

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

THE GREAT COMMISSIONING: AN EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 28:16-20

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CONTENTS

Chapter

1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS	4
2. MATTHEW 28:16-20	16
3. OTHER KEY PASSAGES	33
4. SYNTHESIS	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	83

ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of Christianity, evangelism has been an often-discussed topic. At certain times the discussion has revolved around the question of whether or not there is a command to actively seek out unbelievers for the purpose of evangelism in the Bible that applies to Christians in the world they live in. One of the most common verses cited as a command for evangelism is Matthew 28:18-20, commonly called the "Great Commission." However, some Christians argue that this is a command for discipleship and not evangelism. While it is hard to make a distinction based on this verse alone, Matthew has included in this command of Christ to "teach all that I have commanded you." This crucial line of text provides two inferences. First, if the disciples were to teach everything Christ commanded them, then teaching their disciples to create other disciples would be part of this, and the command would be reciprocal. Second, if there is another command for evangelism within Matthew's Gospel that is included as part of "all that I have commanded you," then this would be a command for evangelism. Because both of these conditional statements prove to be true, then believer's at all times have a command to spread the gospel (evangelize) to unbelievers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the church's existence, arguably no applicable topic is more conversed than evangelism. In today's world, missionaries and evangelists quote many different verses claiming those verses are commands for evangelism. However, the verses they often use might not necessarily refer to evangelism. A previous study has been carried out surveying the Pauline epistles in order to find a command for active evangelism.¹ But one of the most commonly quoted passages is that of Matthew 28:18-20. The main question this paper will attempt to answer is whether or not Matthew intended for the command of Christ in 28:18-20 to be a command for active evangelism or not.

MOTIVATION

As has been noted, many evangelists and missionaries in today's world quote verses as commands for evangelism. Matthew 28:18-20 is often used. This would not be a problem if the verses they quoted were commands for evangelism. However, whether they are or not is unclear. Sometimes the command for evangelism is part of a textual variant.² Other times, the command for evangelism is confused or misinterpreted within the text. Still other times, the passage is misapplied and has no business being applied to evangelism in today's world. This paper desires

¹ Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006).

² An example is Mark 16:15-20.

to find a passage where the principle behind that passage is a command for believers to actively³ witness to unbelievers, and one that can be applied into today's world.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

CHOOSING THE PASSAGES

The nature of this paper does not allow for an adequate survey of all passages ever claimed as commands for active evangelism. Therefore it deals with four passages in Matthew's Gospel. It will begin by analyzing Mathew 28:18-20 because it is one of the most common passages quoted as a command for active evangelism, and because of the reproductive and therefore continual nature of the passage. This nature is shown in the passage itself. Because Christ told the disciples to "teach all that I have commanded you," part of the "all I have commanded you" would include teaching this very command itself.⁴ This naturally leads to the next idea.

After exegeting the passage, it appears that Matthew is relaying Jesus' message to the disciples of "teaching all that I have commanded you." This fact leads this paper to ask if there are other passages within Matthew's Gospel that command active evangelism. If Matthew records Jesus previously commanding the disciples to actively witness to others, and he⁵ intended for that command to be included in the command to teach in Matthew 28, that could also be viewed as a command for believers at all times to evangelize.

³ This paper will distinguish the terms "active evangelism" and "passive evangelism" shortly.

⁴ H. N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 556; John Legg, *The King and His Kingdom*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Webster, NY: Evangelical, 2004), 530; and James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 646. The nature of the passage will be laid out with more detail in Chapter 2.

⁵ "He" is used purposely here for ambiguity. Whether this paper will look at Matthew's or Christ's intentions will be covered later in this chapter.

In order to determine what passages to deal with, a passage must meet three criteria. The first is that there is a command that might possibly be for active evangelism in the passage.⁶ Secondly, evangelists must claim this passage is a command for evangelism. Third, the disciples must be present. At least three passages have the required criteria: 5:13-16; 10:5-8; and 22:9-10. Virtually every scholar who attempts to view the scope of “teaching all things” concludes that, at the very least, the five discourse passages in chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 24-25 are included.⁷ Within these passages, there are few verses that have any possibility of being a command for evangelism. Carter suggests six passages: 4:19; 5:3-16; ch 10; 13:18-23; 22:9-10; 24:9-14,⁸ and others suggest some of these passages as well.⁹ However, of these six, only four contain an imperative. The passages in Matt. 13 and 24 lack any command, and simply assume the gospel will be spread. Further, the first passage he mentions has a command but the command is not for evangelism. This section is also outside of the five discourse passages mentioned above. That leaves 5:3-16; ch. 10; and 22:9-10 for further investigation. The commands in these passages will be exegeted, paying close attention to the context of each passage to try and figure out if they are commands to the disciples for active evangelism.

⁶ In other words, the verb must be an imperative in the Greek.

⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 203. Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 138.

⁸ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 552. Not all of these passages are located within the discourse sections, but all of these passage meet the three main qualifications. Being within the discourse sections would almost surely mean a passage is the object of “teaching all things,” but other passages not part of the discourses may be included as well.

⁹ Brown, *Introduction*, 182; Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 316; and Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 385, also suggest chapter 10.

HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

Every paper dealing with exegesis of biblical passages should establish a proper hermeneutical model. This is set up on the basis of a few important ideas. First, this model holds to the idea that meaning is found by seeking the author's intent.¹⁰ Further, historically it has been common to claim that the author only intended one meaning,¹¹ but recently evangelical hermeneutics has trended toward the idea of claiming that there is more than one meaning when, and only when, the author intends it.¹² This paper affirms the latter view. Secondly, especially in the Gospels the issue of prescription versus description is prominent. Sometimes the author of a historical book will describe an event that happened, but that does not necessarily mean the author is prescribing it as paradigmatic. The key to determining whether or not an event is paradigmatic is repetition. If an event is repeated over and over again, then the author is portraying it as paradigmatic.¹³ Third, another common method this paper will employ is a word study. The method for word study to be followed is laid out in *Grasping God's Word*.¹⁴ Many

¹⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 43-97, especially 45-46. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 175-182, especially 182. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 24. Contra the idea of the meaning being found only in the text or that the reader creates the meaning.

¹¹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook on Hermeneutics*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 113; M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (1885; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1947), 205; Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 141.

¹² Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 88-89; W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, and R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 122.

¹³ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 265-280; Gordon D. Fee, and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 107.

¹⁴ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 132-153.

common word study fallacies plague the interpreter when doing word studies,¹⁵ as well as general fallacies when interpreting.¹⁶

Also, this paper will employ the hermeneutical model set forth in Duvall and Hays' book.¹⁷ This involves a four (and sometimes five¹⁸)-step process. The steps are (1) understanding the text the way the original audience would have understood it, (2) noting the difference between their culture and the culture today, (3) drawing out the principle behind the text, and (4) understanding how to apply the text in a believer's life today.¹⁹ However, there is a slight twist with Matthew 28. If Matthew has an eye to the reproductive nature of his command there, then this command would inherently be for believers at all times in all places. If this is true, then the last three steps will become less prominent, although they will still be used.

NARRATIVE HERMENEUTICS

Not only will this paper use the four-step process, but genre-specific rules also apply. In the case of Matthew's Gospel, it is a narrative, or a theological historical narrative. With every story there must be certain elements: plot, characters, setting, story time, dialogue, implicit

¹⁵ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 133-135. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 27-64.

¹⁶ See Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*.

¹⁷ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 19-27.

¹⁸ The fifth step is inserted between the third and fourth steps, but is normally used only when interpreting the Old Testament. The main point of this step is when dealing with a text under the Old Covenant; this step asks the reader to bring the text into the light of New Covenant revelation. Because this paper is written more with an eye toward Matthew's intent than what Christ intended, and virtually all scholars agree Matthew wrote after 50 AD, this paper assumes that Matthew brought these commands into the New Covenant by means of Jesus' New Covenant command to "teach all I have commanded you."

¹⁹ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 21-25.

commentary, conflict, resolution, and other elements common in narratives.²⁰ Bock and Fanning claim three elements stand out amidst the others: characters, plot, and the narrator's perspective.²¹ With all passages, this paper will give attention to these details during exegesis.

Further, because it is a historical narrative theology, other issues arise. They are two-level documents: the reader must deal with Jesus' *sitz im leben* as well as Matthew's.²² This paper will mainly look at the narrator's point of view and his context.²³ However, it should be noted that the perspective of this paper is that Matthew could not have intended anything Christ did not intend for His words to mean when He originally stated them.²⁴ Therefore this model of exegesis still uses both contexts.

PARABLE HERMENEUTICS

At least one passage in this paper is classified as a sub-genre within narrative: parable.²⁵ While the rules of interpreting narrative still apply to a parable,²⁶ an even more specific method

²⁰ Darrell L. Bock and Buist M. Fanning, *Interpreting the New Testament Text* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2006), 199. W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 116-117. Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 202-212.

²¹ Bock and Fanning, *Interpreting*, 199.

²² Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 130. Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2002), 227. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, does not state this explicitly, but he does imply it on page 118 and in the rest of that chapter.

²³ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 174. Young claims that Matthew has an eye toward "a later audience than on a setting during the life of Jesus. Certainly the emphasis on the situation in the temple complex, when the Sadducees and priests questioned Jesus, provided a background for the message. But Matthew is speaking to another audience, guiding his own listeners, as they overhear Jesus speaking to the priests in the temple." This writer takes the same view.

²⁴ This is an evangelical presupposition that this paper is based upon.

²⁵ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 151. They list Matthew 5:13-16 as a metaphor parable. While some might agree, most simply call this a metaphor.

will be used for exegesis of this passage. Parables can be hard to understand, as the disciples well knew (Matt. 13:10-11) and even Christ admitted at one point (Mark 4:11-12). However, over the life of the church, this has been one of the most disagreed upon topics in hermeneutics.

History of Interpretation

Snodgrass' comments on the church's historical use of parables is insightful:

“Throughout much of the church's history the parables of Jesus have been mistreated, rearranged, abused, and butchered. Often they still are today. They are *used* more than they are heard and understood.”²⁷ For 1800 years the church accepted the allegorical method of interpretation.²⁸ The early church fathers Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine each employed an allegorical hermeneutic for understanding parables.²⁹ Some have recently pointed out that one problem with this allegorical approach was reading anachronistically,³⁰ and putting one's own mindset into the text.³¹ While that was a part of the problem, it was not the real problem itself. The real problem is seen when one goes back to the issue of authorial intent.³² If the author were looking to the future and being prophetic, there

²⁶ Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 304. Most parables (and every parable in the Gospel of Matthew) are located within narrative literature; therefore the rules of narrative still apply. However, most parables are a small story within themselves, therefore the rules of narrative apply doubly with parables—first to the context in which the parable is told, and second, to the parable itself.

²⁷ Klyne Snodgrass, “Modern Approaches to the Parables,” In *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 177-190.

²⁸ McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader*, 235.

²⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 50-51. Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 150. Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 260.

³⁰ McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader*, 236.

³¹ This is known as eisegesis.

³² Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 260.

would be no problem with reading anachronistically. However, one wise scholar has pointed out the difficulty of proving that a parable has a distinct futuristic prophecy apart from other Scripture.³³

Historically, Adolf Jülicher spearheaded the shift away from the allegorical approach in the nineteenth century.³⁴ Jülicher's main argument was that parables did not have a series of main points corresponding to every detail like many of the church fathers assumed.³⁵ Rather, each parable has only one main point,³⁶ and it was often a moral point.³⁷ The problem with this method is that some parables do have more than one main point,³⁸ and even Christ seemed to affirm allegorical interpretation of some parables (Matt. 13:1-23). Therefore this method seems to fall short as well.

The newest method to arise claims a parable often makes one to three main points. Virtually all conservative scholars who have written on interpreting parables in recent decades hold to this method.³⁹ Duvall and Hays lay out this method clearly and concisely while giving credit to Blomberg. They claim there is usually one point for every main character or every

³³ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 29-31.

³⁴ Adolf Jülicher, *Die Fleichnisreden Jesu*, Vol. 1 (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910). Although Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 127, claims that one of Jülicher's classifications of parable types was the allegorical parable, this title is misleading.

³⁵ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 43.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁷ Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 302.

³⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 16-17, 20-21, 163; Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 153-154; Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 303-308; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 9; Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 37.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Also, Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 259-261.

group of main characters.⁴⁰ Therefore, a parable has the same number of points as it does main characters. Further, oftentimes parts of the audience will correspond to each of the main characters/groups of main characters.⁴¹ Because this logical approach to parables lines up best with general hermeneutical principles as well as narrative hermeneutical principles, this paper uses the most recent view on parables.

Guidelines For Interpreting Parables

Out of this view arise many helpful aids for interpreting parables. Bailey encourages the reader to put themselves in the original hearer's shoes.⁴² Blomberg gives three commonly used rules to stay away from the historical problems of interpretation,⁴³ and also provides a summary of how to interpret parables.⁴⁴ Fee and Stuart,⁴⁵ McCartney and Clayton,⁴⁶ Osborne,⁴⁷ and Snodgrass⁴⁸ give their own instructions as well. These instructions often overlap but do not

⁴⁰ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 163; Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 261.

⁴¹ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 163. He states this to keep interpreters away from allegorizing. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 283. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 35. While Bailey and Thiselton do not state this idea outright, it is implicit in the hermeneutical principle they use for their thoughts. This principle states that the text can never mean what it could not have meant to the original readers. In this case, if there was no one who would have associated themselves with a certain main character, it is hard to affirm the author intended for that character to be associated with a main point.

⁴² Bailey, *Jesus Through*, 283.

⁴³ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 20-21, 163.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁴⁵ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 155, as well as 153-160.

⁴⁶ McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader*, 238.

⁴⁷ Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 303-308.

⁴⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 24-31.

contradict one another, so they will be used in exegesis. Thiselton,⁴⁹ Via,⁵⁰ Fee and Stuart,⁵¹ and Snodgrass⁵² all give categories of parables. While none of these systems is perfect, classifying a parable will allow the reader to understand the basic structure of a parable.⁵³ These are better labeled as “descriptions” rather than “classifications.” Lastly, one immensely important guideline for interpreting parables in Matthew notes that Matthew often interprets or gives a one-line summary of his parables.⁵⁴ Using these descriptions and principles, this paper will aim to accurately understand Matthew’s original intent for his audience.

DEFINING TERMS

Certain technical words and phrases will be employed throughout this paper that need to be defined. The first two definitions are crucial to understanding this paper. “Active evangelism” is the action of actively seeking out unbelievers in order to share with them the gospel message. “Passive evangelism” is the action of being prepared to witness to unbelievers when the opportunity presents itself, whether through an unbeliever asking a question or some other means which they initiate. These two definitions are necessary to understanding every part of this paper, from the problem and motivation to the methods used, and all the way to the conclusion. This

⁴⁹ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 41.

⁵⁰ Don Otto Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 147-176.

⁵¹ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 151.

⁵² Snodgrass, *Stories*, 11-15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7, notes the vanity in defining a parable because any definition is either not broad enough to include all parables, or too broad that it tells us nothing about any parable. He also applies this to showing their characteristics.

⁵⁴ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 160; Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 296-302; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 19; Young, *Parables*, 174.

paper is looking to find a command for active evangelism, not one for passive evangelism. For example, 1 Peter 3:15 could be cited for passive evangelism, but not active evangelism.

Other definitions are also helpful. “Evangelism,” “witnessing,” and the phrase “spreading the gospel” are all used with the same basic definition: telling unbelievers about the saving grace of God through Christ’s death on the cross. In this paper, when these words are used without one of the prior words “active” or “passive,” they are used for evangelism in general (both active and passive evangelism).

LITERARY FOUNDATIONS

Any good study on various parts of Matthew’s Gospel or an overview of his book will note the variety of views concerning how this Gospel was formed. A few of the most common views are that this Gospel was created using various documents, oral tradition, or the author’s memory of the events.⁵⁵ Some theories combine parts of these to form their own view. Theories on who the author was range from the traditional theory that the disciple named Matthew wrote it,⁵⁶ or another person in the early church, or possibly a school composed it. Dates range from 50 AD to as late as 100 AD.⁵⁷

For the purposes of this paper, certain views will be assumed without being argued. However, other concepts need not be touched, for they do not impact the writing of this paper. Whether the Gospel was written through redaction criticism or some other method, it does not

⁵⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 43-53.

⁵⁶ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 66-74. Guthrie, *New Testament*, 43-53.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Introduction*, 216, supports a later date, possibly up to 100 AD. Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 79, support a date in the 60’s AD. Guthrie, *New Testament*, 53-56, supports a date from 50 AD to 64 AD.

change the view of this paper. The final literary form of the document is what will be analyzed. The same is true of the author; who it is does not affect this paper. What does affect this paper is the presupposition that the author wrote his Gospel in the first century, and attempted to accurately represent the teachings of Christ. The author will be referred to using both the terms “Matthew” and “the author.” Even though this paper does not claim or need to claim that Matthew the disciple wrote this book, the church thought he was the author for over 1700 years. Also, Matthean authorship has a strong argument.⁵⁸ Therefore it is safe to refer to the author of this book as “Matthew,” even when he might not have written the book.⁵⁹ As long as this paper seeks to find the authorial intent of the Gospel, who the author is and how he composed the book remains non-influential.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 66-74.

⁵⁹ To be clear: it is safe to use the name “Matthew” because, even though he might not be the author, his name has become synonymous with the authorship of this Gospel.

⁶⁰ Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 74.

Chapter Two

INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of books on the topic of witnessing use the Great Commissioning⁶¹ in Matthew 28:16-20 as a springboard to talk about sharing the gospel in a variety of ways.⁶² These verses have become so common in American Christian culture that they no longer hold the hearer's fascination. Because of many people's preconceived notions concerning these verses, it is common for believers to shut off their minds when these verses arise in discussion. Almost every Christian in America immediately thinks of one word when they hear these verses: missions. Believers understand that Jesus wanted everyone to know about Him: His life, death, and resurrection. But is that Matthew's desired meaning when concluding his Gospel with these verses, or is something else in this passage? The only way to know is if one digs deeply into the text, trying to find the original.

ORIGINAL MEANING

⁶¹ This term is used for the sake of clarity. Christ gave these instructions to His eleven disciples, but by its very nature the command of "teaching them all that He commanded" would be a continually passed down command throughout Christian history. However, many fail to notice this and see the command as a once-for-all command. New believers can easily perceive this idea from the title of "Great Commission." However, the title "Great Commissioning" shows the progressive aspect of the command and implies that it was not a once-for-all event. For further explanation, see Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 556; Legg, *King*, 530; and Boice, *Gospel*, 646.

⁶² A few are: Robert E. Coleman, "The Lifestyle of the Great Commission," in *Telling the Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 255; D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1996), 19; Jim Petersen, *Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1989), 39-45; and Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 21-23.

Matthew 28:16-20 is a charge given from Jesus to his disciples in order that they may continually reproduce themselves for as long as Christ desires. Matthew uses five lines to present this scenario. He first covers the characters and setting, then he moves on to the circumstances. He gives them motivation for their action, commands them what to do and how to do it, and finally closes with a promise that only God can make. Many other outlines have been proposed for this passage, and some have heavy implications for interpretation.⁶³ However, this outline fits the text best. Matthew does present this commissioning in the same manner as some Old Testament commissions.⁶⁴ Also, Matthew closes this section with a Moses-like statement, which also concludes all five of his teaching sections. These statements may be quotes of Moses, phrases that sound like Moses, or an allusion to Moses. Through this he recalls the entire Gospel as he wraps up his book on discipleship.⁶⁵

OUTLINE:

- I. CHARACTERS AND SETTING
- II. CIRCUMSTANCES
- III. MOTIVATION, COMMAND, AND MEANS OF ACTION
- IV. PROMISE

CHARACTERS

⁶³ W. D. Davies, and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, International Critical Commentary (London and New York: T & T Clark, 1997), 676-677. The shorter sentence structure and overall terseness of the passage leads one to think that Matthew is stating this story in a simple five-line format. When the reader looks at the passage, this is confirmed by the four occurrences of the Greek word for all (*pas*) and the one implicit mention of all (all three persons of the Godhead).

⁶⁴ Ex. 7:1-5; Josh. 1:1-9; 1 Chron. 22:11-16; and Jer. 1:1-10 have many parallels, but none of them are similar enough to be an overt reference.

⁶⁵ Craig Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2001), 148 and 532.

Matthew, as with many good storytellers, begins by laying out the characters. First he presents the disciples, and then, by implication, lets the reader know that Christ is also there.⁶⁶ The disciples are a common group in Matthew's Gospel, and he has already revealed many of their qualities as a group and as individuals. These disciples were formerly fisherman and tax collectors. Those professions were not the most prominent positions to have, a tax collector being much worse than a respectable businessman. All throughout this Gospel the disciples follow, learn from, and question Christ, and recently they have worshiped and feared Christ. The change the disciples go through from the beginning of the story until the closing commission seems to be drastic, but not simply for the better.

Christ, on the other hand, has always been king and worthy of honor. From the very beginning the reader sees that Jesus descends from the royal lineage of David,⁶⁷ and from Abraham, the very father of the Israelites. Then, when the story of Christ's birth begins a few verses later, the reader learns that Christ will be called Immanuel, as prophesied by Isaiah, which means "God with us." Throughout the entire narrative, Jesus is the Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies and explaining the teachings of the Old Testament, doing miracles, and showing the disciples how to live. Then, at the climax of the book, Christ is resurrected after being wrongfully sentenced to death by crucifixion. Matthew shows that Christ is the only possible Messiah, fulfilling Messianic prophecies and proving Himself to be God incarnate through the resurrection. Matthew has provided the characters, and amidst this he also paints the setting.

⁶⁶ By telling his disciples to go to this mountain, Christ implies that He will meet them there, thus He is also present.

⁶⁷ R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 273.

Setting

The setting of the Great Commissioning is in Galilee on an unnamed mountain, which brings up many different connotations. Some have proposed various theories for which mountain it was, but Matthew does not put any emphasis on which mountain, only that it was a mountain in Galilee. Some might wonder why this mountain is left unnamed, but two observations help the reader see that Matthew does not need to point out which mountain it is. First, the only mountain that Matthew mentions by name is the Mount of Olives. Further, twice before in his Gospel, Matthew has presented Jesus as going up to an unnamed mountain in the Galilean region,⁶⁸ and Christ visits many unnamed mountains in other parts of the Gospel.⁶⁹

However, a good reader will question why Matthew mentioned a mountain but did not name it. Many suggestions have been made, most of which are good. Some think that Jesus began his teaching on a mountain in Galilee with the Sermon on the Mount, and here He concludes his teaching on a mountain in Galilee.⁷⁰ Some even think that this mountain is the same peak from where Jesus issued his Sermon on the Mount. Those who purport this view claim that the verse should be translated as, “To the mountain where Jesus commanded them.”⁷¹ While this understanding is possible, there is no historical evidence for it, and the translation seems to be a stretch at best. Others say the mountain recalls Moses’ commissioning service with the burning bush, and draws further Mosaic parallel in the fact that Moses also received commands on the mountain, just as the disciples do here and in Matthew 5. But the most striking

⁶⁸ Matt 4:23-5:1 (although not clearly in Galilee, it seems that this is the most likely place); 15:29.

⁶⁹ Matt 4:8; 5:1, 14; 8:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1.

⁷⁰ Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 531.

⁷¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13-28* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 808.

parallel through this mountain picture comes from the temptation scene in Matthew 4. Satan tempts Jesus three times, and on the third time Jesus is taken up to a high mountain where Satan promises Christ authority over all the kingdoms of the earth if Christ will worship him. But here, in striking reversal, Christ is being worshipped and has authority over all the earth.⁷²

Schnackenburg's theory claims that the mountain is only a symbol of Christ's association with God.⁷³ His proposal falls short due to his lack of evidence.⁷⁴ Which parallel did Matthew intend? It is extremely hard to tell, for there are many parallels between these verses and Moses as well as between them and the beginning of this Gospel.⁷⁵ It seems best to say that Matthew is referring back the Mosaic example, but it is also set in a similar 'type'⁷⁶ as the introduction to his Gospel.⁷⁷ This, then, is only the first parallel that this passage has with Moses; many more are yet to come.

⁷² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 413; Keener, *Gospel*, 716.

⁷³ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 297-298.

⁷⁴ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, does not provide any reasoning for this claim; he simply states the idea. The evidence also seems to point against his view. Matthew has not once used the Greek word for mountain (ὄρος) in a clearly symbolic sense. He has also used it many times in a clearly literal manner (Matt 4:8; 5:1; 8:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1, 9; 21:1; 24:3; 26:30). Matthew uses it only four times where a symbolic manner is even possible, but three of those are in parables (17:20; 18:12; 21:21), and one in prophetic literature (24:16). So it seems clear that when Matthew uses ὄρος in narrative literature as he does in Matthew 28:16, it is almost certainly a literal mountain.

⁷⁵ The phrase "the beginning of this Gospel" refers to both the temptation and the Sermon on the Mount. Being the inauguration of Jesus earthly ministry, they will be dealt with together.

⁷⁶ 'Type' here refers to the typology of the passage, otherwise known as intertextuality.

⁷⁷ The idea that the interpreter is searching for the author's one intended meaning still applies here. This statement does not mean that the Great Commissioning (A) is referring back to both Matthew's introduction (B) and Mosaic typology (C). Rather, the logic says that A is referring back to B, and C also refers back to B. Therefore A and C are connected, but only in the sense that they refer back to the same issue.

Circumstances

Two actions set up the main situation on this mountaintop: worshipping and doubting. There are only a few instances of people worshipping Jesus before this in Matthew's story. The wise men worship him as a child, the disciples worship Him after He walks on water, and the disciples worship Him again after the resurrection.⁷⁸ However, there is one other pertinent occurrence of προσκυνέω. In Matthew 4, Jesus tells Satan that worship is due to God, and by implication, only God.⁷⁹ Therefore, when Christ is worshipped here in 28:17, it anticipates his claim of deity in the next verse.

Furthermore, not only was Jesus worshipped, but He was also doubted. Many different opinions have surfaced concerning who exactly doubted, but one makes far better sense than the rest.⁸⁰ The Greek is usually translated as "some doubted," but can legitimately be translated, "others doubted." The problem is that the word "others" does not appear in the original text. The word that is translated "others" is much better translated "some." "Some" carries the ambiguity of the original text; it might refer to some of the disciples, or some others who are present. Further, it seems that the word does in fact refer to some, and possibly all of the disciples.⁸¹ Both the disciples and "some" are masculine in Greek, and there are no other characters present as far

⁷⁸ 2:11; 14:33; 28:9.

⁷⁹ Many translators add in the word "only" even though it does not appear in the Greek text. However, based on Satan's question and the original context of what Jesus quotes, it appears that Jesus was saying that Satan was not due any worship. Instead, God was the only one that deserved any worship.

⁸⁰ For a summary of the different views, see Bruner, *Churchbook*, 809-810.

⁸¹ Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 312. Contra Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary (Columbia: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 884; and D. A. Carson, "Mathew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew-Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 663.

as the reader can tell. Because of the word “appointed,” it seems that Jesus told only the disciples, so no others would know to come.

Some commentators question how the disciples could doubt after what happened with Thomas, but this can be explained in a variety of ways.⁸² A few commentators claim the word for “doubted” (διστάζω) is better translated as “hesitated.”⁸³ BDAG allows for either translation, and the only other occurrence of διστάζω seems to lean toward a hesitation rather than full-blown doubt.⁸⁴ Secondly, it is unclear why the disciples doubted. They might have been unsure of themselves, who Jesus was, or if they were having a vision.⁸⁵ Regardless of whether or not these are true, Bruner has presented an explanation. He claims that the main point is not the disciples doubting, but rather, it is Jesus disregarding that doubt (almost like it were a regular occurrence).⁸⁶ While this is a possible explanation, it makes more sense to claim that Christ addressed the disciples’ doubt.⁸⁷ If Christ now has “all authority,” and he will be with them forever, then there is no sense in doubting. This seems to be confirmed by another parallel with Matthew’s Gospel in 14:22-33, where Peter walks on water and then doubts. Christ then questions Peter’s reason for doubting, implying that Peter should not doubt. This passage, which

⁸² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 745. The story of Thomas doubting is in John 20:19-29.

⁸³ Ibid., 744-745; Hagner, *Matthew*, 885.

⁸⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 252. The other occurrence of this word is in Matt. 14:31, where Peter walks on water but begins to fall in because of his διστάζω. While the English word “doubt” has a semantic range from slight hesitation to all-on doubt, the word hesitation fits better in this passage.

⁸⁵ Morris, *Gospel*, 744-745; Hagner, *Matthew*, 885.

⁸⁶ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 810.

⁸⁷ Contra Bruner, *Churchbook*, 810; and Hagner, *Matthew*, 886.

is the only other place Matthew uses διστάζω also happens to contain a rare occurrence of προσκυνέω when it refers to worship of Christ.⁸⁸ In this passage the main point seems to be that obedience and reliance upon Christ can overcome doubt. By employing these two terms again, Matthew hearkens back to the earlier passage and reminds the reader that doubt can be overcome by reliance upon Christ and His authority.

Motivation

Christ now provides the disciples with a reason to obey the command he is about to give while addressing their doubt.⁸⁹ He tells the disciples that all authority has been given to him, and provides two qualifying prepositional phrases concerning where that authority exists. First of all, there is a divine passive at work in this verse.⁹⁰ By placing the word ἐδόθη at the beginning of the clause, Matthew emphasizes the action of giving. This also provides another contrast with Matthew 4, where Satan tempts Christ. Satan promised to give Christ all the kingdoms of the earth (implying authority over them) if Christ would simply bow down and worship him. However, the exact opposite has happened. By not bowing down and worshipping Satan, Christ has been given authority from God through His death and resurrection.

Furthermore, Matthew wants the reader to understand that Christ's authority no longer has limitations. Whereas He formerly only had authority as far as God was enabling Him, Christ now has all authority in heaven and on the earth. Morris notes that Matthew is showing the reader how the restrictions of Christ's incarnations no longer bind Him. Christ again has divine

⁸⁸ Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 134.

⁸⁹ The aspect of addressing their doubt was covered in the previous paragraph, and need not be restated here.

⁹⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 951. Again, only two sets of characters have been introduced here, so it makes sense that the divine passive is at work here.

authority over the entire universe.⁹¹ This idea is further explained by Christ's sphere of authority. His authority does not simply span all of the heavens, or all of the earth. Rather, it extends throughout all of both spheres. Although it is not explicit, this shows, by implication, that Christ has authority over every matter in every locale. Nothing should stop the disciples from carrying out Christ's command, because He has authority over what happens. The disciples should carry out Christ's command and leave the response up to Christ. Christ has authority over the response to the message, and the disciples have the responsibility to spread that message.

Command

Matthew, having set up the situation, presents Christ's command to make disciples of all nations. This sentence has a variety of grammatical and lexical issues, including the classification of three participles and their meaning, along with the meaning of the main verb. Further, there are also background issues concerning two of the participles. Overall, this is a very complex sentence for its short length. Scholars and readers alike need to approach it with caution and care.

Participial Functions

There are three participles that Matthew uses when representing Jesus' original statement; the first one appears before the main verb, and the other two after it. These last two are often dealt with together. The first, πορευθέντες, is the initial command in the Great Commission, often translated with the implication in the English that the Greek is an imperative, with, "go." While some teachers claim that its force is "having gone,"⁹² or "as you

⁹¹ Morris, *Gospel*, 745-746.

⁹² Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 531. William Hendriksen, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 999.

are going,”⁹³ they are probably incorrect.⁹⁴ Wallace argues conclusively that this participle should be classified as attendant circumstance, because it fits every criteria Wallace provides for an attendant circumstance participle.⁹⁵ Therefore, it should be translated with the same force as the main verb,⁹⁶ which is an imperative. Through this evidence, one sees that the common translation is easily the best.

To help the reader understand what exactly an attendant circumstance participle is, two other examples from Matthew are given here. They are Matt 2:8 and 26:42. The first is in the context of the wise men looking for Christ the child, and Herod tells them to “Go and look carefully.” “Go” is an attendant circumstance participle, and “look carefully” is an imperative verb. Thus the participle carries some imperatival force as well. “Looking carefully” is an action that is logically preceded by going to the place where they will look. Secondly, Matt 26:42 is set in the context of the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew records Jesus as “going away and praying.” “Going away” is the participle, and it logically precedes “praying,” which is the main verb. These two examples illustrate the idea.

There are also two other participles that relate to the main verb. They are βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες. The first is usually translated as “baptizing” and the latter as “teaching.” The main question is how these relate to the verb. Commentators and Greek scholars agree that these are participles of means, elaborating on the action of the main verb.⁹⁷ Jesus is telling the disciples

⁹³ Keener, *Gospel*, 718. Talbert, *Matthew*, 313.

⁹⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 642.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 645.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 640. Carson, “Matthew,” 666.

⁹⁷ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 299. Talbert, *Matthew*, 313. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 630, 645. Contra Carson, “Matthew,” 667-668.

that the way that they are to make disciples is to first go, implying that they should leave their locale.⁹⁸ This further portrays Matthew's theme of the Jews rejecting the Messiah and the message being taken to the Gentiles. But Christ still does not rule out the gospel being preached to Jews. Even while remaining in Galilee, Christ wanted his disciples to make disciples there.⁹⁹ Secondly, these are the means of making disciples. Christ wants them to reproduce spiritually through baptizing and teaching.

Participial Meanings

The three participles also have very distinct meanings that Matthew has already employed in this book. Matthew has used the verb πορευθέντες often and commonly as a participle.¹⁰⁰ This word does not have any further meaning that needs to be clearly explained: it simply means, "to go." However, βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες both have meanings that are not immediately clear. The first, often translated as "baptizing," refers to the process of submerging someone in water. This word was used for the dyeing of cloth,¹⁰¹ sometimes included blood,¹⁰² and was usually performed in the *miqveh*s.¹⁰³ However, many scholars agree upon two things. First, this baptizing into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit was the symbol

⁹⁸ Ribberbos, *Matthew*, 554.

⁹⁹ Keener, *Gospel*, 718.

¹⁰⁰ Matt 2:8-9, 20; 8:9; 9:13; 10:6-7; 11:4, 7; 12:1, 45; 17:27; 18:12; 19:15; 21:2, 6; 22:9, 15; 24:1; 25:9, 16, 41; 26:14; 27:66; 28:7, 11, 16, 19.

¹⁰¹ W. F. Albright, and C.S. Mann, *Matthew: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Yale University, 1971), 362.

¹⁰² Legg, *King*, 530.

¹⁰³ Michael J. Wilkins, "Matthew," in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 189. These were the Jewish ritual baths, commonly built into synagogues. These might have tied Christianity to Judaism until the Jewish War of the late 60's and early 70's.

of entrance into Christian belief.¹⁰⁴ It represented power and authority,¹⁰⁵ and the singular word “name” is an early indication of the singularity of the Trinity.¹⁰⁶ Second, it might have replaced circumcision, which was the Old Testament equivalent for entering into God’s Covenant with Israel.¹⁰⁷ The participle often translated as “teaching” also seems obvious at first glance, but has a meaning that many fail to notice. Matthew seems to repeat the same idea here as in the main verb. Both words mean, “to teach.” However, here Matthew uses one word to explain the other. He wants the disciples to teach all that Jesus has commanded them. Scholarly consensus is that Matthew has five different sections of his book, and each of those has one discourse in them. It has been proposed by more than one scholar that Matthew is referring back to these five discourse sections when he records Jesus’ words in chapter 28.¹⁰⁸ Some even consider this command of making disciples to be part of what should be taught, making this a command that would be passed down throughout Christianity.¹⁰⁹ Further, Matthew seems to confirm this by

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *Matthew*, 552.

¹⁰⁵ Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 532; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 955.

¹⁰⁶ Wilkins, “Matthew,” 190.

¹⁰⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 685; Legg, *King*, 529.

¹⁰⁸ Carter, *Matthew*, 553; Paul S. Minear, *Matthew: The Teacher’s Gospel* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), 141; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 298-299; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 690; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 963.

¹⁰⁹ This is not argued for thoroughly in this paper. The simple line of thought is that if Christ commanded the disciples to “make disciples, teaching all that I have commanded you,” then that command would be part of “teaching all that I have commanded you.” Therefore the disciples would teach others to teach others, who would teach others to teach others, and so on and so forth. This idea is referred to in this paper as the “reciprocal” or “continual” nature of the command. See Legg, *King*, 530-531; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1271. Most agree that this phrase refers back to the five discourse sections in 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25 (see the previous footnote, 109). Others, like Wilkins, *Matthew*, 958-964, think the entire Gospel is a handbook for discipleship. If this is the case, then the command in 28:20 would be referring back to itself because it is part of the Gospel. Carson, “Matthew,” 666-670, does not use the word reciprocal, but states it is a “paradigm for all disciples,” as well as stating, “*Everything* he (Christ) has commanded must be passed on ‘to the very end of the age.’” Since Matthew 28:16-20 is a command, it would be included. He further

ending each of the five discourses with a Mosaic phrase, and he is about to end with another Mosaic phrase, the promise of omnipresence.¹¹⁰ So Matthew is telling the disciples to use his book as a manual for discipleship by using this phrase.

The Meaning of μαθητεύω

Of all the words in this section, less research has gone into the most important word than many other words. The definition of μαθητεύω has a huge impact on what Jesus is essentially saying here. He might be talking about conversion, discipleship, or both. Many definitions of this word have been offered, but few seem to stem from serious study of the word. Louw and Nida as well as BDAG offer both definitions for it.¹¹¹ Davies and Allison say that it plainly means, “make disciples” in this instance, with an emphasis on the entry into discipleship.¹¹² But Boice claims that μαθητεύω very literally means “to make one a disciple.” He thinks that Matthew would not use μαθητεύω and διδάσκω in such close context if they meant the same thing.¹¹³ Mounce agrees with him, saying the emphasis is on the conversion to becoming a learner.¹¹⁴

states that this passing on “is a means provided for successive generations to remain in contact with Jesus’ teachings.” The fact that Christ added on the phrase “to the end of the age” also shows that Christ intended this command to be carried on further than just the lifetime of those who said it (unless they would live until the end of the age). See Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 556. Further, the research for this paper found no commentator who states that this command was only for the disciples.

¹¹⁰ Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 148, 532. The phrases used to end the five discourse sections are similar to phrases used to describe Moses in the Pentateuch. This is what the words “Mosaic phrase” means.

¹¹¹ Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 2 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 155; Bauer, *Greek-English*, 609.

¹¹² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 684.

¹¹³ Boice, *Gospel*, 648.

¹¹⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 268.

However, Hagner believes that the emphasis of the verb is on nurturing, the growth that occurs after conversion.¹¹⁵ Bruner believes the word has a very ordinary ring to it, and it refers to the process of teaching others about Christ.¹¹⁶ However, based on the evidence at hand, the word seems to refer to both conversion and growth. The participles just discussed show exactly what Matthew meant when he recorded Jesus' command to make disciples. Hendriksen understands this, and says the word is something more than just "make converts," but it does imply that.¹¹⁷ Both Christ and Matthew intended for the disciples to convert unbelievers and teach them until they became Christ-like in their life.

Christ's Promise

To comfort the disciples while they are undertaking this huge task, Christ promises that He will be with them during the entire endeavor. The first idea that sticks out when reading this promise is the bookend that it creates with the beginning of the book. When the reader is first introduced to Christ in 1:23, He is called "Immanuel," meaning "God with us." Here, Christ promises that he will be with the disciples.¹¹⁸ Further, Christ will remain with His disciples until they have completed the task, and then beyond that. This hearkens back to the idea that the disciples will present the message, but only Christ has control over acceptance of the gospel. There is also an implicit claim to be God in this promise, because only God is eternal, which is

¹¹⁵ Hagner, *Matthew*, 887.

¹¹⁶ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 816.

¹¹⁷ Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 999.

¹¹⁸ Wilkins, "Matthew," 191.

what the phrase “to the end of the age” means.¹¹⁹ This promise wraps up the Great Commissioning and Matthew’s Gospel, and it is marvelously true.¹²⁰

Concluding Observations

To end the discussion of the original meaning, several points must be rehashed. First, there are inherent in this text many different references to previous points in Matthew’s Gospel as well as Mosaic types. The links to Matthew’s Gospel show that Matthew is pointing out that he wants his Gospel to be used as a book for discipleship. He shows this through the last participial phrase, “teaching them all that I have commanded you.” The ties to Moses show that this new sect of Judaism is indeed the new Judaism, the new covenant that God has made with his people. Further, the adjective $\pi\alpha\varsigma$, meaning “all,” occurs four times, and it is implied once more.¹²¹ The repetition of this word shows the universality of Christ’s command for “going and making disciples.” The disciples should spread this message to everyone.¹²² This was a very innovative way of thinking, because many people groups at that time only gathered followers close to their proximity.¹²³ This two-sided typology¹²⁴ and the repetition of $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ seem to be

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 191.

¹²⁰ Boice, *Gospel*, 651.

¹²¹ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 811. Carson, “Matthew,” 665. $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ occurs four times concretely, and the proto-Trinitarian formula in the baptismal phrase implies that Matthew is talking about “all” of the Godhead.

¹²² Legg, *King*, 531; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 554; Bruner, *Churchbook*, 817.

¹²³ Keener, *Gospel*, 719. Keener says, “various cults were propagated by travelers in antiquity,” but there is no indication that they were missionaries at all. Also, in the Old Testament it is common for conquered peoples to convert to Judaism, but rarely do Jews go out and try to convert others in any sense. The only exception to this would be some of the minor prophets.

¹²⁴ “Two-sided” refers to the fact that Matthew refers back to previous parts of his Gospel, which refer back to Moses. Thus this pericope refers back to both previous parts of his Gospel and the life of Moses.

Matthew's main emphasis apart from what he explicitly states. Knowing this, the interpreter can then go on to the next stage in the hermeneutical process.

MEASURING THE CULTURAL GAP

There are many differences between the Christian culture that Matthew is addressing in the first-century church and American Christian culture today. The common ones are language, customs, geography, location, time, dress, and a plethora of other minute distinctions. However, there are a few important distinctions. Matthew is addressing an audience with much Jewish influence, whereas today Judaism has almost no influence whatsoever. This spreads the gap even more and as a result, keeps American Christians out of touch with the issues Matthew is addressing. When Matthew shows Jesus' claims to be God and His innovative command not only to make disciples in their own nation but among all nations, many American Christians miss the significance of it.

Also, many evangelists and preachers overlook the idea of making disciples by teaching all that Christ has commanded. This paper has shown that the command implies conversion. However, it denotes that the disciples will make other disciples, people who will learn about God and become more like Christ everyday. Matthew even shows that he is writing his entire Gospel as sort of an instruction manual for discipleship.¹²⁵ It is hard for a believer today to see this without digging into the text and meditating on it. Therefore the principle one draws out of this must bring out Matthew's main ideas, as well as clearly communicate what most American Christians appear to miss.

¹²⁵ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 963. This is shown through the phrase "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you."

THE PRINCIPLE

Matthew tells his audience to make converts of people from all nations whether through active or passive evangelism, then raise and nurture those converts until the converts themselves can then make converts out of others. The participle translated “Go” does not necessarily command active evangelism, but might be commanding passive evangelism in places other than where they were currently. Essentially Matthew wants continual reproduction to happen in the church. Because of the reciprocal nature of the command, the church should witness, leading to new believers, and then disciple new believers until they are able to further reproduce. This process should look very similar to raising children into competent adults.

CONCLUSION

Matthew commands the twelve disciples to go and reproduce themselves through what Christ has taught them, making more disciples. This command for discipleship implies that evangelism is happening. However, a command to disciple is not necessarily a command to evangelize. Since this paper has not concluded this is a command to individual believer’s for active evangelism, but instead one focusing on discipleship, the next part of this paper will turn to other passages in Matthew. These passages will be ones that Matthew intended for the disciples to teach because of the command covered in this chapter. The point of surveying these passages is to see if they are a command for every individual Christian to be involved in active evangelism.

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

If the author refers back to Jesus' five discourses with his command to "teach all things," and the author records Jesus giving a command for active evangelism somewhere in those discourses, then the command would apply to believers at all times and in all places because of Christ's command in Matthew 28. This chapter will investigate three passages to see if they are commands for active evangelism. Those three passages are Matt. 5:13-16; 10:5-8; and 22:9-10.¹²⁶ However, commands cannot be understood outside of context. Therefore these commands are the main focus of exegesis, but a less in-depth exegesis of the context will also be needed to understand the commands themselves.

5:13-16: SALT AND LIGHT

PLOT

Within the book as a whole, Matthew is recording the first discourse in a series of five discourses. Matthew has just finished his first round of stories about Christ. Specifically, Christ has been baptized by John the Baptist, tempted by Satan, called some of his disciples, and healed many sick. After this, Christ will have another round of healing many people and performing miracles, but in this second round of healing and miracles Matthew will give the reader much more detail than the first time.

¹²⁶ 22:9-10 is not part of one of the five main discourse sections, even though it is part of a long discourse. The main criteria are that the disciples are present, there is an imperative, and some have claimed it as a command for evangelism in the past. Thus it meets the three main requirements for which this paper searched.

Within the Sermon on the Mount itself, the salt and light section is part of the introduction. Jesus begins with the famous beatitudes, and the second part of his introduction is the discussion of salt and light. This introduction sets up the stage for the theme of the Sermon on the Mount: how to live as a true Torah-abiding Christ follower in a world that does not live as Christians.¹²⁷ After verse 16, Matthew records various moral teachings of Christ that help the disciples and the crowds better understand the law. In conclusion, Jesus warns whoever will obey his words and commends them as being wise with the story of wise and foolish builders. Matthew then ends this first discourse by showing the crowd's amazement at his teachings, and noting his ability to teach better than the scribes.¹²⁸

CHARACTERS

Three basic characters are present in this passage. First, as in all the passages covered in this paper, is Christ. He is the one giving the speech, and the only one who speaks in all of chapters 5-7. The only words in these chapters not attributed to his lips are Matthew's narrative words at the end of chapter seven, and they conclude the Sermon on the Mount.

Also present are the disciples. While this word is commonly used to denote Jesus' twelve followers, "disciples" might refer to a larger group than just the twelve. Luke 10 refers to Jesus sending out seventy¹²⁹ people. These people might have been disciples also. However, in

¹²⁷ At the beginning of many sections, Christ overturns Midrashic teachings with the phrase, "You have heard it said ..., but I say to you ...". Further, the introduction to the sermon shows the importance of living out these commands in the midst of the world. See France, *Gospel*, 171-173. Also, Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 56; and Hagner, *Matthew*, 98.

¹²⁸ This comparison of Christ to the scribes is more evidence for this sermon being an interpretation of Torah law, for scribes were often the ones to record/interpret the Torah.

¹²⁹ Or seventy-two, depending on which textual variant is correct.

Matthew's Gospel the author uses μαθητής seventy-two times,¹³⁰ and not once does he note another or a larger group of disciples other than the twelve (and later eleven). Therefore it seems that Matthew does not refer to them in this book, and the characters present in Matthew 5-7 are the twelve disciples.

The last character Matthew mentions is the crowd. It seems that a large group of people were either following or were currently around Christ. This was not uncommon, as seen from the feeding of the multitudes in Matt 14:13-21 and 15:32-38. In his narration, Matthew records crowds being around Christ many times other than just these two feedings. He uses ὄχλος, the word here for crowds, fifty times in his Gospel.¹³¹ Therefore, this is just a general reference to a crowd, leaving the reader with three main (groups of) characters: Jesus, his twelve disciples, and a crowd.

EXEGESIS

Tying the passage together

By providing a double metaphor¹³² in his introduction to the sermon, Christ paints a picture of what he is about to say. The metaphor is imprecise like any other metaphor. However, the rest of his sermon fills in the details of the picture and helps everyone present to see how they

¹³⁰ Matt 5:1; 8:21, 23; 9:10-11, 14, 19, 37; 10:1, 24-25, 42-11:2; 12:1-2, 49; 13:10, 36; 14:12, 15, 19, 22, 26; 15:2, 12, 23, 32-33, 36; 16:5, 13, 20-21, 24; 17:6, 10, 13, 16, 19; 18:1; 19:10, 13, 23, 25; 20:17; 21:1, 6, 20; 22:16; 23:1; 24:1, 3; 26:1, 8, 17-19, 26, 35-36, 40, 45, 56; 27:64; 28:7-8, 13, 16.

¹³¹ Matt 4:25-5:1; 7:28; 8:1, 18; 9:8, 23, 25, 33, 36; 11:7; 12:15, 23, 46; 13:2, 34, 36; 14:5, 13-15, 19, 22-23; 15:10, 30-33, 35-36, 39; 17:14; 19:2; 20:29, 31; 21:8-9, 11, 26, 46; 22:33; 23:1; 26:47, 55; 27:15, 20, 24.

¹³² Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 151.

should carry out their lives.¹³³ It tells what the “good works” of verse 16 are and how to be salt and light to the world.¹³⁴

Immediate Context

First, this metaphor is tied to the last beatitude strongly,¹³⁵ and the others as well.¹³⁶ The majority of commentators agree that verses 11-12 tie in strongly with 13-16,¹³⁷ and some even claim they tie in better with 13-16 than 2-10.¹³⁸ This becomes clear through the shift to second person in verse 11 and the emphatic ὑμεῖς in verses 13 and 14.¹³⁹ This shows that the people who are persecuted are salt and light to the world,¹⁴⁰ possibly just as the prophets were also salt and light.

Who is the “you”?

The first issue at hand is whom Matthew refers to with the ὑμεῖς in verses 13 and 14. Since Christ is speaking the words, it cannot be him. This leaves the disciples and the crowds. Being a plural pronoun, the antecedent should also be plural. However, both μαθητής and ὄχλος

¹³³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 471.

¹³⁴ Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 93; Weber, *Matthew*, 61.

¹³⁵ France, *Gospel*, 177.

¹³⁶ Morris, *Gospel*, 103; Mounce, *Matthew*, 42; John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 91.

¹³⁷ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 44; Nolland, *Gospel*, 211-212.

¹³⁸ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 153.

¹³⁹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 97; Hare, *Matthew*, 44; Nolland, *Gospel*, 212.

¹⁴⁰ Nolland, *Gospel*, 211.

in verse one are plural, so this does not help decide. To begin the chapter Matthew notes that the disciples came toward him, so if it were one group and not the other, it would probably be the disciples and not the crowds rather than vice versa. However, this is not conclusive.

No other textual clues help the reader understand, but herein lays the purpose of Matthew's writing. Looking back at the text, Matthew's reader would realize that Christ was speaking to anyone who would listen. In retrospect, Christ was talking to anyone among the crowds and disciples who would listen to and obey His words. It is possible that some people in the crowd that day were among those who heard about Christ's death and believed it, and some were not. There is even the possibility that some listening to this Gospel being read would have been among the crowd that day. On the other hand, the reader/hearer of the Gospel would have known that some of the disciples fell on both sides of obeying as well. The book of Acts records eleven of the disciples being salt and light, while each of the four canonical Gospels notes that Judas betrayed Christ. So it seems that Matthew records Christ as saying it to at least the disciples, but also to whoever was willing to obey.¹⁴¹

Salt

The next issue to clarify is what the phrase "You are the salt of the earth" means. Salt has many different qualities, but which one is being referenced here? Davies and Allison list eleven qualities of salt that could be in view.¹⁴² However, many of these are viewed as outlandish by the

¹⁴¹ For the purpose of this paper, the disciples are the only ones who need to be the recipients of Christ's words. Since they are more likely candidates than anyone else, even if the crowds were never intended to hear and obey Christ's words, the disciples surely were. This action of speaking to the disciples ties it in to "teaching all things" in 28:20.

¹⁴² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 472-473.

vast majority, and can be ruled out. Others list only the more logical possibilities.¹⁴³ However, one point has been made that brings the situation to light. Due to the nature of a metaphor, it is not specific.¹⁴⁴ There is therefore no need to discuss which of the eleven or more qualities of salt Christ had in mind here.¹⁴⁵ To determine which quality is tough for anyone today¹⁴⁶ and could distort the metaphor.¹⁴⁷ Christ is simply stating what every one of the disciples and everyone in the crowd knew: salt is useful and influential.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, in this context it is a metaphor for how beneficial to the world the person is that does these “good deeds.”¹⁴⁹ Salt is still useful in today’s world, as it seems to have always been and will always be.¹⁵⁰ Therefore it is simple for any reader at any time to understand the metaphor: they are useful and influential for the world.¹⁵¹ It should be pressed no further.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ G. Jerome Albrecht and Michael J. Albrecht, *Matthew*, People’s Bible Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 69; William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 119-120; France, *Gospel*, 175; Hagner, *Matthew*, 99; Keener, *Gospel*, 173-175; Mounce, *Matthew*, 43; Nolland, *Gospel*, 212; Turner, *Matthew*, 154-155; Weber, *Matthew*, 61; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 213-214; In his book *Exegetical Fallacies*, Carson lists the fallacy of appealing to unrelated background material on pages 41-43. Many commentators have, in a sense, tripped over that fallacy. Whereas the background material given by some is relevant to the culture, it has no relation to this text, because of the nature of metaphor. For this reason a discussion of the qualities of salt has been completely disregarded. Even raising the issue of which quality Jesus intended here could be misleading.

¹⁴⁴ Hagner, *Matthew*, 99, notes that pressing it further would turn the metaphor into an allegory.

¹⁴⁵ Bock, Darrell L., *The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: The Gospels* (Colorado Springs: Victor Press, 2002), 54.

¹⁴⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 473.

¹⁴⁷ Ambiguity could be Matthew’s intention here.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 473; Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 109; Keener, *Gospel*, 173; Mounce, *Matthew*, 43; Tasker, *Gospel*, 63; Weber, *Matthew*, 61-62.

¹⁴⁹ Turner, *Matthew*, 155.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty Press, 1979), 119.

¹⁵¹ See footnote 137.

The next phrase in the verse is a rhetorical question that has also puzzled many. Two main issues determine the meaning of this verse. The first is whether salt can lose its saltiness, and the second is the meaning of the word usually translated as “lose saltiness” or “become tasteless.” This section covers them in the opposite order for the sake of clarity. Once the meaning of the word is clear, then the meaning of the phrase as a whole is easier to determine.

The first question to ask is what the word μωραίνω means. This word is used only four times in the New Testament,¹⁵³ once in a parallel passage in Luke’s Gospel, and twice more in the Pauline Epistles. The most common meaning of this word is “to make foolish.”¹⁵⁴ It is possible that here, Christ used the word as a euphemism, and this idiomatic use further reveals Christ’s intent: the disciples and anyone who listens should be wise, and not foolish.¹⁵⁵ One commentator even claims that salt was a rabbinic symbol for wisdom.¹⁵⁶ This idea would make sense based on context. One who holds to this view might claim that in this discourse Christ is explaining how to obey the law, and therefore he is acting like a rabbi. Combined with the fact that there is nothing in the context to overturn this meaning, it is a possible meaning. However, this is a stretch considering no firm evidence exists showing this word was used as a rabbinic symbol for wisdom.¹⁵⁷ Therefore this paper will proceed with both meanings in view to see

¹⁵² Tasker, *Gospel*, notes that salt is different from what it is put into, therefore influential and useful. However, on page 63 he presses the metaphor too far by saying, like salt, the believer should be a disinfectant for the world morally.

¹⁵³ Matt 5:13; Luke 14:34; Rom 1:22; 1Cor 1:20.

¹⁵⁴ Bauer, *Greek-English*, 663; France, *Gospel*, 175.

¹⁵⁵ France, *Gospel*, 175.

¹⁵⁶ R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 112.

¹⁵⁷ Contra France, *Matthew*, 112, who makes this claim but lists no evidence.

which one works best. So the two options are either the verb was used of salt to talk about losing wisdom, or the verb used here does not describe one specific quality of salt, but simply uses a verb idiomatically to show the idea of losing innate qualities.¹⁵⁸

The second definition has caused much controversy over the years, but that does not mean it should be discarded. The problem arises out of one simple scientific fact: salt cannot lose its saltiness.¹⁵⁹ Salt is a very stable chemical compound, and it cannot remain salt and lose its qualities of being salt, whether that is taste, preservation, purity, or any other quality. Further, because it is chemically stable, it is extremely hard for it to stop being salt.¹⁶⁰ The common solution to this fact is to claim that in the first century, it was common for salt to become diluted by being mixed with impurities,¹⁶¹ or it might dissolve.¹⁶² This could be what Christ referred to when he uttered those words.

However, this seems unlikely. Many commentators seem to miss the very point of the statement itself. Christ is not attempting to show that salt might become diluted or dissolve. He is trying to communicate that salt cannot lose its saltiness.¹⁶³ While the idea that salt could become diluted does seem to be relevant background material, Christ here does not mention impurities or

¹⁵⁸ While Bauer, *Greek-English*, 663, says the meaning of *μωραίνω* in Matthew 5:13 is “to become tasteless,” the research for this paper has not found any reason to give the verb this meaning. Matthew does not give any indication that he is talking about a specific quality of salt, so this writer sees no need to press the text beyond what it tells the reader.

¹⁵⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 473; Morris, *Gospel*, 104; Nolland, *Gospel*, 213.

¹⁶⁰ Hagner, *Matthew*, 99; Morris, *Gospel*, 104; Phillips, *Exploring*, 92.

¹⁶¹ Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 69; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 473; Martin Goldsmith, *Matthew & Mission: The Gospel Through Jewish Eyes* (Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 2001), 71; Morris, *Gospel*, 104; Turner, *Matthew*, 155.

¹⁶² Keener, *Gospel*, 173.

¹⁶³ *b. Bekorot* 8b

dissolving. Three facts evidence that he is not worried about salt become diluted. First, Christ uses a third class condition in this sentence. This is a futuristic third class, which means that it is either likely to occur in the future, possible in the future, or simply hypothetical.¹⁶⁴ In this case, the best of those three options is the second.

This is further shown by a conversation recorded later in the first century. A man comes to Rabbi Joshua ben Haninia and asks him a question, “Can salt lose its flavor?” To this the Rabbi responds with another question: “Can a mule bear young?”¹⁶⁵ The Rabbi knew that salt could not lose its saltiness just like a mule could never give birth.¹⁶⁶ To be clear, first-century Jews did not know the chemical composition of salt. What they did understand was the fact that salt could not become unsalted.

Third, the parallel idea of light has the same structure. But there Jesus does not pose a question. Instead he states his intention straightforwardly by saying, “A city located on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14, NET). Because of this evidence, it seems logical that Christ is communicating the idea that salt cannot lose its saltiness through a rhetorical question. However, if by some strange way it did, would it be of any use? The clear answer is no, and the implication is that the hearers should follow his commands given in the rest of the sermon. Anyone who is a Christian will be Christ-like and follow Christ’s commands, just as any salt will be salt-like.

¹⁶⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 696-699.

¹⁶⁵ Via Wilkins, *Matthew*, 214.

¹⁶⁶ Rabbi Joshua ben Haninia lived around the year 90 AD, so this might fall into the fallacy of irrelevant background material. However, this idea was surely in existence before it was written down. Also, the fact that the man asks Rabbi Haninia a question does not prove the idea was a new one, and that people were only beginning to learn in 90 AD that salt could not lose its saltiness. When recording this, Wilkins notes that it was a trick question, and the man knew salt could not lose its saltiness. See also the NET Bible, footnote 14 on Matthew 5:13.

This is confirmed by the meaning of what Christ says. The metaphor states that whoever follows Him is salt, and they might fall away. It seems that Christ was simply putting forth a possible idea in the future, and maybe even a hypothetical one—that Christians who lose their Christ-likeness by ceasing to follow His commands are useless, and are good for nothing.¹⁶⁷

This is further confirmed when looking at a similar passage in Mark 9:50, through which it seems that μωπαίνω probably means, “lose saltiness.” While the context is not the same exact situation of the Sermon on the Mount, the phrase is very similar. The exact clause that μωπαίνω appears in is almost identical to the phrase in Mark, aside from the different words expressing the idea of losing saltiness. In Mark, the words used for saltiness can be literally translated as “becomes unsalted.” If this is the case in Mark, it makes sense that μωπαίνω conveys the same idea in Matthew. Therefore in Matt 5:14 μωπαίνω simply means, “loses saltiness.”

In the first century, when salt did dissolve or become diluted it was completely useless and good for nothing. Jews knew that it could not be re-salted.¹⁶⁸ As essential to life as salt was, dissolved salt was destructive to life. Salt in those days was either thrown on flat roofs¹⁶⁹ or into the roads.¹⁷⁰ If it were thrown into the fields, it would destroy the vegetation.¹⁷¹ If it were put on food, it would most likely make the food taste worse. In the same way, Christ’s followers who stopped following His instructions were good for nothing, and therefore they should obey His commands.

¹⁶⁷ Keener, *Gospel*, 173.

¹⁶⁸ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 55.

¹⁶⁹ Carson, “Matthew,” 217.

¹⁷⁰ Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 69.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Light

After giving a brief metaphor using salt, Jesus moves on to another metaphor using light. This is basically an extension of the salt metaphor, using a different medium. The first two lines in both iterations of the metaphor are parallel: “you are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world,” (Matt 5:13-14, NET) as well as “but if salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again?; a city located on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:13-14, NET). It is similar to Hebrew poetry. The first two lines in each are an example of synonymous parallelism, where the second line restates the first using different terms. The second two lines are a use of synthetic parallelism, where the second clause “answers” the first in some way.¹⁷² In this case, the second explains or amplifies the first. This was common, and explains why the second metaphor Christ used was longer than the first.¹⁷³ This also explains why γῆ is used in the first part and κόσμος is used in the second. No further explanation is needed for this variation.

Further, “light” was a very common metaphor in the ancient world. Isaiah used it for Jerusalem in the Old Testament.¹⁷⁴ John, another Gospel writer, employs light as a metaphor throughout the first half of his Gospel.¹⁷⁵ This was a much more common metaphor than salt, and therefore easier to understand. Because the “light” part of the metaphor is easier to understand, it helps clarify the “salt” part.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Robert Lowth, *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (London: S. Chadwick & Co., 1847), 39-47.

¹⁷³ Keener, *Gospel*, 174.

¹⁷⁴ Is. 2:2-5; 42:6; 49:6. Via Wilkins, “Matthew,” 36, and Keener, *Gospel*, 174.

¹⁷⁵ He uses the word φῶς in John 1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46.

¹⁷⁶ The principle of using easier passages to understand harder ones has already been applied. See the salt section.

The first statement, “you are the light of the world,” (Mat 5:14, NET) is parallel to the first statement in the first half of the metaphor. Both instances of ὑμεῖς are emphatic, both salt and light are a metaphor for Christ’s followers, and both γῇ and κόσμος are datives of place, showing where the metaphor is true.¹⁷⁷ Restating his original metaphor, he establishes the connection between the two and moves on.

Christ elaborates on how His followers are the light of the world by showing that light, by its very nature, illuminates its surroundings. The first illustration of this metaphor seems unrelated semantically—what do a city on a hill and light have in common? However, any person in a culture with settlements can understand the connection. There is a much higher concentration of light and light sources in a city as opposed to the countryside or anywhere else.¹⁷⁸ As an example from their culture, Sepphoris was a city in Galilee which shone down to Nazareth four miles away.¹⁷⁹ Christ might have even been referring to a specific city,¹⁸⁰ the most apparent candidate being Jerusalem.¹⁸¹ If Christ is equating “a city on a hill” to “the light of the world,” then the references in Isaiah come to mind.¹⁸² Further, the Old Testament commonly

¹⁷⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 153-155. Others may refer to this as the locative of place.

¹⁷⁸ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 103.

¹⁷⁹ Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 109.

¹⁸⁰ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 215.

¹⁸¹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 100. At first glance Evans’ suggestion of Sepphoris appears to be a good idea because Christ grew up in Nazareth and likely saw the city lights every night. Further, the disciples and crowds might have also known about Sepphoris, having also lived in Galilee. However, this is improvable. Further, there is little chance that Matthew expected his audience to understand a reference to Sepphoris here, because most would probably lack an encounter with the city. Further, if any Palestinian city was a city on a hill, it was probably Jerusalem.

¹⁸² Is. 2:2-5; 42:6; 49:6. Here Isaiah calls Jerusalem a light to the nations.

refers to Jerusalem or God's temple in Jerusalem being on a hill.¹⁸³ If Christ refers to any specific city, it is Jerusalem. However, some in the audience (both Jesus' and Matthew's) would have caught it, while others would not. But understanding this reference is not essential to understanding the metaphor as a whole.

The second part of the light metaphor takes the reader's mind to a more personable image. Here Christ moves from viewing a large, illuminated city to a small lamp in a one-room house.¹⁸⁴ This lamp would have been a short, 3-6 inch wide pottery vessel. There was a handle on one side and a spout on the other. In the middle was a hole. Oil was poured into the hole in the middle, and a wick was pushed into the spout down to the pool of oil.¹⁸⁵ This lamp would have been the only source of light for a first-century house after dark. Once lit, someone would place the lamp on a high stand in the middle of the house, giving light to all in the house.¹⁸⁶ Placing it on a stand gave maximum benefit to everyone in the house as opposed to placing it on the floor and having large shadows cast all around the room.¹⁸⁷ Also, because most houses only had one room, one carefully placed lamp would give light to everyone in the house.¹⁸⁸ Lamps were extremely useful indoors as well as after the sun set, and everyone in the audience would have understood the usefulness of a lamp.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ 2 Ch. 33:15; Ps. 48:1; Is. 10:32; 66:20; Mic. 3:12.

¹⁸⁴ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 215. He states that a candle would have been the light, but a more probable light was a small oil lamp.

¹⁸⁵ Wilkins, "Matthew," 36-37. See the picture on those pages for the best description.

¹⁸⁶ Turner, *Matthew*, 155.

¹⁸⁷ Hagner, *Matthew*, 100.

¹⁸⁸ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 215.

¹⁸⁹ Keener, *Gospel*, 174-175.

It would be self-defeating to light a lamp and put it under a basket.¹⁹⁰ First, the main purpose of a lamp was to give light. Putting it under a bowl defeats this purpose. There is no record of someone using a lamp to heat up a bowl or clean the inside of it. The purpose of a lamp was to give light.¹⁹¹ It was absurd to have an unseen light.¹⁹² Second, to get the maximum light to everyone in the room, the lamp was placed on a high lamp stand. This is exactly the opposite of putting it under a bowl.¹⁹³ Third, it was not a simple task to light a lamp in the days before matches.¹⁹⁴ Fire was not an easily accessible thing as it is in the 21st century. Rekindling the fire could be as simple as going to a neighbor and using their lamp, or as difficult as going out and scraping stones together to start a fire, then lighting the lamp with that fire. All three of these points show how unheard of putting a lamp under a bowl was.¹⁹⁵

This second metaphor reiterates the point of the first, which showed Christ's followers that they must follow his commands; it was their nature. The same way that salt and light have certain inherent properties such as being salty and giving light, the disciples and anyone else who would listen should obey what Christ is about to teach in this sermon. If they do not, then they

¹⁹⁰ Bauer, *Greek-English*, 656, describes this word as having a distinct referent. It was a basket for grain, holding about 8.75 liters. In this paper, "basket" and "bowl" are used interchangeably.

¹⁹¹ Barclay, *Gospel*, 123-124. Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 69-70.

¹⁹² Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 95.

¹⁹³ Turner, *Matthew*, 155, notes that no one would place a lamp on a high stand and then cover it with a bowl. However, this misses the point. Christ is saying that you could either put it on a lamp stand or under a bowl; he is not saying someone might do both.

¹⁹⁴ Barclay, *Gospel*, 123.

¹⁹⁵ In Judges 7:16 Gideon had the Israelites hide their torches with jars. However, this was a rare instance, and one would not light an oil lamp in this circumstance.

are acting against their very nature as Christ-followers.¹⁹⁶ Matthew portrays this idea through 5:13-16, as he often does at the end of Christ's illustrations.¹⁹⁷

Command

The final verse is the command of this section, and as such, it will be dealt with more in-depth than previous verses. There are two parts to the verse: the command and the purpose. The command concludes and shows the point of the metaphor. The purpose further explains the command while also showing the goal of obeying the command.

The Command Itself

The author recorded Christ as teaching this command to show the point of his metaphor and to teach the audience how to live. In the preceding verses, Christ had simply stated attributes about his followers, and He only implied their actions as a result. Here he commands their actions: "Let your light shine." This is a third person imperative, and the only hortatory line in the verses covered.¹⁹⁸ While commonly translated as "Let him ...", the third person imperative has a much stronger idea than just permission. The translations, "He must let ...", or in this case "You must let ..." would connote the idea of a command rather than permission in English.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, this is an aorist imperative. The action is viewed as a whole instead of looking at

¹⁹⁶ Morris, *Gospel*, 105.

¹⁹⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 478; Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 160; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 24-31; While Snodgrass claims the rule of end stress applies only to parables, there was no specific classification system in Matthew's day. Fee and Stuart claim this metaphor was a type of parable. Either way, the rule can still apply to this pericope, as Davies and Allison affirm.

¹⁹⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 478.

¹⁹⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 486.

the individual parts.²⁰⁰ Being imprecise, this makes for a great introduction and paves the way for Christ to be specific in the body of the sermon.

The content of the command is for followers to “shine their lights.” This metaphor is easy to grasp by a Christian today because it has been mostly understood during the life of the church. Whether it has been understood because of how common the metaphor is or as a result of a children’s song, this does not matter. But when Christ tells his disciples and any other followers, “You must let your light shine,” people even today realize Christ was talking about living an influential lifestyle that reflects Christ. The main content of this lifestyle is good works,²⁰¹ which Christ will use the rest of the sermon to expound on, and has already shown some of what “good works” are through the Beatitudes.²⁰² Concealment of the light is not an option.²⁰³ Rather, they must live out what Christ commands in this sermon to shine their lights.

The last part of the command itself shows where they should let their lights shine. The prepositional phrase “before men” shows their light is not to be hidden, as people do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. Rather, they should let their light shine by doing their good deeds where others can see them.²⁰⁴ This is not an end in itself, but only a means to the end.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 485.

²⁰¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 103; Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 110.

²⁰² France, *Gospel*, 177.

²⁰³ Alexander, *Gospel*, 123.

²⁰⁴ Two thoughts should be noted here. First, this does not mean his followers were off the hook when they were in unseen places. It is a logical fallacy to assume this opposite idea (Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 101-103). Second, Christ assumes the right motivation when he says this. Later in this sermon he speaks of “hypocrites” who pray in public. Some may ask why public prayer is not commended, but public deeds are. Would not prayer fall into the category of good deeds? The difference seems to be motivation. For the hypocrites pray, “so that they may be seen by others.” The implication is that they have a prideful motivation, but Christ’s followers will have unselfish motivation—so that God may be glorified.

Purpose

The purpose of shining light is glorifying God. This is shown through the use of the word ὅπως plus the imperative. BDAG defines the term as a “marker expressing purpose for an event or state,”²⁰⁵ and then lists this passage as an example. This states the reason for actions, and provides the proper motivation for Christ’s followers. A famous document stated long ago that the chief end of man is to glorify God,²⁰⁶ and this is apparent from the text at hand. But he is not some god who is disconnected from them. He has a relationship with them, because He is their Father. This is the first time Matthew will use this word of God, and throughout the Gospel it shows the relationship the disciples have with God.²⁰⁷

PRINCIPLE

Thus, Matthew intends for his readers to follow the commands Christ will give during the Sermon on the Mount. If they are truly Christians,²⁰⁸ they will have influence on the world they live in, just as salt and light influence their surroundings. They will heed Christ’s instructions for the purpose of glorifying God their Father.

10:5-7: THE DISCIPLES’ MISSION

The second passage this chapter covers is Matthew 10, specifically verses 5-7. However, this section will also focus on the surrounding verses closely for context, because this chapter

²⁰⁵ Bauer, *Greek-English*, 718.

²⁰⁶ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1.

²⁰⁷ Weber, *Matthew*, 62.

²⁰⁸ By the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, the term was common.

forms one tightly knit discourse.²⁰⁹ Because of the original context of salvation history and other important facts,²¹⁰ one will see how much thought should be put into this passage when considering whether it is only part of salvation history or also intended as a command for active evangelism.

PLOT

Chapter 10 begins the second of Christ's discourses as recorded in the book of Matthew. In chapters 8-9, Matthew describes how Christ performed many miracles and conversed on various topics. Christ shows that He is the Messiah the Jews have been waiting for, and prepares the disciples for the discourse in chapter 10. This is the beginning of Matthew showing Christ's attempt to save Israel.²¹¹ His miracles validate that he is indeed the Messiah,²¹² as the crowds' statement in 9:33 shows, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." A new era is dawning, and Christ is about to involve the disciples in that era.

After chapter 10, Matthew carries on the story, showing how Christ brought the kingdom into the present, prepared the disciples for his death,²¹³ and fulfilled his work on earth through His death and resurrection. Immediately after chapter 10, the author records the story of John the Baptist asking Christ if he truly was the Messiah. Chapter 10 and 11 are closely connected

²⁰⁹ Some keen commentators note that Matthew has strung together various sayings of Christ into one discourse. See Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics*, 297; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 120. Whether this is true or not, the aim of this paper looks to Matthew's intentions, so the interpretation will focus on his version of the story.

²¹⁰ Some details the author brings out here also occur in 28:16-20. These will be detailed in the Conclusion.

²¹¹ Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 193.

²¹² Weber, *Matthew*, 138.

²¹³ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 122.

through many similar ideas. Paying attention to context will aid the interpreter in understanding their pericope; this is especially true with the passage at hand.

CHARACTERS

In this passage there are only two groups of characters present, but Matthew makes it extremely clear who is there. The main verb in the first sentence is a third person singular verb, implying there is one person calling the disciples. The best option of who this could be is Jesus, because he was the last person mentioned back in 9:35. No commentator disagrees with this.²¹⁴ Secondly, Christ's disciples are also present, but no one else. Matthew even goes so far as to list the twelve by name, and this is the first time he tells the audience their names. By listing the names, he connects this passage to the Great Commissioning, where only Christ and the disciples were present. This is also the first time Christ teaches His disciples with no one else around; the last time he does this in the Gospel of Matthew is the Great Commissioning. One should pay close attention to see all the connections between this passage and the Great Commissioning.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

At the end of chapter 9, Matthew summarizes a large period of time where Christ travels around healing and preaching. The main point is that Christ noticed how poorly the masses had been led,²¹⁵ and wanted to do something about it. They had no clue what they were doing, and Christ pitied them.²¹⁶ So he told his disciples to pray that leaders may be sent to them, in order

²¹⁴ The research for this paper found no one who disagrees.

²¹⁵ Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 148; Bock, *Bible Knowledge*, 67; Phillips, *Exploring*, 174.

²¹⁶ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 114; Alexander, *Gospel*, 275; Bruner, *Churchbook*, 445, 447; Hagner, *Matthew*, 260; Nolland, *Gospel*, 407. The word used here is *σπλαγχνα*, and literally means 'guts.' According to Keener, *Gospel*, 308, by the time of the New Testament, it had become a dead metaphor and simply meant affection, having no more metaphorical value. Also Matthew pictures the crowds as helpless sheep, being led by no one so they just sit around.

that they might hear the good news of the kingdom. They were ready to hear and obey,²¹⁷ but they needed someone to teach them. This is the motivation for Christ's command in 10:5-7.²¹⁸ Because Christ cares for people, he tells the disciples to pray for workers, and then sends them to go out and teach.²¹⁹

Christ then prepared his twelve disciples to go out and relay his message that the kingdom was near. By giving them power to cast out demons and heal the sick, he bestows his authority upon them.²²⁰ These actions will validate their teaching as Christ's actions validated his.²²¹ Also, by preaching the same message that he preached and that John the Baptist preached before him,²²² the disciples harvest many of the souls ready to hear the good news.

The author²²³ then lists the names of the twelve disciples to emphasize their work. Chapter 9 records the calling of Matthew,²²⁴ and 9:37 is the first mention of the disciples since

²¹⁷ The theme of harvest was common in the Bible, but more so for judgment literature. Wilkins, "Matthew," 66-67.

²¹⁸ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 445-446.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 448-449.

²²⁰ Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introduction the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 105; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 117; Goldsmith, *Matthew*, 92; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 197-198; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 384.

²²¹ Charles R. Erdman, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 91; Evans, *Bible Knowledge*, 209.

²²² Erdman, *Gospel*, 94; Nolland, *Gospel*, 417; Weber, *Matthew*, 142; Wilkins, "Matthew," 68.

²²³ To avoid confusion, in this paragraph the terms 'Matthew' and 'the author' are not used synonymously. In this paragraph 'Matthew' refers to the disciple who was a tax collector who calling was recorded in chapter nine, and 'the author' refers to the person who wrote the Gospel of Matthew. They might have been the same person, but here 'Matthew' is simply a character in the Gospel of Matthew, and 'the author' is whoever composed the work.

²²⁴ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 384. Matthew's call is the last recording of a disciple being called in this Gospel. Although very few people think the author ordered his Gospel chronologically, it is still read from beginning to end, and thus 9:37 is the first mention of the disciples after they have all been called.

then. Therefore it makes sense that the author did not list their names earlier. However, the question of “why now?” should be posed, for this is the first time their names are listed.²²⁵ Some claim it separates the general commission of 10:1 from the specific one in 10:5-42.²²⁶ Further, it could also introduce the disciples because they are doing something now, whereas before they were simply following Christ.²²⁷ Others think they are listed because Christ has molded them to be teachers and leaders, because that is what the people need.²²⁸ This seems to be the most logical choice. Even if this is not the correct choice, the author took time to record all the disciples’ names here, and it would catch the first-century audience’s attention.

Several others note details known about the apostles.²²⁹ While this could be slightly helpful, doing an in-depth study of each disciple here would not change the meaning of the command.²³⁰ Therefore such an in-depth study of them is not necessary. However, two facts are noteworthy. First, the apostles are sent out in pairs.²³¹ This fact will have impact later. Second, in 10:2 Matthew calls them apostles. While previously he has only used the term μαθητής,²³² this is

²²⁵ Morris, *Gospel*, 242.

²²⁶ Nolland, *Gospel*, 409; Turner, *Matthew*, 262.

²²⁷ Barclay, *Gospel*, 358, notes that Christ must now have a staff to carry out his goal. This is the same idea.

²²⁸ France, *Gospel*, 176; Keener, *Gospel*, 310; John MacArthur, *Matthew*, 4 Vols, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 119; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 195; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 386.

²²⁹ MacArthur, *Matthew*, 123-182, takes numerous chapters to cover them. Phillips, *Exploring*, 186.

²³⁰ In the research for this paper, no one was found who shares meaning-altering information about the disciples.

²³¹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 167; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 387.

²³² Matt 5:1; 8:21, 23; 9:10-11, 14, 19, 37.

the first and only time he uses the term ἀπόστολος. This probably indicates their function: previously they have been taught,²³³ and now they are sent.²³⁴

EXEGESIS

Before issuing the command, Christ prohibits the disciples from going to certain places.²³⁵ Matthew records Christ giving them these instructions, as a teacher or leader would instruct his pupils.²³⁶ Christ then restricts their ministry by telling them where they must not go: Samaria and Gentile lands. It seems contrary to think that Matthew²³⁷ or Christ would restrict them from doing something they would not do anyway.²³⁸ While the context provides no surefire answer, Matthew does not record all of Christ's teaching, and He might have taught the disciples about the kingdom being inclusive before this point. Some claim this proves Christ as the Messiah.²³⁹ Whatever the reason, this presents little difficulty, and does not determine the main point of the passage.

The main problem this passage presents is that Christ here restricted the disciple's mission, whereas later he contradicts this restriction; but through this paradox the point of the

²³³ D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1985), 56.

²³⁴ Although this could be a word fallacy, the fact that Matthew consistently uses μαθητής but uses ἀπόστολος only here shows this was probably not accidental. France, *Matthew*, 176; Goldsmith, *Matthew*, 91.

²³⁵ This is a prohibitive subjunctive. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 469.

²³⁶ Barclay, *Gospel*, 362.

²³⁷ That Matthew would say this provides validity; a Jew in that day and age would not warn a Samaritan or a Gentile about the kingdom.

²³⁸ Mounce, *Matthew*, 91; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 390. Christ knew Jews in general would not go there, because he knew the Jewish mindset.

²³⁹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 390.

passage reveals itself. Many commentators argue over whether Jesus contradicts himself with the Great Commissioning.²⁴⁰ In this passage, Jesus says, “Do not go to the ἔθνος,” while in Matt. 28 he says “Go to the ἔθνος.”²⁴¹ However, in light of the past, most scholars today agree this is explained by knowledge of salvation history.²⁴² Therefore this command is for a particular time in history, and is not necessarily meant to carry over to the next part of salvation history.²⁴³ Matthew notes this because at that time, the disciples were to stay away from those lands.

Command

Now the story comes to the crucial point in this passage: the positive imperative. Christ commands the disciples to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This verse reiterates the command as part of salvation history through various details.²⁴⁴ First, in the Old Testament, Israel was the chosen nation of God.²⁴⁵ Salvation was to come through them,²⁴⁶ and indeed it

²⁴⁰ Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson, *Introduction*, 106; Barclay, *Gospel*, 364. Nolland, *Gospel*, 416. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 197.

²⁴¹ This is not the exact translation of Matthew 28, but this idea is communicated. See chapter 2 for details.

²⁴² Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson, *Introduction*, 106; Barclay, *Gospel*, 364; Nolland, *Gospel*, 416; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 197.

²⁴³ This is based on a hermeneutical principle, which states that description does not equal prescription. Further, the changeover from one period of salvation history to the next happened when Christ died and rose again. This is not to be confused with dispensationalism. For a working definition of salvation history, see R. W. Yarbrough, “Heilsgeschichte,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 546.

²⁴⁴ Nolland, *Gospel*, 409.

²⁴⁵ A few are: 1 Kings 3:8; Psa 33:12; 78:62, 71; 106:5; Is 18:7; 1 Pet 2:9. If all the references showing Israel as God’s chosen nation was listed here, this thesis might turn into a dissertation. See also Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 197.

²⁴⁶ John 4:22.

did.²⁴⁷ Second, the picture Christ paints through figurative language confirms this was part of salvation history. The word picture of ‘sheep’ is also used throughout the Old Testament in reference to Israel.²⁴⁸ Often they are pictured as sheep without a shepherd, i.e., ‘lost sheep.’ But here, Christ is giving them shepherds. Further, this is the ‘house of Israel.’ Christ could have simply stated, “Go to Israel.” However, portraying them as a house and as sheep illustrates two ideas: He is viewing them as a whole as well as individually. This idea of Israel being a “house” is another common Old Testament metaphor.²⁴⁹ In Ezekiel 34-37, where these two metaphors are used commonly, Ezekiel is prophetically talking about salvation history. Some, if not most, of these prophecies are fulfilled in Christ’s day. Thus Christ commands his disciples/apostles to go to Israel to progress salvation history. Christ then further clarifies what they are to do.²⁵⁰

When they go out, they are to preach and act out what they have learned about and from Christ, further validating that this passage is about salvation history. Christ tells them to preach that, “The kingdom of heaven is near.” While this is a literal command to some degree, it also stands for much more than just that phrase.²⁵¹ When John the Baptist preached this idea, he said it in relation to Christ’s first coming. When Christ preached the message, he preached it about himself, and his work on earth.²⁵² Therefore, to some extent the disciples would have known this was more than just a command to preach only the literal words, “The kingdom of heaven is

²⁴⁷ Nolland, *Gospel*, 416.

²⁴⁸ The main passage being Ez. 34. Turner, *Matthew*, 262. Contra Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 119, because Israel was the first to receive salvation, and then others through them. Samaria was only partially Jewish.

²⁴⁹ Again, see Ezekiel, mainly chapters 35-37.

²⁵⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 171.

²⁵¹ Keener, *Gospel*, 316.

²⁵² Phillips, *Exploring*, 187.

near.” After all, Christ expected them to stay overnight at some places (10:11). Surely they would not repeat these same words over and over again while they were in that town. As for the content of what they preached, it is hard to tell. Suffice it to say they preached what Christ commanded in the Sermon on the Mount, what Christ did in chapters 8-9, and about Christ being the Messiah.²⁵³ Whatever they taught, the disciples probably had more words come out of their mouth than simply what was recorded here; but this phrase summarizes the content of their teachings.

This also connotes the message of salvation history, because what they were preaching was closely tied to salvation history.²⁵⁴ To preach the idea of the kingdom being near is to say that the Messiah has come and salvation is near. Because Christ will soon die and resurrect, the kingdom will be set up. This is validated through their correct action and authoritative healings.²⁵⁵ Because they act in accordance with what they teach, and because they heal others, this message was shown to be true.

Instructions and Warnings

Christ then gives the disciples instructions followed by warnings.²⁵⁶ He tells them specifics, such as packing light and moving quickly. This shows the urgency of the situation and the small window of time the disciples have to preach the message.²⁵⁷ Christ even tells them in

²⁵³ Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 149; Barclay, *Gospel*, 364; France, *Gospel*, 380-381; Hagner, *Matthew*, 271; Keener, *Gospel*, 308, 312; MacArthur, *Matthew*, 189; Turner, *Matthew*, 269; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 385.

²⁵⁴ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 119; Turner, *Matthew*, 267. Contra Bruner, *Churchbook*, 452.

²⁵⁵ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 448; Hagner, *Matthew*, 271.

²⁵⁶ Bruner, *Churchbook*, 445-446; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 389.

²⁵⁷ France, *Gospel*, 381; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 390.

10:23 that they will not make it to every city in Israel before he dies.²⁵⁸ Further, they are warned of the many different reactions they will receive. They are also like sheep, but not in the same way the crowds are. They are like sheep because the religious leaders are hunting them as wolves.²⁵⁹ Christ also warns them that they will be mocked and persecuted as He has been, linking their future with their loyalty to Christ.²⁶⁰ And they should not stay with their families instead of going. But how can they make it through all of these things? They can make it through with help from their partner, and even more so through trusting God. After all, if they pack light they will not be able to take much money. This will help them trust God's provision.²⁶¹ Also, if they are persecuted, they might be killed. But God will punish all bad deeds, and their good deeds will be rewarded. Therefore they should follow this command to go.

PRINCIPLE

Christ tells his disciples to go out and spread the news of the impending kingdom to fulfill that time in salvation history. Almost every element of this chapter points to fulfilling salvation history, from the naming of the twelve disciples to the restriction of staying in Israel. Even in the next chapter, when John the Baptist sends his disciples to question whether Jesus is the Messiah,²⁶² Jesus answers by telling John what He and His disciples had been doing: healing and preaching. This is a confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, and that God is about to fulfill

²⁵⁸ France, *Gospel*, 381.

²⁵⁹ Nolland, *Gospel*, 407.

²⁶⁰ Turner, *Matthew*, 264. 10:24-25 is a reference to Christ, who is the teacher and master.

²⁶¹ Nolland, *Gospel*, 413; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 390.

²⁶² John had preached about this man in Matt. 3:1-12.

his plan of salvation.²⁶³ Therefore the principle of this section is that God brings His plan of salvation to completion.

22:1-14: THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

This parable is a very tricky parable to interpret. As such, it will be dealt with in a different manner than most passages. First, this section will cover the more common, but more faulty way of interpreting this passage. After that preface, the normal method of exegesis will dominate this section. This is done to avoid confusion, as well as to allow the reader to focus on the correct interpretation rather than which detail is right and which is wrong.²⁶⁴

AN INCORRECT VIEW

Historically, and still commonly today, this parable has been interpreted allegorically. Chapter one noted that the church interpreted parables allegorically for 1700 years.²⁶⁵ While allegorical interpretation of parables was strongly critiqued around 120 years ago by Jülicher, some still hold on to that idea. Today, few advocate interpreting parables allegorically,²⁶⁶ but many still interpret this one allegorically.²⁶⁷ The typical allegorical interpretation of this parable

²⁶³ Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson, *Introduction*, 106; Barclay, *Gospel*, 364; Nolland, *Gospel*, 416; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 197.

²⁶⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 309, notes that most problems arise from this parable are caused from allegorizing it. This section is laid out like it is to quell confusion.

²⁶⁵ See Chapter 1.

²⁶⁶ The research for this paper found no one who advocates an allegorical interpretation of parables without huge restraints.

²⁶⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 197, 202; Hare, *Matthew*, 251; H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1974), 281; Phillips, *Exploring*, 417; Others, such as Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 269; Barclay, *Gospel*, 267; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 327; Bock, *Bible Knowledge*, 93; Erdman, *Gospel*, 19; Goldsmith, *Matthew*, 160; Hagner, *Matthew*, 630; Keener, *Gospel*, 522; Legg, *King*, 416; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 406; C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (London:

equates almost every detail of this parable with another event. Here the parallels will simply be listed for brevity. The detail from the parable will be mentioned first, and what it represents mentioned second.

King=God

His son=Christ

1st round of slaves=Old Testament Prophets

Summoning/Calling the invitees=the prophet's message for Israel to repent

Wedding Feast=Blessings in Heaven

2nd round of slaves=Christ and His disciples

The dinner being ready=Christ being on earth and the kingdom being at hand

Rejecting the invitation=Rejecting the Kingdom

Killing the slaves=Killing Christ and disciples and/or killing the prophets

Armies=Rome

Destruction of the city=Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD

3rd round of slaves=the Church

Command in v. 9-10=Great Commission

Going into the streets to find guests=The Gentile invitation

The guests=Gentiles who accepted the invitation

Wedding Garment=Repentance or Charity

Attendants=Angels

Darkness=Hell

There is no reason to accept the allegorical interpretation, and there are some reasons to reject it. Using the principles of interpretation chapter one covered, this interpretation can be classified as over-interpretation. The exegete should only interpret allegorically when Christ or the Gospel author provides an allegorical interpretation,²⁶⁸ and that is not the case here.

Also, if this parable were told as an allegory, it was told very poorly. Assuming it was an allegory, there are incorrect details and anachronisms throughout. While there is a change of slaves between the second and third rounds because the second round is killed, there is no indication of a change between the first and second round. Also, it seems hard to believe that

Passmore and Alabaster, 1893), 190-191; do not explicitly claim the whole parable is an allegory, but they interpret certain parts allegorically.

²⁶⁸ Young, *Parables*, 175, and Snodgrass, *Stories*, 309, note there is no reason contextually for this to be considered an allegory.

Christ was both the son and part of the second round of slaves. If this were the case, Christ probably would have noted the Son going out among the slaves then.²⁶⁹ Further, the parable says a city was destroyed, whereas only the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem.²⁷⁰ Also, the third round of slaves came along and witnessed much *before* the temple was destroyed.²⁷¹ Lastly, when reading the parable, it seems as if Christ betrays whom the attending guests are. If they were Gentiles, here is his chance to say it. However, he designates them as “both good and bad” instead of calling them “Gentiles.” Because of these inconsistencies, it is good to dismiss allegorical interpretation of the entire parable.

Even though allegorically interpreting every single detail is incorrect, some modern day interpreters still interpret some details as symbols for certain events or actions. A common is the claim that destruction of the city equals destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.²⁷² If this is correct, then some allegorical interpretation could be allowed. If not, it seems good to dismiss any allegory and interpret the parable using the accepted rules of interpretation mentioned in chapter one.²⁷³

Because of the subjectivity of interpreting the parable’s destruction of the city as a reference to the destruction of the second Temple, Christians should dismiss it. First, the details

²⁶⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318, critiques the same idea from another point of view by asking, “Why is the son left alive in the parable when Christ died?”

²⁷⁰ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 120; France, *Matthew*, 313-314; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318.

²⁷¹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 436-437; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 319; Young, *Parables*, 174-175.

²⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318.

²⁷³ For the purposes of this paper, this section need not deal with every single detail. This element is a commonly agreed upon allegorical element in the parable. Therefore, it should be easy to prove a common one. However, if it does not, it makes sense to reject most allegorical interpretation of the parable along with this element, because most other details (if not all) will have less evidence for them.

of the historical account do not match the details in the parable. If the parable shows the destruction of the city, the king in this parable would likely be the emperor, and not God.²⁷⁴ Further, the invited guests would be the Zealots who sparked the Jewish Wars.²⁷⁵ If it were a prophetic event that Christ predicted, it makes sense only if the entire city were destroyed.²⁷⁶ In biblical literature, a prophet was shown to be a true prophet (instead of a false prophet) by correctly predicting what would come true every time he spoke. If Christ prophesied and was wrong, he would have been a false prophet because he was wrong once. Surely no evangelical would admit this!

Further, if this parable were an allegory, it would make more sense to interpret this destruction as the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC—but no interpreter has been located who interprets it this way.²⁷⁷ When Israel rejected the prophets and failed to obey God's commandments, the Babylonians destroyed the city and the Temple. Therefore this fits better with some details in the parable, but not all. This would be anachronistic if the parable is allegorical, because the destruction comes after the sending of the second group of slaves, who represent Christ and His disciples. Also, the original audience would probably not have understood the parable this way, because of the anachronism that would have been involved, as well as the fact that the Temple might not have been destroyed when the original readers read it. Therefore the allegorical interpretation of this parable falls short on many different accounts, and believers should reject it in favor of the normal rules for interpreting parables.

²⁷⁴ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 120.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.; France, *Matthew*, 313-314; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318.

²⁷⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 319.

OVERVIEW

This is a parable warning of judgment. Judgment is a common theme in parables,²⁷⁸ and one that Matthew comes back to often through other mediums.²⁷⁹ The interpretation of this parable follows the same rules as every other parable, and according to Snodgrass' classifications, this is a two-stage, double indirect narrative parable.²⁸⁰ This means it is a fictitious story with plot development that intends to communicate truth.²⁸¹ Further, some have claimed it is a combination of two parables, it has been redacted, or it is an adaptation from Luke's parable of the Great Banquet in Matt. 14.²⁸² Regardless of the parable's form before Matthew recorded it here, this paper will focus on what Matthew did write, and not what he changed from the previous form.²⁸³

PLOT

This passage is in the midst of Matthew's fifth major part of the body of his Gospel. There have been four combinations of teachings about Christ and teachings of Christ. This passage is in the fifth part of teaching about Christ, near the end. Matthew is about to enter into

²⁷⁸ Keener, *Gospel*, 720.

²⁷⁹ Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 81.

²⁸⁰ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 299.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸² Barclay, *Gospel*, 266, 270-271; Goldsmith, *Matthew*, 160; Keener, *Gospel*, 517; Mounce, *Matthew*, 204, 206; Nolland, *Gospel*, 885, 889; Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 406; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 300-301, 320-321; Tasker, *Gospel*, 207.

²⁸³ This previous form might have been written or oral, and there might have even been a previous form before Christ uttered it, as Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 270; Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 238; and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 203, note. If Matthew did adapt Luke's parable here, then looking at the changes would be very beneficial. However, Snodgrass, *Stories*, 299-321, shows that they are different parables. If they were different parables all together, the comparing the two parables would lead the read away from the true meaning rather than toward it. This paper avoids possibly getting further away from the meaning by avoiding comparison.

the last discourse section of the five. While this is part of a discourse, it is not part of the formal discourse that Matthew writes, because this is part of an interaction and dialogue with the chief priests and elders. After this last discourse, he will move on to the conclusion of his Gospel, telling of Christ's death and resurrection.

CHARACTERS

The passage does not readily present itself with a list of those present, but it can be deduced through the context. First, the disciples were likely there. They are mentioned in 21:20, and there is an indication that the parable was told the same day as the scene recorded in 21:18-22. 21:23 says, "Now after Jesus entered the temple courts ..." This seems to infer it was later that day, and there is no indication the disciples left. However, they are not directly involved with the discussion.²⁸⁴ Secondly, the chief priests and elders were also present. 21:23 mentions their presence, and the same scene carries over to the parable in 22:1-14, which is the end of the scene. The only other person surely present was Christ. There might have been crowds present listening to Christ, but Matthew only tells the reader about these people. Since this paper is looking at Matthew's intent, the reader should focus on what he recorded rather than what he did not.

EXEGESIS

In the immediate context, Christ is showing and telling the chief priests and elders that they are not part of the kingdom of which they think they are a part.²⁸⁵ Christ has recently entered the Temple courts, and the chief priests and elders have begun to question him

²⁸⁴ France, *Gospel*, 821, says that the only noteworthy audience members are "the chief priests and elders/Pharisees."

²⁸⁵ MacArthur, *Matthew*, 305.

maliciously.²⁸⁶ At this point in time, Christ has had much interaction with them before, and now he is very straightforward with them. In Matt 21:31 Christ summarizes the first parable in this set of three,²⁸⁷ telling them, “I tell you the truth, tax collectors and prostitutes will go ahead of you into the kingdom of God.” This statement impacts Christ’s statements until the end of Matt. 24, and it is even more strongly tied to the two following parables. Matthew’s placement of the two following parables shows the opposition of the Jewish leaders,²⁸⁸ and tension is heightened with each parable.²⁸⁹ It is a warning to the leaders of their impending judgment.²⁹⁰

A Kingdom Parable

The first point of the passage is that this is a kingdom parable. Christ’s words begin with “The kingdom of heaven can be compared to ...” The first rule is noticing that this refers to the whole parable, and not just the introduction.²⁹¹ Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is not only like “a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.” Rather, the kingdom of heaven is like the whole parable from 22:3-13. This idea of the kingdom was a common teaching of Christ.²⁹²

Secondly, because this is a kingdom parable, there can be many points of reference, but there is one main point.²⁹³ While there may be more than one main character in this parable, all

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 304.

²⁸⁷ Marshall Carl Bradley, *Matthew: Poet, Historian, Dialectician* (New York: Peter Land, 2007), 132; Hagner, *Matthew*, 626-627; Hare, *Matthew*, 251; MacArthur, *Matthew*, 304.

²⁸⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 317.

²⁸⁹ Bradley, *Matthew*, 132; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 207.

²⁹⁰ Barclay, *Gospel*, 266; Erdman, *Gospel*, 198; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 319; Weber, *Matthew*, 351.

²⁹¹ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 158.

²⁹² Ridderbos, *Matthew*, 403.

²⁹³ Ibid.

of the main characters point toward one truth about the kingdom. And as is common with parables²⁹⁴ and even more common with this Gospel,²⁹⁵ the main point is stated at the end. Lastly, concerning kingdom parables, they are a call to response.²⁹⁶ The purpose of these parables is not to teach a theological point. Rather, they are to provoke the audience to action.

The First Movement

The parable, although difficult for modern interpreters,²⁹⁷ is understandable within the context. A king throws a wedding banquet for his son, and the parable starts after the first round of invitations have been sent. In the ancient near east, it was common practice to send out two rounds of invitations, whether the host was a king or a farmer. The first round served as a notice and a warning of some sorts. It allowed the guests to prepare themselves, and be ready for the second invitation, which told them when to come.²⁹⁸ The parable starts after these have been sent.

Knowing this, the king sends out his slaves for the second part of the invitation. However, the guests would not come. Even though the wedding feast would likely last days or even weeks, and the guests would have housing and meals provided for them,²⁹⁹ they would not

²⁹⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 24-31.

²⁹⁵ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 160; France, *Matthew*, 314; Goldsmith, *Matthew*, 160; Turner, *Matthew*, 525.

²⁹⁶ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 158.

²⁹⁷ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 299.

²⁹⁸ Ancient Sources: Philo, *Opif.* 78; *Lam. Rab.* 4.2; and Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 3.12 above, note Esth 5:8; 6:14; Sir 13:9; Plutarch, *Mor.* 5111D-E. Modern Sources: Blomberg, *Matthew*, 327; Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 235-236; Keener, *Gospel*, 519; Morris, *Gospel*, 548; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 307; Spurgeon, *Gospel*, 188; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 716.

²⁹⁹ MacArthur, *Matthew*, 305; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 716.

come. In many parables, the punch line does not come until the end. However, since Christ has already told a parable with a similar point, both Matthew and Christ's audience can see where this parable is going. The chief priests and elders would understand at this point that the guests reject the invitation; similar to how Christ accuses them of rejecting the kingdom.³⁰⁰ Moving on, this becomes clearer.

The king, upon hearing of this, sent out another invitation, proclaiming his urgency to have the meal and showing his patience. Everything is ready for his son's wedding feast save one item: guests. There must have been some error, so the king makes this invitation explicit and enticing.³⁰¹ Rather than leaving the guests wondering what will be served, the king tells them that he has prepared his oxen, fattened cattle, and the food is ready to be eaten. He could have easily become angry at their refusal, but his patience wins out.³⁰² Regardless, the guests do not care.

The guests had varied responses, but not one was appropriate. Two men went back to their jobs: one to his farm and one to his business. This blatant disregard to come to the king's banquet was shameful. In ancient near eastern culture, it was shameful to disregard a banquet invitation.³⁰³ It was shameful for a friend not to attend a banquet, but it was also shameful for an enemy not to show up.³⁰⁴ But even more so, to disregard a king's invitation was to dishonor him. This could even be considered an assault on his kingship.³⁰⁵ Further, some invitees even killed

³⁰⁰ Keener, *Gospel*, 521; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318.

³⁰¹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 630; Morris, *Gospel*, 548.

³⁰² Wilkins, "Matthew," 134.

³⁰³ Ibid. Keener, *Gospel*, 519; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 308; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 716.

³⁰⁴ Keener, *Gospel*, 519.

³⁰⁵ Wilkins, "Matthew," 134; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 716.

the king's slaves who carried the message. No culture exists where this irrational action is appropriate.³⁰⁶ None of these actions were appropriate, and therefore, the king reacted.³⁰⁷

The king's reaction to his refusal of invitation might seem harsh, but it was just. Some may write off this overly severe harshness as part of a parable's nature.³⁰⁸ This might explain the king's actions, but in real life the invitee's actions would warrant his reaction. Ignoring this request so dishonored the king that it deserved severe punishment.³⁰⁹ However, some of the invitees had gone further, killing the messengers. Because of this,³¹⁰ the king's reaction is just. Some invitees dishonored him so much that, for him to remain just and honorable, he needed to destroy them.³¹¹ If he does not, why would anyone obey the king or his laws in the future? Therefore he became furious, killed them all, and burned their city.

The chief priests and elders would know the king's reaction was proper, but would have realized they were analogous to the ones being killed.³¹² Anyone listening to this parable would respect and possibly even laud the king's actions—anyone except those who knew they were like the invitees.³¹³ They would realize how harshly Christ was condemning their actions if they had not yet. The king, even though the food was ready, took time to give his army commands. This

³⁰⁶ Keener, *Gospel*, 520; Morris, *Gospel*, 549; Weber, *Matthew*, 352.

³⁰⁷ Ironside, *Expository*, 283, notes that neither failed to get to the feast, and that is the main point.

³⁰⁸ Tasker, *Gospel*, 206, claims the verses are unnecessary and interrupt. While the main truth may be discovered without these verses, the strength of the parable is greatly diminished without them.

³⁰⁹ Keener, *Gospel*, 520.

³¹⁰ Phillips, *Exploring*, 417, helpfully points out that the king killed the murderers only and not the ones who went back to their jobs.

³¹¹ Keener, *Gospel*, 521.

³¹² Legg, *King*, 415.

³¹³ Keener, *Gospel*, 521; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 318.

seeming inconsistency of waging a battle while the food remains warm can be explained away,³¹⁴ but likely it is just a part of the story.³¹⁵ In the original context (both Jesus and Matthew's) the audience would not have worried about this detail. But only killing those who shamed him does not satisfy the King in the parable. He must find guests for his son's banquet.³¹⁶

Therefore the king decides to invite anyone who wants to come. Therefore he sends new slaves (the previous ones are now dead), and gives them new instructions. He tells them to go to the street corners³¹⁷ and "invite everyone" they find. The phrase truly does mean, "invite everyone," more literally saying "as many people as you find, invite that many."³¹⁸ The king did not care at this point who attended the marriage and the feast, but he needed someone to attend and witness his son's union. As unbelievable as it would be to invite the group that seems the least worthy,³¹⁹ through accepting the invitation, they prove themselves to be the most reputable.³²⁰ Therefore the slaves went out and found enough people to fill up the banquet hall.

³¹⁴ Keener, *Gospel*, 521. It is logical to think the king sent his armies, sent his slaves to invite more guests, and then the armies destroyed the city. However, this is a parable and not a retelling of a real, historical event. Nor is it an allegory to a real event. Therefore possible inconsistencies like this are permissible.

³¹⁵ Keener, *Gospel*, 521; Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 38; Tasker, *Gospel*, 207, claims this is irreconcilable, and therefore v. 6-7 were not part of the original. However, he deals with the parable as if he wants to find the divisions and inconsistencies, which is an incorrect way of dealing with any historical account.

³¹⁶ Legg, *King*, 415.

³¹⁷ This phrase, ἐπὶ τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν, contains a *hapex legomena* in διεξόδους, and is difficult to translate. Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 215, claims it means the "exits of the streets" or the "outskirts of the city."

³¹⁸ Bauer, *Greek-English*, 729.

³¹⁹ Wilkins, "Matthew," 134.

³²⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 328.

One last noteworthy point before moving to the second part of the parable is that “both bad and good” were invited this time. This could refer to one of two options. It could tell the reader who the people enjoying the wedding feast are,³²¹ and it could also prepare the audience for the division coming in vs. 11-13.³²² If the first, this is probably a reference back to the tax collectors and prostitutes in 21:31. It would be a reference to the fact that the kingdom contains both those who are righteous and unrighteous. If the second, then it simply lets the audience know that there is even more judgment coming. Based on the context, it seems the first idea is correct. However, one might also anticipate the coming division through this reference.³²³

The Second Movement

The next scene erases any doubts about the point of this parable: make sure to be part of the kingdom! The host customarily entered after the banquet began.³²⁴ But then he threw a man out of the banquet because he lacked the proper attire. Some argue over if he had enough time to gather wedding clothes,³²⁵ and others disagree whether the king provided clothes or not.³²⁶ Whatever the case and however he entered,³²⁷ the man shows disdain by not wearing wedding

³²¹ Turner, *Matthew*, 523; Hagner, *Matthew*, 631; Weber, *Matthew*, 352.

³²² Brown, *Introduction*, 196; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 320; Young, *Parables*, 174.

³²³ In 5:45 Matthew uses a similar phrase in reference to everyone on earth. However, seeing that he only uses it this way once and the phrase is not exactly the same, there is not enough evidence to make a connection between the two.

³²⁴ Keener, *Gospel*, 522.

³²⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 238; Hare, *Matthew*, 252; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 301, 321; Tasker, *Gospel*, 207.

³²⁶ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 269; Hagner, *Matthew*, 631; Morris, *Gospel*, 552.

³²⁷ Ironside, *Expository*, 287-288 notes the man might have gained entrance without proper attire by slipping past the guards or by convincing them to let him in. However, Matthew sees no need for this detail, therefore it is unimportant and mere speculation.

clothes,³²⁸ whereas everyone else did.³²⁹ Further, the fact that he is silent when questioned shows his knowledge of his guilt.³³⁰ He was thrown out, but the parable makes no mention of him being thrown into a city burnt to the ground. Rather, he is bound up and then thrown into “outer darkness,”³³¹ a horrible place³³² with “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”³³³ This vivid imagery leads the audience back to the main point: ignoring even part of the invitation leads to disastrous consequences.³³⁴

³²⁸ Albrecht and Albrecht, *Matthew*, 311.

³²⁹ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 717, claims the word “friend” implies the guest has the proper attire but declined to wear it. However, this seems to be a kind gesture rather than a title. Either way, the conclusion is the same: the man could have worn a proper garment, but did not. Spurgeon, *Gospel*, 193, notes how conspicuous it would have been to be dressed differently than everyone else, and how personable this question was.

³³⁰ Keener, *Gospel*, 522.

³³¹ Ibid., 521, claims the word for banquet denotes a meal taken no later than midday. Because the man was thrown out into darkness, the meal had been delayed for a long period of time. However, this idea is misleading, because “darkness” tied closer to the phrase it follows than denoting the delay in celebration.

On an unrelated note, the idea of darkness is not directly in contrast to 5:13-16. Light and Darkness is a common biblical metaphor denoting the spheres of good and evil. 22:1-14 does not refer back to 5:13-16 when using this illustration. It simply refers to the common biblical metaphor, which is what 5:13-16 does as well. The same is true of the word βαλλω, which frequently occurs in judgment passages.

³³² Young, *Parables*, 173.

³³³ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 717, notes that this language commonly referred to eternal judgment. Matthew uses this phrase six times, in 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; and 25:30. If any part of the parable has a real-world referent, this seems to be it. On the other hand, five of the six occurrences are in other parables where it denotes judgment, but not necessarily eternal judgment.

Hagner, *Matthew*, 627; Mounce, *Matthew*, 205; and Snodgrass, *Stories*, 311, show from Is. 25 that a wedding feast also commonly referred an eschatological event. Young, *Parables*, 173, agrees with them but states no evidence. But again, whether these are true or not does not impact the interpretation of this parable. Either way the main point remains the same.

³³⁴ Young, *Parables*, 172. In this case the invitation is accepted, but not properly followed. The parable implies that everyone knew to wear proper clothing through the fact that everyone else was correctly dressed and the man was silent when accused.

The judgment of those who do not respond correctly is harsh. The first group who does not respond correctly and instead return to their jobs is left out of the wedding feast. This is punishment enough. The second group is killed and their city burned, probably killing their families as well. The third group, consisting of a single individual, has the worst punishment. He is bound, but left alone in a horrible place. The consequences of those who respond incorrectly grow increasingly severe,³³⁵ and the point is potently made: carefully consider how to respond.³³⁶

Matthew's Summary

Matthew gives a summary at the end of these three parables to drive the point home further. He does this often with parables and other types of literature, such as the Salt and Light passage.³³⁷ He states that, "Many are called, but few are chosen."³³⁸ This summarizes all three previous parables, and not only the one at hand. It has a proverbial tone³³⁹ while using figurative language with the words "many" and "few." The first word, when it occurs without the article, is a Semitic expression for "all."³⁴⁰ The second simply denotes the idea "less than all."³⁴¹ There might be only one who is chosen, or it might be all but one. However, the idea is that not every

³³⁵ Barclay, *Gospel*, 269.

³³⁶ France, *Gospel*, 822.

³³⁷ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 160; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 300.

³³⁸ Legg, *King*, 416, notes that in other New Testament authors, such as Paul in 1 Cor. 1:26-27, these words are used synonymously, but here they are not.

³³⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 321; Weber, *Matthew*, 353.

³⁴⁰ Hagner, *Matthew*, 632; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 718; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 215. See also Matthew 20:28.

³⁴¹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 632; Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 215.

single one is chosen. Therefore, Matthew reiterates his point and invites the audience to act and take care how they respond.

The triadic structure most interpreters look for in parables is hard to discern, but it only emphasizes the main point even more. It is hard to discern because of the plethora of characters. The King is surely a main character, for his speech and actions dominate the entire parable.³⁴² But the other two main character groups are subdivided.³⁴³ The king's attendants are two groups of slaves and then servants in the second half of the parable. Also, there are multiple groups of invitees. There are those who disregard the invitation, those who kill the slaves, those who attend the feast, and one who attends but wears improper attire. What should interpreters make of this?

PRINCIPLE

Blomberg lays out a solid triadic structure that emphasizes the one main point without stretching the parable too far. The king stands for God, the first invitees stand for those who disregard the invitation to his kingdom, and the second invitees stand for those who accept it.³⁴⁴ This is consistent with the immediate context as well as revelation as a whole, and it emphasizes the main idea that God will severely judge anyone who brushes aside his kindness.³⁴⁵ This is displayed in each of the main characters. First, the king represents the fact that God will judge those who do not accept his invitation correctly. Second, the first set of guests evidence that rejecting kindness leads to judgment. Third, the second set of guests show that even those who

³⁴² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 194.

³⁴³ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 233; Nolland, *Gospel*, 890; Snodgrass, *Stories*, 307; Spurgeon, *Gospel*, 194.

³⁴⁴ Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 233.

³⁴⁵ Keener, *Gospel*, 520.

participate in parts of the kingdom will be judged if they do not properly accept God's kindness. These three all emphasize God's judgment for rejecting kindness.

CONCLUSION

These three parables provide some insight into what Matthew intended for the disciples to teach when they were making disciples. They were to teach proper living through good deeds, about Christ and salvation history, and to warn people to react carefully to their message. These are only three small passages that Matthew seems to include as the object of "teaching all things." The question the next chapter will seek to answer is whether any of these are commands for active evangelism, and what impact they have on active evangelism.

CHAPTER FOUR

SYNTHESIS

After looking at the Great Commissioning and three other passages in Matthew with possible commands for evangelism, it is now time to synthesize the data collected. The purpose of this thesis is ultimately to find a command for active evangelism. The method this thesis has employed is to see whether a passage is included in the phrase “teaching all that I have commanded you” in Matt 28:20. In this chapter, the three passages will be surveyed from weakest to strongest concerning their relation to Matt 28:20. The principle of the passage will be restated, and then this chapter will show how strong the passage commands active evangelism. Next this paper will look at any other relevant information, some of which was covered above. Finally, parallels (or lack thereof) will be shown between Matt 28 and the pericope, as will the probability of the passage being a command for active evangelism to believers today. The first passage to start with is Matt 22:1-14.

22:1-14: THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

This passage provided the reader with the principle that God sternly judges all who ignore His kindness.³⁴⁶ The principle of this passage has very little to do with active evangelism. God’s kindness can be extended through active evangelism, and then ignored. However, this is not at all a command for active evangelism, or even indirectly a command for active evangelism. Rather, this passage is a warning to everyone about rejecting God’s kindness. Hopefully it will

³⁴⁶ See page 73-74.

encourage unbelievers to accept the message of kindness and encourage believers to continually accept kindness, but this principle is not about active evangelism.

While there is a command for servants to invite people to the banquet, it is not a command for believer's today to participate in active evangelism. First, this imperative in 22:9 is a command to invite others, and not for evangelism at all. While this might allegorically represent active evangelism in the church today, chapter three has shown this idea to be unlikely.³⁴⁷ Further, even if this represented a command for evangelism, it is unlikely for a parable or even a story to have a command the author intends for the audience. Just because an author describes an action taking place does not mean he is commanding his audience to act the same way.³⁴⁸ Last, some commentators do not think this passage is part of "teaching all that I have commanded you." The commentators who think that the phrase refers back specific parts of this book claim it refers back to the five discourses.³⁴⁹ 22:1-14 does not fall into one of these specific discourse sections.

These reasons enough could convince someone that this pericope is not a command to believers today for evangelism, and that it is probably not tied into Matt 28:20, and there is nothing further in the passage to overturn this idea. Aside from the disciples being present at both times, there is a lack of parallels between the two passages. They are in different settings, with Matt 22 being in the temple courts (Matt 21:23) and Matt 28 being on a mountain (Matt 28:16). There is one notable parallel. The Greek verb πορεύομαι is used in both passages. While this word is important to note, it alone cannot show a parallel between the two passages. Further, it is a participle in Matt 28, and an imperative in Matt 22. The presence of the word in Matt 22

³⁴⁷ See page 59-62.

³⁴⁸ See page 7.

³⁴⁹ Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 298-299; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 963.

can best be explained as part of the story, because πορεύομαι is a common word for the command of going to another place and doing something.³⁵⁰ Because of these reasons, this passage is extremely weak as a command for active evangelism for believers today. There is no good reason to think 22:9 was intended to be a command for active evangelism to anyone at anytime.

5:13-16: SALT AND LIGHT

This passage provided the reader with the principle that believers should influence their world by obeying the instructions Christ gave.³⁵¹ While the outcome of this command is that others may see believer's actions and glorify God, this is not necessarily a command for active evangelism for a few reasons. First, the way that the passage is phrased seems to imply that good deeds will be done in front of others. While active evangelism would certainly be a "good deed," the reference here is to the actions Christ portrays in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. If there were a command in the sermon for active evangelism, then this passage would qualify as a command for active evangelism as well. However, that is outside the realm of this paper.

Further, even though the passage depicts good deeds leading to others glorifying God, this probably refers to passive evangelism. In this scenario, the picture paints the image of one acting justly, and others seeing their actions and questioning how they act that way or how to act that way. This leads to them accepting Christ and glorifying God in their own life. Or it might simply refer to believers seeing other believers acting correctly and glorifying God as a result. Either way, this is not active evangelism.

³⁵⁰ It is used as an imperative in Matt 2:20; 8:9; 10:6; 21:2; 22:9; 25:9, 41; Luke 5:24; 7:8, 50; 8:48; 10:37; 13:31; 17:19; John 4:50; 8:11; 20:17; Acts 5:20; 8:26; 9:11, 15; 10:20; 16:36; 22:10, 21; 24:25; 28:26. Matthew uses this word in Matt 2:8-9, 20; 8:9; 9:13; 10:6-7; 11:4, 7; 12:1, 45; 17:27; 18:12; 19:15; 21:2, 6; 22:9, 15; 24:1; 25:9, 16, 41; 26:14; 27:66; 28:7, 11, 16, 19.

³⁵¹ See page 49.

Lastly, this passage has some evidence to tie it to the phrase “teaching all I have commanded you,” but not enough to make it conclusive. It is part of the five discourse sections that are commonly tied to the phrase.³⁵² Further, both statements are made on a mountain, and both statements are made with the disciples present (Matt 5:1; 28:16). While μαθητής could refer to a larger group than the twelve disciples in 5:1, this is unlikely.³⁵³ But the set of characters are different in the two passages, because in the Sermon on the Mount the ὄχλος are implied as present. Further, there are no major words that appear in both passages. Also, the idea of being on a mountain in Matt 28 might refer back to many different situations in Matthew’s Gospel, as well as other situations outside of his Gospel, such as in Exodus. It is difficult to pinpoint which one Matthew intended if any specific one.³⁵⁴ Therefore there is no conclusive tie between the two passages to show a connection, but it is possible. Matt 5:13-16 is an exhortation toward doing good works, with the implication of evangelism occurring. Because of the reasons stated in this section, this is almost surely a command for passive evangelism, but only possibly a command for active evangelism. To prove it is a command for active evangelism, one could show that another part of the Sermon on the Mount was a command for active evangelism, and that this passage is part of what Matt 28:20 refers to. If this were accomplished, then it would also be a command for active evangelism.

³⁵² Schnackenburg, *Gospel*, 298-299; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 963.

³⁵³ See page 34-35.

³⁵⁴ See page 19-20.

10:5-7: THE DISCIPLES' MISSION

This passage provided the reader with the principle that God will complete his salvation plan.³⁵⁵ This could be a command for active evangelism if God wants believers today to be part of that command through the act of active evangelism. An inquiring reader may ask how this can be discovered. One way is through understanding how this situation is described. If it is described over and over again, then it is probably paradigmatic.³⁵⁶ Otherwise there is no good way to tell. Further, one might claim that this passage and the Great Commissioning portray the same general action. If so, this situation would be described twice in Matthew's account, which is hardly repetition. Further, this passage seems to be part of salvation history, showing that it fulfilled God's plan of salvation at that certain point in time. Many points in salvation history are not meant to be repeated, such as the *proto euangelion*,³⁵⁷ Christ coming to earth (and living for over 30 years), and his death on the cross. This is strong evidence against the idea of it being paradigmatic. The command to Christ's disciples helped fulfill God's plan of salvation history at that point in time, and there is no evidence within the passage showing that it should be emulated.

However, many people see this command being reissued at the Great Commissioning, with the restriction being lifted.³⁵⁸ This would, at the very least, show that this action of active evangelism was not only for one certain part of salvation history. There are many good reasons to think that these passages are connected. First of all, the characters present in each situation are

³⁵⁵ See page 58.

³⁵⁶ Duvall and Hays, *Grasping*, 265-280; Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 107.

³⁵⁷ Genesis 3:15.

³⁵⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 688; France, *Matthew*, 413; Hagner, *Matthew*, 887; Hare, *Matthew*, 333-334; Keener, *Gospel*, 718-719; Minear, *Matthew*, 141; Nolland, *Gospel*, 1266.

the same. Concerning what Matthew conveys to the reader, only Christ and the disciples are present.³⁵⁹ Even more noteworthy is the fact that Matt 10 is the first and only place in Matthew where the disciples are named.

Secondly, there are strong verbal connections between the two passages. The word μαθητής appears in both passages, as has been noted. In both passages a number is also given to the disciples, although it is a different number in each because of the absence of Judas at the Great Commissioning. Third, the word authority (ἐξουσία) appears in both passages. In the first, Jesus gives the disciples authority, implying that He has authority to give. In the second, Jesus states that He has authority, in fact He has all authority, and He implies through His statement of abiding presence that the disciples will have authority as well. Also, the word ἔθνος is used in each pericope, although in one it is a restriction and in the other an instruction. Even though it is used differently, this fits with the idea of Matt 28 repealing the restriction of Matthew 10. Since ἔθνος appears in both passages, this lends weight to that argument, for it would be weaker if two different words for “Gentiles” appeared. Finally, the word πορεύομαι also appears in both contexts. It is not used in exactly the same way in each passage, but the same idea is conveyed. In Matt 10 it occurs twice: once as an imperative, and once as a participle. These two together convey essentially the same idea as the participle in Matthew 28: Go, and as you go, preach/make disciples. Because of the many verbal parallels between the two passages, it seems that these two are indeed linked in some way.

Gundry agrees when stating that lifting the prohibition shows that the mission of Matt 10 should be taken into the *parousia*. Therefore he claims that this passage should extend from the disciples all the way through believers who live when Christ comes back. However, Gundry

³⁵⁹ There is one small difference: Judas was not present in Matt 28, while he was present in Matt 10.

jumps too far ahead of himself in saying that it applies to all believers between the time of the disciples and Jesus' second coming. His claim does not hold true without reasoning behind it, and he states none. If Matt 10 and 28 are linked in Matthew's thought, then this shows the reader that active evangelism was for the time when Jesus commanded the disciples to spread the message, and the time after Jesus died while the disciples were still alive. The question now becomes for what other times is this command intended, if any.³⁶⁰

Due to the reciprocal nature of this command, it can be applied to all believers who become followers of Christ after the disciples, until the command is repealed. If this phrase in Matt 28 does indeed refer to itself and back to Matt 10, then the command for active evangelism would last as long as it is followed. Therefore this paper concludes that this passage is indeed a command for active evangelism for believers today.

CONCLUSION

Four passages have been looked into to see whether they are a command for active evangelism to believers today. Two, Matt 5 and 22, lack the evidence for being a command for active evangelism. One, Matt 28, is not a command for active evangelism in and of itself, but it does imply that either active or passive evangelism must occur. The fourth passage, Matt 10, is a command for active evangelism, and is for at least two distinct times in salvation history. Through the continual, reciprocal nature of the command in Matt 28, which also refers to the command in Matt 10, it seems that this command is for believers from the time of the disciples after Christ's death until the command is repealed.³⁶¹ Therefore, believers in today's world

³⁶⁰ There are twenty-one total imperatives in Matt 10. This paper only looked at those in 10:5-7.

³⁶¹ However, further study needs to be done to validate this claim. The next step would require looking into whether or not the command in Matt 28 actually does refer to itself as well when saying the disciples should, "teach all that I have commanded you." See footnote 110.

should be actively seeking out unbelievers to share the gospel message, and what a glorious message this is! Why would anyone want to keep it to themselves? And how great is it to be a part of God's plan of salvation! William Carey said it best:

“What a *treasure*, what an *harvest* must await such characters as Paul, and Elliot, and Brainerd, and others, who have given themselves wholly to the work of the Lord. What a heaven will it be to see the many myriads of poor heathens, of Britons amongst the rest, who by their labors have been brought to the knowledge of God. Surely a *crown of rejoicing* like this is worth aspiring to. Surely it is worthwhile to lay ourselves out with all our might, in promoting the cause, and kingdom of Christ.”³⁶²

³⁶² William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens. In which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicibility of Further Undertakings, are Considered* (Leicester: Ann Ireland, 1792), accessed through <http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/enquiry/anenquiry.pdf>, 87.

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