IT IS WRITTEN:
MATTHEAN DISCOURSE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY DISCIPLESHIP

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

IT IS WRITTEN:

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FOR CONTEMPORARY DISCIPLESHIP

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I dedicate this thesis to the congregation of Heather Hills Baptist Church, who have lovingly and regularly encouraged my pursuit of this doctoral program. My hope is that the results of this study will benefit them in ways that point them toward a clearer picture of Jesus Christ and help them follow him together.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJPS	*Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament
CCEC	*Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*
EBC	*The Expositor's Biblical Commentary*
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
NIVAC	The NIV Application Commentary
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
TMSJ	*The Masters Seminary Journal*
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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PREFACE

This topic of discipleship in connection with the Matthean discourses captured my imagination as early as 1999. A seminary professor, Dr. Doug Finkbeiner, first mentioned it to me in an elective class on discipleship. Although he did not flesh out the details of the idea, he floated the prospect that someone might develop a discipleship methodology based on the discourses. Thus, when an opportunity to write a thesis presented itself nearly two decades later, I immediately knew what I wanted to explore!

My interactions with The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have all been extraordinarily helpful, and in fact, quite inspiring. I am grateful to the many individuals who have helped me along this journey, especially Coleman Ford and Dr. Michael Wilder of the Professional Doctoral Studies program for their availability, generosity, and insight. In the classroom, I have been enormously impacted by the life and teaching of Drs. Jim Hamilton, Hershael York, and Mike Pohlman, among others. I have also greatly appreciated the guidance of Dr. Joseph Harrod, who helped me shape and refine my thesis proposal. Dr. Jonathan Pennington, my faculty supervisor on this project, has also graciously assisted me with both resources and advice.

Finally, I am indebted to the generosity and patience of my congregation at Heather Hills Baptist Church and my dear wife and children, from whom I have been sequestered many times during this process. They all have been my cheerleaders.

Brian McCrorie

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' final words to his disciples before his ascension set the mission of the church for the next two thousand years:

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matt 28:18–20, ESV).[1]

Those who heard these words might well have shrunk back from this intimidating challenge. But with the sending of the Spirit, as recorded in Acts 2, the disciples did indeed "receive power" (Acts 1:8) and began the lifelong work to which Jesus had commissioned them at his departure.

In fact, the earliest members of the first church in Jerusalem "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). This teaching would consist of the inspired words given to these divinely-appointed men for the edification of the church.[2] Jesus' own words would form a large part of this teaching—just as he instructed.

This thesis will focus on Jesus' five discourses in the Gospel of Matthew.[3] According to Jesus' final instructions given to the disciples, it would follow that "all that I have commanded you" would, at least, include these five discourses. Such a fact may seem commonplace; however, a perusal of many contemporary methods used to make disciples will show a stark contrast with this approach. Many popular discipleship

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[1]Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this thesis are to the English Standard Version.

[2]Passages such as Eph 3:5 demonstrate that the apostles were given special revelation from the Holy Spirit.

[3]The five discourse sections are Matt 5–7, 10, 13, 18, and 23–25.

programs incorporate a topical or systematic approach to discipleship.[4] Another helpful approach to making disciples follows from this connection between the Great Commission and Matthean discourse.

This work is not the first to suggest this linkage, or its potential value in discipleship. For example, in his commentary on Matthew, Michael Wilkins writes,

> Thus, when we understand that disciples are to be taught to obey all that Jesus has commanded, these five discourses give us the most complete articulation of the kind of discipleship life that Jesus intends for each of us. That is why I refer to Matthew as a "manual on discipleship," because throughout most of church history, this gospel was used to provide the content of instruction on full-orbed Christian living.[5]

However, many of the key themes in the discourses are sadly missing from modern discipleship. In order to be faithful to Jesus' command to teach "all that I have commanded," the church must resurrect the practice of teaching the Gospels, specifically, the discourses in Matthew, to new believers.

Familiarity with the Literature

In exploring the Matthean discourses and their relevance to discipleship, this thesis will examine three categories of literature. The first category is books and

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[4]For example, in Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), the table of contents includes "Bible Study," "Prayer," "Worship," and doctrines like "Justification," "Grace," and "Adoption." However, there is little if any discussion about the history of God's redemptive plan and where believers fit in this story. Bill Hull's massive tome *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006) spends most of its 300+ pages describing the minute details in creating a discipleship program; however, in the twenty-two pages that actually focus on the content of discipleship, Hull appeals to a limited selection of proof texts in the Gospels with little exposition. Robby Gallaty's *Growing Up* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013) provides a helpful model for Bible study and lays out a six-step plan for basic discipleship: "Communicate," "Learn," "Obey," "Store," "Evangelize," and "Renew." However, no direction is given regarding the content a disciple must be taught. In the classic *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), Leroy Eims lists thirty "vital areas that make up the profile of a disciple," including "Assurance of Salvation," "Victory over Sin," "Scripture Memory," "Lordship of Christ," "The Will of God," and "Witnessing." While these disciplines benefit any Christian, the book does not address the specific content or big story to which new Christians should be introduced. Aubrey Malphurs draws from the Matthean discourses in his *Strategic Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009) in his appeal to modern discipleship; however, his discussion only lasts five pages and summarizes the content rather than exposits it. Even John MacArthur's *Keys to Spiritual Growth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) approaches discipleship topically with chapter headings such as "Obedience," "Confession," "Prayer," "Bible Study," "Fellowship," and "Witnessing."

[5]Michael J. Wilkins. *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 200.

monographs. Because the focus of this work is on the five discourses in the Gospel of Matthew, sources in this category will largely come from exegetical commentaries on the book of Matthew and related monographs.[6] Peer-reviewed journal articles on the Gospel of Matthew and the subject of discipleship form the second category of literature. The final category of literature consists of theses and dissertations.

Books and Monographs

In considering the large number of exegetical commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, three stand out from the others in terms of excellence and relevance to this work.

Dick France's commentary on the first Gospel is perhaps the finest in this first category.[7] France reveals significances in Greek syntax, highlights comparisons from Matthew's Gospel to the other Greek literature of the same period, painstakingly details his process of determining the structure of the Gospel, distinguishes between genres used within the book, constantly points out contextual relationships, and interacts respectfully with many of the major commentaries published before his. France also suggests implications throughout the book and brings the reader continually back to the person and work of Christ.

Don Carson's contribution on Matthew in *The Expositor's Biblical*

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[6]Commentaries influencing this thesis include Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture,* NAC (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1992); D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, ed., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); D. A. Carson, *Matthew,* in vol. 9 of *EBC,* ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 24–670; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew,* 3 vols., ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2004); Craig A. Evans, *Matthew,* NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007); Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28,* WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995); Craig S. Keener, *Matthew,* IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); Wolfgang Trilling, *The Gospel According to St Matthew,* in vol. 1 of *New Testament for Spiritual Reading*, ed. John L. McKenzie (London: Herder & Herder, 1969), 1–240; David L. Turner, *Matthew,* BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew,* NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

[7]France, *The Gospel of Matthew.*

Commentary series provides another superb resource for this study.[8] With a helpful balance between academic scholarship and informal Bible study, Carson helps the reader think through both exegesis and application.

Davies and Allison's commentary assists this thesis with excellent bibliographies for each section of the text, along with original English translations, discussions of form/structure/setting, exegetical comments about the text, and finally explanations with theological implications.[9]

Several monographs lend their substantial voices to the commentaries. First, Jonathan Pennington, in *Reading the Gospels Wisely,* assists the reader in doing simple narrative analysis in the Gospels. He further demonstrates that "we can and should learn to read Gospel episodes in light of their place in cycles, acts, and the macro-plot of the Gospels, as well as part of the entire canon of Scripture." [10] These tools will benefit this thesis immensely as each discourse is later examined.

In addition, Pennington's *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing* offers great assistance in this study, specifically in identifying the themes of *makarios* and *teleios* as they relate the first discourse. In addition, this work provides a useful and accessible blueprint for both reading and interpreting the Lord's great sermon.[11]

A third monograph is Morna Hooker's *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship*. Hooker examines the concluding texts of the four Gospels, as well as the book of Acts, to mine out possible application for discipleship.[12] However, her focus is on the end of the

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[8]Carson, *Matthew*.

[9]Davies and Allison, *Matthew*.

[10]Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 185.

[11]Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

[12]Morna D. Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

Gospel of Matthew, rather than the discourses.

A fourth monograph by David Scaer specifically examines *Discourses in Matthew.*[13] His premise puts forward the idea that the five discourses in Matthew were designed to be catechetical in nature for new Christians, specifically preparing them for baptism and the Lord's Table. As a Christian reads the Gospel with this perspective, Scaer believes it will deepen their understanding of Jesus and his instructions.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Six articles appear to be useful to this thesis. The first, "The Extent of Jesus' Fifth Discourse," by Jason Hood in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, demonstrates the interrelationship between the final discourse in Matthew 23–25 and the first in Matthew 5–7, arguing that Jesus intended the discourses to be taught to others.[14]

A second article, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," by Jeannine Brown, proposes that Jesus determined the future readers of Matthew's Gospel would be as directly engaged by his teaching as was the original audience.[15] Brown demonstrates this through Christ's use of rhetorical, structural, and plot strategies.

Craig Keener addresses the five discourses in "Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations." He argues that Jesus' instructions in Matthew 28:20 are connected to the five discourses in the Gospel and that each discourse is marked by a specific Greek phrase at the end of each discourse. Keener also develops the theme of "The Cost of Discipleship" across all five discourses.[16]

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[13]David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2004).

[14]Jason B. Hood, "Matthew 23–25: The Extent of Jesus' Fifth Discourse," *JBL* 128, no. 3 (September 2009): 527–43.

[15]Jeannine K. Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses: Rhetorical Techniques and Scholarly Consensus," *New Testament Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2005): 19–35.

[16]Craig S. Keener, "Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations," *AJPS* 12, no. 1 (2009): 3–20.

Jonathan Pennington's "Theological Epistemology in the Gospel According to Matthew" seeks to lay out the canonical perspective of Matthew in response to Francis Watson's *Gospel Writing*. However, a substantial part of his presentation deals with the structure of the five discourse sections which is immensely helpful to this thesis.[17]

In "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," Clinton Arnold discusses an ancient document called the *Apostolic Tradition* which is "the most important bearer of traditions and information on how the churches of the Mediterranean world of the second and third centuries organized and conducted training for new believers."[18] This knowledge of the systematic approach to discipleship in the early church will be beneficial in contrasted ancient with modern approaches to Christian discipleship.

Oscar Brooks' "Matthew xxviii 16–20 and the Design of the First Gospel" traces the themes of authority and teaching through the discourses of Matthew and then demonstrates how the Lord was preparing the disciples for the Great Commission's emphasis and culmination of these two themes.[19] In fact, he argues that these two themes control the design of the book.

Void in the Literature

The shelves of any reputable theological library are replete with multi-volume commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew. Many excellent works, both ancient and modern, will aid the development of exegesis in this thesis. There is no void in this general category of resources. Neither does a void exist in relation to writings on

[17]Jonathan T. Pennington, "Theological Epistemology in the Gospel According to Matthew" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, Georgia, November 21–24, 2015).

[18]Clinton E Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," *JETS* 47, no. 1 (March 2004): 39–54.

[19]Oscar S. Brooks, Sr., "Matthew xxviii 16–20 and the Design of the First Gospel," *JSNT* 3, no. 10 (January 1, 1981): 2–18.

discipleship from Matthew. In fact, a survey of the writings of early church fathers through Augustine will demonstrate the church historically used the content of the first Gospel in discipling converts to Christianity.

In addition, a few authors address specifically the role of the five discourses in the Gospel. In recent years, Pennington's work stands head and shoulders above the rest in this regard. His recent paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature specifically goes after the function of the five discourses and will be immensely useful to this thesis.

This thesis seeks to fill a void in the literature by connecting specifically what is learned from the Matthean discourses to the practice of twenty-first century Christian discipleship. It is the attempt to revive an ancient practice in the early church in light of the newest and best theological writing and disciplines.

Thesis

An analysis of the five discourses in the Gospel of Matthew forms a critical, and frequently neglected, vision of Christian discipleship. This analysis includes exegetical and early Christian usages of the Gospel's vision of discipleship. These insights will help the new disciple to flourish as he learns the commands of Christ and then seeks to live them out in the world for God's glory.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF THE GOSPELS AND CATECHESIS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

A historical view of the relationship between the Matthean discourses and the catechesis (teachings on doctrine and discipline) of the early church assists as a valuable starting point in evaluating the thesis of this paper. This chapter will investigate how the four Gospels were viewed in the early church, how the early church catechized new converts, and how the Gospels were used to that end.

How Did the Early Church View the Four Gospels?

A review of the writings of the earliest church fathers demonstrates that the four Gospels were embraced by the church-at-large as authentic and authoritative by the end of the second century.

In his article "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels: Historical Evidence for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," Ron Jones points readers to the writings of Eusebius, which in turn commend the writings of Polycarp, Papias, and Ignatius.[1] Eusebius lived and wrote in the fourth century, while Polycarp, Papias, and Ignatius ministered in the end of the first century. In addition, Jones observes that Polycarp and Papias claimed to be disciples of the apostle John when he lived in Ephesus. As such, they were in a unique position to know the authenticity of the Four Gospels. In particular, Papias (110–120 CE) wrote about the authorship of both Matthew and Mark:

> So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew dialect, and every one interpreted

[1]Ron Jones, "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels: Historical Evidence for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," *The Titus Institute*, accessed September 30, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/9269890/Early_Church_Fathers_on_the_Authorship_of_the_NT_Gospels.

> them as he was able. . . . Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.[2]

Bauckham adds that the "statements about Mark are attributed by Papias to 'the Elder,' who is probably John the Elder. . . . Whether Papias also attributed the comment about Matthew to John the Elder we cannot be sure, but the way Eusebius introduces it suggests that he probably did."[3] Papias appears to be claiming that Jesus' apostle John, an eyewitness himself to the life of Christ, attributed the words of the Gospel of Matthew to the apostle Matthew. Matthew also, according to John, wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, while others translated it into Greek.

Papias also comments on the importance of eyewitness accounts in establishing the Gospels' credibility:

> And if by chance anyone who had been in attendance on the elders should come my way, I inquired about the words of the elders – what Andrew or Peter said, or Philip, or Thomas or James, or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and whatever Aristion and the elder John, the Lord's disciples, were saying. For I did not think that information from books would profit me as much as information from a living and surviving voice.[4]

Those "living and surviving" voices were also important to the Twelve as Peter indicates in the choosing of a new apostle following the death of Judas. Luke records his words, "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:21–22). The new member of this exclusive group would have to be an eyewitness

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[2]Jones, "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels."

[3]Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 202.

[4]Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 15–16.

to the work of Jesus. Earlier in his Gospel, Luke had previously written to Theophilus, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us" (Luke 1:1–2). Bauckham comments:

> If they were close companions of Jesus throughout his ministry, as the Gospels claim they were, and if they were also, as most scholars agree, the first leaders of the mother church in Jerusalem and of its initial outreach elsewhere, we should certainly expect them to have been authoritative transmitters of the traditions of Jesus and to have had something like an official status for their formulations of those traditions.[5]

This appears to be the reason that, while many anonymous disciples of Jesus are mentioned in the Gospels, the list of the Twelve appears in all the synoptic Gospels.[6] Their names are recorded because they are authoritative eyewitnesses to the words and works of Jesus.

Toward the middle of the second century, the church father Justin Martyr quoted from all four Gospels in his writings, also affirming their apostolic authority: "For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them."[7] He also referenced "that his Jewish opponent Trypho had read the Gospels."[8]

The Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus (180 CE), named each of the Gospel authors specifically in his *Against Heresies*, commenting that Matthew and John were apostles and Mark and Luke were associated with apostles Peter and Paul respectively.[9] Pennington points out that Irenaeus "describes the four Gospels as being the four pillars

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[5]Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 94.

[6]The listing of the Twelve can be found in Matthew 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; and Luke 6:13–16.

[7]Jones, "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels."

[8]Pheme Perkins, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 41.

[9]Jones, "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels."

of the church."[10] In Irenaeus' own words:

> The Gospels could not possibly be either more or less in number than they are. Since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is spread over all the earth, and the pillar and foundation of the Church is the gospel, and the Spirit of life, it fittingly has four pillars, everywhere breathing out immortality and revivifying men.[11]

The testimony of church fathers Tertullian (200 CE) and Origen (245 CE) confirmed the nearly universal acceptance of these Four Gospels as authoritative for the church.[12] In fact, Origen "rebuts an attack on Christianity composed by Celsus in the later second century"; and, according to Perkins, "Celsus is certainly familiar with Matthew's Gospel."[13] In his *Commentary on John*, Origen posits, "For we may venture to say that the Gospel is the first fruits of all the Scriptures."[14] Pennington explains, "Some might read Origen's reference here to the 'Gospel' as the general message about Jesus and the new covenant. But the following sections of his argument make clear he is distinguishing the four Gospels here—or better, the Gospel book—from the rest of the New Testament canon."[15]

How Did the Church Catechize New Converts?

Wengert writes, "The word, to catechize, is a Greek verb that described a form of instruction used in ancient schools: *kata* and *echo*, to sound over or repeat again. It denoted a form of oral instruction. The teacher said something, and the children responded: learning by repetition."[16] From the Great Commission text in Matthew 28:16–

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[10]Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 236.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Jones, "The Early Church Fathers on the Authorship of the NT Gospels."

[13]Perkins, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, 41.

[14]Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 237.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress

20 to the writings of Augustine in the fourth century CE, several models of discipleship can be examined to learn how the church instructed its converts.

In the New Testament

Immediately upon the creation of the church by the Spirit in Acts 2, the church seemed to follow the pattern set by Christ: make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. Examples abound in the book of Acts of such a pattern.[17] With regard to the teaching element of discipleship, the Lord Jesus himself spent three years mentoring the Twelve, the apostle Paul invested in the lives of Timothy, Titus, Luke, John Mark, Silas, and Barnabas, along with countless other converts along the way through his missionary journeys. But what formed the content of such instruction? The church was devoted to the apostles teaching, according to Acts 2:42—the inspired teaching that would comprise the New Testament. However, years would pass before the entirety of the New Testament was finished and canonized and centuries would pass before the written Scriptures were readily available to all.[18]

In the First and Second Centuries CE

Two documents were discovered in the nineteenth century that shed considerable light on the catechesis of the early church: the *Didache* and the *Apostolic*

Press, 2009), 3.

[17]This pattern is observed in the conversion of the 3000 in Acts 2, conversion of the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, Paul's conversion in Acts 9, the conversion of Cornelius and those Gentiles present with him in his home in Acts 10, the conversion of Lydia and the Philippian jailor in Acts 16, the conversion of Crispus and many other Corinthians in Acts 18, and the conversion of the twenty-five disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 25.

[18]The Muratorian Canon is perhaps the earliest known list of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, dating to circa 170 CE. The Gutenberg Bible, with the advent of the printing press, was the first to be mass-produced, but history records only approximately 180 copies were made by 1458. The English translation of the New Testament by Tyndale in 1525 resulted in 6,000 printed copies. The goal of the English church was to put the Great Bible in every church in England in 1539, so parishioners would have access to it. However, the Bible did not begin to be widely available until the creation of the first modern Bible society in Germany in 1710 and those that followed in England, Canada, America, and Russia in the 1800's.

Tradition. The *Didache* (circa first century CE) was the earlier of the two and provides a unique look at the early church's programmatic efforts at discipleship.

One of the first contrasts with the New Testament that is found in the *Didache* is the chronology of baptism and instruction. In the scriptural record, the preaching of the gospel would result in conversions with a seemingly immediate baptism taking place prior to any additional teaching. However, by the end of the first century CE, the practice was reversed: now instruction would precede and become a prerequisite of baptism. Bardy writes,

> The time had gone when a discourse from Saint Peter, Saint Paul, or some other apostle was sufficient to win multitudes, and was consequently followed immediately by Baptism. The Church tried to test the seriousness of the candidates who presented themselves to her, and to instruct them in her doctrine.[19]

Why the change in order? Alan Kreider compiled a list of several possible reasons. First, the second-century CE converts were not God-fearing Jews but "ex-pagans who needed a far-reaching programme of instruction and resocialisation."[20] Second, a longer time of catechism was needed due to the theological disputes of the second century.[21] Third, in a time of persecution, the church may have been "screening out possible spies and informers."[22]

The Didache, approximately the length of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, consisted of four main sections: teaching on the "Two Ways," a liturgy, church order, and eschatology.[23]

The "Two Ways" contained the pre-baptismal instruction for new converts. It

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[19]Gustave Bardy, *The Church at the End of the First Century* (London: Sands & Co., 1881), 46.

[20]Alan Kreider, "Baptism, Catechism, and the Eclipse of Jesus' Teaching in Early Christianity," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, no. 2 (November 1996): 318.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 1.

begins simply as a choice between life and death: "There are two ways, one to life and one to death, but the difference between the two ways is great" (*Did*. 1.1)[24] The Didache goes on to explain the way of life and the way of death, using language very similar to several biblical passages as noted in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the "Two Ways" Language with Scriptural Texts

Didache	*Language Used*	*Scriptural Comparison*
1.1	"There are two ways, one to life and one to death."	"See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil." (Deut 30:14)
1.2	"The way of life is this: first, you shall love God who created you; second, your neighbor as yourself."	"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . . This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt 22:37–39)
1.2	"All those things which you do not want to be done to you, you should not do to others."	"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 7:12)

Following this description of the way of life comes a series of rules that a disciple should follow in order to demonstrate this commitment to God and neighbor. As O'Loughlin comments, "These turned the headline commandment of 'love God and neighbor' into immediate and practical actions, such as avoiding sorcery in one instance of everyday life and turning the other cheek in another."[25] Most of these rules are also easily recognized as coming from either the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), the Ten Commandments (Exod 20), and other biblical passages.

The way of death covers only two verses in the Didache and "consists of two

[24]Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 59.

[25]Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 39.

parts. In the first part, twenty-three vices are listed; in the second part, we find nineteen groups of evildoers."[26] O'loughlin provides a helpful summary:

> The *Didache* seems to be fully aware of the phenomenon of those who saw morality in terms of the avoidance of specific sinful acts by the individual, while not ignoring the social nature of sin and the social demands that are made on those who seek God. Christians were not to ignore the demands of seeking justice in society and showing a constant concern for the poor, and still imagine that they were not on the Way of Death.[27]

According to Bardy, "It was only after the catechumen had received the teaching on the two ways that he was baptized."[28] The "Two Ways" is believed to have been sourced in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically Matthew 5:17–48 and 7:13–14.[29]

In the Third and Fourth Centuries

The *Apostolic Tradition* (circa 215 CE) by Hippolytus "records the life of Christian communities which were very deliberate in their approach to incorporating new members."[30] According to Arnold, "These new people clearly have some rudimentary level of faith. They appear to be aware of enough of the gospel message that they have exercised faith in it and are now taking the step to commit themselves to a rigorous course of study, prepare for baptism, and join the community of believers."[31]

The discipling of these converts would take place daily for one hour before they would go to work each morning. The overall process would take approximately three years, though some churches required a five-year process. Each new convert would be paired with a more mature Christian who would accompany the convert to the classes.

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[26]Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 115.

[27]O'Loughlin, *The Didache*, 38.

[28]Bardy, *The Church at the End of the First Century*, 46.

[29]Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 193.

[30]Kreider, "Baptism," 320.

[31]Clinton E. Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis and New Christians' Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism," *JETS* 47, no. 1 (March 2004): 42.

The process would culminate at Easter, when the converts would be finally baptized and admitted to the Lord's Table and, thus, the family of Christians in that church.

The key features, delineated by Arnold, of this teaching were: immersion in the Word of God, learning the central doctrines of the faith, scriptural and moral formation, and deliverance ministry.[32] With regard to the latter feature, the *Apostolic Tradition* records:

> And a deacon shall take the oil of exorcism and stand at the left hand of the presbyter. . . . And when the presbyter grasps each one of those who will receive baptism, let him command him to renounce, saying, "I renounce you, Satan, with all your service and all your works." And when he has renounced all these, let him anoint him with the oil of exorcism, saying, "Let every spirit be cast far from you" (21:8–10)[33]

Arnold comments on this practice, which would be unusual in the contemporary evangelical church: "This was a logical time for the early church to deal with the evil spiritual influences on these people as they forsook their pagan religions and magical practices to embrace the living and true God."[34]

Another significant figure in the church and the development of catechesis was Augustine of Hippo. He has the distinction of not only designing his own catechism but also having grown up as a catechumen. Catechumens were allowed to live as they liked, as long as they had not yet been baptized.[35] Augustine chased women regularly and ended up living with one for fourteen years, even having a son with her. Augustine was educated to become a great orator and actually taught on the university level. He grew up, however, quite lost spiritually. He was born in North Africa and then moved to Italy at the age of twenty-eight, living first in Rome and then settling in Milan for three years.

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[32]Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis," 46–53.

[33]Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 114.

[34]Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis," 52.

[35]William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 92.

Because of his interest in public speaking, Augustine was drawn to hear the teaching of a great orator. And under the long, patient biblical teaching of that orator, Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, Augustine was challenged with the dangers of the coming judgment; and being inspired by close friends who heard the gospel, he gradually became deeply convicted of his sins. During this time, he also visited with Ambrose's teacher Simplicianus, who told Augustine the story of Victorinus, who was a great orator in Rome and defender of paganism but not a man of faith until his very old age. The prospect of such a changed life both fascinated and frustrated Augustine. He would write about Victorinus:

> He seemed to me to be as courageous as he was fortunate, because he found an opportunity of becoming open to you. I myself was longing for this very thing, yet I was bound: not by someone else's iron chains but by my own iron will. The enemy still held sway over the exercise of my will, and from that had fashioned a chain for me and bound me in fetters.[36]

These experiences culminated in a very dramatic scene in a garden in Milan where Augustine, desperate for answers, read the Apostle Paul's words to "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh" (Romans 13:14). He repented of his sins and called on the mercy of Christ. After being prepared by Ambrose, he was then finally baptized. He resigned his teaching job, committed himself to celibacy, and devoted himself to Christ. He gained a new perspective on the Bible, on faith, on the nature of evil, and especially on the incarnation of Christ.[37] He began writing and soon was a teacher again—this time teaching the scripture.

About the year 403 CE, Augustine received a letter from a deacon in Carthage with a request "to write something on the catechizing of beginners."[38] This request would lead to the writing of *De Catechizandis Rudibus* (On Catechizing Beginners). In this

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[36]Augustine, *Confessions, Volume I: Books 1–8*, in vol. 26 of *Loeb Classical Library*, trans. Carolyn J.–B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 373.

[37]Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 126–27.

[38]Ibid., 131.

treatise, Augustine gave the deacon his advice on how to approach those interested in the gospel. Augustine, however, does not just lay out a methodology for the deacon to follow; he is interested in much more than that. "Augustine considered the deacon's complaints about weariness and boredom a problem at least as important as technique and so offered an array of remedies to reignite his zest for teaching."[39] In one section, he wrote:

> If our understanding finds its delight within, in the brightest of secret places, let it also delight in the following insight into the ways of love: the more love goes down in a spirit of service into the ranks of the lowliest people, the more surely it rediscovers the quiet that is within when its good conscience testifies that it seeks nothing of those to whom it goes down but their eternal salvation.[40]

In fighting against the mundane that can arise in constant repetition in teaching the learners, Augustine also advocated love as the answer:

> Now, if we find it distasteful to be constantly rehearsing familiar phrases that are suited to the ears of small children, we should draw close to these small children with a brother's love, or a father's or a mother's, and as a result of our empathy with them, the oft-repeated phrases will sound new to us also.[41]

This combination of precept and passion would not only serve the deacon well but many others in the centuries that would follow, including "Bede and Alcuin in the eighth century, Erasmus and Francis Xavier in the sixteenth, [and] Josef Jungmann and the kerygmatic movement in the twentieth."[42]

Moral transformation was a key component of his catechesis. Augustine wrote,

> Let himself fancy that any such [immoral] course may be followed with impunity on his part, simply because he sees many who are called Christians loving these things, and engaging themselves with them, and defending them, and recommending them, and actually persuading others to their use. . . . [A new believer] must be sedulously

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[39]Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 132.

[40]Augustine of Hippo, *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, in vol. 5 of *The Augustine Series*, ed. Raymond Canning, trans. Raymond Canning (New York: New City Press, 2006), 93.

[41]Augustine, *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, 97.

[42]Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 32.

warned against letting his hope rest on man.[43]

The primary method Augustine proposed for sharing the good news of the gospel with newcomers to the faith was via the history of salvation. While this was not a new approach, most theologians had previously ended with the cross and resurrection. "One finds historical recitals of this sort in the speeches of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles and in the works of Christian apologists from Justin Martyr in the second century to Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth."[44] However, Augustine proposed starting in Genesis 1 but continuing on into the present church age. He presented two models for communicating this history, one long and detailed and one short and concise. The goal in the presentation, according to Augustine was to "recount every event in [his] historical exposition in such a way that [his] listener by hearing it may believe, by believing may hope, and by hoping may love."[45] Gatch describes the fourth century CE with regard to catechesis as "fully developed."[46] Indeed, it was the high point of catechesis in the church until the Reformation.

How Were the Gospels Used in Early Church Catechesis?

Having briefly surveyed the progression of catechesis in the early church, the question of how the Gospels were engaged in such catechesis emerges. As the Great Commission text of Matthew 28:16–20 is considered, the phrase "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" is striking. What is "everything I have commanded you"? While it could refer to the content of Jesus' teaching across all Four

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[43]Arnold, "Early Church Catechesis," 50.

[44]Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 154.

[45]Raymond Canning, introduction to *Instructing Beginners in Faith* by Augustine of Hippo (New York: New City Press, 2006), 19.

[46]Milton McC. Gatch, "The Medieval Church: Basic Christian Education from the Decline of Catechesis to the Rise of the Catechisms," in *A Faithful Church*, ed. John H. Westerhoff III and O. C. Edwards, Jr. (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc., 1981), 79.

Gospels or even across the entire New Testament, within the context of Matthew's Gospel it seems more likely that it is a reference to at least the five discourse sections. In this regard, Gilbert writes:

> Analysis of Matthew's narrative rhetoric demonstrates that the didactic element of instruction is not merely word, but also includes deed. Matthew's rhetorical arrangement emphasizes the word-deed duality of teaching in the alternation of discourse with narrative. Not only are the disciples present for Jesus' teaching in the discourses, but they also follow him in ministry and observe what he does. Jesus' instruction of the disciples, therefore, includes both orthodoxy and orthopraxis, for they hear from Jesus about life in the kingdom and see his example of perfect kingdom living. In consideration of the instruction element in μαθητεύσατε, the disciples must convey all that Jesus taught them, meaning that they must impart to other followers both word (the oral teaching of Jesus) and deed (the demonstration of kingdom living in the practical outworking of life).[47]

Even though this would seem a likely conclusion, only a few early church extant documents even reference the Great Commission text until the fourth century CE with Augustine.[48] Nevertheless, a significant amount of Matthew's Gospel found its way into the *Didache*, *Apostolic Tradition*, and *Instructing Beginners in Faith*. Pennington remarks about the *Didache*, "A good case can be made that these are not just references to the Jesus traditions in general but often to Matthew itself."[49] Not until the twentieth century CE does this connection appear to be made by Joachim Jeremias, in a lecture on the Sermon on the Mount, who noted:

> We have in the Sermon on the Mount a composition of words of Jesus, collected together on the basis of paraenetic considerations, and we may conclude that its original function was in catechetical instruction (prebaptismal), or in teaching designed for the newly baptized (postbaptismal). In Luke (6. 20–49) this catechism is designed for Gentile-Christians, and in Matthew (chapters 5–7) for Jewish-Christians.[50]

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[47]Scott Allan Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples: Sermonic Application of the Imperative of the Great Commission" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 2014), 182–83.

[48]Kreider, "Baptism," 315. According to Robert Thomas, church fathers who mention the Great Commission in their writings include Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Hippolytus, along with several bishops at the seventh Council of Carthage. Robert L. Thomas, "Historical Criticism and the Great Commission," *TMSJ* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 40–43.

[49]Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 238.

[50]Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon On The Mount* (London: The Athlone Press, 1961), 23.

One of the internal markers in the Gospel of Matthew to suggest that he intended his Gospel to be a catechesis was the use of μαθητής in the discourses. Wilkins writes that "in approximately seventeen of Matthew's thirty-four inclusions, the term μαθητής is a signal word to note discipleship instruction."[51]

Some evidence from the New Testament would suggest that the early church did, in fact, recognize the importance of transmitting Jesus' words to disciples. "In the New Testament texts themselves, early catechetical traditions are embedded which rephrased the sayings of Jesus and applied them to various Christian communities."[52]

In the *Didache*, references from Matthew's first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), can be found in almost each chapter.[53] Love of God, love of neighbor, the "Golden Rule," and instruction on prayer and fasting also feature prominently in the *Didache*.[54] Even the comments on the Christian's watchfulness for the return of Christ are rooted in Matthean discourse (24:42, 42): "On this basis it has often been thought that the Didache here depends on Matt 24."[55]

Other early church fathers who incorporated Jesus' commands from the Gospels included Justin Martyr, Eusebius, and Irenaeus. "Justin's *Apology* is filled with the saying of Jesus which shaped the life of the Christian community in Rome. Indeed, according to Justin, the point was not to master a body of teaching but to put it into practice."[56] Again, moral transformation was essential to being a catechumenate, even if

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[51]Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 165.

[52]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 323.

[53]Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford, ed., *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 336.

[54]Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1989), 31–33, 43.

[55]Draper and Jefford, *The Didache*, 387.

[56]Kreider, "Baptism," 324.

he was not yet a baptized Christian. Pennington writes,

> Eusebius of Caesarea intimates that the Gospels were the primary instruction for early Christian catechumens. In his commentary on Psalm 22 (LXX), he says that the "grass" and "water" of the psalm are the "holy gospels," which are like "food" for the catechumen, who has yet to be baptized and thus cannot yet partake of the Eucharist."[57]

Irenaeus demonstrated how the Old Testament lifestyle was transformed through Christ, specifically referencing Matthew's Gospel,

> For no longer shall the Law say, Do not commit adultery, to him who has no desire at all for another's wife. . . . nor an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, to him who counts no man his enemy, but all men his neighbours, and therefore cannot stretch out his hand at all for vengeance. It will not require tithes of him who consecrates all his possessions to God, leaving father and mother and all his kindred, and following the Word of God.[58]

One specific area of catechesis that dates to the time of Papias in the late first century is the associating of the Matthean discourses with the five books of the Pentateuch.[59] Some commentators see a correspondence of each discourse with a book of the Pentateuch, either forward or in reverse. However, the larger point to be made with regard to the Matthean discourses is the establishment of a "New Moses" in the Christ. Wright calls the discourses "the new Pentateuch, the books of the new covenant."[60] Evans points out that "Matthew used a phrase from the Pentateuch to conclude each of the five major discourses. . . . Thus Jesus' language once again sounds a Mosaic ring."[61] Morna Hooker draws attention to the similarity between the text of Matthew 28:16–20 with the call of Moses in Exodus 3.[62] And Dale Allison, Jr., has written a tome exploring the comparison

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[57]Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 238.

[58]Ibid., 325.

[59]Craig S. Keener, "Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations (Matthew 28:19–20)," *AJPS* 12, no. 1 (2009): 15.

[60]N. T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 32.

[61]Craig A Evans, *Matthew*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 486.

[62]Morna D. Hooker, *Endings: Invitations to Discipleship* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 44.

of the infancy narratives to the comparison of the Passover with the Lord's Supper to the comparison of the Great Commission with the Call of Joshua.[63]

Sadly, catechesis as a widespread practice would actually fade away from the sixth century CE until the Reformation, nearly a thousand years later. This diminishing occurred about a century after Augustine, and the practice was neglected until it was resurrected by the reformers, first and notably, Martin Luther. Gatch, referencing Jungmann, writes, "the catechumenate as a class and catechesis as a method of educating Christian initiands and initiates passed out of existence in the Middle Ages."[64] And Luther, in 1528, gives the reason for writing his own catechism:

> Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet they all supposedly bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy Sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments!"[65]

Why did catechesis decline so dramatically from its dominance in the fourth century CE to its near disappearance by the time of the Reformation? Scholars list at least two factors. First, the legalization of Christianity under Constantine meant essentially that all citizens of the Roman Empire soon counted themselves as Christians without going through the normal initiatory rites and catechesis. Gatch comments:

> This decline—almost disappearance—of the catechumenate and of catechetical instruction can be traced to a number of correlative causes. Chief among them, functionally, was the fact that, as the populace of the Roman Empire became Christianized, the class of catechumens or candidates for initiation virtually disappeared.[66]

A second, and related factor to the first is the rise of infant baptism in the church. Again, Gatch explains, "It came increasingly to be believed and taught that infants ought to be

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[63]Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[64]Gatch, "The Medieval Church," 79.

[65]Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms*, 13–14.

[66]Gatch, "The Medieval Church," 81.

baptized as soon as possible after birth."[67] Harakas adds, "With the Edict of Milan in 313 and the legitimization of Christianity, the older practice of adult baptism and its concomitant adult instruction and formation continued for several centuries but was eventually supplanted by infant baptism."[68] The rationale seemed to be that, because baptism was taking place shortly after birth, the normal pre-baptismal instruction would not apply and thus fell into disuse. "The assumption in early Christian communities was that a baptized infant or small child would be educated and formed for Christian living in the home."[69] Addressing the rise of infant baptism in the church, Kreider adds:

> Although many of the liturgical usages of the ancient catechumenate—the scrutinies, the exorcisms—were incorporated in the rite of baptism, catechism itself disappeared. During the coming centuries, there would be no formal ecclesiastical instruction of children. This would be the responsibility of their sponsors, and preeminently of their parents.[70]

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[67]Gatch, "The Medieval Church," 81.

[68]Stanley Samuel Harakas, "Faith Formation in Byzantium," in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 117.

[69]Harakas, "Faith Formation in Byzantium," 117.

[70]Kreider, "Baptism," 319–20.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIVE DISCOURSES—WHY DO THEY EXIST?

Specifically focusing on the Matthean discourses, this chapter will examine the structure and interrelation among the discourses to determine any linguistic or contextual clues as to the intent of Jesus in their original usage.

The Five Discourses: Their Structure

Any study of the five major discourses (FMD) in Matthew must begin with identifying the related texts. The FMD are not the only words of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew; however, they form the main instructional content given to his disciples on how to follow him faithfully. Each discourse relates a specific theme or themes—to be examined in the subsequent chapter. Within the context of this Gospel, the reader could logically assume that the FMD equate to the "all that I have commanded you" in the Great Commission text (Matt 28:19). But is this logical assumption borne out in the FMD themselves? Are there clues in the texts that lead the reader to confirm this assumption?

Identifying the FMD

The Gospel of Matthew appears to consist of a series of alternating narratives and discourses. One of the first scholars to highlight these discourses was Benjamin Bacon who pointed out the phrase that appears at the end of each discourse: "and when Jesus had finished" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).[1] This repeated phrase serves as an

[1]Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 81.

endpoint for each discourse.

With a clear endpoint, the beginning point of each discourse can be located as follows:

Table 2. Matthean discourses: Beginnings and endings

Discourse	*Beginning*	*End*
1	"And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying" (5:2)	"And when Jesus finished these sayings" (7:28)
2	"These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them" (10:5)	"When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples" (11:1)
3	"And he told them many things in parables, saying" (13:3)	"And when Jesus had finished these parables" (13:56)
4	"And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said" (18:2–3)	"Now when Jesus had finished these sayings" (19:1)
5	"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples" (23:1)	"When Jesus had finished all these sayings" (26:1)

A Christian Pentateuch?

While Bacon rightly distinguished the FMD by their common ending formula, he went further by speculating that these FMD form a new five-book collection for the Christian church, effectively replacing the Old Testament Torah:

> The Torah consists of five books of the commandments of Moses, each body of law introduced by a narrative of considerable length, largely concerned with the "signs and wonders" by which Jehovah "with an outstretched and mighty arm" redeemed his people from Egyptian bondage. Matthew is a "converted rabbi," a Christian legalist. Each of the "five books" of his "syntaxis of the logia" of Jesus begins with an introductory narrative and closes with a stereotyped formula linking its discourse to the next succeeding narrative section.[2]

Bacon also connected "a group of ten Mighty Works" in Matthew 8–9 with the ten

[2]Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, 81.

plagues that freed the Israelites from Egypt.[3]

While there is no question that Matthew contains numerous references to the writings of Moses from the Pentateuch, most scholars do not accept his correlation. Allison summarizes the objections well:

> 1. Bacon puts the birth narrative (Matt 1–2) as well as the passion narrative (Matt 26–28) simply in the categories of "prologue" and "epilogue" rather than including them in the formal structure of the FMD.
> 2. It is inaccurate to assert that all of the books in the Pentateuch contain law as Bacon does. For example, Genesis does not contain any Mosaic commandments.
> 3. While some of the FMD may contain some correspondence to the books of the Torah, it is not clear that the first discourse corresponds to Genesis in any way or that the second discourse corresponds to Exodus. Some have suggested a reverse order, with the first discourse corresponding to Deuteronomy and so forth; however, this still results in ambiguity with the later discourses relating to Exodus and Genesis.
> 4. It is not evident from the text that a narrative unit should be combined with a discourse to create a "book" at all.
> 5. Numerous First Century literary works are divided into five parts; therefore, if Matthew is also to be divided in this way, it does not follow that Matthew must necessarily be corresponding to solely the books of Moses.[4]

What about Chapter 23?

Some debate has centered on the framing of the fifth and final discourse in Matthew's Gospel. Some scholars have included chapter 23 with chapters 24–25 as the fifth discourse, while others separate chapter 23 as a separate and sixth discourse.

The primary reasons for considering chapter 23 separately are found in Matthew 24:3 which recounts, "As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'"

According to Jason Hood, advocates of a chapter 23 separate discourse point to two seeming changes between Jesus' instructions in chapter 23 and chapters 24–25.[5]

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[3]Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, 187.

[4]Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 296.

[5]Jason B. Hood, "Matthew 23–25: The Extent of Jesus' Fifth Discourse," *JBL* 128, no. 3

First, they indicate the change in location. While Jesus was teaching in the temple in chapter 23, in chapters 24–25 he was on the Mount of Olives. Second, it appears that Jesus' audience in chapter 23 was the Pharisees, while in chapters 24–25 he addressed his disciples privately.

Regarding these two claims, Hood points out that the disciples are actually mentioned throughout chapter 23 even though the Pharisees might be the direct object of Jesus' words. Hood also shows how similar changes occur in the discourse in Matthew 13, where Jesus moves from a boat in the water to the inside of a house. Yet these two different locations and potential changes in audience are not viewed as different discourses. Hood writes, "The heart of chs. 23–25 also contains a geographical shift that connects two parts of a discourse, precisely in order to indicate a slight shift in audience without a break in theme."[6] So, these two objections to the notion that chapter 23 belongs with chapters 24–25 are not persuasive. Other objections also fall under scrutiny.[7]

In support of including chapter 23 with chapters 24–25, Hood demonstrates the numerous literary connections between the Sermon on the Mount in the first discourse and Matthew 23–25 which will be explored later in this chapter.

The Five Discourses: Their Interrelation

Pennington writes that "the question of whether and in what ways the FMD's relate to each other has been neglected and not given sufficient attention, though it has not been completely ignored."[8] He further suggests that Matthew wrote the FMD in such

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(September 2009): 530.

[6]Hood, "Matthew 23–25," 531.

[7]Other objections include chapter 23 speech resembling controversy material, chapter 23 being best understood as the climax of previous material, a seeming connection between the start of the first discourse (5:1) and the start of chapters 24–25 (24:3), and a bracketing of the material between 21:9 and 23:39 with references to Ps 118.

[8]Jonathan T. Pennington, "Theological Epistemology in the Gospel According to Matthew" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, Georgia, November 21–24, 2015), 4.

a way that they work together in a unifying theme.

Pennington demonstrates this by showing what the discourses have in common with each other. For example, the first, third, and fifth discourses all discuss the kingdom of heaven, while the second and fourth discourses "give practical instructions for how disciples are to function as the *ekklesia*."[9]

He then directs the reader to the writings of Stanton who also shows a commonality between the first, third, and fifth discourses with regard to their audiences. In these discourses, Jesus speaks to a mixed audience consisting of a larger crowd as well as his disciples, while in the second and fourth discourses, Jesus only teaches the disciples.[10]

Finally, Pennington argues that there is a unifying theme that transcends all the FMD: that of "Revelation and Separation." The theme is evident as the revelation of God in the FMD separates people into two distinct groups: those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. He demonstrates how this is "most obvious" in the middle discourse but exists in each of the other four discourses as well.[11]

Returning to the previous discussion of the fifth discourse, a remarkable literary connection exists between that discourse and the first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5–7. Hood calls this a "cluster of parallels" and a "most important complex of links" between the discourses "when viewed in tandem." Table 3 puts these parallels on display:[12]

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[9]Pennington, "Theological Epistemology," 7.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Table 3 based on information from Hood, "Matthew 23–25," 540.

Table 3. Parallels between discourses 1 and 5

Discourse 1	*Discourse 5*
Receiving the Kingdom (5:2)	Losing the Kingdom (23:13)
Blessed Children of God (5:9)	Cursed Children of Hell (23:15, 23)
Commendation of Mercy and Purity (5:8)	Condemnation for Lack of Mercy and Purity (23:23–26)
Will Experience Persecution as Did the Prophets (5:10–12)	Will Receive Judgment for Persecuting the Prophets (23:29–35)
City where Disciples Work for Christ (5:13–16)	City where Lost Have Rejected Christ (23:37–39)

Beyond the first chapter of each of these discourses, many other literary connections can be made between these discourses. Both discourses address the swearing of oaths, length of prayers, hypocrisy, and judgment parables; contrast "wise" and "foolish"; reference those who use "Lord, Lord" at judgment without success; note that the "wise" person is saved; and mention "false prophets."[13]

The conclusion Hood reaches is significant: "Literary connections reinforce . . . the likely intent of Matthew for his audience: chs. 23 through 25 are intended to function as didactic material."[14] In other words, Matthew intentionally designed his Gospel, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to be used in catechesis, in the making and teaching of disciples. While this has been widely acknowledged with regard to the Sermon on the Mount discourse, even as prebaptismal instruction, the other discourses in Matthew have not often been regarded in the same way.[15] Osborne adds:

> It is probably true that the centrality of the five discourses does likely relate to the catechetical needs of the church. Matthew centers on the teaching discourses of Jesus and their ethical implications, and this redactional choice likely arises in part from catechetical interests.[16]

[13]Hood, "Matthew 23–25," 541.

[14]Ibid., 542.

[15]Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (London: The Athlone Press, 1961), 23.

[16]Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew,* ZECNT, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 33.

The Five Discourses: Devices Used to Broaden Application of the Discourses

In addition to these connections, scholars have pointed out other devices in the discourses that affirm this truth: the FMD are meant for teaching disciples beyond those present when Christ first spoke to them.

Ulrich Luz mentions in his examination of the Mission Discourse (Matt 10), "the transparent character of the discourse is clear. . . . The commands of Jesus are in principle valid for all Christians."[17] Andrew Lincoln concurs,

> It becomes clear that in the discourses Jesus was addressing the implied readers and their present situations as much as the disciples in the narrative. A number of features had already hinted that the implied readers were to see themselves as addressed by the discourses and to treat these discourses as in many ways transparent for the present."[18]

David Howell relates that the end of each discourse "generically points beyond the discourse's immediate narrative setting to address 'whoever' would be a disciple," and follows up by illustrating how each of the discourses do exactly that.[19]

Daniel Patte sees the reader's place in the Sermon on the Mount discourse: "His teaching is addressed to all his disciples, a group that includes international crowds (4.25), that is, a group not limited to the band of disciples that followed him during his ministry. . . . The Sermon is also addressed to the readers."[20] Patte also sees a broader expansion of the audience in the Kingdom Discourse of Matthew 13 to include "whoever (in the crowd, among the readers) will want to be a disciple."[21]

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[17]Ulrich Luz, "The Disciples in the Gospel According to Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 101.

[18]Andrew Lincoln, "Matthew: A Story for Teachers?," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 115.

[19]David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 223–25.

[20]Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 62.

[21]Ibid., 154.

Plot Devices

Jeannine Brown's insightful article on "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses" exposes a number of devices: plot, structural, formal, linguistic, topical, and generic—helping the readers see how Matthew's Gospel intentionally appeals to them.[22]

Plot devices in the narratives surrounding the FMD contribute to the broadening application to the reader. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount discourse, the audience begins as the disciples in 5:1–2 with the crowds in the background. However, by the final call of Jesus in 7:28–29, the crowds have become the major focus of the discourse. Lincoln sees this "as if the audience within the narrative itself is secondary; the teaching for the implied readers is what really counts."[23]

Brown also puts forward the "bumps" in the story, the discontinuity between the FMD and the surrounding narratives as a tool that "functions like a red flag to invite the reader to a more direct connection with the discourse teachings."[24] As an example she appeals to Matthew 10:5–23 when Jesus gives the disciples very specific instructions for a mission they are to undertake. The "bump" or discontinuity is that the reader never discovers anything further about the mission perhaps directing the finishing of the mission to the reader rather than the Twelve.

A third plot device is simply found in the Great Commission text at the narrative conclusion to the Gospel where the Twelve are instructed to make more disciples and teach them to obey all of Jesus' instructions. Howell calls this the "open-ended conclusion to the Gospel" where the reader is now included "with the disciples in

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[22]Jeannine K. Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses: Rhetorical Techniques and Scholarly Consensus," *New Testament Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 2005): 26–33.

[23]Lincoln, "Matthew," 116.

[24]Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," 24.

the Great Commission."[25] Terence Donaldson agrees that the reader will "join the original disciples as they are taught by their teacher and lord."[26]

Structural and Formal Devices

The most obvious structural devices in Matthew are the FMD themselves. As Brown writes, "By providing lengthy, uninterrupted sections of Jesus' teaching, Matthew heightens the effect of immediacy between Jesus and the reader."[27] While the narrative sections of Matthew's Gospel often move quickly, spanning long periods of time, the FMD slow down the action to real time, which puts the reader more ably in the scene.

In considering the ending of each of the FMD, another device used liberally is the increasing generalization of the teaching. Brown points out that in the Sermon on the Mount discourse, the Greek pronoun πᾶς is used nine times, with the majority of the uses in the last paragraphs. "The effect is to invite the reader to be one of those who fit the descriptions introduced by πᾶς."[28] In the Mission Discourse of Matthew 10, several techniques are used included moving from specific commands to more generic commands, moving from second person to third person pronouns, and ending the discourse with more uses of πᾶς and other indefinite pronouns. In the Kingdom Discourse of Matthew 13, narrative interruptions break up the first half of the discourse but seemingly vanish in the second half. Instead, questions between Jesus and the disciples provide the only break to the teaching, and questions usually serve to draw the reader in. In addition, the ending to this discourse appeals to the *person* who is trained for the kingdom of heaven in contrast to the previous six parables that teach the *nature* of the

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[25]Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 251.

[26]Terence L. Donaldson, "Guiding Readers – Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 42.

[27]Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," 26.

[28]Ibid.

kingdom. In the final two discourses of Matthew 18 and 23–25, the endings again are aimed at the reader through a warning and an eschatological parable.

As was previously mentioned, questions are used as a formal device in the FMD.[29] According to Howell, these kinds of rhetorical questions "compel acceptance or rejection."[30] Brown adds that "these questions tend to minimize the distancing effect that such interruptions might have on the reader" such that "the reader is virtually compelled to respond to Jesus' teaching in some way."[31]

Linguistic, Topical, and Generic Devices

The use of indefinite and inclusive language in the FMD draws the reader into the text. One example of this shown earlier is the more generalized endings to the discourses, but it is also on display throughout the discourses. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount discourse, "No one can serve two masters" (6:24) is universal in application, not only to the audience before Jesus. In the Kingdom discourse, "He who has ears, let him hear" (13:9) functions in the same manner. In the Eschatological discourse, "the one who endures to the end will be saved" (24:13) also invites the reader into the task of enduring.

Also common to each of the FMD is the use of contrasting alternatives as seen in table 4.[32]

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[29]Questions are found in the FMD in Matt 5:13, 47; 6:25–31; 7:3–4, 9–10, 16; 10:29; 18:12, 33; and 24:45.

[30]Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 219.

[31]Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," 28.

[32]Created from data in Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," 30–31.

Table 4. Contrasting alternatives in the FMD

Text	*Contrasting Alternatives*
5:19	Breaking or Keeping Commands
6:14–15	Forgiving or Not Forgiving
7:24–27	Acting or Not Acting on Jesus' Words
10:33	Acknowledging Jesus or Denying Him
10:39	Finding One's Life or Losing It
13:18–23	Contrasting Responses in the Parable of the Soils
13:41–43	Alternating Groups of Evil and Righteous Ones
18:5–6	Welcoming Children or Causing Them to Stumble
18:23–35	Forgiving rather than Unforgiving
24:45–51	Faithful or Wicked Slave
25:1–13	Wise or Foolish Bridesmaids
25:14–30	Productive or Worthless Servants
25:31–46	Sheep or Goats

Only one instance of direct commentary by the author exists in Matthew's Gospel and is located in 24:15 where the narrator says, "Let the reader understand." As Brown comments, "Such direct commentary is a bold rhetorical move that clearly and directly calls for response on the part of the reader."[33]

Another device that Matthew uses to address the reader is the use of extra-story elements. For example, in Matthew 18:17, a reference is made to the "church" in view of discipline. Of course, at the time of Jesus' teaching, the church had not yet been born. So, Matthew is pulling a term from the future and placing it in the historical discourse of Jesus which would appeal more directly to the reader than the immediate audience.

A final device that is used frequently in the FMD is the parable. Again, Brown is insightful:

> Understanding a parable is not separated from response to it; rather, comprehension seems to be wedded to proper alignment with the parable. Those who truly understand the parables align themselves with the right response visualized in the parables.[34]

[33]Brown, "Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses," 31.

[34]Ibid., 32.

Since approximately 75 percent of the Matthean parables are located in the FMD,[35] it is reasonable to assume that the reader will be engaged and called to action quite frequently.

Conclusion

What was the intent of Jesus in giving these five discourses as recorded in Matthew's Gospel? Were they simply a body of teaching for the Twelve as they prepared for kingdom Christ would bring in? Were they merely evangelistic in nature, preaching beyond the Twelve to the crowds who typically followed Jesus from place to place?

When one analyzes the structure of these discourses, how they interrelate with one another, and all the various rhetorical devices employed, a logical conclusion can be reached that Jesus, and Matthew under the Spirit's moving, intended for these FMD to be taught much more broadly than the audiences present at the original teaching venues. These discourses are designed to engage every one of their readers and to be used in the making of Christian disciples.

What do the FMD teach? What is the body of content that must be passed on to each succeeding generation of disciples? What are the key themes Jesus wanted to embed in the minds of his followers? That is the subject of the next chapter in this thesis.

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[35]Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 2–5.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIVE LOCI OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE MATTHEAN DISCOURSES

This chapter will review the five Matthean discourses to identify the most significant themes for discipleship within the Gospel. To identify and describe all the commands of Christ to his disciples in the Matthean discourses is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper is already limited in scope to just the Gospel of Matthew. However, in order to make progress in following the Lord's instruction to teach "all that I commanded you," the primary discipleship theme will be synthesized from teachings in each discourse. As Scaer writes:

> Matthew's orderliness in placing the teachings of Jesus into five discourses suggests a formalized teaching document. It also implies that what Matthew has written is a *didachē*, the teaching, doctrine, or perhaps even the dogma. At the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the crowds are described as being amazed at his *didachē*, or teaching (7:28). This is punctuated at the end of Matthew's Gospel when the disciples become authorized guardians of this teaching (28:16–20).[1]

Keith Sheridan adds, "In a sense, Matthew's gospel is a manual for discipleship, and we may expect to find in the lengthy discourses to the disciples not just instruction for the twelve limited to their historical mission but essentially what they are to pass on in their efforts to make disciples."[2]

What then, is to be passed on? The answer to that question is the objective of this chapter.

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[1]David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 51–52.

[2]Keith Sheridan, "Disciples and Discipleship in Matthew and Luke," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3, no. 3 (October 1973): 241.

Matthew's Gospel as *Bios*

Before looking at the discourses in detail, a brief overview of genre is helpful in establishing further context for the themes Jesus will put forward to his disciples in the FMD. Dryden provides a summary of recent thinking in this area.

> Over the last few decades a general consensus has emerged in line with the work of Richard Burridge, who has shown that the closest literary cousin to gospel in the Greco-Roman world was ancient biography (*bios*). . . .Ancient biographies were most often written explicitly as a form of wisdom, being more concerned with demonstrating how their subjects were exemplars of particular virtues than with giving a comprehensive personal history.[3]

Perkins adds, "Ancient moralists insisted that students learned as much from sustained observation of their teacher's way of life as from the formal teaching of a philosopher or rabbi."[4] The implication is that the Gospels were not written simply or even primarily to record the history of Jesus of Nazareth; rather the reader is being called to emulate the standard of virtue found in the words and deeds of Christ. The FMD in Matthew's Gospel were certainly instructive, but the narrative which follows each discourse is equally instructive as the disciple observes Jesus live out what he taught. This may be why Pennington sees the association of *bios* with *gospel* as "convincing, though not comprehensive."[5] He would see the *bios* of the Gospels as also the continuation of a narrative from the Old Testament into the New Testament. Thus, an understanding of Gospel genre combining both ancient biography and Old Testament narrative may better serve the author's original intention and the contemporary reader's understanding. Consequently, Pennington offers this definition: "Our canonical Gospels are the theological, historical, and aretological (virtue-forming) biographical narratives that retell the story and proclaim the significance of Jesus Christ, who through the power of the

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[3]J. de Waal Dryden, *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture* (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2018), 99-100.

[4]Pheme Perkins, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 168.

[5]Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 25

Spirit is the Restorer of God's reign."[6]

The Sermon on the Mount Discourse

The first discourse (Matt 5–7), aptly named the "Sermon on the Mount" by Augustine, is also the longest of the five discourses and the subject of numerous volumes.[7] Yet, as Stott laments,

> The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably it is the least understood, and certainly it is the least obeyed. It is the nearest thing to a manifesto that he ever uttered, for it is his own description of what he wanted his followers to be and to do.[8]

The Sermon on the Mount describes the ideal follower of Jesus in terms that stand in stark contrast to the rest of society; some would call the teaching counter-cultural.[9] Indeed, according to Jesus, his followers will even be persecuted for living according to his standards. One commentator actually calls this "The Discourse on Discipleship" rather than the Sermon on the Mount because that title "too often conveys to modern hearers the concept of a general code of ethics rather than the specific demands of the kingdom of heaven."[10] John Piper would likely agree, referencing the text of Matthew 5–7 in his book *What Jesus Demands from the World* over one hundred times.[11]

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[6]Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 35.

[7]Laney lists nine popular interpretations of the Sermon: a pattern for Christian living (Augustine), commands for all Christians (Martin Luther), a moral code for religious orders (Thomas Aquinas, a blueprint for a new society (Tolstoy), an impossible ideal (Gerhard Kittel), an interim ethic (Johannes Weiss, Albert Schweitzer), an ethic of intention (Johannes Muller, an eschatological ethic (some dispensationalists), and conditions for entrance into the kingdom (Dwight Pentecost). J. Carl Laney, "Nine Ways to Approach the Sermon on the Mount," Transformed, Western Seminary, last modified February 22, 2016, https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformedblog/2016/02/22/7141/.

[8]John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 15.

[9]Jesus himself affirmed the notion that he was describing the ideal disciple in 5:48 when he said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

[10]R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 153.

[11]John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

The Character of a Disciple

The first section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3–16) speaks to the character of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Often referred to as the Beatitudes, these eight axioms are both instructive and comforting to the follower of Jesus.

Makarios. Each axiom begins with the Greek μακάριος, sometimes translated "happy" but more often translated "blessed" or "approved." Carson explains, "When man blesses God, he is approving God. Of course, he is not doing this in some condescending manner, but rather he is eulogizing God, praising God. When God blesses man, he is approving man; and that is always an act of condescension."[12] France would go further, stating, "It introduces someone who is to be congratulated, someone whose place in life is an enviable one. 'Happy' is better than 'blessed,' but only if used not of a mental state but of a condition of life. 'Fortunate' or 'well off' is less ambiguous."[13]

Pennington states that the term *makarios* is one of the two rails on which his understanding of the Sermon rides.[14] He sees a connection between *makarios* and the Hebrew term *ʾašrê*, primarily because there is an uncommon direct correlation between the two terms in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Every instance of *ʾašrê* in the Hebrew Old Testament is translated as *makarios* in the Greek Septuagint.[15] According to Pennington, *ʾašrê* is seen primarily in the poetic books of Psalms and Proverbs, where right at the outset the term is compared to the flourishing of a tree planted by the water (Psalm 1:1).[16] Pennington proposes the best way to read the beatitudes and thus ascertain the meaning of *makarios* is with the dual readings of

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[12]D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 16.

[13]R. T. France, *Matthew*, in vol. 1, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 114.

[14]Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 41.

[15]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 46.

[16]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 52.

eschatological reversal blessings and wisdom or virtue-ethics reading, along with this concept of human flourishing.[17] Eschatological reversal blessings show how the current situation will ultimately be reversed when he culminates his kingdom. For example, now, there may be spiritual poverty; but then, there will be a heavenly kingdom (5:3). Pennington, like many other commentators, sees "that the primary subtext of the Beatitudes is Isa. 61" and that they "are examples of the thoroughly eschatological vision of Isaiah."[18] Wisdom or virtue-ethics reading with regard to the Beatitudes concerns itself with understanding "Jesus's answer to the great human question of happiness" and "seeing the Beatitudes as a picture of and guide on the journey of the soul or ladder of ascent to God."[19] Dryden takes a similar approach in defining *makarios*:

> This adjective is notoriously difficult to translate and combines the ideas of eschatological blessing with "contentment/happiness." If we keep in mind that the Bible understands joy as a gift of God, then "joyful" would be a good translation. However we translate it, the point of these benedictions, connected to certain virtues, is to make those virtues desirable.[20]

At first reading the Beatitudes appear to be paradoxical in nature. For example, verse four might be read "Happy are those who are not happy." Calvin opines,

> I admit that this doctrine is far from the general opinion, but it should be the philosophy of Christ's disciples, that they may set their happiness beyond this world, and above the desire of the flesh. Though the logic of the flesh will never allow what Christ is preaching here, yet it is no pipe-dream that He is propounding, like the paradoxical game which the Stoics used to play, but a real life demonstration of why those are the truly happy whose state is rated most unhappy.[21]

What do the Beatitudes reveal about the character of a disciple of Jesus Christ? Namely, that he be spiritually bankrupt, mournful over his sin, meek in his behavior, hungry and

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[17]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 64.

[18]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 60.

[19]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 61-62.

[20]Dryden, *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom*, 148.

[21]John Calvin. *A Harmony of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, in vol. 1 of *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. A. W. Morrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 169.

thirsty for doing what is right, merciful toward others, pure in his heart not just in his outward actions, seeking and pursuing peace wherever possible, and at times opposed for his faithful life. He is also to bear witness to Christ, pictured as salt which flavors and prevents corruption, and as light which illuminates the darkness. But as one author writes, "Salt is of no use as long as it stays in the salt cellar. Light is of no use under a bowl. . . . Disciples, therefore, must be both distinctive and involved."[22] They must engage with people.

Wonderful rewards await disciples who exhibit these qualities. From receiving comfort from the forgiveness of sins, to receiving mercy, to being "stuffed" with righteousness through Christ, to seeing God and being called his son, to inheriting the earth—God promises great future blessing to those who faithfully follow Christ. That future blessing also has effect in the present. For example, in regard to those who mourn receiving comfort, John MacArthur affirms: "As we continually mourn over our sin, we shall be continually comforted—now, in this present life. God is not only the God of future comfort but of present comfort."[23]

The text gives special emphasis to persecution and its reward in verses 10–12. First, Jesus makes the pronouncement of blessing in verse 10 as he had in the previous verses. Then, he changes the person from third ("they") to second ("you") in verses 11–12. This intensifies the point Jesus is making, both with regard to the persecution itself as well as the reward. Finally, he uses an *inclusio* that bookends the Beatitudes ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven") in verse 3 and verse 10. The verbs in these two verses, however, are present tense rather than future tense like the verbs in verses 4–9. This seems to confirm that the kingdom of heaven belongs *now* to true followers of Jesus who are

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[22]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 172.

[23]John MacArthur, *Matthew 1–7, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 162.

characterized by these traits. This also excludes nonbelievers from participating in these blessings. Pennington summarizes this section, "And herein lies the genius of the Beatitudes: they are situated in a Christ-centered apocalyptic and eschatological understanding of the world; they present true human flourishing as entailing suffering as Jesus's disciples await God's coming kingdom that Jesus is inaugurating."[24]

The Duties of a Disciple

The second section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:17–48) focuses on the relationship between Jesus' disciples and the Old Testament ("Law and the Prophets"). Jesus puts forward a strong claim that he has not come to destroy the Old Testament but rather to fulfill it (Matthew 5:18). He follows this with three additional, related claims: (1) All of the Law to the tiniest detail is in force until it is fulfilled, (2) If someone follows the Law and teaches it to others they are great in God's kingdom and vice versa, and (3) A disciple's righteousness had to exceed the Pharisees and scribes in order to get into heaven. Interpretations of verses 17–20 abound, but the big idea seems to be that Jesus, in the subsequent verses, will teach the correct interpretation of the Law as opposed to what the Jewish disciples had heard from scribes and others who treated the Law as a sterile "to do list" to suit their own agendas.[25] The effect of this teaching will be to show the utter hopelessness of achieving righteousness by the Law, yet not minimizing its demands. The purpose of this teaching will be to exalt Christ and promote his lordship. Again, Carson is helpful:

Jesus came not to abolish the Old Testament but to fulfill it—fulfill it in the sense

[24]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount,* 153.

[25]Pennington describes the various approaches to these verses: "On one end of the spectrum is a denomination such as the Seventh Day Adventists, who see the specifics of the Mosaic law as an essential part of Christian experience, hence their strict dietary and worship rituals. The dispute between the Reformed tradition and the much younger dispensationalist tradition rests largely on this issue as well, the latter rejecting any replacement of Israel by the church. Within the Reformation, many of the differences between the Calvinist/Reformed tradition and that of the Lutherans also rests on a different reading of the relationship between the law and the new covenant." Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount,* 170.

> that he himself was the object toward which it pointed. Therefore it is the height of folly not to listen to his commands, the commands of the kingdom.[26]

Jesus now makes application of what he means by a higher righteousness than that of the Pharisees and scribes. He wants to correct the misinterpretations of the Law and at the same time demonstrate his authority as Messiah to give commands of his own which must be obeyed by those seeking to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus addresses six areas of the Law in verses 21–48.

In addressing murder, Jesus calls his followers to a higher standard of not being angry at a brother or even insulting a brother. Such infractions lead directly to judgment and Hell! Even in worship, reconciliation with a wronged brother is a priority over one's offerings to God.

Jesus directed attention next to adultery and decrees that lust itself results in the same judgment. Christ's disciples will instead foster an attitude of dealing radically with sin. Stott adds,

> It is better to forgo some experiences this life offers in order to enter the life which is life indeed; it is better to accept some cultural amputation in this world than risk final destruction in the next. . . . we have to decide, quite simply, whether to live for this world or the next, whether to follow the crowd or Jesus Christ.[27]

Divorce in Jesus' day was allowed for pretty much any reason. Quarles details how the different rabbinical schools formed different opinions of the meaning of the phrase "something improper" in Deuteronomy 24:1.[28] Some of the more ridiculous allowances from the school of Hillel found their way into the *Mishnah*.[29] Josephus also records that

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[26]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 40.

[27]Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 91.

[28]Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Modern Church* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 125.

[29]According to the Mishnah, a man could divorce his wife if she was barren, became a deaf mute, or had epilepsy, tetanus, warts, or leprosy. Divorce could also take place if she had poor posture or thinning hair, or if her eyes were too high or too low or cross-eyed. He could divorce her if she burned his food, yelled at him so neighbors could hear, visited her parents' home, or spoke to another man besides him. He could even divorce her simply if he found someone prettier than his wife. (*m. Yebam*. 6:6; 14:1; *m. Git.* 4:8; 9:10; *m. Ketub*. 7:1, 7; *m. Qidd*. 2:5; *m. Bek*. 7)

divorce was permitted, "for any causes whatsoever."[30] Jesus speaks with authority, restricting divorce for all reasons except sexual unfaithfulness. In addition, he states that such illegitimate divorces lead to adultery.

Jesus next moves to address swearing. Instead of regulating the oaths people may make, he commands that such oaths not even be made by his followers. "Jesus' prohibition of swearing is based on the assumption that God requires truthfulness. . . . As soon as it is necessary to bolster it with an oath in order to persuade others to believe what is said, the ideal of transparent truthfulness has been compromised."[31]

The subject of retaliation was well-known to the Jewish people from the Law. The principle of retribution ("an eye for an eye") is now transformed by Christ's kingdom principles. "In place of the principle of retribution he sets nonresistance; in place of the defense of legal rights he sets uncalculating generosity; in place of concern for oneself he sets concern for the other."[32] And while such principles may be difficult to live in a sin-cursed world, they are also not incompatible with the other teachings of Christ in standing for justice and the rights of others. This is about self-sacrifice as opposed to personal retaliation. And it is "the way the Savior himself went, the way of the cross."[33]

Finally, Jesus addresses love. Loving one's neighbor is at the heart of the Law but hating one's enemy is not taught in the Old Testament. Jesus turns that erroneous teaching on its head by insisting that his disciples love their enemies and pray for their persecutors. He challenges the notion that loving others who reciprocate in their love is anything remarkable or righteous. And he powerfully concludes with the call to be perfect just as God is perfect. This is the call of those who would enter the kingdom of

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[30]Josephus (*Ant*. 4.8.23 §253). Philo also affirmed this view (*Spec. Leg*. 3.5 §330–31).

[31]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 215–16.

[32]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 218.

[33]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 55.

heaven.

Teleios. At the beginning of the Sermon, the term *makarios* was highlighted as one of the key ideas of the Sermon. Pennington referred to the term as one of two rails on which his understanding of the Sermon rides. The other rail is the term *teleios* which is often translated "perfect" as in 5:48. France shows how this term is the "more" that is demanded by Jesus in 5:47 and is, in fact, "God's requirement which goes beyond legal conformity. *Telios* is wider than moral perfection: it indicated 'completeness,' 'wholeness,' a life totally integrated to the will of God, and thus reflecting his character."[34] Pennington demonstrates that:

> The language of "be *teleios* as your heavenly Father is *teleios*" is strongly reminiscent and allusive of the call to holiness in imitation of God in Lev. 19:2 and 20:26. . . . But the change from the much more common *hagios* (holy) to the less frequent *teleios* is very significant. . . . not moral perfection but wholehearted orientation toward God. . . . This makes sense of Jesus's constant attack on the Pharisees for being *hypocrites*. . . . They are hypocrites because they are not unified in heart and action; they actually *do* the right things, but they are not the right kind of people because their hearts are wrong.[35]

The Piety of a Disciple

The third section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:1–18) challenges Jesus' followers to avoid hypocrisy, especially in the giving of alms, prayer, and fasting. The main point Jesus is making is that his followers should not do outward religious activity in order to gain approval from men. With regard to almsgiving, Jesus calls his disciples to help the needy in a private, quiet manner. If one "blows his own horn" in attracting attention to his donation, the human applause received is his only reward.

Similarly, in regard to prayer, Jesus advocates a private, secret time of prayer rather than an open, public, men-pleasing speech. Jesus then takes an excursus on the

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[34]France, *Matthew*, 134.

[35]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 78–79.

subject providing a model prayer containing six petitions. The first three are related to God himself: his name, his kingdom, and his will. The second three relate to man and his needs: daily food, sins, and temptations.

Jesus, then, addresses fasting and condemning the abuses of the practice. The hypocrites of Jesus' day would mar their appearance to make it evident to all that they were fasting. Jesus commands differently for his disciples: "Jesus is telling his followers that when they fast they are to act normally so that no one but God will know it. . . . No voluntary act of spiritual discipline is ever to become an occasion for self-promotion."[36]

The Perspectives of a Disciple

This fourth section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19–34) begins with three metaphors to demonstrate the proper perspective that a disciple has with regard to treasure in heaven versus material possessions on earth. Jesus then discusses the trust disciples should have in their heavenly Father to provide for them.

The first metaphor is the storing up of treasure in heaven rather than on earth. Why? Treasures on earth can be stolen and those not stolen are eventually subject to deterioration. More importantly, the type of treasure disciples pursue reveals the condition of their hearts. What is this treasure in heaven? Certainly, it is beyond one's ability to describe fully in human terms and yet God's Word gives the reader glimpses of such treasure, glimpses believers even experience in part here on earth. Carson elaborates,

> Scripture . . . pictures love undiluted, a way of life utterly sinless, integrity untarnished, work and responsibility without fatigue, deep emotions without tears, worship without restraint or disharmony or sham, and best of all the presence of God in an unqualified and unrestricted and personal way.[37]

The second metaphor uses the eye to picture the contrast between a "healthy" and "bad"

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[36]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 78–79.

[37]Ibid., 81–82.

disciple. The term "healthy" is better translated "single" which makes one or two implications. Jesus may be pointing the singular focus on heavenly treasure that a disciple must maintain, especially in contrast to the "two masters" in the third metaphor. The opposite of the word translated "healthy" or "single" is "selfish greed or meanness."[38] Jesus, therefore, may also be referring to the expected generosity of his disciples with regard to their material possessions. Either or both of these meanings are possible and fit the context.

The third and final metaphor references slavery and the impossibility of a slave having two masters. John Stott gives a helpful summary:

> Jesus now explains that behind the choice between two treasures (where we lay them up) and two visions (where we fix our eyes) there lies the still more basic choice between two masters (whom we are going to serve). It is a choice between God and mammon.[39]

Having given the perspective of a disciple regarding treasure or material possessions, Jesus next speaks to the perspective of a disciple regarding trust in his heavenly Father.

The command to "not be anxious" is a very significant theme in the Matthean Discourses, appearing here as well as in the Mission Discourse (Matt 10) and the Kingdom Discourse (Matt 13). Illustrating the reasons for such a trust in the Father, Jesus appeals to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. The *a fortiori* argument presented in verse 30 helps the disciple understand that if God feeds the birds and clothes the grass, how "much more" will he take care of his children who are "of more value than they." If a disciple can't find confidence in those truths, he has "little faith" indeed.

Jesus has a message for Christian worriers: trust me! He gives two reasons why believers should not worry about basic necessities of life like eating, drinking, and clothing. The first is because the Gentiles, those without God, the pagans, worry. They

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[38]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 262.

[39]Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 158.

worry but God's disciples do not. The second reason is because God knows people's needs so by worrying one of two lies are being communicating: either God doesn't really know, or he doesn't really care. Carson writes,

> Away with secular thinking. The follower of Jesus will be concerned to have a distinctive lifestyle, one that is characterized by values and perspectives so un-pagan that his life and conduct are, as it were, stamped all over with the words, "Made in the kingdom of God."[40]

Jesus finishes this section with a positive goal for his disciples in this area of trust. He calls his followers to "seek first" his kingship. This is another way of saying "God's people living under God's rule." As his disciples submit themselves to his lordship and his righteous commands, then God will provide everything they need to survive. God does not promise wealth or abundance of possessions. He promises to supply basic necessities. In verse 34, this truth is echoed, that each day will have its own troubles. Tomorrow does not promise to be trouble-free—quite the opposite! But God will give his children what they need to survive from day to day. Stott adds: "It is reasonable to trust in our heavenly Father's love, even in times of grievous trouble, because we have been privileged to see it revealed in Christ and his cross."[41] Pennington summarizes,

> Herein lies a deep irony of human existence. According to Jesus's teachings, when people seek to keep everything together and provide for themselves apart from God, the result is not the sought-after peace, but rather, anxiety. . . . But the people who live like the flowers and birds, apparently foolish from the world's financial perspective, are the ones who are free from anxiety. They seek first God's kingdom and as a result get all their needs met without anxiety.[42]

The Relationships of a Disciple

The fifth section of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:1–12) calls the disciple to consider his interactions with others and with God. With regard to others, Jesus gives a

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[40]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 98–99.

[41]Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 168.

[42]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 252.

command that is often quoted but rarely understood properly: “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Doesn’t the scripture, however, call the Christian to exercise judgment? Certainly, church discipline itself would call for a judgment to take place. Even the Lord Jesus pronounced judgments on individuals and places. It may be a useful polemic to throw Matthew 7:1 in the face of someone who is critical of a believer’s words or actions. But the meaning of this command has more to do with attitude, than action. In fact, it may be better translated “Do not be judgmental.” This speaks of a critical spirit, where an individual is focused on the failings of others. Calvin writes: “Thus we see Christ’s intention, that we should not be too eager or ill-natured or malicious, or even over-curious, in judging those nearest to us.”[43] Carson adds, “What is fundamentally at stake, I think, is attitude. This is clearly seen that particular kind of critical spirit found in the gossip . . . he speaks without any desire to build up, or any real concern to instill discernment.”[44]

Those who pursue a critical, judgmental spirit to others will receive the same treatment to the same extent from the true Judge. That alone should be a motivation for disciples to avoid such a spirit. Again, this does not mean that a Christian should overlook sin in other’s lives, but rather should proceed gently and humbly in confrontation. And further, the disciple should remove the “log” from his own eye before seeking to remove the “speck” from his brother’s eye. Self-evaluation should always precede other-evaluation. Christians are called to be discriminatory, however, in regard to “dogs” and “pigs.” As they seek to share the good news (“pearls”), their valuable treasure, with the world, they will encounter people who will not hear it. The command from the Lord is to not waste time with those people. France explains, “There may be nonetheless times and situation when a responsible assessment of the likely response

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[43]Calvin. *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 225.

[44]Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount*, 107.

requires the disciple's instinctive generosity to be limited, so that holy things are not brought into contempt."[45] Keener agrees, "it does not allow us to prejudge who may receive our message, but does forbid us to try to force it on those who show no inclination to accept it."[46]

In regard to the disciple's relationship with God, the Lord calls for persistence in prayer and trust. Keener points out Matthew's use of a typically Semitic step parallelism in Matthew 7:7–10:

A Ask, and it will be given you
  B Seek and you will find
    C Knock and it will be opened to you
A′ For everyone who asks receives
  B′ And the one who seeks finds
    C′ And to the one who knocks it will be opened[47]

Notably, all the imperatives in verse 7, αἰτεῖτε, ζητεῖτε and κρούετε are present tense, emphasizing the ongoing nature of the commands.[48] Persistence is required of disciples in regard to prayer. Carson laments the current state of prayer in the Western world:

> Our environment loves hustle and bustle, smooth organization and powerful institutions, human self-confidence and human achievement, new opinions and novel schemes; and the church of Jesus Christ has conformed so thoroughly to this environment that it is often difficult to see how it differs in these matters from contemporary paganism.[49]

Some difference of opinion exists about the specificity of the verbs: ask, seek, and knock. One position looks to the surrounding context to link "ask" to the relationship of father/child as in verses 9–10, "seek" to the kingdom of God as in Matthew 6:33, and

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[45]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 277.

[46]Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 159.

[47]Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 244.

[48]Charles L. Quarles, *Matthew*, EGGNT (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2017), 72.

[49]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 117.

"knock" to the gate in Matthew 7:13 referring to salvation.[50] Alternatively, France takes the position that all three verbs are synonyms and that the repetition is for emphasis and clarity in communication.[51] Regardless whose interpretation is correct, the emphasis is certainly on the disciple's persistence in prayer in his relationship with God.

As Jesus illustrates that relationship through the father-son motif, he again uses the *a fortiori* argument (Matt 6:30). The argument is simple: if evil parents give children good gifts, how much more will God give good gifts to his children? Interestingly, as Stott highlights, "Jesus here assumes, even asserts, the inherent sinfulness of human nature. . . . So the force of the parable lies rather in a contrast than in a comparison between God and men."[52] In other words, no one is more gracious and generous than the heavenly Father.

This does not mean, however, that whatever a Christian asks of God that God is obligated to give it, as if God were a slave to one's whims, like a genie. The text is clear: God will give "good things" to his children which may or may not reflect their understanding of their own needs.

This section ends with a familiar maxim in verse 12, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Carson shows that Matthew 5:17 and 7:12 form an *inclusio* with the phrase "the Law and the Prophets."[53] This would indicate that the main body of Jesus' sermon lies between these two texts and is focused on the righteousness demanded by the kingdom of heaven. So, in this sense, the verse functions as a summary statement of the sermon.

This kind of proverb is not uncommon among religions, even ancient ones. But

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[50]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 244–45.

[51]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 280.

[52]Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 185.

[53]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 120.

what is starkly different about Jesus' proverb is the positive emphasis rather than negative. Most religions tell their adherents not to do things to others that they do not want done to them. One commentator recounts the famous story about Rabbi Hillel who lived about the time of Christ. A Gentile had asked him to teach him the whole Torah while he was standing on one leg. The rabbi's answer: "Do not do to your neighbor what is hateful to you. This is the whole Torah."[54] But this allows a person to just avoid doing wrong without any demand for doing right. Jesus has a higher calling for his disciples: to do for others what they would wish done for them—to effect good in others' lives. This is how disciples in the kingdom live. Don Carson reflects on the disciple's motivation in living this way:

> Why are we to act in this way? Jesus does *not* say that we are to do to others what we would like them to do to us *in order that* they will do it to us. . . . Rather, the reason . . . is that such behavior sums up the Law and the Prophets. In other words, such behavior conforms to the requirements of the kingdom of God.[55]

The Response of a Disciple

The final section of the Sermon (7:13–27) sets out four sets of alternatives in responding to the body of the sermon. Jesus is making clear the truth that there are only two ways to live. One way leads to life, the other to destruction.

Two gates. The first set of alternatives Jesus mentions is the broad gate and the narrow gate (Matt 7:13–14). The gate a person enters will ultimately determine their destination. The well-traveled, wide gate is used by most people, pursuing the "easy way" but ending up in destruction. The narrow gate leads to a "hard way" but leads to life. Jesus is setting his disciples' expectations for what following him might entail.

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[54]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 283.

[55]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 121.

Two trees. The second set of alternatives Jesus mentions is the good tree and the bad tree (Matt 7:15–20). Each tree bears fruit in keeping with their nature, bad fruit off the bad tree and good fruit off the good tree. Jesus is using the illustration to address the discernment his disciples need to recognize false prophets for what they truly are. Carson adds,

> False teachers must be identified. If they are not recognized immediately by their doctrine, then sooner or later they may be recognized by their lives; for what a man believes must sooner or later manifest itself in what he does. Jesus affirms an indissoluble link between belief and conduct.[56]

Two claims. The third set of alternatives juxtaposes those who claim they are serving the Lord with those who are actually doing his will (Matt 7:21–23). These sobering words remind his followers that "it is possible for a man to preach correct doctrine, and in the name of Christ, and yet himself remain outside the kingdom of God."[57] The verses are not teaching a salvation by works, but rather the distinguishing of those with a genuine relationship to Christ with those who are masquerading as disciples without the inner reality. Neither are these verses teaching that a Christian can lose his salvation; rather, Jesus declares at the judgment "I never knew you." There is no evidence in the text that these under judgment were insincere in their claims, which leads the reader to assume they are self-deceived. As France explains, these professors of Christ are "unaware that their discipleship does not match up to Jesus' criteria of obedience (v. 21) and personal relationship (v. 23).[58] As a result of their self-deception, Jesus will sentence them to "depart" quoting from Psalm 6:8.

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[56]Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*, 136.

[57]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959–60), 521–22.

[58]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 152.

Two builders. The final set of alternatives involve two men who are building two houses (Matt 7:24–27). One man builds the house on a rock and one on the sand. The storms come along and beat on the houses. The one on the rock stands while the one on the sand is destroyed. The two men have something in common and something in contrast with each other. They both hear the words of Christ, just as Jesus' audience did that day on the mountainside or the readers do in the twenty-first century. However, the man building on the rock is the one who both hears and does the words of Jesus. The man building on the sand hears but does not do the words of Jesus. Interestingly,

> Words such as *house* and *build* have ecclesiological references in the New Testament. Along with the word *rock*, they are used in the promise to Peter that Jesus would build his church on the rock. . . . In both the parable and the words to Peter, rock [*petran*] provides the foundation for the building. Just as the church survives a siege from hell, so the house on the rock is threatened but not demolished by floodwaters.[59]

Summary

In reviewing the character in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus desires his disciples to possess, the theme of righteousness emerges as dominant, a greater righteousness than the Pharisees. Gilbert writes, "its message is quite clear in that Jesus explains the characteristics of righteous living in the kingdom."[60] Pennington adds:

> Faithful discipleship, what Matthew calls being "righteous" and what we can call "virtue," is entirely compatible with God's initiating and sustaining grace. These two come together in the vision of what it means to be a follower/imitator of Jesus, which is the ultimate perlocutionary purpose of the Sermon.[61]

The Mission Discourse

The second instructional passage in Matthew (Matt 10) is directed specifically to the Twelve who are sent out on a mission. This discourse provides their marching

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[59]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 242.

[60]Scott Allan Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples: Sermonic Application of the Imperative of the Great Commission" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 2014), 127.

[61]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 308.

orders.[62] In one sense, these disciples are the prototypical disciples, models for all who would come after them. And yet, specific, delegated authority sets them apart as well. Familiar themes from the Sermon on the Mount surface again in these words.

The Context of the Mission

The preceding narrative in 9:35–10:4 sets the stage for this discourse, in a similar way to 4:23–25 and the first discourse. Matthew gives a summary statement about Jesus' ministry of kingdom proclamation and healing. Then, he relates a clear motivation for the actions Jesus would take in chapter ten: compassion for an oppressed and helpless people, lost sheep needing shepherds. This is likely an allusion to Old Testament passages like Ezekiel 34, where the Lord takes on the role of shepherd for his sheep because of the failure of their current shepherd-leaders in not feeding them or caring for them. Because Jesus loves the nation of Israel, he sees a need for shepherds who will duplicate his compassionate ministry to them. Then, he changes metaphors to describe Israel as a field ripe for harvesting but without sufficient workers to do the reaping. In fact, he commands his disciples to pray that God will provide such laborers in 9:38.

In a beautiful response to this urgent need, Jesus then answers his own prayer request by selecting twelve men to meet the need he had just described. In 10:1–4, he gives the names of this diverse yet common group of mainly Galileans. Keener writes, "To include a *tax collector* (who was backed by the elite, v. 3) and possibly a revolutionary (v. 4) in the same band of disciples was noteworthy."[63]

The fact that Jesus selected *twelve* men is significant. Although not mentioned in this account, the number of Jesus' selected representatives would correspond to the

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[62]Davies and Allison point out that the word *instructing* in 11:1, the Greek word διατάσσω, "means to set troops in order for battle." W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 2, ICC (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 239.

[63]Keener, *Matthew*, 200.

twelve tribes of Israel. This would be seen most clearly in 19:28, as France explains, "where these twelve disciples are given an eschatological role when, alongside the Son of Man seated on his own glorious throne, they, too, 'will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"[64] He also notes that when Judas commits suicide it was important to the Eleven that they replace Judas in order to regain that special number.[65]

One final contextual note of importance is Matthew's use of the term *apostle* in 10:2. This is the first and only time he uses the word in his Gospel. The emphasis seems to be on the sending out of these men with the authority of Christ to continue his mission to the nation of Israel.

The Commissioning of the Twelve

In 10:5–15, Jesus begins his instruction for these newly selected men about to be sent out on their mission. Clearly, not every instruction given to the Twelve is universal in scope for all future disciples. For example, they are told by Jesus not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans (v. 5). The task for the modern reader, then, is to determine which elements of Jesus' discourse *are* applicable to the contemporary disciple and which are reserved for the apostles.

Regarding the restricting of their ministry to Jews only, the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans is well-known and illustrated in the incredulity of the Samaritan woman at Jesus' conversation with her in John 4. However, another reason for this restriction "may have been Jesus' understanding of his own place in redemptive history. . . . This was a stage in the drama of redemption, a stage to be superseded in the great commission he himself would one day leave with his followers, commanding them to make disciples of all the nations (28:18–20)."[66]

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[64]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 376.

[65]Ibid.

[66]D. A. Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World: An Exposition of Matthew 8–10* (Grand

Regarding the ministry of the Twelve, they were to continue the proclamation and healing ministry of Lord Jesus as was summarized in 9:35. The proclamation was that the "kingdom of God is at hand"—the same message of John the Baptist (3:2) and the Lord Jesus himself (4:17). This is an activity still tied to Christ's disciples today. Keener clarifies, "To make disciples for this king is to proclaim the good news that God's future kingdom is already active in this age."[67] However, the apostles also were given power to accomplish miraculous works, just like Jesus did. Interestingly, Matthew does not record any miracles done by the apostles except one attempted miracle that failed in Matthew 17. So, are Christians today expected to have continued power to do miracles? The debate over continuationism is still very controversial in twenty-first-century Christianity. Carson makes a compelling observation that "signs and wonders . . . are rather frequently associated with the apostles."[68] And while there are many today who claim to exercise such signs and wonders, "If the command to raise the dead (Matt. 10:8) were a universal mandate, it is rather surprising that none of the early Christians has survived to the present day."[69] So, the healing ministry of the Twelve seems limited to the apostles themselves and others, like Paul, who would be made apostles in the early church.

In verses 8–10, the disciples are taught to live simply in their itinerant mission. They are commanded to take no money, no staff for protection, and not even a pair of sandals. They are to live off the generosity of those who will keep as they journey. Scaer notes, "By depending on others for the bare necessities of life, the apostles are living examples of the Sermon on the Mount's requirement to have no concern about food and

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Rapids: Baker, 1987), 118–19.

[67]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 316.

[68]Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*, 120.

[69]Ibid., 121.

clothing (6:25)."[70] This instruction too seems to be restricted to the Twelve since Jesus reverses the policy in Luke 22:35–36 after his arrest.

Verses 11–15 center around the worthiness of a potential host to receive these apostles into his home and provide for their needs. The phrase "until you depart" in verse 11 points to an itinerant ministry, rather than settling in one location. The worthiness, if found, results in a blessing, the "peace" passed to him by the apostles. A home's worthiness was determined by its reception to the message of the apostles. Those who were found to be unworthy, rejecting the message, would be in danger of dire judgment from God. France notes, "The discrimination required reminds us of Jesus' maxim in 7:6 about placing treasure only before those who are able to appreciate it."[71] In fact, the apostles were instructed to "shake off the dust from your feet" if the home did not receive them. While this practice is still observed by some, like Jehovah's Witnesses, it seems clear it was intended only for these specially authorized Jewish disciples. Leon Morris explains that "the Jews held that even the earth in Gentile lands was unclean, and it was their custom when they returned from abroad to shake from their feet the dust they had acquired when abroad. Jesus is telling his followers to treat the unwelcoming Jews as they would treat Gentiles."[72] Finally, Jesus warns that the judgment on these unwelcoming Jews would be greater than the punishment meted out on Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, Jesus will issue such condemnation to three such towns: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in the very next chapter (11:20–24).

The Conflict with the World

In the next paragraph of verses 16–23, the Lord returns to a familiar theme:

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[70]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 278.

[71]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 286.

[72]Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 250.

persecution. To date, Jesus had only insinuated that they might be rejected from a certain house or town; but now, he will broaden and intensify the reality into which they were headed. And interestingly, he returns to the sheep metaphor but to a starkly different picture. Now, the disciples would be the sheep and the people to whom they would be sent would be like wolves. Yet, they are instructed to live with wisdom (as opposed to naiveté) and innocence. Jesus describes the potential of being arrested, judged before the Sanhedrin, and even physically whipped in the Jewish synagogues. Paul suffered this kind of persecution five times in his first two decades of Christian ministry according to 2 Corinthians 11:24. Jesus talks of their having to appear before Gentile rulers to answer for their witnessing for the Lord's sake. The Bible records that James was beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:2) and Paul testified before Agrippa, Festus, and even Nero.

Verses 19–20 give comfort in the middle of these difficult words. The Father would send his Spirit to help them, to give them the words to say, when they were in these predicaments. And as a result, they should not be anxious, a repeated command in this discourse and reminiscent of 6:25–34 where it was also the provision of the Father that allowed for settled confidence rather than fear.

From simple rejection to whipping, the Lord now adds the possibility of martyrdom to the list of responses his messengers may experience. Verses 21–23 speaks to the dismantling of even families over the message of Jesus, even betraying each other all the way to death. And Jesus assures his apostles of almost universal hatred toward them. Then, he gives another promise of encouragement. If the disciples would persevere, endure persecution, all the way to the end, they would be saved, they would find themselves with God in heaven forever. "Jesus is talking not about the preservation of physical life, but the ultimate wellbeing which is compatible with the loss of physical life."[73]

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[73]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 395.

The message of verse 23 at first may seem a bit cryptic. Jesus tells the apostles that they will not run out of towns to visit until "the Son of Man comes." At first reading, modern disciples may think of Jesus' second coming which has not occurred yet, thousands of years after this account. In fact, this talk about the coming of the Son of Man is referenced seven times in Matthew's Gospel. But the word that is used in each of these instances is not παρουσία, the technical word for Christ's second coming.[74] And the text does not say that the Son of Man is coming down *to earth*.

France suggests that verse 23 and the others like it are referring to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14, where the son of man

> . . . *comes* before God to be enthroned as king. . . . he *comes* in the clouds of heaven *to God*. . . . This means that, despite centuries of later Christian interpretive tradition, when the gospels speak of 'the Son of Man coming' the presumption must be that they are speaking not of an eschatological *parousia* but of a heavenly enthronement, the vindication and empowering of the Son of Man after his earthly rejection and suffering, when God will turn the tables on those who thought they had him in their power. . . . it is, to use Lucan terminology, ascension language.[75]

Thus, the coming of the Son of Man in verse 23 could be "marking the end of a mission specifically to Israel, when the universal kingship of the Son of Man is established after his resurrection and his church's mission is accordingly widened beyond the narrow bounds set in 10:5–6."[76]

The Confidence in the Father

In verses 24–33, Jesus continues developing the theme of persecution for his disciples. First, he makes the negative point that his disciples are ranked below him as their "teacher" and "master." Whatever ill treatment Jesus received, his disciples were likely to experience more of the same. The reference to Jesus being associated with

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[74]Παρουσία is used four times in Matthew's Gospel—all four references in chap. 24.

[75]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 396–97.

[76]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 398.

"Beelzebul" points back to 9:34; the disciples could expect worse maligning. If there is any positive principle to take from these verses, it might be that, although disciples would never be "above" their teacher, they may aspire to be "like him." This should be the satisfying pursuit of a disciple's life—it is "enough."

Despite the hardship that awaits them, Jesus issues a command, "Have no fear of them" in verse 26. He then lays out several reasons to not be afraid of their detractors. First, any persecution they endure in secret will be made known someday. God is watching. Second, the gospel is meant to be proclaimed and even things Jesus has told them in private will need to be shouted from the "housetops." Carson adds, "Living in the light of the end simultaneously encourages bold witness (because the truth of the gospel will prevail and will be recognized as God's truth), and quiet confidence in the face of opposition (because every facet of opposition to the gospel will one day be exposed)."[77] A third reason not to fear is because earthly persecutors can only threaten with death while the eternal security of Jesus' disciples is assured, unlike those who reject the gospel message and are destroyed in hell. A fourth reason comes in the specific and intimate care of the Father. This is illustrated in the comparison between birds and disciples and the numbering of the hairs on each head. This smaller-to-greater argument demonstrates that God is very much concerned with his children, even when enduring hardship. Trilling speaks to these seemingly contrasting pictures of God: "Only when we see God as so great and recognize his omnipotence, even over our very life, does his fatherliness gain its full force."[78]

This section concludes with a requirement for each disciple: public confession

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[77]Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*, 147–48.

[78]Wolfgang Trilling, *The Gospel According to St Matthew, New Testament for Spiritual Reading* (London: Herder & Herder, 1969), 2:189.

as to the person of Jesus Christ.[79] It is "an open declaration of allegiance."[80] Carson writes, "It is impossible to forge an absolute disjunction between being a Christian and Christian witness. One cannot be the former without engaging in the latter."[81] Such public testimony, contextually perhaps even in the face of potential martyrdom, results in Jesus' affirmation to the Father on that disciple's behalf. The opposite, according to verse 33, is also true.

The Commitment to Christ

In verses 34–39, Jesus ensures his apostles know how personal the opposition may become, affecting their own families. Jesus makes a shocking statement in verse 34 in declaring he did not come to earth with peace but with a sword. On its face, this seems at odds even with his own angelic birth announcement of "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14). And yet, the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6) would only extend peace to those who follow him. Everyone else, would be in conflict. France explains,

> The way to peace is not the way of avoidance of conflict, and Jesus will be continuously engaged in robust controversy. . . . His followers can expect no less, and their mission to establish God's peaceful rule can be accomplished only by sharing his experience of conflict.[82]

Jesus then quotes from the prophet Micah in describing the kind of disunity in family relationships that may come in following him.[83] And verse 37 makes it clear: a disciple's love for and commitment to Christ must supersede every other relationship. The final two verses of this section again bring the cost of discipleship into clear focus. Jesus' disciples

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[79]This section clearly applies to all disciples, not just the Twelve. "The use of *whoever* reaches beyond the apostles to those who hear them and respond either positively or negatively to their message. These hearers are required to make the same commitment to Jesus that was required of the apostles." Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 282.

[80]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 264.

[81]Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*, 152.

[82]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 408.

[83]Mic 7:6

would not just be rejected from a home or town, not just persecuted by the religious establishment, not just brought before Gentile rulers, and not just betrayed by members of their own family. Discipleship might just lead to death. And in verse 38, the first mention of a "cross" in the Gospel is found and it is not Jesus' cross. The disciple is called to bear his own cross if necessary, with full assurance that in losing his life, he will find life. France comments on verse 39, "It seems clear that the reference in this paradoxical epigram to 'losing life' is to be taken literally in the first instance, though of course, as with taking up the cross, the principle can also be extended to suffering and deprivation through loyalty to Jesus."[84]

The Camaraderie of His Followers

In verses 40–42, Jesus returns to the theme of how the apostles would be received as they are sent out. The remarkable principle is that if someone receives one of the apostles, or a prophet, or any disciple of Jesus, he receives a reward, a blessing. Carson writes, "If hospitality and help and general receptivity are extended to prophets and righteous men, not merely out of common courtesy but because of who these people are, there is a profound self-identity with what they stand for, a sharing in their commitments *and rewards*."[85]

Summary

In reviewing the character in the Mission Discourse that Jesus desires his disciples to possess, the theme of witness is dominant. Gilbert writes, "Scholarship of the mission teaching of the second discourse (10:5-42) often focuses on the issue of why Jesus tells the disciples to go only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" rather than the Gentiles or Samaritans (10:6). However, one should not miss that Jesus' instructions to

[84]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 411.

[85]Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World*, 152.

the twelve are filled with exhortation that concerns how they function as disciples as they carry out this mission."[86] Again, the *bios* component of the Gospel genre helps the disciple to keep in mind that even as he goes about the mission prescribed to him by Jesus, he is looking to Jesus as the perfect standard in his own witness to the world.

The Kingdom Discourse

Matthew's third discourse (Matt 13) is completely different from the first two in its form. In this chapter, Jesus gives eight parables to continue to teach his disciples what it means to follow him. Interestingly, although parables were common in the writings of the Old Testament prophets and among Jewish rabbis, as Morris records, "No other New Testament character is recorded as having told as much as one parable. The parabolic method is Jesus' own."[87]

The reason this discourse is often titled the "Kingdom Discourse" is because most of the parables in this chapter begin with "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." or a similar phrase.[88] The parables describe the kingdom which is the main subject of Jesus' and his apostles' proclamation, specifically, the "gospel of the kingdom."

The first parable in the collection, the "Parable of the Sower," does not follow this form, "perhaps to show what a parable is. It is given importance by being followed by an explanation of Jesus' purpose in using parables and then an explanation of this parable."[89]

Each of the parables Jesus gave has a point. And the "secret" (13:11) of these parables lies in the fact that most ordinary people could understand his stories, but not get

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[86]Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples," 127.

[87]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 333.

[88]Matt 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, and 47. The "kingdom of heaven" is also referenced in 13:11 and 52, but not in the same form as the others.

[89]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 334.

the point. The reason for that is explained in verse 11 and following. But as Scaer delineates: "What is mysterious is not the parables' figurative or symbolic speech—which would require decoding to be understood—but Jesus' teachings, which could be believed only by revelation."[90]

The Parable of the Sower

Although Jesus himself titles the first parable "The Parable of the Sower" in verse 18, the emphasis is not primarily on the sower at all, nor the seed, but on the soil as Jesus will explain to his disciples later. Jesus begins with a common agricultural scene. A sower is spreading his seeds and they are falling in different locations with differing results. In the end, some of his seeds fall on good soil and produce a great harvest.

The first place the seeds fall are "along the path," on the sides where the ground had not been plowed and the seeds cannot penetrate. As a result, the birds easily ate them up. As the sower continues to sow, some of the seeds fall into "rocky ground." Morris explains, "This will mean not ground littered with stones, but ground where the bedrock came close to the surface, with the result that these seeds had no depth of soil."[91] The text says these seeds sprouted quickly but then withered quickly as the sun heated the thin soil. Because of the bedrock, the roots could not go down deep enough to sustain longevity. France describes the third scene as "similar . . . but this time the danger comes not from the inadequate resources in the soil, but from competition."[92] These thorns growing in the same location indicate no problem with the soil but that "there is no room for a new type of vegetation."[93] As a result, the grain is "choked" also not producing the desired result. Finally, some of the seed finds "good soil" and is extraordinarily

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[90]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 298.

[91]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 336.

[92]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 505.

[93]Ibid.

productive, up to "a hundredfold." Keener comments that the "average Palestinian harvest may have yielded seven and a half to ten times the seed sown."[94]

Following the telling of the parable, Jesus' disciples ask him why he is speaking in parables. His answer is that the parables have a dual purpose: to reveal and to conceal. According to Keener, "Jewish teachers used parables as sermon illustrations to explain a point they were teaching. To offer an illustration without stating the point, however, was like presenting a riddle instead."[95] Jesus also presents this as a sovereign decision of God, revealing the truth to some but not to all. Jesus explained that this fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9–10. In other words, the parable itself is understandable in that the words and symbols used are common; but the point of the story is not clear, unless spiritually revealed. Morris adds, "The word of God is always effective: it brings enlightenment or judgment—enlightenment to the disciples, judgment to those who rejected Jesus."[96]

Jesus then explained the meaning of the parable to the disciples. The seed refers to the "word of the kingdom" which the Twelve have been commissioned to preach. The hard ground where the seed first landed represents someone who hears but does not understand the message. This is when the "evil one" like a bird swoops in and steals away the seed. The stony soil symbolizes one who hears and is enthusiastic about the message but "has no root in himself." When the heat of testing comes his way, his faith withers away. As Blomberg points out, "What counts is not profession of faith but perseverance in faith. To be sure, all true Christians will persevere, but only by observing who perseveres can we determine who those true Christians are."[97] Morris adds,

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[94]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 377.

[95]Ibid., 378.

[96]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 341.

[97]Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1992), 214–15.

> There is something more than falling. He takes offense. That is to say, he comes to regard adherence to Christ as something of a trap; if it means persecution he wants nothing to do with it. He is repelled. The time of trial means the end of this person's adherence to Christ.[98]

The thorny soil signifies those "who are versed in the kingdom's mysteries, but as they approach the end of the catechesis, they are distracted by material gain and forsake the community of Jesus' followers.[99] Whether or not this type of person is truly a follower of Jesus is debated, but there is definitely an absence of fruitfulness which should characterize a disciple of Christ.[100] The specific hazards symbolized by the thorns are "the cares of the world" and "the deceitfulness of riches"—both of which draw attention back to the first discourse and the Lord's warning about worrying and not being able to serve both God and money. This will be further illustrated in the account of the young man in 19:16–22 who turns away from following Jesus due to his "great possessions." Finally, Jesus turns his attention to the "good soil" which describes the one who understands the message of the kingdom and is abundantly fruitful in his good works. Craig Blomberg sums the message up nicely:

> The parable provides a sober reminder that even the most enthusiastic outward response to the gospel offers no guarantee that one is a true disciple. Only the tests of time, perseverance under difficult circumstances, the avoidance of the idolatries of wealth and anxiety over earthly concerns, and above all the presence of appropriate fruit can prove a profession genuine.[101]

The Parable of the Weeds

Jesus turns his attention back to the crowd at this point and relates three more parables about growth. In the parable of the weeds, Jesus relates the story of a landowner with slaves who sowed "good seed" in his fields. However, that night as they were

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[98]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 346–47.

[99]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 305.

[100]France notes that the term "choke" casts doubt on this being a true disciple. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 521.

[101]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 218.

sleeping, the landowner's enemy sowed "weeds" in the field. Then, when the wheat began to come up, so did the weeds. The landowner's servants asked if the weeds should be pulled but the owner declined, fearing the wheat would also be pulled out since the roots would be tangled together. He ordered that both wheat and weeds be allowed to grow up together. Then, at harvest time, he would have his reapers gather all the weeds first and throw them into a furnace. Then, they would gather the wheat and put it into his barn.

Jesus gives the interpretation of the parable in 10:36–43, again at the request of his disciples. The symbols in the story are defined as follows:

Table 5. Definition of symbols in the parable of the weeds

Symbol	*Reality*
Sower	Son of Man
Field	World
Good Seed	Sons of the Kingdom
Weeds	Sons of the Evil One
Enemy	Devil
Harvest	End of the Age
Reapers	Angels

Thus, this parable describes both the present condition of the world as well as points to the future and final judgment. Keener writes, "The landowner avoids uprooting the young darnel, which still looks like wheat, because he values the wheat; in the same way, God endures the wicked in the present to provide all those who will receive him time to become his followers."[102] But even as God will one day "reap" his own, bringing them into his "barn," so also God will judge the wicked with fire.

[102]Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 389.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Jesus gives yet a third parable about seeds, this time about a tiny mustard seed that grows into a huge tree. The reference to birds making nests in the tree alludes back to Daniel 4, likely a reference to the nations of the world which were incorporated into Babylon. France explains, "This parable invites a comparison between the great but short-lived earthly empire of Babylon and the far greater and more permanent kingdom of heaven."[103]

The Parable of the Leaven

Similarly, the parable of the leaven describes a woman making a loaf of bread which expands as she "hides" the tiny amount of leaven in the dough. This is a reference to the mystery of the kingdom which may seem hidden at the present but will one day be evident to all.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

In the next two parables, Jesus emphasizes the value of the kingdom. In this parable, the story is about a man who finds a secret treasure in a field and buries it. Then, he sells all his earthly possessions in order to buy that field. The buried treasure, like the kingdom of heaven, was not known to others, but he recognized it and made a great sacrifice to obtain it, much like Jesus' disciples had, in leaving all to follow him.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

Similarly, a merchant in this parable sells all that he has in order to purchase a pearl of great value. The difference between this parable and the preceding one is that while the men with the treasure in the field could presumably live off its riches, the merchant would not be able to live off the pearl unless he sold it again. As Morris says,

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[103]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 527.

"His delight was in possessing it, not in the profit he could make from it."[104] So, the purchase was for admiration and display. In either case, the meaning to disciples is clear: gaining the kingdom of heaven will cost one everything, but it is worth it.

The Parable of the Net

This parable is like the parable of the weeds and is also followed with an explanation. Here, fishermen are casting nets into the water and bringing in different kinds of fish.[105] After the catch is over, the men sort the fish into "good" and "bad," throwing the bad away. The explanation is that at the judgment the angels will sort between the "evil" and the "righteous," throwing the evil into a "fiery furnace." Piper points out that "the kingdom of God, as Jesus presents it, is not a realm or a people, but a rule or a reign. Therefore, it brings a people into being the way a net gather fish."[106] Also,

> this theme of eschatological judgment will reappear in the Fifth Discourse, in which the goats separated from the sheep are sentenced to their final doom. This parable depends on a prior referent that Peter and Andrew will be fishers of men (4:18–19), but separating the good fish from the bad is the task of angels, not theirs.[107]

The Parable of the New and Old Treasures

At this point, Jesus asks the disciples if they understand the parables he has just given. They answer in the affirmative which leads Jesus to his last parable of this discourse. He compares the disciples to a "scribe" who has been "trained [literally, "discipled"] for the kingdom of heaven." Jesus says they are like a house owner who has in his possessions both "old" and "new" treasures. Blomberg suggests, "In light of v. 35,

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[104]Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 360.

[105]Blomberg writes that "all kinds" is "more literally, all races, a strange way of speaking of fish but a natural way of emphasizing the universality of God's judgment of people." Blomberg, *Matthew*, 224.

[106]Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 337.

[107]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 314.

Jesus probably means that as his disciples teach God's will, they will be drawing out the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, while showing how they are fulfilled and apply in the kingdom age."[108] France adds, "The scribal language may suggest that the 'things new and old' are a deliberate contrast with the official scribes of Israel, who can produce only what is old because they have not discovered the new secrets of the kingdom of heaven."[109]

Summary

In reviewing the themes in the Kingdom Discourse that Jesus desires his disciples to understand and follow, the teaching of the kingdom of heaven is obvious. Again, Gilbert is helpful.

> The third discourse (13:1-53) consists of parables primarily related to the kingdom of heaven. However, keeping in mind the significance of arrangement for conveying authorial purpose, Matthew has organized this material in such a way that the key to understanding this discourse comes at the end through Jesus' final words to the disciples in this chapter: "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (13:52). One of the three times Matthew uses the verb μαθητεύω is in this verse (here as the participle μαθητευθείς), and he here indicates that their understanding of the kingdom means that they have been trained in the kingdom as scribes so that they can now also teach others about the nature of the kingdom of heaven.[110]

The Discourse on Relationships

In his fourth discourse (Matt 18), the Lord Jesus is asked two questions by his disciples, leading him to give instruction on how they should live together in community as followers of Christ.

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[108]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 225.

[109]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 546.

[110]Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples," 127-28.

The Paramount Follower of Jesus

The first question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" is set within the context of "At that time," connecting this discourse to the previous teaching in chapter 17. There, Jesus had been giving instruction on the temple tax and mentioned the difference between the "sons" and the "others" in relation to the kingdoms of the earth. Jesus had also clearly told the disciples that he would be leaving them soon. So, the question being asked is a practical one in the mindset of the Twelve: who would be in charge when Jesus is gone? Who would be the great disciple, the top disciple? This question is asked multiple times by the disciples in the Gospels, even at the Last Supper in Luke 24! And Blomberg suggests that "Jesus' singling out of Peter, James, and John to accompany him for the transfiguration (17:1–13) would also have raised questions in the disciples' minds about varying degrees of privilege."[111]

In response to the question, Jesus calls a child and sits the child down in middle of the group. France writes, "He is calling for so radical an inversion of their natural assumptions about leadership and importance that shock tactics are needed. We are given no indication of the identity of the child, and that is as it should be: the child's very anonymity helps to make the point."[112] While the disciples were likely assuming one of their own would be named, probably Peter,[113] Jesus points to a random, unknown child.

His instruction, that one must "turn and become like children" in order to enter God's kingdom must have seemed startling to the disciples. And yet, this way of speaking has remarkable similarity to Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3 when

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[111]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 272–73.

[112]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 677.

[113]Peter had been named first in the list of disciples (10:2), was commended for his answer describing the identity of the Son of Man (16:16), had been one of three invited to witness the transfiguration (17:1–13), and was evidently Jesus' spokesperson in the recent discussion of the temple tax (17:24–27).

Jesus told Nicodemus he needed to start over and experience a new birth in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. As France explains, Jesus is warning the Twelve "that the concern for status which they have just displayed in not compatible with God's scale of values, and that true discipleship must involve the eradication of this natural human tendency."[114]

Next, Jesus answers the disciples' question head-on by asserting that in order to be the "greatest," a disciple must have childlike humility. Platt points out that

> [w]e can take this imagery further than Jesus intends, equating all kinds of characteristics of children with what it means to be a Christian. But remember that Jesus calls His disciples to humility of heart, not childishness of thought. Children have many characteristics that the people of God are not to copy. . . . The emphasis in this passage is on humility, so that the smartest, most intelligent, most successful, most noble, or most gifted person might come to Jesus with humility of heart, turning from themselves and trusting completely in the Father.[115]

The Protection of Little Ones

Verse 5 is a verse of transition as Jesus moves from his object lesson into further instruction about how disciples should relate to each other. He uses the child in their midst to press home the principle of the least being the greatest in the kingdom. "In first-century thought children were often very little esteemed."[116] Now Jesus says children should be welcomed as they would welcome Jesus. He is not suggesting that kindness to children results in eternal life; rather, he is emphasizing the aspect of humility in how disciples view themselves in relation to others. Then, Jesus shifts to the phrase "little ones." He had previous used this descriptor in 10:40–42 in reference to receiving "little ones" the same way as prophets and righteous ones were received. "Little ones" in Matthew 18 no longer refers to the child of verses 1–5 but rather to those "who believe,"

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[114]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 678.

[115]David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, CCEC, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 237.

[116]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 273.

that it, his disciples, Jesus' little ones.

Jesus warns that anyone who causes one of his disciples to sin is in terrible danger. The illustration of having a large "millstone" tied to the offender's neck and thrown in the deepest part of the sea cements the idea that there is no escape—this individual will be drowned. This is how strongly Jesus views the offense of luring one of his followers to commit sin. Scaer comments, "He does not imply that one evil act leads to damnation, but a life-style characteristic by causing others to sin is incompatible with true discipleship."[117] Keener adds, "Jesus says this punishment would be an act of mercy compared to what is in store for those who turn *little ones* from Christ's way—be they arrogant university professors, torturers enforcing Islamic law or gossipers within the church."[118]

Verse 7 find Jesus offering a double "woe," first to the world of people who will encounter many temptations to sin and, second, to those who are the source of such temptations to others. Jesus admits it is "necessary" that such temptations exist, due to the curse of sin. However, he has no sympathy for the ones causing people to offend God. In verses 8–9, Jesus has a particular set of metaphors for those who, from their own hearts, create their own temptations which cause them to sin. These familiar statements recall his words in the Sermon on the Mount in dealing with the sin of adultery and the taking of extreme measures in battling such temptation such as amputation of the offending members.

Scaer points out that one of the early church fathers, Chrysostom, "found here the imagery of the church as the body of Christ. He took the removal of limbs as excommunication from the church. . . . Rather than having the offense of one become the

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[117]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 274.

[118]Keener, *Matthew*, 285.

practice of all, it would be better to remove the offender from the community."[119] Contextually, this would fit the coming message of Christ in verses 15–20 about church discipline. However, France argues that the use of the second-person singular in these verses has a strictly individual application, rather than corporate.[120] Rather, "It is for individual disciples to work out for themselves where their particular danger of 'stumbling' lies and to take appropriate action."[121]

The Parable of the Straying Sheep

In a beautiful picture of the right relationship disciples of Christ should have toward each other, especially when one is being tempted away, Jesus speaks of a shepherd of one hundred sheep who leaves the ninety-nine who are safely together to pursue the one sheep who is straying. Jesus insists that each of his "little ones" should not be "despised," which is the opposite of being received as he taught previously. He displays the affection of the Father for each "one" of his "little ones." And he called disciples to do the same. The care for his "little ones" is amplified by their seeming angelic representation in God's presence as indicated by verse 10. Interestingly, Jesus teaches that the shepherd receives a "greater joy" over recovering the on straying sheep than he has over the ninety-nine safely together. France notes that "it is caused by the recovery, rather than by any inherent superiority in the sheep itself. The natural tendency to regard such discriminatory joy as unfair is firmly repudiated in the figure of the elder brother in Luke 15:25–32."[122] God does not desire that a single "one" of his "little ones" would be lost, destroyed.

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[119]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 330.

[120]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 683.

[121]Ibid.

[122]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 688.

The Process of Discipline in the Christian Community

To help fulfill the Father's will of verse 14, Jesus prescribes a methodology for his disciples to follow in order to rescue straying sheep. This plan ultimately begins with self-discipline, as noted in verses 8–9, then extends toward the discipline of other disciples who sin, verses 15–20.

In verses 15–17, the instruction is directed toward individual disciples, while verses 18–20 speak to the corporate discipline that is sometimes ultimately required. The compassion of the Lord as communicated in verses 10–14 continues in the reference to "brother." The brother doing the confrontation is to literally, "Show him his fault."[123] Then, if the offending brother "listens," or responds properly, reconciliation is complete. However, if the offending brother does not listen, the brother is to escalate the seriousness of the unrepentance by taking one or two other people with him to confront the offending brother again. According to Jesus, this fulfills the command of Deuteronomy 19:15. If the offending brother still does not listen, the matter is to be told to the "church."

The Greek εκκλησία simply means "assembly," and was a commonly understood word. However, in 16:18, Jesus had talked about "my church"; his disciples now would understand "church" as an assembly of worshiping disciples of Jesus. France adds that "no mention is made of any officers or leadership within the group. . . . The group share corporately in the pastoral concern which motivated the individual disciple to raise the issue."[124]

Even at this point, as public mention of the sinner takes place, the goal is restorative. But if he "refuses to listen even to the church," the church is to consider that individual in the same category as Gentiles and tax collectors. In other words, they are to

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[123]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 278.

[124]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 691.

be considered outside of God's covenant people. Keener explains, "This discipline was full excommunication, implying spiritual death."[125] Scaer develops this idea:

> As severe as excommunication appears, it must be understood in light of the far worse fate of eternal separation from Jesus that awaits those who do not takes Jesus' words to heart. A threat of eternal death concludes each of the Five Discourses. . . . It is far better for offenders to be confronted with their sin and threatened with removal from the community than to be dropped in the sea with a millstone around their necks.[126]

With regard to individual responsibility of disciples within the church, I like the appeal to "Cain's question 'Am I my brother's keeper?'. . . . This passage asserts that the answer is Yes."[127]

Jesus then switches to the corporate disciples in verses 18–20, using the second-person plural. These verses are often taken out of context but are best understood within the context of the preceding corporate discipline. Verse 18 assures the faithful church that heaven is in agreement when the church follows these teachings of Christ. Verse 19 assures the church of the resources of heaven as they undertake this difficult task. And verse 20 notes the presence of Jesus himself, supporting the church as she undertakes discipline. Quoting John MacArthur, David Platt writes, "Never is the church more in harmony with heaven and operating in perfect accord with her Lord than when dealing with sin to maintain purity."[128]

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

The second half of Matthew 18 features Jesus' response to the second question asked by Peter, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" And Jesus' famous answer is, "I do not say to say seven times, but

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[125]Keener, *Matthew*, 289.

[126]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 333.

[127]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 692.

[128]Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 245.

seventy-seven times." According to rabbinic tradition, forgiving someone three times was usually sufficient.[129] But Jesus' response is to repudiate human convention and teach a principle of the kingdom. His giving of seventy-seven times to Peter's seven times seems to be an allusion back to Genesis 4:24 where Lamech's boasts about being avenged seventy-seven times to Cain's seven times. France comments, "The disciple must be as extravagant in forgiving as Lamech was in taking vengeance."[130] Some translations render seventy-seven to be seventy times seven, or 490. But in case anyone still wants to keep track to 490 incidents requiring forgiveness, Jesus' subsequent parable eliminates all possibility of counting offences.

In his parable, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a king desiring to "settle accounts with his servants." One of his servants is found to be owing ten thousand talents, an impossibly huge number.[131] The king orders that the servant's family be sold to acquire the money. The servant begs for mercy, and the king shows mercy, completely forgiving him the massive debt. The point is not that the debt could be paid, even with the selling of his family, but rather that the mercy extended was incalculable.

The servant in turn goes out and finds someone who owes him one hundred denarii and demands to be repaid, grabbing and choking the man.[132] The man begs for mercy but finds none. The servant has the man thrown in prison until the debt is paid.

Other fellow servants of the king see this incident and report it to the king who angrily summons the servant, reprimanding him for his lack of mercy, and delivers him to

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[129]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 281.

[130]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 705.

[131]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 339, points out that ten thousand talents would be equivalent to roughly $1 billion in today's currency. Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 147, records that Herod's annual income was about nine hundred talents.

[132]One denarius was considered a day's wage in the Roman Empire. Thus, one hundred denarii was approximately one hundred days' work, or according to Scaer, approximately $10,000–15,000 in today's currency (Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 340).

the torturers until his debt is paid. In other words, he will never be released from torture and incarceration.

The explanation of this parable is simple, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (18:35). Piper explains,

> The point of this parable is that God has no obligation to save a person who claims to be his disciple if that professing disciple has not received the gift of forgiveness for what it really is—infinitely precious, amazing, undeserved, heart-humbling, mercy-awakening. If we claim to be forgiven by Jesus, but there is no sweetness of forgiveness in our hearts for other people, God's forgiveness is not there.[133]

Keener add, "Forgiveness must issue *from the heart*—it must be sincere."[134]

Summary

In reviewing the themes in the Fourth Discourse that Jesus desires his disciples to possess, the idea of Christian community is put forward as primary. Gilbert writes,

> The fourth discourse is 18:1-35, and its subject matter largely concerns the relationships of disciples to one another in the community, such as the need for humility (18:4), not causing others to stumble (18:6-7), pursuing errant brothers (18:12-14), confronting unrepentant sin in the church (18:15-20), and forgiving the sinning disciple (18:21-35).[135]

The Eschatological Discourse

In his fifth and final discourse (Matt 23–25), Jesus speaks to the coming judgment. While there is some debate as to whether chapter 23 belongs with chapters 24–25, the text is clear that the instruction in chapter 23 is addressed to "the crowds and to his disciples" so it appears to be a discourse. As previously noted, the Sermon on the Mount discourse features prominently in chapters 23–25 as well, showing interrelation with all three chapters.

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[133]Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, 148.

[134]Keener, *Matthew*, 293.

[135]Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples," 128.

The Denouncing of the Pharisees and Scribes

David Platt writes about one sobering reality in chapter 23: "It is possible for you and me to believe genuinely that we are doing God's work, obeying God's Word, and accomplishing God's will, yet to be deceived and to experience eternal damnation."[136] So, while this entire chapter is spoken *against* the Pharisees and Scribes, it is spoken *to* Jesus' disciples and thus has application to modern-day disciples.

Seven times in chapter 23, Jesus declares a "woe" against the religious leaders. But before that, he gives instruction to his disciples on how not to be like the Pharisees and Scribes. In verses 1–12, his primary complaint is that these leaders do not practice what they preach; they are hypocrites, as Jesus will relentlessly charge them in later verses. Even though they are duly appointed leaders in the seat of Moses, Jesus' disciples must be careful only to follow what is correctly taught to them from the Law and not follow the behavior of these corrupt leaders. He points out how they are quick to burden other people with extra rules but do not bother to follow them themselves. Rather, they seek the best, most prominent positions in society and the works they do are only done to be viewed by others.

Jesus commands his disciples not to seek titles, such as rabbi, father, and instructor, as these men do for the purpose of achieving privilege or attaining a certain status in society. Jesus is not making an absolute statement about using these terms, as Paul calls himself father to some whom he considers children in the faith.[137] And fathers are addressed specifically in the New Testament by this title. But Jesus is calling his followers to repudiate "an excessive deference to academic or ecclesiastical qualifications."[138] Jesus reminds the disciples that in the end it is God who exalts, and he

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[136]Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 298–99.

[137]1 Cor 4:15; Phlm 10.

[138]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 863.

exalts those who are humble, rather than those who exalt themselves.

In his "woes," Jesus uses perhaps the strongest language recorded in the Gospels in accusing the religious leaders. Platt writes, "Jesus . . . calls them hypocrites, sons of hell, blind guides, fools, robbers, self-indulgent, whitewashed tombs, snakes, vipers, persecutors, and murderers."[139] Some scholars view the woes in chapter 23 as the counterpart to the blessings of chapter 5, thus helping to structure the overall book, perhaps in a chiastic form. This would also see chapters 23–25 as an intended parallel to chapters 5–7.[140]

In the first woe, Jesus accuses the religious leaders as being a barrier to others coming into the kingdom of heaven, even as they had not entered themselves. The second woe is similar, with the leaders paying great attention to converting Gentiles to Judaism but failing to convert them to Christ. Rather they have discipled people to be destined for hell. Blomberg cautions, "Strong warnings appear here for those with great evangelistic fervor in any age. Such people had better be preaching the true gospel."[141]

The third and fourth woes find the Pharisees and Scribes missing the forest for the trees, so to speak. Jesus first accuses them of holding people to oaths made against the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar but not holding people to oaths made against the temple or altar itself, which are the larger objects from which the smaller objects get their value. Then, Jesus applies this to tithing, where the religious leaders made sure that even the smallest herbs and vegetation were tithed while completely ignoring the much larger principles of "justice, mercy, and faithfulness."[142] France elaborates, "The problem was

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[139]Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 298.

[140]Ian Boxall, *Discovering Matthew* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 40.

[141]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 344.

[142]This three-fold designation of important principles may be an allusion to the summary of God's demands in Mic 6:8, namely, "to do justice, and to act kindly, and to walk humbly with your God."

that they did not devote the same care to working out the practical implications of these basic principles as they did to the minutiae of tithing herbs."[143] Jesus ended these woes with his famous "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel" statement, meaning that how they treated the law was like filtering out the smallest bug from their drinking glass but swallowing a camel instead, a parallel to Jesus' teaching about the speck and the log in the Sermon on the Mount.

In the fifth woe, Jesus continues the purity laws motif he had begun in the fourth woe with the gnat and camel as unclean things. Now, he charges the religious rulers with keeping the "outside" of their cup and plate clean but neglecting the inside. Then, in the sixth woe, he takes the uncleanness to an even more extreme illustration: an outwardly "beautiful" tomb but full on the inside with "dead people's bones and all uncleanness." The point Jesus is making here is clear, as Keener notes: "The leaders' outward appearance merely provided a veneer for the impurity, hence lawlessness, of their hearts. To those who prided themselves on obedience to Torah, the charge of lawlessness would be deeply offensive and shaming."[144]

The final woe continues the imagery of tombs but focuses Jesus' sharpest and longest attack of all—accusing these religious leaders of murder. As France describes, "Now the tombs are literal and the charge is more serious: despite their pious protestations, they are responsible for the deaths which the tombs mark."[145] The horrific irony Jesus points to is the care the Pharisees and Scribes take of the prophets' tombs, yet they will kill the prophets sent to them, first and foremost, the Lord Jesus himself. Keener notes, "Their behavior proves that, spiritually speaking, they are not descendants of the

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[143]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 873.

[144]Keener, *Matthew*, 339.

[145]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 876.

prophets, but rather descendants of those who killed them."[146] In fact, Scaer adds, "Not only will the Pharisees and scribes be held responsible for crucifying Jesus, but they also will be held responsible for their fathers' executions of the prophets."[147] In an obviously sarcastic statement, the Lord tells them to get on with their father's business. Jesus also names their father, the serpent! He specifically uses the phrase "brood of vipers," recalling the name John the Baptist attached to these rulers. He also names their destination, "sentenced to hell." Christ relates how he will be sending more victims to them whom they will beat and kill. Whether or not the disciples realize that he is talking about them is not clear. He concludes the seventh woe by stating that "all these things" will happen while those who are listening are alive. Platt explains this as "the culmination of Israel's opposition to God and His Word was evident in the Jewish generation of Jesus' day."[148]

The Lament over Jerusalem

Although Jesus' tenderness is on full display in these verses (23:37–39), this is still a text of judgment. Jesus now turns his attention to the broader audience of Jerusalem and speaks of her unwillingness to receive him as her Messiah. Because of this, Jesus is making a symbolic and physical departure from the temple, stating that it is now "desolate," or empty of divine presence. France writes, "As Jesus contemplates what lies ahead of the people he came to save, it gives him no pleasure. He had 'wanted' to gather them, not to condemn them."[149] Blomberg adds, "With the full inauguration of the new covenant at Jesus' death, the temple will no longer play any role in the unfolding plan of

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[146]Keener, *Matthew*, 339.

[147]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 374.

[148]Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, 306.

[149]France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 883.

salvation history. . . . The departure of Jesus means the departure of God."[150] There appears to be a glimmer of hope however as Jesus leave the door open for a time when the people of Israel will, as they did in Matthew 21, again call out, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," acknowledging the Davidic Messiah of Psalm 118.

The Destruction of the Temple

Matthew 24:1–2 describes a future destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. While numerous interpretations of Matthew 24–25 exist, most concede that the temple was indeed destroyed as Jesus predicted in AD 70 at the hands of the Roman General Titus. Jesus leaves the crowds then in verse three and journeys with his disciples to the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem for a continuation of the discourse begun in chapter 23.

The Coming of the Son of Man

The disciples ask the Lord two questions. First, when will these things happen? Second, what are the signs for his coming? His response to these questions constitutes the remainder of the discourse. For the purpose of this thesis, a futurist perspective is in view in Matthew 24–25. In other words, the predicted events of 24:4ff are all in the future, rather than in the past, or partially in the past and partially in the future. Thus, the destruction of the temple as predicted by Jesus in 24:1–2 is the only event in Matthew 24–25 that was fulfilled in the past.

Jesus mentions the coming of false Christs and false prophets, wars, famines, earthquakes—all as a precursor to a time of "great tribulation." His disciples will need to be alert to these signs, just as the leaves on a fig tree are the precursor for the beginning of summer. Jesus also uses the expression "birth pains," which according to Blomberg, "were in fact a common Jewish metaphor to refer to an indeterminate period of distress

[150]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 350–51.

leading up to the end of this age."[151]

The "abomination of desolation," a specific reference to Daniel's prophecy, will signal the time of great tribulation, when persecution will increase dramatically against followers of Christ. His disciples will "endure to the end" and continue to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. They will also not believe the lies of the false Christs and false prophets, despite "signs and wonders."

At the end of this time of tribulation, Jesus will return "on the clouds of heaven," just as Daniel prophesied. He will rescue his disciples who have proved true to the end of the tribulation.

Verse 36 begins an answer to the second question about the sign of the Son of Man's coming. This will continue through 25:30. Jesus gives instruction as well as parables in his response. Jesus tells his disciples that no one will know when he returns; it will be like a thief sneaking into the house during the night. The duty of faithful disciples will be to "stay awake" and "be ready" for his return.

Jesus employs two parables to drive this point home. First, the parable of the ten virgins reinforced the idea of always being ready for the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus. Second, the parable of the ten talents also describes the accountability involved with being ready for Christ's return, doing the work he has commissioned to be done.

The Final Judgment

In the concluding verses of chapter 25, a courtroom scene emerges where Jesus is the judge. The nations are gathered, the saved are separated from the lost, and each is consigned to his fate, the saved to "eternal life" and the lost to "eternal punishment." As was predicted by Paul in Philippians 2, both the lost and the saved all refer to Jesus as the "Lord" (vv. 37, 44).

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[151]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 354.

The criteria used to determine in which group one was placed was how he treated "the least of these my brothers." Such treatment was also considered as rendered to Christ. This language is reminiscent of the second and fourth discourses where the "little ones" are defined as Jesus' disciples. While this text may appear to be supporting a salvation by good works, it must be remembered that receiving the "little ones" as defined by Jesus in Matthew 10:40–42 included receiving the message of the disciples, namely the gospel of the kingdom. This message continues to be spread by those devoted to the apostles' doctrine, the church. And it continues to be both received and rejected with the same repercussions as noted here. Blomberg notes, "The sheep are people whose works demonstrate that they have responded properly to Christ's messengers and therefore to his message, however humble the situation or actions of those involved."[152]

David Scaer summarizes well this final section:

> The judgment of the nations is not a parable. It is a future event described in apocalyptic language, an event that will bring the curtain down on this age when heaven and earth pass away. The rewards promised to those who do the will of Jesus and the punishments threatened against those who have only give him lip service are at last meted out. With each group assigned to its appointed destiny, further teaching has no value or purpose. . . . Matthew's Five Discourses have come to a final and dramatic conclusion as the damned are sentenced to eternal punishment and the just are given eternal life.[153]

Summary

In reviewing the themes in the Eschatological Discourse that Jesus desires his disciples to understand, the end of the age is clearly a period Jesus wants his disciples to keep in mind and motivate their lives as disciples. Gilbert writes, "The final discourse (24:1-26:1) includes both the destruction of the temple and the end of the age. . . .it broadly describes Jesus' message regarding how the disciples should be prepared for

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[152]Blomberg, *Matthew*, 378.

[153]Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 393.

these two events."[154]

Even as a primary theme has been put forward from each discourse, might there be a single theme which unites all of them and encompasses the teaching of the Gospel? Pennington believes there is:

> There is a consistent theme that ties all five of the discourses together, namely, the dual theme of revelation and separation. Each of the five major discourses has its own distinct teaching focus, but woven throughout each of these is a meta-theme that God is revealing himself in Christ and that this revelation results in or creates a separation of people into two groups, those inside and those outside, based on faith-response to Jesus. . . . This theme . . . is most obvious and prominent in the central third discourse . . . the chiastic center of the book.[155]

[154]Gilbert, "Go Make Disciples," 128.

[155]Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

CHAPTER 5

A COMPARISON OF MODERN DISCIPLESHIP TO MATTHEAN DISCIPLESHIP

Having established some key discipleship themes in the discourses, this chapter compares a selection of popular modern discipleship books with these major themes contained in the discourses of Matthew's Gospel. While not conclusive, the results should give some indication of potential deficiencies in the practice of modern discipleship along with commendation for methodologies in closer alignment with the FMD.

In addition, the chapter will introduce some specific categories of evangelical discipleship as delineated in Trevin Wax's book *Eschatological Discipleship* that may be helpful in seeing additional commonality among the discipleship books.

Eschatological Discipleship

Trevin Wax has written a helpful book which seeks to impress on the minds of evangelicals not simply that they should be disciples but also that they should constantly be asking themselves the question, "What time is it?" He defines eschatological discipleship as

> spiritual formation that seeks to instill wisdom regarding the contemporary setting in which Christians find themselves (in contrast to rival conceptions of time and progress) and that calls for contextualized obedience as a demonstration of the Christian belief that the biblical account of the world's past, present, and future is true.[1]

Wax then looks at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and asks, "What has missiology to do with eschatology? The key is in understanding the comprehensive

[1]Trevin K. Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), 41.

obedience to which Christ calls his followers. How does a disciple know how to obey the living Christ in various contexts?"[2] He further sees four compelling reasons to incorporate an eschatological worldview into Christian discipleship: (1) The gospel at the heart of the Commission is itself eschatological, (2) the specific command to teach disciples to obey all that Christ has commanded, (3) the Great Commission envisions the church as an eschatological community, and (4) the command to obey, that is necessarily contextual.[3]

In his penultimate chapter, Wax discusses evangelical conceptions of discipleship and groups such thinking into three categories: (1) discipleship conceived of as evangelistic reproduction, (2) discipleship in terms of personal piety, and (3) discipleship that is gospel centered in its motivation.[4] He then addresses the strengths and weaknesses of each category and discusses how an eschatological worldview can be useful to each category. This chapter will group evangelical books into the same three categories in evaluating their assimilating of the themes from the FMD.

A Brief Introduction to and Summary of the Modern Discipleship Books Reviewed in This Thesis

A total of nineteen discipleship books, all written in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, have been selected for a comparison against the themes of the FMD. These books were primarily selected because they are unashamedly evangelical in nature and have gained some measure of popularity among evangelicals. Each book will be assigned a three-letter code which will be used in the comparison to the FMD.

Eugene Peterson wrote *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (ALO) based off the Psalms of Ascent, Psalms 120–134.[5] From these inspired texts, he draws the

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[2]Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 52.

[3]Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 52–55.

[4]Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 191.

[5]Eugene H. Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*: *Discipleship in an Instant*

reader's attention to key truths that help to sustain the disciple in his long journey to heaven. These truths are repentance, providence, worship, service, help, security, joy, work, happiness, perseverance, hope, humility, obedience, community, and blessing.

Crazy Love (CRL) was written as a loving critique of the evangelical church.[6] Of its ten chapters, three focus on the character of God and seven on Christian self-evaluation. Two prominent themes surface throughout the book. The first is that of self-examination to see if one is truly saved versus being a lukewarm Christian, which is not really a Christian at all. The second theme concerns a radical obedience. Chan fears that many Christians are trying to live their best life now instead of later when they'll be in heaven.[7] As a result, few believers sacrifice or take risks for the Lord in this life.

Greg Ogden wrote *Discipleship Essentials* (DIE) as a tool for Christians to grow together in their faith in small groups of three, like Jesus often ministered to his disciples. The workbook consists of twenty-five chapters through four main sections: Growing up in Christ, Understanding the Message of Christ, Becoming Like Christ, and Serving Christ.[8]

Josh Harris wrote *Dug Down Deep* (DDD) to explain why he believes in sound doctrine.[9] The title refers to the digging of the foundation on a rock in Luke 6:46–49. Each of the chapters in an integration of Harris' own life with one of several key doctrines such as the transcendence and nature of God, the doctrine of the scriptures, the uniqueness of Christ, the atonement, the Holy Spirit, and the church.

Society (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[6]Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013).

[7]Chan, *Crazy Love*, 195–96.

[8]Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

[9]Joshua Harris, *Dug Down Deep: Building Your Life on Truths that Last* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2011).

David Platt's *Follow Me* (FME) is a book about Christian living and mission.[10] It seeks to challenge the reader to examine their personal conversion to Christ. He writes, "I want to explore not only the gravity of what we must forsake in this world, but also the greatness of the one we follow in this world. I want to expose what it means to die to ourselves and to live in Christ."[11] The books concludes with a helpful "Personal Disciple-Making Plan."

Following Jesus (FJE) by N. T. Wright is a unique reflection on discipleship as it does not focus at all on methodology.[12] Rather, the premise is to focus on the person of Christ in the scriptures and grow in the faith by following him. The book is split into two parts. In the first, Wright surveys Hebrews, Colossians, Matthew, John, Mark, and Revelation, giving the readers a high-level view of Christ. In the second part, Wright explores themes such as resurrection, temptation, heaven and hell, new life, and a renewed mind.

Jonathan Dodson, pastor at Austin City Life in Austin, Texas, has written a book (GCD) that weaves his experience with his theological reflections to help other Christians follow Christ.[13] His premise is that a "gospel-centered definition of discipleship collapses the dichotomy between evangelism and discipleship by showing that disciples are made and matured through repentance and faith in the good news."[14] After defining discipleship in part one, he gets to the heart of discipleship in part two, discussing both gospel motivation and gospel power. Then, in part three, he applies the

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[10]David Platt, *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013).

[11]Ibid., 4.

[12]N. T. Wright, *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[13]Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

[14]Ibid., 40.

gospel and speaks of creating a culture of discipleship in a church.

Grounded in the Faith (GIF) by Kenneth Erisman provides three levels of discipleship training and twenty-four chapters of sound theology from justification to overcoming temptation to prayer and the will of God to the sovereignty of God.[15] The format of each chapter is for the reader to listen, absorb, and then interact. Heavily based on reformed sources like Piper, Sproul, White, Berkhof, and Flavel, this material is determined that the reader "will gain . . . classic, historic, sound biblical theology that is a reflection of the best biblical scholarship through the centuries."[16]

One of the foremost contemporary theologians, J. I. Packer, collaborated with Dr. Gary Parrett of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to produce a modern-day catechesis for Christian disciples.[17] *Grounded in the Gospel* (GIG) provides a compelling case for a revival of catechesis in the modern day by showing its biblical roots in both Old and New Testaments, tracing its waxing and waning through the centuries, and comparing multiple catechisms to create a simple and faithful model for this generation. Based on John 14:6, the model proposed is structured around the way, the truth, and the life, using the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalogue as the foundation.

Growing Up (GUP) is the work of Robby Gallaty, senior pastor at Brainerd Baptist in Chattanooga.[18] This book with ten chapters is heavy on prescription and application and is designed for D-Groups, groups of 3–5 people who meet together for 12–18 months weekly for discipleship meetings. The first four chapters describe this strategy and the motivation for sustaining it. The final six chapters follow an acronym of

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[15]Kenneth Erisman, *Grounded in the Faith: An Essential Guide to Knowing What You Believe and Why* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013).

[16]Ibid., 9.

[17]J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).

[18]Robby Gallaty, *Growing Up: How to Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2013).

C.L.O.S.E.R., representing Communicate, Learn, Obey, Store, Evangelize, and Renew.

One of the classic works on discipleship in the twentieth century, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker* (JCD) by Bill Hull outlines a four-step process: evangelizing, establishing, equipping, and leading.[19] He uses the example of Jesus and the Twelve as a model for the open, loving relationships necessary to disciple a follower of Jesus. "What Jesus modeled *for* us should be commonplace *among* us."[20]

"*Multiply* (MUL) is designed as a simple resource that you can use to begin making disciples. Our prayer is that it will give you the confidence you need to step out in faith and disciple the people whom God has placed in your life."[21] Francis Chan lays out in five sections the content he believes can facilitate discipleship in the church. The first section is "Living as a Disciple Maker," relating the importance of discipleship in the Christian's life. Second, "Living as the Church" emphasizes the necessity of community for a disciple to grow to maturity. The third section teaches "How to Study the Bible." The fourth and fifth sections give an overview of the entire Bible and redemptive history.

The second book by Robby Gallaty in this list is *Rediscovering Discipleship* (RDI). [22] In the first section of seven chapters, Gallaty aims to "know the man before you go on the mission." He traces Jesus' Jewish upbringing and the uniquely Jewish aspects of discipleship. Then, he reviews church history to highlight the characteristics of men and women who helped to recover discipleship in their eras. In the second section of six chapters, Gallaty describes his method for making disciples and some of the roadblocks

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[19]Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984).

[20]Ibid., 112.

[21]Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 9.

[22]Robby Gallaty, *Rediscovering Discipleship: Making Jesus' Final Words Our First Work* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

faced in this task, along with giving the five principal elements of his D-Groups: missional, accountable, reproducible, communal, and scriptural.

In *The Course of Your Life* (CYL), author Tony Payne of Matthias Media, sets out a framework to apply the word of God to people's lives in a prayerful and intensive manner.[23] The workbook has nine seminars and a suggested 6-part weekend intensive. According to Payne, God's agenda for a person's life is to transfer him from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and to transform him to be mature in faith. This is accomplished through the proclamation of God's word, prayer dependent on the Holy Spirit, and the people who will do both.

Harrington and Patrick contribute *The Disciple Maker's Handbook* (DMH) to the discussion of modern discipleship.[24] Harrington is the lead pastor at Harpeth Christian Church in Franklin, TN. The big idea of the book is "to help you understand what Jesus did and how he did it–and how you can emulate his commitment to reach people and make disciples."[25] The seven elements noted in the title are developed in the second part of the book: relationships, Jesus, intentionality, Bible, Spirit, journey, and multiply.

Christopher Wright has written a book focused on the fruit of the Spirit (CFS) as a path of discipleship. Wright is a director at Langham Partnership in England and wrote this book following his preaching a series of expositions on the fruit of the Spirit at a convention in Northern Ireland in 2012. He wrote that "We look on the outside and assess people by 'how they are doing,' and pay less attention to what kind of character they have become or are becoming. . . . Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit . . . do not

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[23]Tony Payne, *The Course of Your Life: A Personal Revolution* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2011).

[24]Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, *The Disciple Maker's Handbook: Seven Elements of a Discipleship Lifestyle* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

[25]Ibid., 13.

focus on what kind of performance we can achieve, but what kind of person we are.[26]

Acting the Miracle (ATM) is a book about the mystery of sanctification featuring chapters from five leading teachers: John Piper, Kevin DeYoung, Ed Welch, Jarvis Williams, and Russell Moore. It is a compilation and expansion of the teaching from the 2012 National Desiring God Conference in Minneapolis. The striving for personal holiness is a happy pursuit. According to the book, "Happiness in Jesus is not just the product of holiness; it is the essence of true Christian holiness." [27]

The Practice of Godliness (POG), by Jerry Bridges, is a sequel to his earlier work *The Pursuit of Holiness*. In this book, he examines thirteen character traits: humility, contentment, thankfulness, joy, holiness, self-control, faithfulness, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, and love. His goal in the book is "to create an awareness of the importance of each of the aspects of godliness and provide some practical suggestions for growing in them."[28]

Finally, J. I. Packer wrote *Growing in Christ* (GIC) as a companion volume for his *Knowing God*. It is essentially a modern catechism, leading the reader in Bible study through the three historic sections of any robust catechism: The Apostles' Creed, The Ten Commandments, and The Lord's Prayer. He also deals with the subject of baptism, prayer and obedience as part of a life of discipleship.[29]

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[26]Christopher J. H. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 22.

[27]David Mathis, "Introduction," in *Acting the Miracle: God's Work and Ours in the Mystery of Sanctification*, ed. John Piper and David Mathis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 25.

[28]Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996), 8.

[29]J. I. Packer, *Growing in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), 11.

Modern Discipleship Versus Matthean Discipleship:
The Results

Table 6. Modern discipleship versus Matthean discipleship

Books	Righteousness	Witness	Kingdom	Community	Last Times
Books Primarily on Evangelistic Reproduction					
CYL	X	X	X	X	
DMH		X			
FME		X	X	X	
GUP		X	X	X	
MUL		X	X	X	X
RDI		X		X	
Books Primarily on Personal Piety					
ALO	X			X	
ATM	X			X	
CFS	X				
DDD	X			X	
GIF	X		X		
GIG	X			X	
JCD	X		X		
POG	X		X		
Books Primarily on Gospel-Centered Motivation					
CRL	X		X		X
DIE	X	X		X	
FJE			X		X
GCD		X		X	
GIC	X		X	X	X

Note: The first column at the left lists the selection of discipleship books in the groupings defined in *Eschatological Discipleship.* Columns 2–6 represent the five major themes in the FMD of Matthew's Gospel. For the purposes of this table, a book receiving an "X" in any of the given themes indicates that the author has designated at least one chapter in his book to that theme or a clear derivation of that theme.

Summary

The results of the comparison are clear. The books belonging to a more evangelistic reproduction category promoted the themes of witness, kingdom, and community while not showing a great emphasis on themes of righteousness and last times. The books belonging to a more personal piety category promoted the theme of righteousness strongly. Less of an emphasis was given to the themes of community and kingdom and even less to witness and last times. The books belonging to a more gospel-centered motivation category tended to be more balanced overall in their emphasis of the various themes. Individually, the books have certain strengths and weaknesses in emphasizing various themes but overall there was a good mix, unlike the other two categories. If the trending among this sampling of modern discipleship books is representative of the entire corpus of modern discipleship books, then a resurgence of discipleship themes from Matthew's Gospel and likely other Gospels seems to be in order for the church to faithfully execute Jesus' command to teach "all that I have commanded you."

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In surveying the available literature, it appeared that few works connected the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19–20, specifically the charge to be teaching "all that I have commanded you," with the five major discourses in the Gospel. Noticeably absent was any connection between these instructions in the discourses to contemporary discipleship methodology or catechesis.

Thus, this thesis attempted to demonstrate that Jesus intended these discourses to be used in the discipleship of his followers, and that the themes in these discourses have implications for contemporary discipleship, just as they did in the first century.

Reviewing the early church practice of discipleship, several facts emerged, both from the New Testament documents as well as the writings of church fathers. In Matthew's Gospel itself, the use of μαθητής throughout the discourses indicated instructional material for catechumenates. And from the *Didache* and the *Apostolic Tradition* to the writings of Augustine and others, it was clear that the teachings of Jesus, including especially sections from Matthew's Gospel, and notably, the Sermon on the Mount, were often used in catechizing new converts, often prior to their baptism and admittance to the Lord's Table.

With regard to the five discourses themselves, a variety of literary devices demonstrated that the discourses have a great deal of interrelation among themselves, expressing common themes such as the kingdom of heaven, the function of disciples in the *ekklesia,* and the themes of revelation and separation. Also, the use of plot devices used in the discourses call for an audience beyond that of the disciples. Additionally, the use of indefinite and inclusive language, contrasting alternatives, direct commentary,

extra-story elements, and parables led to the conclusion that the discourses were intended to be taught much more broadly than the original audience.

Within the five discourses, characteristics of a true disciple were noted as communicated by the Lord. These instructions help the disciple to understand the character required, the duties expected, and the relationship needed with both the Father and the world at large. The commitment would be costly while the reward would be eternal. In his parables, the Lord described the kingdom of heaven and the disciples' role in sowing the seed, living faithfully, and treasuring its worth. He emphasized the importance of caring for other believers, even to the necessity of confronting sin and calling to repentance and restoration, all with a heart of mercy and readiness to forgive. Jesus also gave great attention to the end times and the eternal disaster that would befall his enemies, the priority of being ready and watchful for his return, the heart of compassion for his people who had rejected him, and the merit of continuing his mission until his return.

Finally, nineteen modern, evangelical books on discipleship were evaluated in light of those themes from the discourses. The helpful categories of evangelical discipleship revealed tendencies of some categories to emphasize certain themes found the FMD while other themes had less emphasis. In general, the books coming from a gospel-centered motivation had the most balance of all the various themes from the FMD in Matthew's Gospel.

Several implications for the church emerge from this thesis. First, the Lord has given an abundance of instruction for making and maturing disciples. This thesis has only focused on the Gospel of Matthew with its substantial discipleship content in the five discourses. However, three other Gospels and the epistles, plus the revelation from the Old Testament also contribute greatly to this good work.

Second, the Gospel of Matthew is an ideal book to be used in making disciples. The thesis has been substantiated: the five discourses were intended by Christ to be used

in equipping followers of Jesus to fulfill the Great Commission.

Third, the church can be thankful for an abundance of discipleship materials that exist today. All the books reviewed in this thesis are useful to the church in the disciple-making process. There is simply an embarrassment of riches in this category of resource, particularly in the twenty-first century, perhaps more than at any other time in history.

Fourth, this thesis has revealed that there may be some deficiency in the church's approach to discipleship regarding the content of what is being taught, depending on the emphasis on evangelistic reproduction or personal piety. All the themes of the FMD need to be emphasized much more in the training of disciples, in order to be more aligned with the teaching of Christ himself in Matthew's Gospel. While this may be being accomplished in the holistic preaching and teaching ministry of churches, it is not apparent in many of the discipleship books being published today, even in the best of them.

The church of Jesus Christ will persevere, and he will continue to build it as he promised. But the church will best be served as it continues to faithfully teach its members "to observe all" that the Lord commanded his disciples.

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ABSTRACT

IT IS WRITTEN:
MATTHEAN DISCOURSE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR CONTEMPORARY DISCIPLESHIP

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This thesis seeks to establish that the five major discourses in the gospel of Matthew were intended to be used by the church for the discipleship of its members. This body of teaching is referred to by Christ in his great commission of Matthew 28:18–20 as the "all things" needing to be passed on to new disciples. The premise is established by a review of early church history and their use of the discourses, observation of the interrelation of the discourses, recognition of the various devices used to broaden the application of the discourses beyond the original audience, and a review of the many themes in the discourses intended for disciples. Finally, the thesis compares the findings in the discourses with a sampling of contemporary discipleship materials in order to determine any implications for the church today regarding their faithfulness to Jesus' instructions.

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