LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

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

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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

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\(^2\) An example is Mark 16:15-20.
to find a passage where the principle behind that passage is a command for believers to actively 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. 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 he 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.

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


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.

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\(^6\) In other words, the verb must be an imperative in the Greek.


\(^8\) 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.

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. Further, historically it has been common to claim that the author only intended one meaning, 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. 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. 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. Many

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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, as well as general fallacies when interpreting. Also, this paper will employ the hermeneutical model set forth in Duvall and Hays’ book. This involves a four (and sometimes five) -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. 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

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16 See Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*.


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.”

commentary, conflict, resolution, and other elements common in narratives. Bock and Fanning claim three elements stand out amidst the others: characters, plot, and the narrator’s perspective. 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. This paper will mainly look at the narrator’s point of view and his context. 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. 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. While the rules of interpreting narrative still apply to a parable, an even more specific method

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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.”

For 1800 years the church accepted the allegorical method of interpretation. The early church fathers Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine each employed an allegorical hermeneutic for understanding parables. Some have recently pointed out that one problem with this allegorical approach was reading anachronistically, and putting one’s own mindset into the text. 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. If the author were looking to the future and being prophetic, there

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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.


31 This is known as eisegesis.

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 each 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

\(^{34}\) 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. 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. 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. Blomberg gives three commonly used rules to stay away from the historical problems of interpretation, and also provides a summary of how to interpret parables. Fee and Stuart, McCartney and Clayton, Osborne, and Snodgrass give their own instructions as well. These instructions often overlap but do not

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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.


44 Ibid., 165-166.

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


47 Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 303-308.

contradict one another, so they will be used in exegesis. Thiselton,\textsuperscript{49} Via,\textsuperscript{50} Fee and Stuart,\textsuperscript{51} and Snodgrass\textsuperscript{52} 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\begin{itemize}
  \item [\textsuperscript{49}]Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 41.
  \item [\textsuperscript{51}]Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 151.
  \item [\textsuperscript{52}]Snodgrass, *Stories*, 11-15.
  \item [\textsuperscript{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.
\end{itemize}
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. 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, or another person in the early church, or possibly a school composed it. Dates range from 50 AD to as late as 100 AD.

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

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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.\(^{60}\)


\(^{59}\) 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 Commissioning\(^\text{61}\) in Matthew 28:16-20 as a springboard to talk about sharing the gospel in a variety of ways.\(^\text{62}\) 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

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\(^{61}\) 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.

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. However, this outline fits the text best. Matthew does present this commissioning in the same manner as some Old Testament commissions. 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.

OUTLINE:

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

CHARACTERS

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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.

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. 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, 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.

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

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, and Christ visits many unnamed mountains in other parts of the Gospel.

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. 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.” 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 Mathew 5. But the most striking

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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.

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.  

Schnackenburg’s theory claims that the mountain is only a symbol of Christ’s association with God. His proposal falls short due to his lack of evidence. 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. It seems best to say that Matthew is referring back the Mosaic example, but it is also set in a similar ‘type’ as the introduction to his Gospel. This, then, is only the first parallel that this passage has with Moses; many more are yet to come.

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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 (ὁρος) 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 ὁρος 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. 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. 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. 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. Both the disciples and “some” are masculine in Greek, and there are no other characters present as far

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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.

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.\textsuperscript{82} A few commentators claim the word for “doubted” (διστάζω) is better translated as “hesitated.”\textsuperscript{83} BDAG allows for either translation, and the only other occurrence of διστάζω seems to lean toward a hesitation rather than full-blown doubt.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{86} While this is a possible explanation, it makes more sense to claim that Christ addressed the disciples’ doubt.\textsuperscript{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

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 744-745; Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 885.
\item\textsuperscript{84} Walter Bauer, \textit{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.
\item\textsuperscript{85} Morris, \textit{Gospel}, 744-745; Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 885.
\item\textsuperscript{86} Bruner, \textit{Churchbook}, 810.
\item\textsuperscript{87} Contra Bruner, \textit{Churchbook}, 810; and Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 886.
\end{itemize}
is the only other place Matthew uses διστάζω also happens to contain a rare occurrence of προσκυνέω when it refers to worship of Christ. 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. 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. 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 worshiping 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

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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.\footnote{Morris, Gospel, 745-746.} 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, πορευόντες, is the initial command in the Great Commissioning, 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,”\footnote{Evans, Bible Knowledge, 531. William Hendriksen, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 999.} or “as you
are going, “they are probably incorrect.” Wallace argues conclusively that this participle should be classified as attendant circumstance, because it fits every criteria Wallace provides for an attendant circumstance participle. Therefore, it should be translated with the same force as the main verb, 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 δίδασκοντες. 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. Jesus is telling the disciples

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93 Keener, Gospel, 718. Talbert, Matthew, 313.
95 Ibid., 645.
that the way that they are to make disciples is to first go, implying that they should leave their locale.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \( \text{πορευόμενος} \) often and commonly as a participle.\textsuperscript{100} This word does not have any further meaning that needs to be clearly explained: it simply means, “to go.” However, \( \text{βαπτίζομενος} \) and \( \text{διδάσκομενος} \) 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,\textsuperscript{101} sometimes included blood,\textsuperscript{102} and was usually performed in the \textit{miqvehs}.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{98} Ribberbos, \textit{Matthew}, 554.

\textsuperscript{99} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 718.


\textsuperscript{102} Legg, \textit{King}, 530.

\textsuperscript{103} Michael J. Wilkins, “Matthew,” in \textit{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.\textsuperscript{104} It represented power and authority,\textsuperscript{105} and the singular word “name” is an early indication of the singularity of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{106} Second, it might have replaced circumcision, which was the Old Testament equivalent for entering into God’s Covenant with Israel.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{109} Further, Matthew seems to confirm this by

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\item\textsuperscript{104} Carter, \textit{Matthew}, 552.
\item\textsuperscript{105} Evans, \textit{Bible Knowledge}, 532; Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 955.
\item\textsuperscript{106} Wilkins, “Matthew,” 190.
\item\textsuperscript{107} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 685; Legg, \textit{King}, 529.
\item\textsuperscript{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, \textit{King}, 530-531; John Nolland, \textit{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, \textit{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, “\textit{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. 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. Davies and Allison say that it plainly means, “make disciples” in this instance, with an emphasis on the entry into discipleship. 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. Mounce agrees with him, saying the emphasis is on the conversion to becoming a learner.

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.


112 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 684.

113 Boice, Gospel, 648.

However, Hagner believes that the emphasis of the verb is on nurturing, the growth that occurs after conversion.\textsuperscript{115} Bruner believes the word has a very ordinary ring to it, and it refers to the process of teaching others about Christ.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{117} Both Christ and Matthew intended for the disciples to convert unbelievers and teach them until they became Christ-like in their life.

\textbf{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{115} Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 887.

\textsuperscript{116} Bruner, \textit{Churchbook}, 816.

\textsuperscript{117} Hendriksen, \textit{Matthew}, 999.

\textsuperscript{118} Wilkins, “Matthew,” 191.
what the phrase “to the end of the age” means. This promise wraps up the Great Commissioning and Matthew’s Gospel, and it is marvelously true.

**Concluding Observations**

To end the discussion of the original meaning, several points must be reheashed. 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 πᾶς, meaning “all,” occurs four times, and it is implied once more. 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. This was a very innovative way of thinking, because many people groups at that time only gathered followers close to their proximity. This two-sided typology and the repetition of πᾶς seem to be

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119 Ibid., 191.

120 Boice, *Gospel*, 651.


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.

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\(^{125}\) 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. 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.

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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. 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.

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 seventy people. These people might have been disciples also. However, in

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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,\textsuperscript{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 ὁχλος, the word here for crowds, fifty times in his Gospel.\textsuperscript{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 metaphor\textsuperscript{132} 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


\textsuperscript{132} Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 151.
should carry out their lives.\textsuperscript{133} It tells what the “good works” of verse 16 are and how to be salt and light to the world.\textsuperscript{134}

**Immediate Context**

First, this metaphor is tied to the last beatitude strongly,\textsuperscript{135} and the others as well.\textsuperscript{136} The majority of commentators agree that verses 11-12 tie in strongly with 13-16,\textsuperscript{137} and some even claim they tie in better with 13-16 than 2-10.\textsuperscript{138} This becomes clear through the shift to second person in verse 11 and the emphatic ὑμεῖς in verses 13 and 14.\textsuperscript{139} This shows that the people who are persecuted are salt and light to the world,\textsuperscript{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 ὀχλος

\textsuperscript{133} Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 471.


\textsuperscript{135} France, *Gospel*, 177.


\textsuperscript{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

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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.

vast majority, and can be ruled out. Others list only the more logical possibilities.\textsuperscript{143} However, one point has been made that brings the situation to light. Due to the nature of a metaphor, it is not specific.\textsuperscript{144} There is therefore no need to discuss which of the eleven or more qualities of salt Christ had in mind here.\textsuperscript{145} To determine which quality is tough for anyone today\textsuperscript{146} and could distort the metaphor.\textsuperscript{147} Christ is simply stating what every one of the disciples and everyone in the crowd knew: salt is useful and influential.\textsuperscript{148} Therefore, in this context it is a metaphor for how beneficial to the world the person is that does these “good deeds.”\textsuperscript{149} Salt is still useful in today’s world, as it seems to have always been and will always be.\textsuperscript{150} Therefore it is simple for any reader at any time to understand the metaphor: they are useful and influential for the world.\textsuperscript{151} It should be pressed no further.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{143} G. Jerome Albrecht and Michael J. Albrecht, \textit{Matthew, People’s Bible Commentary} (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 69; William Barclay, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew} (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 119-120; France, \textit{Gospel}, 175; Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 99; Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 173-175; Mounce, \textit{Matthew}, 43; Nolland, \textit{Gospel}, 212; Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 154-155; Weber, \textit{Matthew}, 61; Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 213-214; In his book \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{144} Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 99, notes that pressing it further would turn the metaphor into an allegory.


\textsuperscript{146} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 473.

\textsuperscript{147} Ambiguity could be Matthew’s intention here.


\textsuperscript{149} Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 155.


\textsuperscript{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 μωράξινω means. This word is used only four times in the New Testament, 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.” 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. One commentator even claims that salt was a rabbinic symbol for wisdom. 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. Therefore this paper will proceed with both meanings in view to see

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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.


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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{161} or it might dissolve.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{163} While the idea that salt could become diluted does seem to be relevant background material, Christ here does not mention impurities or

\textsuperscript{158} While Bauer, \textit{Greek-English}, 663, says the meaning of \textit{μωραίνει} 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.


\textsuperscript{162} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 173.

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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?”\textsuperscript{165} The Rabbi knew that salt could not lose its saltiness just like a mule could never give birth.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{164} Wallace, \textit{Greek Grammar}, 696-699.

\textsuperscript{165} Via Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 214.

\textsuperscript{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 ὠραίνω 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 ὠραίνω 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 ὠραίνω conveys the same idea in Matthew. Therefore in Matt 5:14 ὠραίνω 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 roofs or into the roads.169 If it were thrown into the fields, it would destroy the vegetation.170 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.
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. 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. 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. John, another Gospel writer, employs light as a metaphor throughout the first half of his Gospel. 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.

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175 He uses the word φως 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 γῆ and κόσμος are datives of place, showing where the metaphor is true.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{178} As an example from their culture, Sepphoris was a city in Galilee which shone down to Nazareth four miles away.\textsuperscript{179} Christ might have even been referring to a specific city,\textsuperscript{180} the most apparent candidate being Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{181} If Christ is equating “a city on a hill” to “the light of the world,” then the references in Isaiah come to mind.\textsuperscript{182} Further, the Old Testament commonly

\begin{enumerate}
\item Wallace, \textit{Greek Grammar}, 153-155. Others may refer to this as the locative of place.
\item Blomberg, \textit{Interpreting}, 103.
\item Evans, \textit{Bible Knowledge}, 109.
\item Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 215.
\item Hagner, \textit{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.
\item Is. 2:2-5; 42:6; 49:6. Here Isaiah calls Jerusalem a light to the nations.
\end{enumerate}
refers to Jerusalem or God’s temple in Jerusalem being on a hill.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{187} Also, because most houses only had one room, one carefully placed lamp would give light to everyone in the house.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{183} 2 Ch. 33:15; Ps. 48:1; Is. 10:32; 66:20; Mic. 3:12.
\textsuperscript{184} Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 215. He states that a candle would have been the light, but a more probable light was a small oil lamp.
\textsuperscript{185} Wilkins, “Matthew,” 36-37. See the picture on those pages for the best description.
\textsuperscript{186} Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 155.
\textsuperscript{187} Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 100.
\textsuperscript{188} Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 215.
\textsuperscript{189} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 174-175.
It would be self-defeating to light a lamp and put it under a basket. 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. It was absurd to have an unseen light. 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. Third, it was not a simple task to light a lamp in the days before matches. 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.

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

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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.


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. Matthew portrays this idea through 5:13-16, as he often does at the end of Christ’s illustrations.

**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. 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. Furthermore, this is an aorist imperative. The action is viewed as a whole instead of looking at

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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.


the individual parts. 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, 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. Concealment of the light is not an option. 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. This is not an end in itself, but only a means to the end.

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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 ὀπως plus the imperative. BDAG defines the term as a “marker expressing purpose for an event or state,” 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, 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.

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, 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

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206 Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1.


208 By the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, the term was common.
forms one tightly knit discourse. 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.

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


Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 122.

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**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. His miracles validate that he is indeed the Messiah, 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, 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.
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.\\(^2\)\\(^1\)\\(^4\) 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,\\(^2\)\\(^1\)\\(^5\) and wanted to do something about it. They had no clue what they were doing, and Christ pitied them.\\(^2\)\\(^1\)\\(^6\) So he told his disciples to pray that leaders may be sent to them, in order

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\\(^2\)\\(^1\) The research for this paper found no one who disagrees.


that they might hear the good news of the kingdom. They were ready to hear and obey, but they needed someone to teach them. This is the motivation for Christ’s command in 10:5-7. Because Christ cares for people, he tells the disciples to pray for workers, and then sends them to go out and teach.

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. These actions will validate their teaching as Christ’s actions validated his. Also, by preaching the same message that he preached and that John the Baptist preached before him, the disciples harvest many of the souls ready to hear the good news.

The author then lists the names of the twelve disciples to emphasize their work.

Chapter 9 records the calling of Matthew, and 9:37 is the first mention of the disciples since

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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.


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. Some claim it separates the general commission of 10:1 from the specific one in 10:5-42. Further, it could also introduce the disciples because they are doing something now, whereas before they were simply following Christ. Others think they are listed because Christ has molded them to be teachers and leaders, because that is what the people need. 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. While this could be slightly helpful, doing an in-depth study of each disciple here would not change the meaning of the command. Therefore such an in-depth study of them is not necessary. However, two facts are noteworthy. First, the apostles are sent out in pairs. This fact will have impact later. Second, in 10:2 Matthew calls them apostles. While previously he has only used the term μαθητης, this is

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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.


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, and now they are sent.

**EXEGESIS**

Before issuing the command, Christ prohibits the disciples from going to certain places. Matthew records Christ giving them these instructions, as a teacher or leader would instruct his pupils. Christ then restricts their ministry by telling them where they must not go: Samaria and Gentile lands. It seems contrary to think that Matthew or Christ would restrict them from doing something they would not do anyway. 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. 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

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234 Although this could be a word fallacy, the fact that Matthew consistently uses μωθητής 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.


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.


passage reveals itself. Many commentators argue over whether Jesus contradicts himself with the Great Commissioning.\textsuperscript{240} In this passage, Jesus says, “Do not go to the ἐθνὸς,” while in Matt. 28 he says “Go to the ἐθνὸς.”\textsuperscript{241} However, in light of the past, most scholars today agree this is explained by knowledge of salvation history.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{244} First, in the Old Testament, Israel was the chosen nation of God.\textsuperscript{245} Salvation was to come through them,\textsuperscript{246} and indeed it


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


\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{244} Nolland, *Gospel*, 409.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{246} John 4:22.
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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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 near.”

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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.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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. Christ even tells them in

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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

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\(^{258}\) France, *Gospel*, 381.


\(^{260}\) Turner, *Matthew*, 264. 10:24-25 is a reference to Christ, who is the teacher and master.


\(^{262}\) John had preached about this man in Matt. 3:1-12.
his plan of salvation. 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.

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. 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, but many still interpret this one allegorically. 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, 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

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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. Further, the parable says a city was destroyed, whereas only the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem. Also, the third round of slaves came along and witnessed much before the temple was destroyed. 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. 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.

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,\textsuperscript{278} and one that Matthew comes back to often through other mediums.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{280} This means it is a fictitious story with plot development that intends to communicate truth.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

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\textsuperscript{278} Keener, Gospel, 720.

\textsuperscript{279} Carson and Moo, Introduction, 81.

\textsuperscript{280} Snodgrass, Stories, 299.

\textsuperscript{281} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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. 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, 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, and tension is heightened with each parable. It is a warning to the leaders of their impending judgment.

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. 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.

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

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286 Ibid., 304.
291 Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 158.
293 Ibid.
of the main characters point toward one truth about the kingdom. And as is common with parables\(^{294}\) 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


\(^{296}\) Fee and Stuart, *How to Read*, 158.

\(^{297}\) Snodgrass, *Stories*, 299.


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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{303} It was shameful for a friend not to attend a banquet, but it was also shameful for an enemy not to show up.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{305} Further, some invitees even killed

\textsuperscript{300} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 521; Snodgrass, \textit{Stories}, 318.

\textsuperscript{301} Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 630; Morris, \textit{Gospel}, 548.

\textsuperscript{302} Wilkins, “Matthew,” 134.


\textsuperscript{304} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 519.

\textsuperscript{305} Wilkins, “Mathew,” 134; Wilkins, \textit{Matthew}, 716.
the king’s slaves who carried the message. No culture exists where this irrational action is appropriate.\textsuperscript{306} None of these actions were appropriate, and therefore, the king reacted.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{309} However, some of the invitees had gone further, killing the messengers. Because of this,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{306} Keener, Gospel, 520; Morris, Gospel, 549; Weber, Matthew, 352.

\textsuperscript{307} Ironside, Expository, 283, notes that neither failed to get to the feast, and that is the main point.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{309} Keener, Gospel, 520.

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

\textsuperscript{311} Keener, Gospel, 521.

\textsuperscript{312} Legg, King, 415.

\textsuperscript{313} Keener, Gospel, 521; Snodgrass, Stories, 318.
seeming inconsistency of waging a battle while the food remains warm can be explained away, but likely it is just a part of the story. 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.

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 corners and “invite everyone” they find. The phrase truly does mean, “invite everyone,” more literally saying “as many people as you find, invite that many.” 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, through accepting the invitation, they prove themselves to be the most reputable. Therefore the slaves went out and found enough people to fill up the banquet hall.

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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 τὸς διεξόδους τῶν ὀδών, contains a hapax 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, and it could also prepare the audience for the division coming in vs. 11-13. 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.

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. 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, and others disagree whether the king provided clothes or not. Whatever the case and however he entered, the man shows disdain by not wearing wedding clothes.

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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,\textsuperscript{328} whereas everyone else did.\textsuperscript{329} Further, the fact that he is silent when questioned shows his knowledge of his guilt.\textsuperscript{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,”\textsuperscript{331} a horrible place\textsuperscript{332} with “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”\textsuperscript{333} This vivid imagery leads the audience back to the main point: ignoring even part of the invitation leads to disastrous consequences.\textsuperscript{334}

\textsuperscript{328} Albrecht and Albrecht, \textit{Matthew}, 311.

\textsuperscript{329} Wilkins, \textit{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, \textit{Gospel}, 193, notes how conspicuous it would have been to be dressed differently than everyone else, and how personable this question was.

\textsuperscript{330} Keener, \textit{Gospel}, 522.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{332} Young, \textit{Parables}, 173.

\textsuperscript{333} Wilkins, \textit{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, \textit{Matthew}, 627; Mounce, \textit{Matthew}, 205; and Snodgrass, \textit{Stories}, 311, show from Is. 25 that a wedding feast also commonly referred an eschatological event. Young, \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{334} Young, \textit{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,\textsuperscript{335} and the point is potently made: carefully consider how to respond.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{337} He states that, “Many are called, but few are chosen.”\textsuperscript{338} This summarizes all three previous parables, and not only the one at hand. It has a proverbial tone\textsuperscript{339} 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.”\textsuperscript{340} The second simply denotes the idea “less than all.”\textsuperscript{341} There might be only one who is chosen, or it might be all but one. However, the idea is that not every

\textsuperscript{335} Barclay, Gospel, 269.

\textsuperscript{336} France, Gospel, 822.

\textsuperscript{337} Fee and Stuart, How to Read, 160; Snodgrass, Stories, 300.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{339} Snodgrass, Stories, 321; Weber, Matthew, 353.

\textsuperscript{340} Hagner, Matthew, 632; Wilkins, Matthew, 718; Schnackenburg, Gospel, 215. See also Matthew 20:28.

\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{342} But the other two main character groups are subdivided.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{342} Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 194.


\textsuperscript{344} Blomberg, *Interpreting*, 233.

\textsuperscript{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.


This passage provided the reader with the principle that God sternly judges all who ignore His kindness. 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

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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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 evangelion, 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. 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. 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 μακαρία 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

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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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textbf{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.\textsuperscript{361} Therefore, believers in today’s world

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

\textsuperscript{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.”  

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


