jesus' disciples would remain his committed followers their entire lives. For some disciples, in particular the apostles, the cost of discipleship was high (cf. Wilkins 1992:187). They had to literally give up everything to follow Jesus. However, this kind of radical demand was not made to all Jesus' disciples, but rather, to some who were not part of the inner circle of twelve. Even if the Saviour's followers are not required to give up everything to follow him, they should embody an attitude that is prepared to give up everything for him (cf. Matt 8:18–12; Luke 14:25–33).

Jesus' disciples become part of the church community. Without going into a detailed ecclesiology, it is still worth noting some of the aspects what the New Testament church is to look and act like, especially as this would carry implications on the way a disciple stewards his or her material possessions. The church, as a community, is to make God known (cf. 1 Pet 2:9; 4:10). It is a community that is to be recognisable by the love its members have for one another (cf. John 13:35). It is a community that is to regard each other as spiritual siblings (cf. Matt 23:8). Jesus expects his followers to have a greater allegiance to him—over and above their commitment to their immediate physical family (cf. Mark 10:29).

The fourth theological motif is that of the giver of the SOM, namely, Jesus. He is designated as the Messiah, or, as the Greek language equivalent, the Christ (cf. Green 2000:39). *Messiah* or *Christ* means, 'anointed one.' Israel as a nation was familiar with the anointed roles of prophets, priests, and kings. Israel was expecting a Messiah who would embody these three offices of ministry.

It was previously stated that Jesus comes as a Moses type of prophet, who assumed the right to speak on behalf of God. Hebrews 4:15 declares Jesus to be the great high priest who is able to sympathise with

the weaknesses of his disciples. Of particular interest to this essay, in addition to the above point, is that Jesus was tempted in the same sort of ways his followers experience enticement to sin (yet he never transgressed God's will). The historical analysis showed that Jesus was, at least for a time, and perhaps his whole life, from a poor family and knew what it was like to be in want and short of money.

As king, Jesus leads his people from the captivity of sin. Of pertinence to this essay is the fact that he leads people away from the idolatry of worshiping various forms of material wealth (including money). Also, as king, he will preside in judgment over the nations (cf. France 1994:221). The giver of the SOM will then be the one who acts as judge to its demands.

4. Synthesis of the Findings

4.1. Money as a rival god

Money (along with all other forms of material wealth) was presented as a rival god that challenges for the disciples' allegiance. The historical analysis of the SOM showed that the passage provided definition for the Christian movement. As demonstrated, this included a continuing relevance of the Decalogue. To displace one's allegiance to God, with an allegiance to money, was essentially a violation of the first commandment, which directs God's people to worship him alone.

The literary analysis of the SOM showed that when Jesus instructed his disciples to seek first God's kingdom, it was not a matter of chronology, but rather, a matter of priority. Not putting God first and running after the accumulation of material wealth was shown to be behaviour that characterised idol worshippers, who live in fear of their idols. Further, the literary analysis made the point that, the anxiety that results from

lack of trust in God, was shown to add the moral evil of idol worship to any given day. Also, the theological themes of both the God of the SOM and Jesus, the presenter of the SOM, portrayed the supremacy of the Lord over all creation.

The demand on the Christian disciple to neglect allegiance to money (along with all other forms of material wealth) in favour of allegiance to God stands, regardless of one's financial disposition. The historical analyses showed that the SOM was written in what was more than likely a prosperous urban area. Also, as previously mentioned, Jesus as the supreme example of how a disciple should be, was for most of his life (if not all) poor, and in the best-case scenario, achieved a modest level of existence. Thus, the teachings are also pertinent to the poor disciple.

Money, as a rival god, was presented as a radically different deity to the disciples' heavenly Father. The consequences of following either the Lord, or money, are significantly different. The depiction of God was that of a spiritual Father who is intimately involved with and cares for the needs of his own. While money, as an idol, did not receive much description, the differing consequences of allegiance to God and material wealth were noted, thus hinting towards the kind of master money makes. Prioritising allegiance to money over God results in accumulating transient treasures that will not last, as opposed to the eternal treasures connected with God's kingdom.

Worship of material wealth is degenerative, as seen in the metaphor of the bad eye, which shows that allegiance to money creates a stingy person. The veneration of riches potentially deceives people into thinking they are in fact good stewards of the wealth that God has given to them. The historical analyses highlighted that some of the affluent in the Jewish community exploited the poor. Thus, stinginess and greed

corrupts people, and they can become potential perpetrators who add to the loss of human dignity.

In contrast to a life lived in allegiance to money, the disciple, who was shown to prioritise God by being generous to others, was also shown to have a life characterised by purity, truth, blessing, and revelation. Further, Matthew 6:25–34 showed a life lived in allegiance to God as one characterised by the alleviation of unnecessary anxiety, i.e. the correct attitude towards the accumulation of wealth results in a God given liberation from anxiety.

Something of the nature of living under God's rule is mentioned here, for it further highlights the radical difference in orientation of lifestyle for the disciple who rejects the veneration of material wealth for the worship of God. For instance, the motif of God's kingdom and living under his rule included a life involved with his eternal purposes. This included participation with God in good works that transform other people's lives, and in exercising compassion. That the motif of discipleship and the application of stewardship of wealth can involve the disciple in such actions dwarfs the anxiety-ridden and degenerate type of character that the worship of money creates.

4.2. The accumulation of wealth

The literary analysis of the SOM concluded that, by paying attention to Jesus' teaching style, one can also surmise that he was not prohibiting the accumulation of wealth. This answers the question of whether the disciple is to neglect pursuing income-producing work in favour of seeking God's kingdom. The literary analysis also revealed that the admonition from Jesus was not to neglect work, but to work hard and to trust God to provide.

Further, the historical analysis of the SOM showed that Jesus had a trade, and also lived a sinless life. Thus, it is possible to be involved in an enterprise, whereby a disciple accumulates wealth and keep one's allegiance to God. However, it was concluded (in the portion of the essay examining the theological motif of discipleship), that Jesus may require different levels of sacrifice from different disciples.

The historical analysis of the SOM settled on the assumption that Matthew, a former tax collector, wrote the first Synoptic Gospel. Matthew was someone who gave up everything to follow Jesus. Further, discipleship requires the disciple to adopt the attitude of preparedness to give up monetary pursuits in favour of obedience to Jesus.

Matthew 6:19–34 provides some indication as to whether one's accumulation of money is at the cost of authentic discipleship. First, one could argue from the passage on the two kinds of treasure, that if the disciple has not prioritised God's values above money, the disciple is not adhering to the demands of following Jesus. Second, the teaching of the good and bad eye showed that a stingy disposition demonstrates a sacrifice of discipleship for the worship of money. Third, a life characterised by anxiety and fear over provision points to a movement away from following Jesus, to skewed priorities and a wayward attitude toward wealth.

Trust in God was the suggested cure to assuage the worry related to human survival and a disciple's unclear priorities. This kind of trust was not shown to be a quick fix, for the disciple needs to take time to learn from nature. This kind of reflection would have been done, as mentioned earlier, in the context of people, who were suppressed by the Roman Empire and many of whom had been exploited by their own peers, i.e. God's cure for the alleviation of this kind of worry may not

meet the expectations of people who are looking for swift justice on their enemies.

The alleviation of anxiety related to human survival and its cure were counter cultural in that day. The Romans came to power through conquest and accumulated much wealth. In contrast, Jesus advocated trust in God. Philosophies of the day may have taught the admiration of people who lived a life free from the lure of wealth, but in practice, they did not adhere to such a worldview.

4.3. Stewardship of money as a community affair

The literary analysis of the SOM exposed that generosity is a requirement of the disciple. For the practice of generosity, a recipient is required. The theological motif of God's kingdom carried the implication that God the king ruled over his community of people. It is within this context of community that Jesus exhorted and commanded his people to practice good stewardship with money. The church community was depicted as a relational one, i.e. a spiritual family that cared deeply for the needs of the other. The spiritual family was shown to supersede the priority the disciple has to his or her own earthly family, i.e. it can be concluded that money (as well as all forms of material wealth) was expected to be used as a means to meet the needs of the spiritual family.

Finally, God was portrayed as having concern for the needs of his people. In the theological analysis, the church was presented to be a community that is to make God known. Thus, generous stewardship of money, entrusted to the believer by God, is a reflection of God's character. Significantly, good stewardship of wealth was shown to create a disposition of purity, blessing, and revelation. In turn, these are

attributes that reflect the presence and power of God in the lives of Jesus' disciples.

Reference List

- Achtemeier PJ, Green JB, and Thompson MM 2001. *Introducing the New Testament: its literature and theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Blomberg CL 1992. *Matthew*. The New American Commentary 22. Nashville: Boardman Press.
- Bowden J 2005. Kingdom of God. In John Bowden's (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, 690–691. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown C 1975b. *Soul*. In C Brown (ed.), *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology* (vol. 3), 676–687. Exeter: The Paternoster Press.
- Carson DA 1994. *The Sermon on the Mount: an exposition of Matthew 5–7*. Carlisle: Paternoster Books.
- Carter W 2000. *Matthew and margins: a socio-political and religious reading*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield.
- _____. 2001 *Matthew and empire: initial explorations*. Harrisberg: Trinity Press International.
- Chafer LS 1976. *Systematic theology: Christology* (vol. 5). Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.
- Combrink HJB 1983. The gospel according to Matthew: an Introduction and theology. In AB Du Toit's (ed.), *Guide to the New Testament IV, the synoptic gospels and Acts: introduction and theology*, 57–101. Translated by DR Bridges. Johannesburg: Orion Publishers.

- Davids PH 1992. Rich and poor. In JB Greens and S McKnight's (eds.) *Dictionary of Jesus and the gospels*, 701–710. Downers Grove: IVP.
- Derickson GW 2003. Mathaen priority/authorship and Evangelicalism's Boundary. *Masters Seminary Journal* 14(1):87–103.
- Dobschütz E von 1914. The Lord's prayer. *Harvard Theological Review* 7(3):293–321.
- Drane J 2001. *Introducing the New Testament* (1st Fortress Press ed.). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Dray S 1998. *Discovering Matthew's gospel*. Leicester: Crossway Books.
- Dunn JDG 2009. *New Testament theology: an introduction*. *Library of Biblical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Eichler J and Brown C 1976. Possessions, treasure, mammon, wealth, money. In C Brown, *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology* (vol. 2), 829–836. Grand Rapids: Regency.
- Ervast P 1983. *The Sermon on the Mount or the key to Christianity: an iinterpretation by Pekka Ervast*. Finland: KaristoOy.
- France RT 1985. *Matthew*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- _____ 1989. *Matthew—evangelists and teacher*. Exeter: The Paternoster Press.
- _____ 1994. Matthew, Mark and Luke. In DA Hagner (ed.), *A theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.), 212–245. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press.
- Guelich RA 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount: a foundation for understanding*. Waco: Word Books.
- Green M 2000. *The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven*. (rev. ed.). BST. Leicester: IVP.
- Hagner DA 1993. *Matthew 1–13*. Word Bible Commentary (vol. 33a). Dallas: Word Books.

- Hendrickx H 1984. *The Sermon on the Mount: studies on the synoptic gospels*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Hill D 1977. *The gospel of Matthew*. London: Oliphants.
- Humphries-Brooks S 1996. Matthew. In WE Mill and RF Wilson (gen. eds.), *Mercer Commentary on the Bible 6: The Gospels*, 2–56. USA: Mercer University Press.
- Johnson LT 1999. *The writings of the New Testament* (rev. ed.). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Juel GH 1997. The Trinity and the New Testament. *Theology Today* 54(3):312–324.
- Kapolyo J 2006. Matthew. In T Adeyemo (gen. ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1105–1170. Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers.
- Keener CS 1999. *A commentary on the gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kissinger WS 1975. *The Sermon on the Mount: a history of interpretation and bibliography*. Metulen: The American Theological Library Association.
- Lategan B 2009. Mapping the hermeneutical process. In Du Toit A (ed), *Focusing on the message: New Testament hermeneutics, exegesis and methods*, 65–105. Pretoria: Protea Book House.
- Leske A 1998. Matthew. In WR Farmer (ed.), *The international Bible commentary: a Catholic and ecumenical commentary for the twenty-first century*, 1253–1330. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press.
- Long TC 1997. *Matthew*. Louisville: WJK.
- Marshall IH 2004. *New Testament theology: many witnesses, one gospel*. Downers Grove: IVP.
- Metzger BM 1992. *The New Testament: its background, growth and content*. (2nd ed.). Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- McArthur HK 1978. *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount*. Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers.

- Nolland J 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: a Commentary on the Greek text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Pelikan J 2001. *Divine rhetoric: the Sermon on the Mount as message and as model in Augustine, Chrysostom and Luther*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Ridderbos HM 1987. *Matthew*. Bible Students Commentary. Translated by R Togman. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Ryken L, Wilhoit JC, and Longman III T (gen. eds.) 1998. *Dictionary of biblical imagery*. Downers Grove: IVP.
- Saldarini AJ 2003. *Matthew*. In Dunn JDG (gen. ed.), *Eerdmans commentary on the Bible*, 1000–1063. Grand Rapids. Eerdmans.
- Schmidt TE 1988. Burden, barrier, blasphemy: wealth in Matt 6:33, Luke 14:33, and Luke 16:15. *Trinity Journal* 9(2):171–189.
- Senior D 1997. *The gospel of Matthew*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Smith KG 2008. *Academic writing and theological research: a guide for students*. Johannesburg: South African Theological Seminary Press.
- Spicq C 1994. *Theological lexicon of the New Testament*: (vol. 1). Translated and edited by JD Ernest. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Stott JRW 1988. *The message of the Sermon on the Mount*. Leicester: IVP.
- Talbert CH 2006 *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: character formations and ethical decision making in Matthew 5–7*. Grand Rapids. Baker.
- Unger MF and White W Jr. (eds.) 1985. *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Weiss J 1971. *Jesus proclamation of the kingdom of God*. Translated by RH Hiers and H Larrimore. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

- Wenham D and Walton S 2001. *Exploring the New Testament: a guide to the gospels and Acts* (vol. 1). Downers Grove: IVP.
- Wilkins MJ 2001. In CE Arnold's (gen. ed.) Zondervan illustrated Bible backgrounds commentary, 2–203. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Wright NT 1992. *The New Testament and the people of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Young BH 1995. *Jesus the Jewish theologian*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers.