

Jesus' Turn from Israel?

The Parable Discourse in Matthew's Narrative

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible.
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANWR	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt.</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries.
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker; <i>A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra.</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly.</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments.
ICC	International Critical Commentary.
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature.</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament.</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series.
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series.
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies.
NA27	Novum Testamentum Graece, 27 th ed. Edited by Nestle/Aland.
NAC	The New American Commentary.
NASB	New American Standard Version.
NCB	New Century Bible.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament.
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum.
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen.
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies.</i>
PNTC	The Pelican New Testament Commentary Series.
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly.</i>
SE	Studia Evangelica.
SHBC	Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary.
SP	Sacra Pagina.
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.</i>
TIM	<i>Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew.</i> Edited by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held.
TNTCS	Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series.
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin.</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 The Problem

In this study we will seek to determine how the parable discourse in Matthew (13:1-52) was intended by the author to function in the Gospel's storyline. This is not at all obvious. In the parable discourse Jesus first speaks four parables to the crowds (13:1-35), interrupted by an explanation for why he does so and the interpretation of one of them. Then he leaves the crowds and interprets another parable for the disciples and gives them a few additional parables (13:36-52). Many readers of the Gospel of Matthew will be struck by Jesus' sudden disapproval of the crowds in this discourse; "while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt 13:13). Jesus' characterization of the crowds as blind, deaf, and obtuse is surprisingly harsh after we have read in the previous chapters that they respond positively to Jesus. They are amazed at the authority given him as teacher, healer, and forgiver of sins (7:28; 9:8, 33), and they glorify God because of him and wonder hesitatingly whether he might be the Son of David (9:8; 12:23). Surprising is it also that Jesus, according to the majority view, cloaks his mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in parabolic speech, with the purpose of hiding his message from the people.¹ Thus we might wonder if he no longer seeks their repentance and salvation (Cf. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:1.). But interestingly, Jesus continues his ministry to Israel after the discourse (e.g. 13:54; 14:14), and the reader is somewhat confused as to how the event of the parable discourse should be understood.

The answers vary from the view of J. D. Kingsbury on one hand, who sees the parable discourse as the "great turning point" of the Gospel where Jesus pronounces his disciples the true people of God in the place of Israel,² to U. Luz on the other hand, who alleges that this discourse is a direct address to the readers—an interruption of the narrative with no real effects on the story.³ Except for these two, only J. R. C. Cousland

¹ See ch. 3, section 3.2.1.

² Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction Criticism* (Richmond: John Knox, 1969), 31, 130.

³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20* (Hermenia; trans. James E. Crouch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 228-229.

has to my knowledge discussed this issue to some extent.⁴ The problem has been noted by many a commentator, but usually only with a brief suggestive explanation.

The question is of considerable relevance since narrative and redactional approaches to Matthew these days often are combined.⁵ For everyone interested in the story *Matthew*⁶ had in mind, the issue has significant implications, as the views of Kingsbury and Luz illustrate. The issue also has implications for the notoriously difficult question of the structure of the First Gospel, as it affects how one views the narrative preceding and following the discourse. Finally, it may also be relevant for the ongoing debate over the social context of Matthew's Gospel.

1.2 Research Survey

Since the early days of redaction criticism it has generally been held that Matthew's main purpose with the five great discourses was to communicate the authoritative words of Jesus directly to his readers. As W. Marxsen wrote in 1964; "Matthew formulates the contents of Jesus' teaching in such a way that the disciples he addresses appear as representatives of the later Church of Matthew's time, to which the teaching is made to apply directly."⁷ The five discourses first became an object of study after B. W Bacon in 1918 showed how Matthew had appended five large sayings collections with a specific concluding formula.⁸ Bacon, himself a predecessor of redaction criticism, saw these discourses as a code of ethical instruction intended to correct a tendency of lawlessness in his community.⁹ Many would follow Bacon and see in the five great discourses primarily a paraenetic or didactic purpose.¹⁰ But scholars soon also took interest in the setting of

⁴ J. Robert C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup 102; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 241-259, 281-288.

⁵ Cf. some of the newest commentaries on Matthew: Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1* (Concordia Commentary; Saint Louis: Concordia, 2006); R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

⁶ I use "Matthew" for the author merely for convenience; no assumption is made regarding his identity.

⁷ Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (translated by G. Buswell, *Einleitung in Das Neue Testament*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964), Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968, 150.

⁸ Benjamin W. Bacon, "The 'Five Books' of Matthew against the Jews," *Expositor* 15 (1918): 56-66.

⁹ According to David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (JSNTSup 31; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989), 28-29.

¹⁰ E.g. F. Green, G. D. Kilpatrick, and K. Stendahl. Cf. Bauer, *Structure*, 32; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 2-5; Graham Stanton, "The

the Matthean community, especially its relationship to the larger Jewish community, and emphasized the *apologetic* function of the discourses.¹¹

Jack D. Kingsbury

The first redaction critical study on the Matthean parable discourse came in 1969 when J. D. Kingsbury published his monograph *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction Criticism*. Quite in line with scholarship at the time Kingsbury here concluded that the discourse has both a paraenetic and an apologetic side, but he differed from many contemporary commentators in how he mainly sought to relate material of the parable discourse to the development of *the Matthean story*. Thus we see how he anticipates his two later influential studies on the Gospel; one with a composition critical approach (1975);¹² the other based on literary criticism (1986).¹³ Kingsbury's conclusion gave the parable discourse an unusual emphasis, although some had already stressed the pivotal role of the discourse on the basis of macro-structural considerations.¹⁴ In Kingsbury's view the discourse functions as "the great turning point" in Matthew's Gospel, a turning point he describes as follows:

Jesus has come to the Jews preaching and teaching (4:17, 23: 9:35; 11:1) but was rejected by them; in reaction to this, Jesus addresses an apology to the Jews, yet speaks to them, not openly, but in parables, i.e. incomprehensible forms of speech, and so fashions a discourse that in form and content (a "parable apology") reveals that the Jews are no longer the privileged people whom God imparts revelation, but instead stand under judgment for having spurned their Messiah.¹⁵

Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945-1980," *ANWR* II.25.3 (1985): 1903-1904.

¹¹ E.g. P. Benoit, P. Bonnard, W. D. Davies, and W. Trilling. Cf. Bauer, *Structure*, 48-49; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Kingsbury, *Structure*, 3-4; Stanton, "Origin," 1894.

¹² Kingsbury, *Structure*.

¹³ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

¹⁴ John C. Fenton, "Inclusio and Chiasmus in Matthew," *SE* 1 (1959): 174-179; idem *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (PNTC; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 14-16; Charles H. Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 427-428. For a discussion of the chiastic outlines of Gospel proposed by these and other scholars, see the chapter on structure.

¹⁵ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 31.

The Jews' rejection of Jesus is according to Kingsbury described in chapters 11-12, where John the Baptist doubts Jesus (11:2-19); three Galilean cities fail to repent in response to his miracles (11:20-24); the leaders of the Jews oppose him and accuse him of being in league with the prince of demons (12:1-45); and Jesus in the end points to the disciples only, as those who do the will of God (12:46-50).¹⁶ In Kingsbury's reading the crowds in Matthew are always representatives of the Jews.¹⁷ Thus, when Jesus responds to this rejection in the parable discourse, "he faces in the crowds the whole of unbelieving Judaism."¹⁸ There are three reasons why Kingsbury does not find the harsh treatment of the crowds in the parable discourse problematic: (1) the crowds always represent the Jews in general; (2) the single feature of the crowds that Matthew dwells on in the parable discourse is that they, despite their affirmations of Jesus, "stand beyond the pale of the Church"¹⁹; (3) the reader should always have in mind Matthew's whole account of the crowds when dealing with any single instances.²⁰ By the latter Kingsbury presumably means the reader should have in mind the crowds' eventual rejection of Jesus (27:15-26).

According to Kingsbury, Matthew facilitates this turning point *formally* by his choice of wording and structural arrangement of the discourse: Jesus is said to *speak* (λαλέω) to the crowds; he no longer teaches (διδάσκω) or preaches (κηρύσσω), as he did earlier;²¹ he refers to the crowds as "them" (αὐτοῖς), revealing that the Jews now stand on the outside and are excluded from the promises of the end-time Kingdom;²² Jesus sudden use of παραβολή in this discourse distinguishes this new period of enigmatic speech from the time when he spoke to the Jews openly, and the frequent use of the term in this discourse underlines that the Jews are excluded from understanding, while the disciples are included;²³ the same division between the Jews and the disciples is further underlined by the two-part arrangement of this discourse, one to the crowds (13:1-35) and the other to the disciples (13:36-52).²⁴ *Materially*, this turn is brought about by how this discourse

¹⁶ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 15-16.

¹⁷ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 25.

¹⁸ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 16.

¹⁹ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 27-28.

²⁰ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 28.

²¹ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 28-30.

²² Kingsbury, *Parables*, 13, 47-48.

²³ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 30-31.

²⁴ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 12-15, 131.

narrates how the disciples hear and understand the parables, which all concern “the knowing and doing of God’s will,” while the Jews do not understand God’s will, and consequently will not carry it out.²⁵

In Kingsbury’s opinion the effects of Jesus’ turn against the Jews in the parable discourse are seen in that Jesus no longer teaches and preaches to the Jews so as to lead them into the kingdom of heaven. After 11:1 Jesus never again preaches (κηρύσσω) in the Gospel, and although he is sometimes said to teach (διδάσκω), “this term either finds its place in the scenic framework of a pericope (13:54; 21:23; 22:16; 26:55), or is employed negatively in a denunciation of Jewish doctrine (15:9; cf. 16:12), or occurs where there is debate with Jews who are manifestly obdurate already (13:54; 22:16), or merely demonstrates that Jesus has had the last word over his opponents (22:33).”²⁶ But, as Kingsbury explains in a later work, Matthew lets Jesus continue to heal the Jews, because this is how Matthew portrays Jesus as Israel’s Messiah.²⁷

Kingsbury’s monograph has proved influential,²⁸ and through his two later studies, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* and *Matthew as Story*, even more influential, he upheld his views on the parable discourse.²⁹ References to the parable discourse as a turning point can be found occasionally.³⁰ But few see this turning point as dramatic as Kingsbury. For instance, whereas Kingsbury reads chapters 11-12 as a description of how “the Jews on all sides reject Jesus as the Messiah . . .,”³¹ or even as a “total rejection by Israel,”³² many are hesitant to infer such a sweeping opposition from Israel in these chapters,³³ and those who basically agree with him often choose more

²⁵ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 131-132.

²⁶ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 29.

²⁷ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 21.

²⁸ Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 9, n. 24.

²⁹ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 18-21; *Story*, 23-24, 74-75, 111-113.

³⁰ E.g. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 212; H. J. Bernard Combrink, “The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative,” *TynBul* 34 (1983): 71; Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1974), 13; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 197; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 333; Donald Senior, *Matthew* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 147; Turner, *Matthew*, 339.

³¹ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 130.

³² Kingsbury, *Structure*, 18.

³³ Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 254-255, 287; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 212; France, *Matthew* (2007), 417-418, 499; Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 44; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972), 197, 223-224; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 371; Paul S. Minear, *Matthew:*

careful descriptions.³⁴ In addition, many of those who relate the parable discourse to the opposition revealed in the two previous chapters do so based on the apologetic message they find in the parables, not on Jesus' treatment of the crowds.³⁵ Of those who do explain Jesus' exclusion of the crowds on the basis of the preceding chapters, some avoid a direct identification of the crowds and the Jews by speaking vaguely about the opposition as a basis for Jesus' action in the parable discourse.³⁶ The idea that Jesus with the parable discourse changes his ministry and gives up his attempts to lead Israel into the kingdom is generally *not* accepted.³⁷ Among the scholars who see a turning point with this discourse, most are content to describe it as signaling Jesus' increasing focus on the disciples and the establishment of the church.³⁸

Ulrich Luz

In the second volume of his three-volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (1990)³⁹ Luz expounds a very different view of the parable discourse. To him this discourse is no turning point in the narrative; its effects on the narrative are minimal, perhaps even non-existent. He opposes Kingsbury's notion of a change in Jesus' ministry following the parable discourse; "Jesus continues to turn to the people; they are not

The Teacher's Gospel (New York: Pilgrim, 1982), 18; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 103, 121; Senior, *Matthew*, 146; Turner, *Matthew*, 286, 334-335.

³⁴ Dale C. Allison, "Matthew: Structure, Biographical Impulse and the *Imitatio Christi*" in *The Four Gospels*" (ed. F. Van Segbroeck et al.; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992): 1206; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 8-18* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 294, 374; Ellis, *Matthew*, 12; David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 143-144, 153; H. B. Green, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 130; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 147; John P. Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of," ABD 4:629.

³⁵ E.g. Allison, "Structure," 1206; France, *Matthew* (2007), 499; Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 44; Keener, *Matthew*, 371; Minear, *Matthew*, 18-19; Eduard Schweizer, *Good News according to Matthew* (trans. D. E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 296; Turner, *Matthew*.

³⁶ Green, *Matthew*, 129-132; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993), 372-376; Senior, *Matthew*, 146; William G. Thompson, *Matthew's Story: Good News for Uncertain Times* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 92-93; Turner, *Matthew*, 339.

³⁷ A few see here a turn from the crowds: Cf. France (his 1985 commentary): "... he [Jesus] will no longer teach them [the crowds] except in parables.": R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 221; Similarly Green, *Matthew*, 130: "From this point on Jesus has no positive message (though much by way of reproach and counter-argument) for official Israel." And; Kari Syreeni, *The Making of the Sermon on the Mount: A Procedural Analysis of Matthew's Redactional Activity, Part 1* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1987), 112. Cf. below, ch. 5, n. 40.

³⁸ Allison, "Structure," 1206; R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1989), 155-156; Garland, *Reading*, 154; Frank J. Matera, "The Plot of Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 248; Meier, "Matthew," 4:629.

³⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*.

hardened but are open and sympathetic toward Jesus.”⁴⁰ According to Luz, “nothing has changed.”⁴¹ There is no separation evident in the following narrative between Jesus and the people, but there is a *continuing* separation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders.⁴² And as long as the disciples continue to *follow* Jesus, they are in Matthew’s mind *potential disciples*.⁴³ Luz sees the parable discourse’s lack of effects on the narrative in light of the other great discourses, rooted in Matthew’s intention with these to have Jesus directly address Matthew’s readers. This discourse is therefore “a manifesto to the readers that interrupts the narrative.”⁴⁴ Matthew leaves several clues that reveal this interruptive character of the discourse. New elements suddenly appear here without preparation: The keyword παραβολαί; the reflection on the nature of kingdom of Heaven; the theme of understanding; and the concept of the hardening of hearts. In addition Matthew has “directly linked” the pericopae preceding and following the discourse (12:46-50; 13:53-58) through the mention of Jesus’ family members. Thus, at the conclusion of the discourse “the narrative thread takes up exactly where it left off.”⁴⁵

In Luz’ opinion the parable discourse for Matthew was primarily an address to his readers. And the message was paraenetic; the readers should take care not to be like the hardened and obtuse Israel. The parables themselves embody additional paraenetic exhortations.⁴⁶ But the discourse is also an event in the narrative, although no ordinary event. Jesus’ characterization and treatment of the crowds reflect the people’s rejection of Jesus in the passion narrative, and the parable discourse therefore “*condenses and anticipates the story of the entire Gospel in a concentrated form*. What will happen in the story of Jesus as a whole is anticipated here and taught to the disciples.”⁴⁷ Though this may be described as a teaching event, almost like the scholastic dialogues or the passion predictions later in the narrative, Luz, asserting that “the parables discourse is not a mere stage in the Matthean story,”⁴⁸ seems to think that for Matthew this was not its purpose.

⁴⁰ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

⁴¹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 229.

⁴² Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

⁴³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Hermeneia; trans. James E. Crouch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 163.

⁴⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 228.

⁴⁵ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 228.

⁴⁶ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

⁴⁷ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

⁴⁸ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

He writes: "... our chapter's narrative skeleton is an anticipation that is out ahead of Matthew's story of Jesus." As an event that has no effects on the narrative but instead previews a later development, the parable discourse would be close to what in literary criticism sometimes is called *prolepsis* or *flash-forward*.⁴⁹

Few have written off the parable discourse from the Matthean narrative to the extent Luz has. It is noteworthy that most of the elements that for Luz indicates that the discourse is an interlude in the narrative (παραβολαί, *understanding*, *hardening*, the two surrounding pericopae) were among Kingsbury's reasons to see the discourse as a turning point in the narrative.⁵⁰ At this point Luz probably has less support in scholarship than Kingsbury. But in his critique of Kingsbury as regards the effects on the narrative, he speaks, as we indicated, for many. Some will also agree with him that Matthew with the parable discourse previews the end of the story.⁵¹

J. Robert C. Cousland

Cousland argues a view similar to Luz'. Instead of explaining the harshness of the parable discourse on the basis of the passion story, Cousland explains it as a reflection of the situation of Matthew's community. This he lays out in detail in his study *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (2001). Here Cousland gives considerable space to the parable discourse, as it constitutes something of an anomaly in Matthew's presentation of the crowds.⁵² Much like Luz Cousland does not find in the parable discourse a turning point in the narrative, nor does he find a substantial change in Jesus' ministry following the discourse.⁵³ Matthew's purpose with this discourse was exclusively to speak to his readers, and he simply let Mark dictate his placement of it, despite the inconsistency it created.⁵⁴

For Cousland, the parable discourse is more a "non-event" than it is for Luz, and he does not make it a basis for understanding Matthew's portrayal of the crowds in the narrative. He finds that Matthew in the rest of the Gospel presents the crowds as a

⁴⁹ Cf. "Temporal Ordering" in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan; Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 591.

⁵⁰ Cf. Kingsbury, *Parables*, 16, 131.

⁵¹ John C. Fenton, *The Gospel of St. Matthew* (PNTCS; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 225.

⁵² Cousland, *Crowds*, 241-259, 281-288.

⁵³ For his specific criticism of Kingsbury at this point: Cousland, *Crowds*, 105-108.

⁵⁴ Cousland, *Crowds*, 257-260

stereotyped “character,” but still a character that undergoes development, especially as they go from tentatively suggesting that Jesus might be the Son of David (12:23), to confessing that he is the Son of David (21:9).⁵⁵ The parable discourse interrupts and is in conflict with Matthew’s deliberate presentation of the crowds’ development, and this indicates that the event only should be understood on the *transparent level*, as part of Matthew’s story of his community and their Jewish environment.⁵⁶

Cousland argues that Matthew had a very clear and specific role assigned to the crowds.⁵⁷ As Matthew writes the story of his community into his Jesus story, the crowds play the role of Matthew’s contemporary unbelieving Jews. Because Matthew wants, via his Christian readers, to appeal to these Jews while clearly condemning their Pharisaic leadership, he presents the crowds in his Gospel (mostly) in positive terms,⁵⁸ and carefully distinguishes them from the religious leaders.⁵⁹ Cousland criticizes Kingsbury for lumping the crowds together with their leaders in his use of the term “the Jews.” In Cousland’s eyes, the opposition to Jesus in chapters 11-12, leading up to Kingsbury’s turning point, largely comes from the leadership, while the crowds are staged as a positive contrast to these. Kingsbury therefore misses Matthew’s intention when he states that Jesus in the parable discourse faces “the whole of unbelieving Judaism.”⁶⁰ The result as regards the crowds is that Kingsbury “defines them into perdition.”⁶¹

Matthew’s treatment of the crowds in the parable discourse becomes for Cousland a cornerstone in his argument for Matthew’s deliberate construction of a second story within the Jesus story, precisely because its placement in the context is so difficult to explain. Because of its focus on the crowds’ lack of understanding, the discourse also becomes a cornerstone in his thesis that Matthew devised two “economies” for Israel; one for the religious leaders, and one for the rest of people.⁶² The fate of the helplessly evil leaders is sealed, and they will lose the kingdom (21:43). The rest of the people are on the narrative level also similarly judged, because they follow their leaders (27:20). But on the

⁵⁵ Cousland, *Crowds*, 43-50.

⁵⁶ Cousland, *Crowds*, 259.

⁵⁷ Cousland, *Crowds*, 275-281.

⁵⁸ Cousland, *Crowds*, 288-293.

⁵⁹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 94, 281-288.

⁶⁰ Cousland, *Crowds*, 11.

⁶¹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 10.

⁶² Cousland, *Crowds*, 281-288.

transparent level, the Jewish laity are not presented as helplessly evil; they are only accused of lacking understanding, a condition that can be amended. Thus their fate is open, if they, unlike the crowds in the narrative, are not persuaded by their leaders (cf. 27:20, 25). In general Cousland gives more weight than is usual to the “transparent” level of Matthew’s narrative. But other scholars have also found reasons for the parable discourse’s sudden negative treatment of the crowds in this level of the text, although they have not spelled it out in detail.⁶³ Cousland therefore represents a view of the parable discourse with considerable support in scholarship.

Two Recent Dissertations

Two dissertations on the parable discourse of newer date should also be mentioned, although both are of limited relevance for our discussion. L. Lybæk’s study on Matthew 11-13 (2002)⁶⁴ focuses on the normativity of Matthew’s written sources, with little regard for these chapters’ relation to the larger narrative. Though she does not seek to defend the link between the parable discourse and chapters 11-12, she sides with Kingsbury as she points out that certain themes carry through the three chapters.⁶⁵

A. O. Ewherido (2006) has studied the parable discourse for clues to the social setting of the Matthean Community.⁶⁶ Without much discussion he adopts Kingsbury’s view of the discourse as the great turning point, thereby presupposing the matter we try to clarify.⁶⁷ By combining this view with an interest for the “transparent” level similar to Cousland’s, the parable discourse becomes an illustration of the breach between the Matthean community and larger Judaism. This leads Ewherido to find Matthew’s purpose with all the parables of this discourse connected the conflict between these two groups.

⁶³ Esp. Schweizer, *Good News*, 300; Wolfgang Trilling, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew, 13-28* (Trans. Kevin Smyth; New York: Crossroad, 1981), 22. Also; Beare, *Matthew*, 295; Green, *Matthew*, 130; Harrington, *Matthew*, 197, 201; Hill, *Matthew*, 223, 227; Minear, *Matthew*, 84; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 121. Cousland also refers to H.-J. Klauck and J. Zumstein: Cousland, *Crowds*, 259.

⁶⁴ Lena Lybæk, *New and Old in Matthew 11-13: Normativity in the Development of Three Theological Themes* (FRLANT 198; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).

⁶⁵ Lybæk, *New and Old*, 66-68.

⁶⁶ Anthony O. Ewherido, *Matthew’s Gospel and Judaism in the Late First Century C.E.: The Evidence from Matthew’s Chapter on Parables (Matthew 13:1-52)* (Studies in Biblical Literature 91; New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

⁶⁷ Ewherido, *Judaism*, 19, 47, 57.

Summary

Kingsbury and Luz, two very prominent Matthean scholars, make up the poles in the discussion of the parable discourse's relationship to the Matthean narrative. When we include Cousland, we have the three most common explanations for this problem represented: The discourse is a part of the developing storyline—Jesus reacts to Israel's failure to believe him and repent (Kingsbury); the discourse is a proleptic part of the story—Jesus gives a preview of the end of the story (Luz); the discourse is not a part of the primary storyline—Jesus addresses the situation of the readers. Almost all modern Matthean scholars are placed somewhere between these views; most of them closest to Kingsbury, but few with attempts to reconcile the discourse to the following narrative.

Methodologically not much is separating these three scholars, although their object of study is different. Kingsbury was in his first monograph in scope limited to the parable discourse itself, and Cousland is similarly limited to *the crowds*. Luz is the one with the broadest focus, and we note that he is the one who finds the clue to the parable discourse in another part of the Gospel. There might also be a slight difference in the presuppositions of these three. Kingsbury, though he agrees that there is a “transparent” level in the Gospel,⁶⁸ is the one who places the least emphasis on this aspect, and the one who to the greatest extent reads the Gospel on its level of *story*. He is also the one who takes the parable discourse at face value, as an ordinary event in the story. This observation is important. Another scholar, F. J. Matera, has analyzed the Gospel from a *purely* narrative approach, and not surprisingly he arrives at a view of the parable discourse close to Kingsbury's,⁶⁹ deeming it the “climax” of this part of the Gospel.⁷⁰ If one at the outset views the Gospel of Matthew as a coherent story—a presupposition of the narrative analysis⁷¹—one will read every event in light of the storyline, without resorting to explanations behind the text. Thus the parable discourse automatically becomes an ordinary event in the narrative. At the same time, when reading a narrative one must at the outset presuppose a coherent story with ordinary events until one has good reasons to think otherwise. We keep these points in mind as we proceed.

⁶⁸ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 27, 134-136; idem; *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 105-113. So does also Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 11.

⁶⁹ Matera, “Plot,” 233-253.

⁷⁰ Matera, “Plot,” 248.

⁷¹ Cf. Kingsbury, *Story*, 1.

1.3 Goal and Method

This study seeks to detect how Matthew intended the parable discourse to interact with the Gospel's narrative, and how he intended it to function in his overall argument. Since our focus is on the author-editor's *intention*, our approach is primarily *redactional*. In that we are interested in Matthew's *narrative*, we also have a *narrative approach*, seeking to understand how the events of the Matthean narrative create a development meant to bring forth a specific response in the reader.⁷² But our interest is not in this narrative as an independent universe of meaning, available for exploration by the modern reader; it is the author's own understanding of his narrative that we seek, and our goal is to discern the *argument* the author wanted to make by the means of this story. Our use of modern literary critical techniques will therefore be limited. As illustrated, a study of Matthew's Gospel purely on the narrative level may wrongly presuppose that the parable discourse for Matthew was an ordinary event. In addition, conventional literary criticism is only of limited help in identifying Matthew's emphases, and by taking events merely at face value, we may miss out of the subtle indications of Matthew's intentions, such as his redaction might reveal. Redaction criticism is therefore our primary method.⁷³

To reveal how Matthew understood his story and to trace his argument we must employ the redactional method of inquiry on two levels. We must discern his *tendencies* in his adjustments to his sources on the detailed level, and we must recognize his overall compositional reasoning—how and for what purpose he arranged pericopae and sections as he did. This latter aspect of redaction criticism, which is more concerned with changes in *order* than changes in the *text*, is sometimes called *composition criticism*,⁷⁴ and it will be crucial both when we look at Matthew's macrostructure and his arrangement of shorter sections of material. The detail-level examination of Matthew's redaction can only be done on an ad-hoc basis in the passages that are most critical to understanding Matthew's narrative.

Two presuppositions underlie what has just been said and the chapters that will follow: First we presuppose Matthew's use of sources, more specifically; Mark, Q, and

⁷² Cf. Kieran Egan, "What is a plot?" *New Literary History* 9 (1978): 470.

⁷³ For a description of this method in line with the approach of this study cf. John H. Hayes & Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (2nd ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 101-109.

⁷⁴ E.g. Stanton, "Origin," 1895.

the special Matthean tradition, “M.” Though there was a renewed opposition against the Two-Source Hypothesis in the last decades of the previous century, the hypothesis still, after this re-testing, holds a firm position with the majority of critical scholars, and this might be taken as a testimony to its robustness. C. Tucket’s paper “The Current State of the Synoptic Problem,” presented at the quite recent “Oxford Conference In The Synoptic Problem” provides an overview over the latest contributions to the debate.⁷⁵ In regards to Matthew’s Gospel specifically, Davies and Allison devote much attention to this question in their commentary.⁷⁶ They test the most prominent source theories on the Matthean texts, and find overwhelming evidence for the majority view. On the basis of this foundation we can also make a second presupposition; that Matthew deliberately edited and shaped his story for a *purpose* connected to his readers; that there is a traceable *argument* in the Gospel, for instance of a theological, apologetic, or paraenetic kind.

Finally, as an apology for the choice of a method that today is somewhat out of fashion: Redaction criticism is still critical for anyone interested in the historical aspect of Matthew’s Gospel, and what Matthew historically sought to communicate and achieve with his intended readers is still crucial to a very vital debate over the social context of his Gospel.⁷⁷ And this debate is again part of a larger and similarly vital debate over the parting of the ways of Christianity and Judaism.⁷⁸

1.4 Course of the Study

Only if we find reason to suspect that the parable discourse is something else than a regular event in the narrative, do we need to look for other possible reasons for its content and placement. The course of this study will therefore be to examine the parable discourse and the surrounding narrative to see if there seems to be a continuous narrative development, or if there are signs of disruption and incoherence. We will prepare for this

⁷⁵ Christopher Tucket, “The Current State of the Synoptic Problem” (paper presented at The Oxford Conference in the Synoptic Problem, Lincoln College, Oxford, 7-10 April, 2008). Forthcoming in *Oxford Conference in the Synoptic Problem*. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.

⁷⁶ W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 1-7* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 97-127, and in the “Sources” sections at the beginning of their exegesis of each pericope.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ewherido, *Judaism*, 1, 20-26. David C. Sim “Introduction” in *Matthew and his Christian Contemporaries* (ed. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski; LNTS (Library of New Testament Studies) New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 1-6.

⁷⁸ Cf. e.g. James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2nd. ed.; London: SCM Press, 2006), xi-xxviii.

study in chapter two, where we seek to establish Matthew's macrostructure, particularly how the parable discourse is placed in relation to the preceding and following context; where sections begin and end—if Matthew at all thought of his Gospel in terms of *sections*.

In chapter three we examine the parable discourse; more specifically its narrative aspect. The most crucial passage is *the reason for parables* (13:10-17), where Jesus gives his own explanation for his act of speaking in parables. A detailed exegesis of this text will be provided. We will also look at some of the narrator comments that make up the discourse's narrative framework, but only to a limited degree will we look at the parables themselves. Their narrative import is largely determined by the narrative framework, and they are to a large degree independent units of meaning, which, we will see, sometimes point beyond the narrative context.

It is my conviction that to determine how Matthew intended the parable discourse to be related to the main narrative, one can not focus too narrowly on the parable discourse itself, like Kingsbury did in his first monograph. As Cousland pointed out, Kingsbury did not justify sufficiently that the crowds in the parable discourse represent Jesus' opponents in the preceding chapters. Kingsbury's evidence for a change in Jesus' ministry, given in passing and spanning only a half page,⁷⁹ is also insufficient. In this study I will devote more discussion to the preceding and following context than to the parable discourse itself, and chapters four and five are devoted to this task. We will look for elements that *prepare for* the parable discourse in the preceding narrative, and *effects* of the discourse on the following narrative. We will have a particular focus on the portrayal of the disciples, the crowds, and Jesus' ministry, and as we try to keep track of developments in these characters' behavior, the narrative approach will come into play.

Chapter six will provide a conclusion to the question we have studied and a discussion of some of its implications.

For Biblical citations in English I will in general follow NASB, except for in shorter clauses. For Greek I will follow NA27.

⁷⁹ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 29.

Chapter 2 – Matthew’s Structure and Composition

To understand Matthew’s purpose with the parable discourse, it is crucial that we understand at what point in his narrative or argument the discourse is placed. For that again, we need to understand the plan Matthew had for his Gospel, the outline he followed in his composition. His plan might have been rigid, or it might have been flexible; he might have perceived his Gospel in terms of parts and sections, or in terms of a storyline. In this chapter we will look at proposals for Matthew’s structure, and we shall find reason to examine certain parts of the Gospel in some detail to settle the issue.

2.1 Proposed Outlines

Matthew still confounds and intrigues when it comes to determining an outline of his gospel, and there is yet no consensus on the matter. Among countless suggestions only two models have survived decades of scrutiny and have a considerable following among modern scholars; one going back to B. W. Bacon and 1918;¹ the other first suggested by E. Krentz in 1964,² and developed more elaborately by J. D. Kingsbury in 1975.³ In addition to these two models, there are scholars today who either doubt that Matthew ever had a specific outline or they opt for a less stringent concept of *structure* in Matthew. Such views, which started to take hold in the 1980s, certainly do not make up a *model* of Matthew’s structure; the outlines these scholars offer, sometimes in a mere pragmatic fashion, can be very diverse. Still I will treat them as a group for simplicity’s sake, and describe them under the rubric “mixed structure model.” One last model that stirred some interest in the 1960s and 1970s, but now is largely abandoned, will also be covered briefly because of the prominent position it often gave the parable discourse.

2.1.1 Bacon’s Pentateuch Model

The Pentateuch model is based on a formula that in Matthew concludes five discourses by Jesus: Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους . . . , “when Jesus had

¹ Bacon, “Five Books.”

² Edgar Krentz, “The Extent of Matthew’s Prologue,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 409-414.

³ Kingsbury, *Structure*.

finished all these sayings . . .” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1, with minor variations). For Bacon this formula ended five “books” in Matthew, each consisting of a discourse with the preceding narrative. Chs.1-2 and 26-28 he labeled prologue and epilogue. Bacon saw in these five books an analogy to the five books of the Pentateuch, and proposed that the Gospel of Matthew was shaped as a new Torah, and Jesus as the new Moses.⁴ Though many scholars agree that these themes are present in Matthew, few see them sufficiently dominant to make them the main structuring principles of the gospel.⁵ The parallels to the books of the Pentateuch are in addition few and strained.⁶ When the Pentateuch allusion is ignored, some, like J. P. Meier and D. L. Turner, still defends Bacon’s outline.⁷

Some scholars have objected to this model that Matthew has six or even seven discourses,⁸ pointing to the other longer units of discourse material.⁹ One can certainly be justified in calling chapter 11, 12:25-45, and chapter 23 discourses.¹⁰ The crucial question is not whether Matthew intended Jesus to speak more than five discourses, but whether he had a special purpose and function for the five. The conclusion formula might indicate this, especially the addition of πάντας to the last occurrence: “When Jesus had finished *all* these sayings . . .” (26:1). This indicates a very conscious use of the formula.¹¹ There may also be verbal similarities in the introductions to these five discourses, not shared by the other discourses.¹² More important, the five discourses are spoken primarily to the disciples,¹³ whereas the other three have other audiences.¹⁴ Though

⁴ Meier, “Matthew,” 4:629

⁵ E.g. Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 267-268; Davies, *Setting*, 93; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, li, 86; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 3, 182; Donald Senior, *What are they saying about Matthew* (2nd ed; Mahwah: Paulist, 1996), 27.

⁶ Meier, “Matthew,” 4:629

⁷ Meier, “Matthew,” 4:628-637; Turner, *Matthew*, 8-10; See also Hill, *Matthew*, 44-48; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 172-174. For other defendants of this model see Kingsbury, *Structure*, 3, n.13.

⁸ Cf. Stanton, “Origin,” 1904; Bauer, *Structure*, 152, n.20.

⁹ Stanton, “Origin,” 1904. Cf. Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (SHBC 19; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 15.

¹⁰ Ch. 23 is about the same length as ch. 18; the speeches in chs. 11 and 12 are about one third shorter.

¹¹ Meier, “Matthew,” 4:628.

¹² Terence J. Keegan, “The Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 415-430. The verbal parallels by no means constitute “formulae” like Keegan’s title suggests, and his case for ch.18 is somewhat weak, but most of these discourses appears to have been prepared for in an exclusive way.

¹³ In the Sermon on the Mount the crowds are part of the audience, although the disciples are given “front row seats.” Cf. 5:1-2, 7:28. In the parable discourse the crowds and the disciples are addressed in turns, but as we will see in ch. 3, the disciples are the real recipients of the whole discourse.

Bacon regarded chapter 23 a part of the final discourse, and has been followed by some,¹⁵ most agree that the narrator comments in 24:1-3, with a change of setting and audience, separate the two.

Bacon's conclusion formula only refers back to and concludes the *discourses*. If, as Bacon's outline claims, the formula concludes pairs of narrative and discourse, we should expect that literary or thematic connections between discourse and *preceding* narrative are clearer and stronger than those we find between discourse and *succeeding* narrative. This is not always the case. The inclusio in 4:23 and 9:35 seems to tie the sermon on the mount to the succeeding narrative,¹⁶ and thematically most discourses could be argued to belong to the following chapters as well as the preceding.¹⁷ The *books* in Bacon's model should therefore be regarded as closely tied together rather than clearly separated. The different applications of the conclusion formula also speak for this, since it only in 7:28 and 11:1 can be said to *conclude* a section. In the remaining occurrences it is rather a transition statement or an introduction to the next section.¹⁸

A final and common argument against Bacon's five-book outline concerns what falls outside these five books. The opening and ending chapters, especially Jesus' death and resurrection, are part of the main storyline and are odd forms of prologue or epilogue.¹⁹ In light of all these points, Bacon's seven-part model fails to convince.

The logical adjustment to Bacon's model is to detach the discourses from the preceding narratives and be left with a structure of alternating narrative and discourse, eleven sections in all. Fenton did this in his 1963 commentary, keeping chapter 23 as part of the last discourse.²⁰ Allison argued for the same structure in more recent times; with chapter 23 as part of the preceding narrative section.²¹ There is wide agreement that the

¹⁴ Ch. 11: John's disciples, the crowds, the unrepentant cities, God, and "all". Ch. 12: the Pharisees (with the crowds listening – v.46). Ch.23: the crowds and the disciples, the Pharisees, and Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Cf. Bauer, *Structure*, 152, n.20; Combrink, "Structure," 61-90; Fenton, *Matthew*, 14-17.

¹⁶ E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 412; idem, *Matthew 8-18*, 1; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 10.

¹⁷ Cf. Hubert Frankemölle, *Jahwebund und Kirche Christi (NTAbh n.s. 10)*; Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 342, who pairs discourse and following narrative. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, li; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 3.

¹⁸ Cf. Senior, *What are they*, 27. Even if the formula does not always conclude *sections*, it is still rightfully called a conclusion formula, since it refers back to and concludes Jesus' discourses.

¹⁹ E.g. Stanton, "Origin," 1904; Kingsbury, *Structure*, 5; Senior, *What are they*, 27. Meier has in light of this criticism chosen to call the epilogue "climax": Meier, "Matthew," 4:629, 635.

²⁰ Fenton, *Matthew*, 14-17.

²¹ Allison, "Structure," 1204-1208.

discourses all possess a certain thematic unity,²² something that can be seen from the many similar headlines or outlines of these in commentaries. But though the discourses can function as self-contained units in a macro-structure, the narrative sections do not reflect the same unity, and this leaves some doubt regarding this outline (see below). Allison is followed, at least to a great degree, by Witherington and Hagner.²³

2.1.2 Kingsbury's Model

Though Kingsbury saw the conclusion formula as an important aspect of Matthew's Gospel, he was not convinced Matthew intended it to structure his Gospel. His skepticism towards Bacon's structure was in part based on its lack of correspondence to Matthew's own designation for his work: *the Gospel of the Kingdom*.²⁴ According to Kingsbury, a structure built on the five-fold formula suggests a paraenetic or didactic purpose of the Gospel instead of reflecting the person and the work of Jesus. In addition, the formula does not function as a *headline*; it points backward to a finished discourse, often while transitioning into the following narrative, and except for in 13:53 it does not suggest a theme.²⁵ Kingsbury therefore took hold Krentz' earlier suggestion that another recurring formula is the key to Matthew's structure: Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ... (from that time Jesus began ...).²⁶ In 4:17 this expression introduces Jesus' preaching ministry; in 16:21 it introduces the theme of Jesus' death. This twofold formula possesses qualities Bacon's formula lacks to divide the Gospel into sections: It exclusively points forward in time and it carries thematic content. Thus it introduces a *new theme*, serving as a headline for the next section.²⁷ Kingsbury regarded the opening verse (1:1) analogous to the "Ἀπὸ τότε"-formula, as an introduction to the first part, and arrived at this outline: (I) The Person of Jesus Messiah (1:1–4:16); (II) The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah (4:17-16:20); and (III) The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah (16:21-28:20).²⁸ For Kingsbury this structure reveals the main purpose of Matthew to be *Christology*, a notion he finds

²² Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 449; France, *Evangelist*, 155.

²³ Witherington, *Matthew*, 14-15; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, liii.

²⁴ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 5-7.

²⁵ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 6.

²⁶ Krentz, "Prologue," 409-414.

²⁷ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 7-9

²⁸ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 9-11.

more in line with the gist of the Gospel than the paraenesis often inferred from Bacon's outline.²⁹ The conclusion formula is according to Kingsbury also Christological, reminding the reader that the discourses were Jesus' words, divinely inspired revelation.³⁰

Kingsbury's model has had some support among scholars;³¹ most notably by his own student D. R. Bauer, who has reiterated Kingsbury's points and sought to support the model more methodically.³² Many scholars are still unconvinced that the inconspicuous Ἀπὸ τότε-phrase was intended by Matthew to divide his Gospel into sections, especially since it also occurs at 26:16 without introducing a new section.³³ Luz points out several other expressions that function much in the same way to introduce new content, and he concludes that all of these work to bind the Gospel together as one narrative rather than divide it into sections.³⁴ Many will still affirm the "formula" as an important temporal and thematic marker. Hagner says of it, without subscribing to Kingsbury's division, that it signals a "major turning point in the Gospel".³⁵ Gundry—even more skeptical of the phrase's structural importance—chooses to speak of the two occurrences as "turning points in Jesus' life, not in Matthew's Gospel."³⁶

Stanton rejects Kingsbury's proposal because 4:17 does not seem to introduce a new section; it is rather the final sentence of the unit beginning with 4:12.³⁷ This is the view of many commentators.³⁸ It is in many ways more logical to see this whole unit of 4:12-17 as the introduction to Jesus' ministry. It records no preparatory event like Jesus' baptism or temptation (3:13-4:11), but rather the beginning of the ministry itself: John's imprisonment causes Jesus to move to Capernaum and start preaching. 4:18 begins a new

²⁹ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 5, 36-37.

³⁰ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 6-7

³¹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 24; Garland, *Reading*, 9-10; Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 39-47.

³² Bauer, *Structure*. A certain bias towards his *Doktorvater* is evident. Bauer finds no weaknesses in Kingsbury's outline, and the methods he employs appear to be chosen at least partly because they produce the desired result. From his list of 15 structural devices, he chooses a combination of five that he tests exclusively on Kingsbury's outline. The devices can also show similar unity for other divisions. For a favorable assessment cf. Krentz' review: *Currents in Theology and Mission* 1 (1992): 58-59.

³³ E.g. Meier, "Matthew," 4:628; Senior, *What are they*, 32-34. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 61. In defense Bauer points to differences between 26:16 and the other occurrences: Bauer, *Structure*, 44.

³⁴ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 4-5.

³⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, liii, 74.

³⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 10.

³⁷ Stanton, "Origin," 1905.

³⁸ E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 374; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 156; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 71.

unit which describes Jesus calling disciples.³⁹ For this reason many have viewed 4:12 as the opening of a main section on Jesus' ministry.⁴⁰ Others choose 4:23, because of the inclusio it creates with 9:35 around chapters that describe Jesus' ministry.⁴¹

Kingsbury's division at 16:21 has been adopted more widely than 4:17. Luz favors a break here because of its shift in emphasis from Jesus' ministry to his passion, like the similar shift in Mark 8:31. As such this model reflects Matthew's decision to write a "*book of narration*" and to make "the Gospel of Mark the basis of his own plan"⁴² Though the corresponding verse in Mark is tied to the preceding story of Peter's confession and therefore does not introduce a new section,⁴³ Matthew somewhat detaches 16:21 from the preceding story with his insertion of "Ἀπὸ τότε," and this could be taken as an indication that he intended 16:21 to open a new section. But on the other side, both Peter's audacity and presumption (16:22) and his misconception of Jesus' Messiahship can only be understood on the background of the previous story. Thus they still appear too closely connected for 16:21 to constitute a major break in the Gospel.⁴⁴ As with Bacon's outline, Kingsbury's proposal works best when the different sections are seen as tied together rather than clearly separated;⁴⁵ this also because the themes by Kingsbury assigned to each of the three sections also appear in the others.⁴⁶ When neither 4:17 nor 16:21 are clear literary breaks, and we in addition see themes overlap, there is reason to be somewhat hesitant to embrace Kingsbury's proposal.

2.1.3 Chiastic Models

Several scholars have suggested that Matthew composed his Gospel as one great chiasm. While H. B. Green identified chapter 11 as the center,⁴⁷ and P. Gaechter found the center

³⁹ Against Bauer, *Structure*, 86.

⁴⁰ E.g. Floyd V. Filson, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Adam & Clark, 1967), 23; Thompson, *Story*, 66; Senior, *What are they*, 36. Nolland, *Matthew*, 170, chooses 4:13.

⁴¹ E.g. Beare, *Matthew*, 119; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 10

⁴² Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 3-4, 9.

⁴³ E.g.: New section at 8:27: Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), 165; John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP; Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2002), 49. New section at 8:22: R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 320; Lamar Williamson Jr., *Mark* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1983), 147.

⁴⁴ Cf. Senior, *What are they*, 33-34.

⁴⁵ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 4-5, 9.

⁴⁶ Gundry, *Matthew*, 10.

⁴⁷ H. B. Green, "The Structure of St. Matthew's Gospel," *SE* 4 (1965): 47-59.

to be chapters 13-16,⁴⁸ most scholars in this group, like C. H. Lohr, P. F. Ellis, J. C. Fenton, and H. J. B. Combrink, follow Bacon's observation of the alteration of narrative and discourse, and see the parable discourse as the center.⁴⁹

Matthew's purpose behind this structure would have been to emphasize the central unit, the parable discourse, and its theme, the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵⁰ Lohr, followed by Ellis, calls this discourse "the high point of the Gospel" and "the central pivot about which the other sayings and doings of Jesus revolve."⁵¹ Combrink explains how the narrative sections on each side of the parable discourse reflect each other: before the discourse we have the failure of Israel to understand Jesus; after the discourse we have the disciples understanding Jesus and confessing him to be the Messiah.⁵² Even the pericopae immediately preceding and following the parable discourse mirror each other; both reflect (implied) opposition to Jesus from those that were closest to him.

Intriguing as the chiasmic outlines may be, they have failed to take hold with scholarship. Discourses one and five, and two and four, are undeniably of very similar length.⁵³ They also have certain thematic connections, though not clear enough to prove an intentional symmetry.⁵⁴ More dubious are the many thematic and verbal parallels that have been found on a more detailed level between the corresponding sections.⁵⁵ There is wide affirmation of the presence of chiasm and inclusio in Matthew, and especially the inclusio in 1:23 and 28:20, spanning the whole gospel, gives some cause to look for more symmetry in Matthew.⁵⁶ But the great majority of scholars will still consider the evidence for an intentional chiasmic structure to be scant, and the model is rarely defended today.⁵⁷

2.1.4 Mixed Structure Models

⁴⁸ According to Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, lii.

⁴⁹ Ellis, *Matthew*, 10-13; Fenton, "Inclusio," 174-179; idem, *Matthew*, 14-16; Lohr, "Oral Techniques," 403-435; Combrink, "Structure," 61-90. Combrink's outline is a combination of Bacon's and Kingsbury's structure.

⁵⁰ Combrink, "Structure," 71; Ellis, *Matthew*, 11, 60; Lohr, "Oral Techniques," 424, 427-428.

⁵¹ Lohr, "Oral Techniques," 427-428; Ellis, *Matthew*, 11, 60.

⁵² Combrink, "Structure," 82-83.

⁵³ E.g. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 5.

⁵⁴ Contra Ellis, *Matthew*, 13-14.

⁵⁵ Esp. Ellis, *Matthew*, 27-98. For criticism cf. e.g. Senior, *What are they*, 30; Meier, "Matthew," 4:628.

⁵⁶ E.g. Meier, "Matthew," 4:627; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 7-8; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 92-93.

⁵⁷ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 3.

In face of the many and diverse structural models proposed the last half century, most with some valid insights, but none without difficulties, many scholars have come to the conclusion that Matthew did not organize his material according to one grand scheme, but instead made use of several structuring principles. This view is probably the most prevalent among Matthean scholars today, spelled out in different ways by for instance Gundry, France, Luz, Senior, Hagner, and Davies and Allison.⁵⁸ These all agree that the five discourses are an intentional feature of the gospel, but with differing degrees of emphasis on this feature as a structuring device. For none of them the conclusion formula divides the gospel into separate “books”, like they do for Meier. And instead of speaking of a “blueprint” or an intentional outline, these scholars rather point to the Gospel of Mark and chronology as the leading structuring “principles.”⁵⁹

Of the commentators just mentioned, Gundry is the most hesitant to suggest an outline of Matthew. As he writes, “It is doubtful that the first evangelist thought in terms of one.” He concludes that the Gospel is “structurally mixed.” Davies and Allison share Gundry’s view, but they also emphasize the alternation between narrative and discourse, which they deem to be “firmly established.”⁶⁰ Still they conclude: “We, in any case, can not claim to have found the blueprint [for Matthew’s Gospel.]” Hagner’s conclusion is similar. He refrains from offering an overall structural outline, but “with the prominence of Matthew’s alternation of narrative and discourse,” he still decides to structure his commentary after to these.⁶¹ France, Luz, and Senior lean more towards Kingsbury than Bacon, and they all suggest outlines without claiming to have found Matthew’s plan.⁶²

The hesitancy of the scholars in the “mixed structure” group is somewhat unsatisfying, but the views they express seem to better describe Matthew’s Gospel than the previous models. Matthew appears as a continuous narrative, and neither of the “formulae” creates clear divisions. Thus it may seem more appropriate to say that

⁵⁸ Gundry, *Matthew*, 10-11; France, *Evangelist*, 153; *Matthew*, 2-4; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 4-5, 9-10; Senior, *What are they*, 34-36; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, liii; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 71-72.

⁵⁹ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 9; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 72; Gundry, *Matthew*, 10-11.

⁶⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 61.

⁶¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, liii.

⁶² France, *Matthew (2007)*, 2-5; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 9-10; Senior, *What are they*, 36-37.

Matthew's structure was the chronology of Jesus' life, Mark's Gospel, or Matthew's retelling of Mark's story.⁶³

But such a concept of structure is quite different from *formal structure*, and it is moving towards the related concept of *plot*. Mark's Gospel certainly influenced Matthew's storyline and arrangement of material,⁶⁴ and the Markan chronology is largely preserved. But we should be careful to distinguish Matthew's process of composition from the final product. Though the Gospel of Mark led Matthew to emphasize certain aspects of the story, it is not a device in Matthew's Gospel that divides it or concentrates its emphases on certain points. In terms of structure, the Markan narrative has only provided Matthew with a number of events, and to some extent, the arrangement of these events. So when Senior suggests that Matthew's *retelling* of Mark might be Matthew's structure,⁶⁵ he probably means that Matthew created his own story on the basis of Mark's, and the arrangement of the events in this new story made up the structure of Matthew. Since the basic definition of the term *plot* is *the arrangement of events*,⁶⁶ Senior's suggestion is in principle that Matthew's plot may be Matthew's main structure.⁶⁷

Reasoning similar to that just described has led some scholars to apply methods of literary criticism to Matthew to better identify and explain Matthew's plot, the narrative "structure" that determined his composition. Unfortunately there is even less of a consensus on this question than on Matthew's formal structure. R. A. Edwards, F. J. Matera, Kingsbury, and M. A. Powell⁶⁸ have all undertaken narrative studies of Matthew, but applying different methodological criteria, they end up in disagreement on the central questions of the key events, the number of plots, and where the plots have their resolutions. Despite their insights, these studies also illustrate that a method primarily developed for more modern fiction not so easily is applied to a composite and multi-level

⁶³ Cf. Senior, *What are they*, 35; Gundry, *Matthew*, 10.

⁶⁴ Almost all of Mark is used in Matthew, though usually shortened. Stories Matthew excludes: the convulsing demoniac (Mk 1:23-26), Jesus' private prayer (Mk 1:35-38), the blind healed by saliva (Mk 8:22-26), the alien exorcist (Mk 9:38-39 – although partly adopted in Mt 10:40-42), the widow's offering (Mk 12:41-44). Excluded Sayings: the parable of the seed (Mk 4:26-29), salted with fire (Mk 9:49-50).

⁶⁵ Senior, *What are they*, 35

⁶⁶ Matera, "Plot," 235.

⁶⁷ France, *Evangelist*, 153, makes this proposal explicitly.

⁶⁸ Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), Matera, "Plot"; Kingsbury, *Story*; Mark A. Powell, "The Plot and Subplots of Matthew's Story," *NTS* 38 (1992): 187-294.

writing such as Matthew. In any case, as we in this study seek to find *Matthew's* plan and outline for his Gospel, we need, as stated in the introduction, Matthew's redactional and compositional tendencies as reference points to his key events and overall arrangement. Thus we will leave out the discussion of Matthew's plot and instead pursue the lead of the one feature of arrangement there is consensus on; the five discourses.

2.2 The Alternation of Narrative and Discourse as Structure

In one sense the arrangement of alternating narrative and discourse *is* a structure in Matthew's Gospel, even though Matthew might not have conceived of his composition as being made up of eleven distinct parts, or arranged his material primarily according to this framework. The reluctance of the commentators above to endorse Allison's revised version of Bacon's structure, appears to be that they do not find these eleven sections to sufficiently encapsulate each their own themes or events. Like Gundry writes, "[Matthew's] favorite points keep reappearing." There is not enough change from one narrative section to the next for these to be seen as sufficiently independent units. And important shifts in the narrative do not always happen along the lines of the discourses, like 4:17 and 16:21 illustrate. Luz in addition finds that the Matthean narrative, after being interrupted by a discourse, always picks up the narrative thread from the previous narrative section.⁶⁹ So although there is a wide agreement on a thematic unity for each of the five discourses, it might appear more likely that these are imbedded in one continuous narrative than demarcating sections or stages in it.

But it is notable then, that in some places the discourses do provide the lines that separate certain themes or events. There is an agreement similar to that of the discourses on the thematic unity of chapter 8-9, where we see a number of miracle stories clustered together.⁷⁰ After the "interruption" of the mission discourse, when the narrative resumes in 11:2, it does not do so with more miracle stories. In all of chapter 11 the focus is on the responses to Jesus' miraculous ministry. In chapter 12 there is a similar unity, but now the conflict with the Pharisees seems to be the red thread. There is no agreement, however, that chapter 11 and 12 should be seen as one unit. Chapter 11 appears to look

⁶⁹ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 4-5, 12; idem, *Matthew 8-20*, 59, 228.

⁷⁰ In practically every commentary on Matthew these chapters are placed together as one unit. This holds true also for scholars who do not hold to any version of Bacon's structure. E.g. France, *Matthew (2007)*; Gundry, *Matthew*; Kingsbury, *Structure*, 18; Luz, *Matthew 8-18*; Schweizer, *Good News*.

back at the ministry recorded in chapters 8-9 (cf. 11:4-6), while chapter 12 records additional deeds by Jesus. But the two chapters are somewhat related since they both describe responses (mostly negative) to Jesus' ministry. In the next two narrative "sections" (13:53-17:27; 19:1-24:2) there is no obvious thematic unity, but we note that after the ecclesiological discourse (ch. 18), Jesus leaves Galilee for good and moves in the direction of Jerusalem (19:1). This discourse therefore marks the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry. We also note that after the eschatological discourse (24:3-25:46) a new stage in the narrative begins; Jesus' passion. Just like with chapters 11-12, chapters 26-28 should not necessarily be seen as one unit; chapters 26-27 narrate the passion, and chapter 28 recounts the resurrection and the Great Commission. But these events are closely enough related that they *can* be seen as a unit and be described under one headline. If we go back and take the same liberty with chapters 1-4, we can say that these chapters describe the birth, preparation, and beginning of Jesus' ministry. Though calling these chapters a unity is a stretch, they can be distinguished from the next narrative section because of their total lack of miracle stories.

To summarize we can say that the first discourse is placed before Matthew focuses on Jesus' miracles; the second is placed between the miracle stories and the responses to Jesus' ministry; the third is placed after the responses to Jesus' miracles; the fourth is placed before Matthew leaves Galilee; and the fifth is placed before the passion story. These observations should have a wide acceptance in Matthean scholarship. Even if they indicate a structuring purpose for the discourses, this has only limited literary significance as long as the narrative sections are disparate and not unified. As indicated, this lack of unity is especially notable in 13:53-17:27 and 19:1-24:2, something that may affect our view of the parable discourse in the narrative. But even more important to our study is the question of whether Matthew saw chapters 11-12 as one unit, and how intentional he was in his placement of the parable discourse in relation to this material.

2.3 Chapters 11-12

One reason we see a lack of unity in 13:53-17:27 and 19:1-24:2, is that Matthew here followed Mark to a much greater degree than in the first half of his Gospel. In the first half Matthew vigorously rearranged Mark's narrative and also used more from Q. In the

second half Matthew followed Mark's order, which thematically is more haphazard until we reach the passion story. Such a puzzling change in compositional procedure is among the reasons Matthew's structure deserves the description "mixed," and why we should be cautious about assuming a "blueprint" for Matthew's Gospel. Exactly where this change in compositional procedure takes place is not totally clear. It is first from 14:1 that Matthew's order fully aligns with Mark's (Matt 14:1 = Mark 6:14). But it is in 12:1 that Matthew begins to recount in Mark's order what he has not already used from Mark (Matt 12:1-13:58 = Mark 2:23-4:34; 6:1-6a). The implication for our study is that the thematic relation between chapter 11 and 12 may be more a coincidence than an intentional arrangement—and even more important, the parable discourse might simply have been the material next in line after chapter 12. If so was the case, that could either mean Matthew found Mark's order worthy to be preserved, or he could have followed Mark into the parable discourse merely for pragmatic reasons, without intending the discourse to engage the previous material in a particular way.

H. B. Green, J. M. Robinson, Luz, and E. Schweizer find that Matthew changed his compositional procedure at 12:1,⁷¹ but only Robinson attempts to explain it. He believes Q 3-7 inspired Matthew's arrangement of chapters 3-11, and that Matthew adopted Q's Messianic argument: John prophesies the Messiah (Q 3:1-22, cf. Matt 3); Jesus proves he is the Messiah both in word (Q 6:20-49, cf. Matt 5-7) and in deed (Q 7:2-10, cf. Matt 8-9); Jesus confirms to John that he is the Messiah (Q 7:18-23, cf. Matt 11:2-6).⁷² A greater number of scholars see the change in composition beginning at 13:53,⁷³ though no one seems to find it worth proving. Gundry blames this shift on "editorial fatigue,"⁷⁴ while Davies and Allison believe Matthew at this point had used up almost all of Q (except what he saved for the last discourses), and with little room for creativity, he chose to follow Mark.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Green, *Matthew*, 122; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 4; James M. Robinson, "The Matthean Trajectory from Q to Mark," in *The Sayings Gospel Q: Collected Essays by James M. Robinson* (ed. Christoph Heil and Joseph Verheyden; Leuven: Peeters, 2005): 602; Schweizer, *Good News*, 70-71.

⁷² Robinson, "Trajectory," 606-627.

⁷³ E.g. Willoughby C. Allen, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), 157; Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 80; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 451; Kingsbury, *Structure*, 19-20; Lohr, "Oral Techniques," 428.

⁷⁴ Gundry, *Matthew*, 10.

⁷⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 71.

We shall see that Matthew's change of composition happened at least after chapter 12, and we will look at two reasons for thinking so: the first is that there appears to be one substructure spanning both chapters 11 and 12, tying these together as a unit; the second is that Matthew evidently planned for chapter 12 as he was also planning for earlier parts of his Gospel, and that he planned chapters 11-12 to display a thematic unity.

2.3.1 The Structure of Chapters 11-12

Delineation of literary structures is anything but an exact science, and the ambiguous nature of the matter leaves ample room for subjectivity. Especially in a work like Matthew, where material from different contexts might have been brought together because of one common element, while also containing plenty of diverging elements. There is an unevenness and diversity in the material that gives flexibility to divine just the structure that will best serve one's own interpretation. The many proposed macro- and microstructures that have claimed to grasp the mind of Matthew have made most modern commentators wary of structural delineation. Some give little attention to it, while others propose outlines without suggesting they have found *Matthew's* structure. When pointing to the structure of chapters 11-12 as an argument for the unity of this section, it is with the understanding that this argument alone has limited weight. But because this question is important not only to find Matthew's macrostructure, but also to understand how Matthew viewed the parable discourse's context, we will look at it in some detail.

When discussing substructures in Matthew, one can not get around Davies and Allison's thesis that Matthew as a rule structured his material in triads.⁷⁶ This, they assert, is true wherever Matthew did not follow Mark. Thus they find complete triadic structures in all narrative/discourse sections before chapter 13. In the second half they find complete and consistent triads only in the church discourse, but partial triads in the two Markan discourses, the parable discourse and the eschatological discourse, which Matthew extended. The triads take different forms, sometimes it is a simple repeated sequence of three (ch. 18); sometimes two or three units are repeatedly followed by one unit with very different material (ch. 8-9; 11-12); sometimes this contrasting material instead forms the center with three units preceding and following (ch. 10); and for the sermon on the mount it is a combination of these patterns. The different triadic

⁷⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 62-71, and the introductions to each section of their commentary.

arrangements would imply that Matthew was not bound by a certain pattern, but that he liked to organize his material so that in one way or another it created groups of three. Matthew was not the first in the Jewish tradition to do this,⁷⁷ and he may have had specific reasons for this choice.⁷⁸

Davies and Allison's proposal was not altogether new. The presence of triads in Matthew has been observed by many. France pointed out seven examples in his 1985 commentary,⁷⁹ and Luz listed twenty examples of triadic structures in Matthew and noted that more could be added.⁸⁰ Already in the first verse of the Gospel we meet the triad of Jesus, David, and Abraham. Further, Jesus is tempted three times (4:1-11), and gives three passion predictions (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). He also prays three prayers in Gethsemane (26:36-46), before Peter denies him three times (26:69-75). If we limit ourselves to triadic *structures*, Matthew explicitly reveals that Jesus' genealogy (1:2-16) consists of three parts (cf. 1:17), and other places triads emerge as Matthew three times repeats an introductory phrase, sometimes using *πάλι* or another subtle marker to indicate a new triad (Matt 5:21-32, 33-48; 6:2-18; 13:24-33, 44-50).⁸¹ As regards sections, especially the sermon on the mount has often been seen as a triadic structure.⁸²

Since Davies and Allison's commentary was published in 1988 no one has, to my knowledge, discussed their thesis in detail. Other issues than *structure* have dominated Matthean scholarship the last two decades, and as narrative approaches have become popular in commentaries, there has been more interest in reading the text as one unified story than chopping it up and discerning themes. Still, among commentaries after 1988 which discuss substructures, many of Davies and Allison's outlines have received quite a

⁷⁷ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 70-71; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 5-6.

⁷⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 70-71, point out that both Jesus and Mark employed triads, and thus Matthew might have thought it appropriate for a *gospel*. Triads might also have been a scribal convention or a sign of literary sophistication. They could also aid memorization, and they were convenient to demarcate or tie material together, or, when used chiasmically or with a "fourth" unit, they could serve to emphasize certain units. There might have been a specific background for the triadic arrangement of the sermon on the mount. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 134-135; Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 62-63.

⁷⁹ France, *Matthew* (1985), 56.

⁸⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 5.

⁸¹ E.g. Nolland, *Matthew*, 228, 563; Gundry, *Matthew*, 92, 279.

⁸² E.g. Joachim Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Transl. L. L. Welborn; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 23; R. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Transl. O. C. Dean; Nashville: W. Publishing, 1982), 38; Betz, *Sermon*, 62-65.

bit of support, especially chapters 8-9, 11-12 and 13:1-52.⁸³ Some of these outlines had also been suggested earlier.⁸⁴ Our interest now is mainly in chapters 11-12, but we begin with chapters 8-9 as these will be central for our understanding of chapters 11-12.

Chapters 8-9

One of the nine miracle stories in chapters 8-9 recount two miracles (9:18-26), and this has inspired some to concentrate on the symbolism of the number *ten*.⁸⁵ But given the clear triads in the preceding sermon on the mount, it is striking that we now have three groups of three miracle stories. Held pointed this out in 1963,⁸⁶ and Meier noted, before Davies and Allison, that the triads are followed by additional material related to discipleship.⁸⁷ In this “buffer material” after the first three miracles (8:1-17) we have one man who asks to follow Jesus and another who is asked (8:18-22); after the second triad (8:23-9:8), Jesus asks Matthew to follow (9:9); and after the last triad there is a saying, not about following, but about being sent (9:35-38). This structure serves to draw attention to these two aspects of Jesus’ ministry; he ministered to the people and he called disciples. In the last unit and in the next section we see how these are linked, because also the disciples are called to minister to the people.

It appears somewhat inconsistent that after the second triad there are two pericopae in the buffer “unit” (9:9-13, 14-17, par Mark 2:13-17, 18-22). Nowhere else in Davies and Allison’s proposed triads are two so clearly separate units combined into one. Though Matthew was somewhat of a literary architect, he also has many “broken patterns.” As Filson wrote, “... topical connection was more important to this writer than symmetry of pattern.”⁸⁸ In many of Matthew’s transpositions of Mark, he kept several Markan pericopae together. In some, like these two pericopae, one can see why. Three

⁸³ E.g. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 137 on chs. 8-9; Ewherido, *Judaism*, 75-78, on ch. 13; France, *Matthew (2007)*, on chs. 8-9; Garland, *Reading*, on ch. 13; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, on chs. 8-9 (p. 196, 246), and 11-12; Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven* (WUNT 2.101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 122-123, on ch. 13; Nolland, *Matthew*, on chs. 8-9 and 13; Senior, *Matthew*, on ch. 8-9; 13 Turner, *Matthew*, on chs. 8-9, 11-12, (and 18).

⁸⁴ E.g. on chs 8-9: Fenton, *Matthew*; Gundry, *Matthew*; John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980). On ch.13: Trilling, *Matthew (Vol. 2)*, v.

⁸⁵ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 1; Meier, *Matthew*, 79.

⁸⁶ Heinz Joachim Held, “Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, by G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 248.

⁸⁷ Meier, *Matthew*, 80.

⁸⁸ Floyd V. Filson, “Broken Patterns in the Gospel of Matthew” *JBL* 75 (1956): 227-231.

reason might have led Matthew to keep these two together: (1) In 9:9-13 Jesus is said to eat with “tax collectors and sinners” and the tax collector Matthew became one of the twelve. In 9:14-17, in the imagery of fabric and wineskins, we get an explanation for why such people would make up Jesus’ successors. If Matthew’s community was increasingly made up of Gentile “sinners” and stood in conflict with a Pharisaic Jewish community,⁸⁹ such connections were probably important for the identity of Matthew’s community (cf. 11:25; 21:43). (2) The contrast between Jesus’ “unscrupulous” feasting with “tax collectors and sinners” in the first story and the fasting of John’s disciples in the second prepares for the contrast in the Q-logion Matthew will use in 11:16-19. (3) Matthew lets these two stories follow the healing of the paralytic, just like they do in Mark (Matt 9:2-8, par Mark 2:1-12), and that connection, too, is important: Before his association with sinners like Matthew, Jesus demonstrates in the healing of the paralytic that he has the authority to forgive sins (9:6, 8).⁹⁰ The three stories together show Jesus coming in mercy, giving health to the sick and turning sinners to righteousness, bringing feast and not mourning. We have here the refrains of the Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic reign.⁹¹ Christological as well as ecclesiological connections between these stories might have been important to Matthew and his community, and might even have been pointed out in expositions of Mark. They were probably too valuable for Matthew to sacrifice for the sake of total consistency.

Many regard what for Davies and Allison is the last unit of this section (9:35-38) a part of the introduction to the mission discourse (ch. 10).⁹² Since the keyword *follow* is not used here, as it is after the two first miracle triads, its part of the structure of chapters 8-9 can be questioned. It no doubt is a well-planned transition text that connects to both preceding and following material. If left out of the narrative section of chapters 8-9, there is still a balanced pattern,⁹³ and unity of this section should not in any case be questioned.

Chapters 11-12

⁸⁹ E.g. Ewherido, *Judaism*, 207-210; J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996), 12-15.

⁹⁰ Cf. Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 224.

⁹¹ E.g. Is 2:2-3; 25:6-8; 49:8-13; 56:6-7; 61:1-3, 11; Jer 33:6-8; Ezek 34:16; Zech 10:7.

⁹² E.g. France, *Matthew* (2007), 300, 370; Garland, *Reading*, 109; Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 498.

⁹³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 6.

In chapters 11-12 Davies and Allison suggest a very similar structure: Three cycles with two units describing unbelief/rejection of Jesus followed by one describing acceptance.⁹⁴ Because of the diversity of the material in these chapters this pattern does not stand out as in 8-9. Like we have noted earlier, chapter 11 seems to look back on Jesus' ministry until now, while chapter 12 narrates new events. Though it is clear from the outset that both chapters are dominated by opposition to Jesus, in 11 this opposition seems to come from a broad specter of the populace; in 12 it mostly comes from the Pharisees. The two passages that stand out in contrast are those that end each chapter; 11:25-30 and 12:46-50. In the former "infants" have understood what most of Israel has not; that is, they have repented in the face of Jesus' ministry. In the latter the disciples are the true family of Jesus because they do the will of God. This similarity in both chapters should at least suggest the possibility of these two chapters structured after the same mold.

Luz points out parallels in the order of materials in the two chapters: Description of miracles (11:2-6; 12:1-21); a warning discourse (11:2-19; 12:22-37); judgment over Israel (11:20-24; 12:38-45); and salvation to the church (11:25-30; 12:46-50).⁹⁵ Despite a parallel structure, Luz does not conclude that these chapters form a unit. For him chapter 11 summarizes and concludes the first half of the Gospel, while chapter 12 introduces the second half. The parallel structure, we could assume, reflects a desire of Matthew's to begin the second part like he ended the first, thereby connecting them. A few difficulties with this arrangement should be noted: (1) 11:2-6 is in Luz' outline both part of the miracle description and the warning discourse. The succinct summary of miracles in 11:5 is very short compared to the two miracle stories plus the summary in 12:1-15. As a "warning discourse," the warning element is explicit only in 11:6, in the part that in Luz' outline primarily should be a miracle description. The rest of the "warning discourse", 11:7-19, has no element of warning, but is a description of past unresponsiveness to John's and Jesus' ministries. Though 11:7-9 can be subsumed under 11:6 and the thus function as a warning, the correspondence to the arrangement in chapter 12 is somewhat strained. (2) Luz includes 12:15-21 in the second description of miracles, although the fulfillment quotation is a comment on Jesus' departure and desire for anonymity (12:15-

⁹⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 233-234.

⁹⁵ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 177.

16). Still, Jesus' healing activity is mentioned (v. 15c), and the quotation might be understood to describe how Jesus sought to *minister* to the people in anonymity.

Instead of understanding chapters 11 and 12 in the categories miracles, warning, judgment, and salvation, it is more common to use two categories that in one way or another describe unbelief, opposition and rejection from Jesus' opponents or Israel; and faith and acceptance from the disciples or the church.⁹⁶ If we follow the natural lines between the pericopae of this section (usually demarcated by the narrator's voice), the material quite readily falls into the categories of unbelief and acceptance, in the pattern suggested by Davies and Allison: We have three groups of three; each with two examples of unbelief followed by one example of acceptance: Unbelief (11:2-19, 20-24), acceptance (11:25-30); unbelief (12:1-8, 9-14), acceptance (12:15-21); unbelief (12:22-37, 38-45), acceptance (12:46-50). We note the similarity to the structure of chapters 8-9.

This arrangement also has its weak points, although minor: (1) The narrator interrupts Jesus' words and the addressees change in 11:7, and thus 11:2-19 could be regarded as two units. Still, the monologue in 11:7-19 is inspired by the first pericope, and the two are connected since they both have to do with John. It is to the deeds described in 11:5 that "this generation" in 11:16-17 are unresponsive, and it is on the basis of this unresponsiveness and opposition (11:19) that Jesus gives his warning in 11:6. (2) As we have touched on, the monologues referring backward to "this generation" in chapter 11 are of a quite different character from the new events narrated in chapter 12, involving the scribes and the Pharisees. Still, all the units refer to someone who lacked faith, did not repent, but rejected Jesus. In addition, in 12:39 a connection is drawn between the Pharisees and scribes and the "generation." (3) The three units exemplifying faith and acceptance are very different. There are clear parallels between 11:25-30 and 12:46-50,⁹⁷ but 12:15-21 is totally different. Though we can discern the shape of the church behind the three elements *infants*, *Gentiles*, and *disciples*, the focus of 12:15-21 and its fulfillment quotation is on Jesus and not the Gentiles. Still, the twofold mention of

⁹⁶ E.g. Beare, *Matthew*, 254-255; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 183; France, *Matthew (2007)*, 417-418; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 298; David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story* (JSNTSup 42; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 139-141; Turner, *Matthew*, 286.

⁹⁷ E.g.: Both contrast those with the right and the wrong responses to Jesus' ministry, with an emphasis on the right responses. In both units there is an aspect of *invitation* (11:28-29; 12:50).

Gentiles in this pericope was probably of high importance to Matthew (cf. 28:19); probably important enough to make it the element of correspondence in the structure.

We saw that Luz, who found a similar arrangement in both chapter 11 and 12, did not conclude that they form one section. But in a structure with three parts, one in chapter 11 and two in 12, the structure of chapter 12 can not mirror that of chapter 11. There is one structure running through both chapters, and hence they should be viewed as a unit.

Especially in light of the similar structure in chapters 8-9, the triadic outline of chapters 11-12 seems likely to reflect Matthew's intentions. It may be a coincidence, but in both sections the contrasting units, which receive extra emphasis because they break with the predominant themes, have to do with *the disciples*. The dominant units have more to do with *Israel*; first as *recipients* of Jesus' ministry, next as *respondents* to it.

2.3.2 The Planning and Unity of Chapters 11-12

Our next argument for the unity of chapters 11-12 is the thematic plan Matthew evidently had for the material that ended up in chapter 12. This will prove that he was not merely following Mark's order with Markan "leftovers" from the previous sections, but that he changed his mode of composition *after* chapter 12. Thus it is likely that Matthew composed chapters 11-12 in one stage. As we will see that Matthew also braided these two chapters together, it will be clear that Matthew saw these chapters as one unit.

We get clues to Matthew's plan for chapters 11-12 from chapters 8-9, where Matthew freely picks stories from the first half of Mark for his three miracle cycles.⁹⁸ Several purposes guided his choice of order in chapters 8-9, but one of his overall purposes for the whole arrangement was probably to prepare for Jesus' answer to John in 11:5, since all the ailments and conditions mentioned in that Q-logion are dealt with in this section. But we need to take note of "alien" elements, because they may indicate that Matthew is not yet planning for chapter 12 as he is composing chapters 8-9. Why are there elements of opposition to Jesus in chapters 8-9, if Matthew planned to treat the theme later? Similarly, why are there two miracles in chapter 12? Are they left over from chapters 8-9? These questions require that we look in some detail at the two sections.

⁹⁸ He begins in Mark 1, moves to 4:35-5:20, goes back to Mark 2, then to 5:21-43 and finally 10:46-52.

Opposition to Jesus in Chapters 8-9

Opposition to Jesus surfaces in five of the stories in chapters 8-9. In the exorcism of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28-34, par Mark 5:1-20), the locals respond to Jesus' spectacular exorcism with a request that he leave the region. The story would have been a good illustration of the rejection of Jesus, but the Gadarenes are usually regarded as Gentiles,⁹⁹ and that might explain why Matthew did not leave this story for chapters 11-12. In addition, the response of the inhabitants is a minor element of the story. It is primarily a dramatic and spectacular display of Jesus' power over demonic forces and compassion for the oppressed. Even if Matthew saw these people as Jews, he probably found the story to speak louder about Jesus and his ministry than his rejection. Matthew has shortened the part describing the Gadarenes' response just like he has shortened the rest of the story, and nothing in his redaction suggests a particular focus on this aspect. That he did not altogether omit this aspect might be because he wanted to *hint* of opposition that would be treated more explicitly later; either from Gentiles (cf. 10:18; 24:9) or Jews.

In the healing of the paralytic (9:2-8, par Mark 2:1-12) the scribes murmur about blasphemy, but again Matthew shortens this aspect. But he makes one notable redactional change: In Matthew Jesus asks the scribes why they are thinking *evil thoughts* (πονηρὰ), as opposed to thinking "this" (ταῦτα) in Mark. Their thoughts are expressions of moral corruption, not reasonable theological objections from experts in the Law. In 5:20 the reader heard about the lacking righteousness of the scribes, from now on they are also associated with "evil," and they thus become enemies of God. Though this detail is important, it should not be exaggerated. The focus of the story is on Jesus' authority, forgiveness and healing; elements that have not been pruned down. The amazement the people in the Markan story express in response to the miracle parallels the people's amazement after the Sermon on the Mount (7:28-29). There their testimony to his authority gave the final touch to the portrait of Jesus as the supreme teacher, and in this story Matthew uses this occasion offered by Mark to let the people testify to Jesus authority as healer and forgiver (9:6, 8). The story was not only important in the miracle section because it brings in Jesus' authority also here; the story was also important right here because with its focus on forgiveness it prepares for the next story. Still, the addition

⁹⁹ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 82-83; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 24.

of πονηρὰ shows that Matthew did not seek to root out all hints of conflict in this section. In the background we see opposition to Jesus taking form. So far only the *thoughts* of Jesus' opponents are described as evil; in chapter twelve the opponents themselves and the whole generation are evil (12:33-45).

In the call of Matthew (9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17) there was not much need to shorten. But to Jesus' response to the Pharisees, Matthew adds a command to them to go and learn what "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" means, and this provocation certainly adds an element of conflict. The story can be classified as a controversy, but opposition to Jesus is not its point: As we have seen, in the preceding story Jesus demonstrates his authority to forgive sins; here he associates with sinners and calls one of them to be among his twelve; in the next story Jesus will explain why he chooses such people as his helpers. The intention of the added Hosea quotation is not primarily to denigrate the Pharisees. It is placed between statements about the purpose of Jesus' ministry, and is first and foremost about him. Against accusations of Jesus' lax attitude towards the Law, it paints him instead as the paramount example of right service to God. As imagery of sickness is used, the mercy here ascribed to Jesus interprets also the surrounding stories of healings, and the quotation is therefore a paradigmatic statement about Jesus' ministry, not unlike another quotation in 11:5. The Hosea quotation will be used again in 12:7, and *there* it is used to describe the Pharisees. But here, too, it is still an important contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees, and it clearly paints the latter as hypocrites and opponents of God. If opposition to Jesus emerged dimly in the previous pericope, its contours become even more visible here. But it is still a background theme.

In the question about fasting (9:14-17, par Mark 2:18-22) there is no real conflict, but an element of conflict is transferred from the preceding stories. Matthew makes some interesting changes to Mark. Instead of having the people ask why the disciples of Jesus do not fast like the disciples of John and the Pharisees, Matthew makes *John's disciples* ask why Jesus' disciples do not fast like "we and the Pharisees." The Pharisees have been colored as opponents of God in 3:7-10, 5:20, and the preceding story. John, on the other hand, has only been presented in positive terms (3:1-17). But here John's disciples lump themselves together with the Pharisees (in Mark it is done by the people), and Jesus' answer suggests that they are not part of the "new wineskins." John's disciples now

become the third Jewish group in three consecutive stories that somehow place themselves opposite Jesus.¹⁰⁰ As noted, this story points forward to 11:16-19. It makes a Christological point as it alludes to the eschatological feast, a feast which Jesus in the preceding stories have brought a foretaste of to Gentiles (8:5-13), marginalized Jews, and sinners. It makes an ecclesiological point as it states the moldable character of such people as the reason they are fit to carry the “new wine.”

The last of the nine miracle stories, the healing of the mute demoniac (9:32-34), is based on a Q-story (cf. Luke 11:14-28). We meet a strikingly short and pale account of a miracle, followed by a disproportionately exuberant response from the people, and a remark by the Pharisees that Jesus exorcises with the help of the “ruler of demons.” The people’s response, “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel,” seems to summarize the people’s reactions to all the miracles, more than it refers to this one. It is a worthy concluding fanfare to the section. But the Pharisees’ reaction show that Matthew is also preparing for the coming opposition, because it could easily have been omitted. When we are informed that the people’s response is a redactional addition,¹⁰¹ and we consider that the healing is neither dramatic nor spectacular, and the Pharisees’ response is almost as dominating as the miracle, we can wonder why this story was not rather used in chapters 11-12. The fact is that it *is* used there, but in a longer version (12:22-32).¹⁰² And the likely explanation is this: At this point, as Matthew has completed his eighth miracle story, he still needs a healing of a deaf/mute (κωφός) to cover all the ailments in Jesus’ reply to John in 11:5. Mark has two such stories, but both contain elements Matthew seeks to avoid.¹⁰³ Matthew will entirely omit the first (Mark 7:31-37); the second (Mark 9:14-29) he will prune down and use later as a pronouncement story teaching the disciples about faith (Matt 17:14-20).¹⁰⁴ He can not use it here, because it presupposes that the disciples have already been commissioned to minister. Matthew therefore turns to Q 11:14-28, which, as far as we know, was the only other healing he had of a κωφός. But this is a controversy story; the concise healing account is merely an

¹⁰⁰ Evert-Jan Vledder, *Conflict in the Miracle Stories: A socio-exegetical study of Matthew 8-9* (JSNTSup 152, Sheffield: JSOT, 1997), 213: John’s Disciples uphold old values.

¹⁰¹ It is probably based on the people’s response in Mark’s version of the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:12), which Matthew replaced with the response about Jesus’ authority (9:8).

¹⁰² Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 133-134; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 50.

¹⁰³ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 561.

¹⁰⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 720.

introduction to the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees. Because Matthew wants a focus on Jesus and his miracles in this section, and will let controversies dominate another section, he cuts off most of the story, and adds the reply of the people. His new story accomplishes three things: It completes the preparation for 11:5; it lets the eyewitnesses conclude with a testimony of the unprecedented character of Jesus' ministry; and it raises the level of conflict between Jesus and his opponents a notch; and thereby signals a theme in the mission discourse and the following narrative.

These five stories that contain elements of opposition to Jesus all have their firm place in chapters 8-9 because of what they reveal about Jesus and his ministry. But perhaps except for the first of these stories, all have a secondary focus on the sprouting opposition to Jesus. In the three consecutive stories we looked at, three groups of Jews place themselves opposite Jesus; three groups that also will approach Jesus in chapters 11-12 (not just 11!), but there with more explicit doubts or enmity (11:2; 12:2, 38). Thus Matthew prepares for what is coming. But as the last story shows, he also distinguishes thematically between chapters 8-9 and 11-12.

Miracles in Chapters 11-12

If we move to chapters 11-12 and look for miracles, we find only two. One, the healing of the mute demoniac, we have just mentioned (12:22-32, par Luke 11:14-32 + 12:10). It is now recounted in full as a controversy story, combined with a controversy from Mark (cf. Mark 3:19b-30). We have already seen that this story is not a leftover from the previous narrative section, which Matthew now pragmatically recounts in Mark's order because he has decided to follow Mark. It was planned to end up here, and thus we can already conclude that chapter 12 is part of Matthew's intentional thematic planning and does not belong to the "Markan" composition of the second half of the Gospel.

The other story is the Markan healing of the man with the withered hand (12:9-14, par Mark 3:1-6). Here Matthew has shortened Mark in a typical fashion, and added an argument from Jesus. It follows the controversy about plucking grains on the Sabbath (12:1-8), as in Mark (2:23-28). The story is quite similar to the healing of the paralytic in 9:2-8, but this story makes no Christological point about Jesus' authority or forgiveness. In light of the punch line from the preceding story, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (12:7),

it does speak about Jesus and his radical mercy. But this is not the focus of the story. The basis for these two consecutive stories is the merciless Pharisaic regulations, “precepts of men” (15:9), and the focus is their hypocrisy. The story opens with the Pharisees setting a trap for Jesus. Then Matthew replaces Jesus’ short and general argument in Mark with an eloquent rabbinic argument that reveals their hardhearted hypocrisy. The Pharisees are unable to muster a reply to Jesus, but go instead out and plan how to kill him. This is a polemic and unflattering portrait of Jesus’ opponents; it is not a portrait of Jesus. In Mark this story comes early in chapter 3, well ahead of the three miracle stories in Mark 5 that Matthew uses in chapters 8-9 (Mark 5:1-43, par Matt 8:23-9:1; 9:18-26). Matthew passed over it as he collected his nine miracle stories. When we compare it to the last two miracles of that section (9:27-34), we see that the reason was not that the story lacked drama or the miracle was not spectacular enough; Matthew wanted to save this story for the heated conflict in this section.

The two miracle stories that appear in chapters 11-12 reflect, compared to chapters 8-9, a dramatic escalation in the conflict between Jesus and his opponents. In one Jesus is accused of collaboration with Beelzebul; in the other there are plans to kill him. But that is not the only reason they fit into this section. The polemics in the portrait of Jesus’ opponents are quite subdued in chapters 8-9; none of the actions they take are outrageous. It is quite reasonable in their context to think that Jesus blasphemed as he pronounced forgiveness, to react to his table fellowship with sinners, and to ask why his disciples did not fast. In chapters 11-12, on the other hand, it appears very unreasonable in light of Jesus’ miracles that “this generation” and the Galilean cities would not repent. It also comes across as unreasonable to stop people from plucking grains or be healed on the Sabbath, especially in light of Jesus’ analogy with the sheep. Worst of all is the desperate accusation that Jesus exorcizes by Beelzebul. What began as questions about Jesus’ religious customs or approach to Scripture in chapters 8-9 became an evil and irrational rejection of Jesus in chapters 11-12.

We have seen that Matthew, as he was composing or planning chapters 8-9, also was planning chapters 11-12. A conspicuous detail is that he lets the characters of both chapter 11 and 12 pop up as seeds of opposition in three consecutive stories in chapters 8-9, something that indicates that he thought of chapters 11-12 as one section. That he in

chapter 12 arranges the Markan stories in Mark's order is not because he at this point has given up thematic structuring. Neither is the different nature of chapters 11 and 12, or that each of them largely comes from each their source, a reason to see these chapters as separate units. As we have seen, Matthew often preferred Mark's order in his transpositions because he wanted to retain connections and developments.

The difference between chapters 11 and 12 should not be overstated. The material actually falls into a unified progression—which Matthew enhances: Chapter 11 is almost exclusively made up of Q-material. It starts in the general, by criticizing “this generation” (11:16), and this sets the tone and colors the rebuke of the three Galilean cities (11:20-24). They become examples of something that was more widespread (see below). In the next pericope (11:25-30) we hear that those whom God hid revelation from were the “wise and intelligent.” The groups we next meet in the Markan material in chapter 12 are examples of such people. Scribes or Pharisees were in rabbinic sources sometimes called “wise,”¹⁰⁵ and they were in general influential and of high standing.¹⁰⁶ The Pharisees dominate four stories in this chapter, two from Mark (Matt 12:1-8, 9-14), one combined from Q and Mark (Matt 12:22-37), and the last entirely from Q (Matt 12:38-45, par Luke 11:29-32 + 11:24-26). Matthew thus turns back to Q toward the end of this section, to two adjacent pericopae where we again meet “this generation” (12:38, 41, 42, 45). If Matthew only had planned ahead for chapter 11, he would presumably have used these after the rebuke of the Galilean cities. The reference to Niniveh and the Queen of the South (12:41-42) parallels those of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom (11:21-24). Here in 12:38-45 the scribes and the Pharisees (cf. 12:38) become the specific examples of the general “this generation.” Thus Matthew has tied the two chapters together, and he has surrounded the specific examples with more general statements. There is therefore a unifying theme in these chapters that often has been described as diverse or disparate.¹⁰⁷ The evident planning for these chapters, the structure, and the thematic unity should lead us to conclude that chapters 11-12 for Matthew were one unified section.

2.4 Conclusion

¹⁰⁵ סַבְרִי. Cf. “Φαρισαῖος” in TDNT.

¹⁰⁶ Overman, *Church*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ E.g. France, *Matthew* (2007), 417; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 298; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 103.

In this chapter we have sought to place the parable discourse within Matthew's compositional arrangement. Although Matthew apparently wanted to create a continuous narrative, his use of the conclusion formula indicates that he also wanted the five great discourses to be noted as discourses. The alternation of narrative and discourse is therefore some sort of a structure, and that this structure should be understood as *the* literary structure in Matthew becomes likely as we see the lines between narrative and discourse demarcate content topically. The discourses are thematically unified entities, and most of the narrative sections have certain unifying aspects. Chapters 1-4 and 26-28 narrate distinct phases of the Jesus story, and chapters 8-9 and 11-12 are concerned with specific themes. Only 13:53-17:27 and 19:1-24:2 provide some grounds for questioning the alternating structure, but even these are distinguished by *geography*. In chapter five we will see further distinctions between these two sections. We therefore conclude that Allison's adjusted version of Bacon's structure reflects Matthew's outline of his Gospel.

When assigning content to the eleven sections in this structure, Matthew was inspired by chronology (chs. 1-2), Q (chs. 3-11), and Mark (chs. 12-28), but he was very active and creative in synchronizing his sources. The early placement of the mission discourse as an extension of Jesus' ministry was his own idea. Similarly, Matthew did not just adopt Q's Messianic argument in chapters 3-11 and then followed Mark in 12-28. He used parts of Mark to bolster Q's argument, especially in chapters 4 and 8-9, and he also used parts of Mark to *expand* this argument (ch. 12), and make it not only a *defense* for Jesus as the Messiah, but also an *accusation* against those who rejected him. This is the note on which the narrative leading up to the parable discourse ends.

We have not yet decided whether the parable discourse is part of the thematically arranged first half of Matthew's Gospel, or whether it is part of the Markan arrangement of the second half. To answer that question we need to await chapter four, where we will determine whether the parable discourse engages the preceding narrative.

With the understanding we have just gained of the section immediately preceding parable discourse, we should be in a better position to make our judgment in chapter four: We have seen that chapters 11-12 have a structure that contrasts examples of unbelief with examples of acceptance of Jesus. Unbelief dominates, and Matthew has arranged the

section as one long indictment of “this generation.” But there are glimmers of hope—in the “infants,” the Gentiles, and the disciples.

Chapter 3 - The Parable Discourse

In this chapter we seek to discern what Matthew intended to take place in the event of the parable discourse. After settling on the section's structure, our main task will therefore be to interpret the passages that reveal its *narrative aspect*. Finally we will note some observations regarding the nature of this discourse in regards to the larger narrative.

3.1 Composition and Structure

If we merely list the contents of the parable discourse, they are as follows:

13:1-3a	The setting
13:3b-9	The parable of the sower
13:10-17	The reason for parables
13:18-23	Interpretation of the parable of the sower
13:24-30	The parable of the weeds
13:31-32	The parable of the mustard seed
13:33	The parable of the leaven
13:34-35	Summary and fulfillment quotation
13:36a	Change of setting
13:36b-43	Interpretation of the parable of the weeds
13:44	The parable of the treasure
13:45	The parable of the pearl
13:47-50	The parable of the dragnet
13:51-52	On understanding the parables

Verses 1-36 roughly correspond to Mark's parable discourse (Mark 4:1-34). But Matthew has replaced Mark's parable of the seed with the similar parable of the weeds (cf. Mark 4:26-29), and he has omitted the sayings about the lamp and about hearing right (cf. Mark 4:21-25). Verses 37-52 have no parallels in the other Gospels.

Only the first four parables are by Matthew explicitly designated as such (vv. 18, 24, 31, 33). All the parables except the sower are introduced with “the kingdom of heaven is like/may be compared to ...” Some also regard 13:52 as a parable, although here it is not the kingdom that is compared to something, but a scribe *trained for the kingdom*.¹ One of the proposed structures below depends on this interpretation.

One issue which is not immediately clear from the discourse, and one which also might affect one’s view of the structure, is who Matthew intended to be addressed in the different parables. In verse 2 large crowds gather around Jesus, and when Jesus in verse three speaks many things to *them* (ἀντοῖς) in parables, we assume he speaking to the crowds. We are confirmed in verse 10 where the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks to ἀντοῖς in parables. Jesus states that he is indeed speaking to the crowds (ἀντοῖς) in parables (v. 13), and explains that ἐκείνοις (i.e. the crowds) are not given to know the mysteries of the kingdom (v. 11). From this we would assume that parables are spoken only to the crowds, although the disciples hear them as well.

After Jesus has interpreted the parable of the sower to the disciples, he again speaks parables to ἀντοῖς, and though we could assume that this time the pronoun refers to the disciples, whom Jesus was just speaking to, we are again confirmed in verse 34 that these parables were spoken to τοῖς ὄχλοις—the crowds. It is therefore somewhat surprising that the last three parables (vv. 44-50) seem to be spoken to the disciples, since Jesus and the disciples now have left the crowds and are in a house by themselves (v. 36). Some have suggested that we also here should envision these parables spoken to the crowds.² Like in verse 24, Jesus has just spoken to the disciples, and they are the most natural addressees, but since we there eventually (v. 34) understood that Jesus did follow his own “rule” and spoke those parables to the crowds, we should envision the same scenario here. The order of these units therefore do not describe the chronology of the event of the parable discourse, but it is as an expression of “literary convenience.”³ In this reading Matthew agreed with Mark; Jesus spoke parables to the crowds and

¹ Stanley D. Toussaint, “The Introductory and Concluding Parables of Matthew Thirteen,” *BSac* 121 (1964): 351-55; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 126-128; David Wenham, “The Structure of Matthew XIII,” *NTS* 25 (1979): 516-517. The same comparative expression is used as in some of the parables (ὁμοίός ἐστιν), and the summary of the discourse’s content in v. 53 as *parables*, might be taken to imply that v. 52 is one.

² France, *Matthew* (2007), 534, 538-539.

³ France, *Matthew* (2007), 539.

explained them to the disciples in private (Mark 4:33-34). But as Matthew did not want to separate the parable interpretations too much from their parables, he did not place them at the very end. This can explain why the disciples in verse 10 *came* (προσέρχομαι) to Jesus, although he according to verse 2 was in a boat on the lake: Matthew did not envision the disciples wading out to Jesus, but that they later came and heard his interpretation.⁴

This is a possible, but not convincing, view of the discourse. One has to choose between two inconsistencies: Either Matthew intended Jesus to speak parables also to the disciples, apparently in conflict with his answer in verses 11-13; or Matthew intended his readers to conceive of an order of these events in conflict with the order of the narrative. If Matthew meant the dialogue of verses 10-23 to take place later, he could have stated so. Verse 36 tells us that after Jesus had left the crowds, the disciples came and asked about *the parable of the weeds*, a different question than they asked in verse 10. That they in verse 10 ask about *parables* (plural), though only one has been spoken, does not necessarily imply that this conversation took place after several parables had been spoken. With the plural in the disciples' question and Jesus' answer Matthew makes sure the reason for parables is not limited to the sower. About the disciples coming to Jesus in the boat, Matthew might have thought of a solution to it,⁵ or he simply did not notice the inconsistency or thought it too minor to worry about.

Another option is that the order of the narrative is only supposed to reflect the order of the real events until the last three parables, and that Matthew inserted these here because they were thematically related to the other parables and he saw no better place to include them. But this is also unlikely. First, verse 34 seems to conclude the section spoken to the crowds. Second, if Matthew meant that these were spoken to the crowds, we would at least expect that he had introduced the first of these parables like the other, saying that Jesus spoke another parable to *αὐτοῖς*. But since these parables follow Jesus' interpretation of the weeds uninterrupted, there is no signal to the reader that they should be so understood. Rather the opposite; the word *παραβολή* becomes associated with the crowds during the discourse, and since it is not used about these three parables, that should rather indicate that they were addressed to the disciples. Although they clearly are

⁴ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 215; Gundry, *Matthew*, 255. Gundry still sees the last parables given to the disciples.

⁵ According to Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 125, the disciples are "doubtless thought of as being in the boat with Jesus." Cf. Meier, *Matthew*, 144.

parables (confirmed by v. 53), the inconsistency of having Jesus speak to the disciples in parables is not screaming once the parable introduction and the explicit designation as παραβολή is removed. Third, the inconsistency is actually not that problematic. As Jesus ends this short, continuous discourse to the disciples, he asks them if they understood *all this* (v. 51). As we will see below, Matthew's point with this discourse is not that Jesus speaks to the crowds in parables and the disciples openly, but both groups listen, and by speaking in parables, the disciples will understand the message, but the crowds will not.

As we have just seen, there are difficulties with this text. It does not readily divide itself in a logical arrangement, and the lack of consensus on its structure is reflective of this. There are four common models: two that divide the discourse in two; one chiasmic model; and Davies and Allison's triadic model.

The Sower and Additional Parables

As a few others before them,⁶ Gundry and Harrington divide the discourse in two between verses 23 and 24, after the parable of the sower, the reason for parables, and the interpretation of the sower.⁷ They seem to do this mostly for pragmatic reasons, but others see a parallel structure in these two parts, both begin with a public parable (vv. 1-9, 24-33, then have something about the purpose of the parables (vv. 10-17, 34-35), then have private interpretation for the disciples.⁸ The difficulty with this outline is of course that in the second half there is not only an interpretation of the public parable, there are also more parables. Still, this reflects in a good way the paradigmatic role of the parable of the sower with the attached reason for parables, which section Matthew adopts as a whole from Mark before he starts adding and rearranging additional parables. Still, that the interpretation of the parable of weeds is separated from the parable, just like that of the sower, might indicate that Matthew had something else in mind.

The Public/Private Model

The most popular structure of the parable discourse, and the one followed by both Kingsbury and Luz, has been the two-part outline with a second division beginning with

⁶ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 229.

⁷ Gundry, *Matthew*, 250-251; Harrington, *Matthew*, 198-199.

⁸ Luz refers to Segbroeck, Dupont, and Marin. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 229, n. 7.

verse 36,⁹ where the setting changes from the crowds at the lake to the disciples in the house. The first half of the discourse is then public; the second private. Verses 34-35 suitably end the first section, and verse 36 is a suitable introduction to the second, parallel to the introduction to the first (vv. 1-3a). The similarities between the interpretation of the weeds and the parable and interpretation of the dragnet can perhaps serve as an inclusio around the second part, separating out verses 51-52 as a conclusion to the whole discourse.¹⁰ It is not uncommon among subscribers of this model to follow Kingsbury and Luz and see the first half as apologetic, explaining the unbelief of Israel; and the second as paraenetic, warning the readers not to be like Israel.¹¹

Since we have argued that the parables of the second section are spoken to the disciples, it would seem probable that Matthew thought of this discourse in two parts; one for the crowds; the other for the disciples. That the first part roughly corresponds to Mark's parable discourse¹² and the second makes up Matthew's expansion also speaks for this. The advantage of this model over the previous is that it can explain the separation of the parable of weeds and its interpretation on the basis that Matthew wanted to push the latter into the private section. But that verses 10-23 also are given in private complicates the view of this discourse as one public and one private section, and we may ask whether public/private were the categories that determined Matthew's arrangement of this material. Hagner, noting the difficulties with all the proposed structures, decides to follow this suggestion because of verse 36: "This change of audience is a major factor to which all other structural features must be subordinate."¹³

The Chiastic Model

Wenham's chiastic model builds on the same change of setting, and the second half of his chiasm corresponds to the second division in the previous model.¹⁴ For Wenham verse 52

⁹ E.g. Fenton, *Matthew*, 224; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 364; Hare, *Matthew*, 148; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 12-15; Luz, *Matthew 8-18*, 230; Meier, *Matthew*, 141; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 121-122; Thompson, *Story*, 91;

¹⁰ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 230.

¹¹ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 132; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 230-231.

¹² One must allow the parable of the weeds to replace Mark's parable of the seed (Mark 4:26-29) and exclude Mark's parable of the lamp (Mark 4:21-23)

¹³ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 364.

¹⁴ Wenham, "Structure," 516-522.

is a parable, and with the parable of the sower—also not said to be about the kingdom—it forms an inclusio around the other parables. The first part of the chiasm then has four parables to the crowds, the three last of which have similar introductions; the second has four parables to the disciples, the three first with similar introductions. The two short parables in each division are placed symmetrically, with verses 34-43 as the center.

Though the parable of the sower and verse 52 have in common that they are not explicitly said to be about the kingdom and they do not share the introductions of the other parables, they are so different that Matthew could not have expected his readers to see them as an inclusio. In addition, the climax of Wenham’s chiasm is a strange climax, indeed. It combines a summary by the narrator (v. 34), a fulfillment quotation (v. 35), a change of setting (v. 36a), and the interpretation of the weeds (vv. 36b-43). We could understand why the fulfillment quotation could be a climax, or the change of setting—if we take Jesus’ withdrawal from the crowds as an important symbolic act. But the interpretation of the weeds disrupts this structure, something Wenham partly acknowledges. Despite its problems, Blomberg and Turner adopt this outline.¹⁵

The Triadic Model

The last model was first suggested by Trilling,¹⁶ but it has been defended in more detail by Davies and Allison who believe Matthew here sought to create a triad based on the pattern that was already set by the material adopted from the Markan parable discourse.¹⁷

Thus we have:

Parable(s):	<i>The sower</i> (vv. 1-9)
Discussion of parables	The reason for parables (vv. 10-17)
Interpretation of parable	Interpretation of <i>the sower</i> (vv. 18-23)
Parable(s):	<i>The weeds</i> + the mustard seed + the leaven (vv. 24-33)
Discussion of parables	Summary and fulfillment quotation (vv. 34-35)
Interpretation of parable	Interpretation of <i>the weeds</i> (vv. 36-43)

¹⁵ Turner, *Matthew*, 333; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 213.

¹⁶ Trilling, *Matthew* (Vol. 2), v.

¹⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 370-372.

Parable(s):	<i>The treasure</i> + the pearl + the dragnet (vv. 44-48)
Interpretation of parable	Interpretation of the dragnet (vv. 49-50)
Discussion of parables	Saying on <i>treasure</i> / on understanding parables (vv. 51-52)

Davies and Allison interpret the parables as following: The first triad is primarily apologetic, explaining why Israel failed to receive their Messiah; the second triad is also primarily apologetic, explaining unbelief in a more universal perspective, pointing to the struggle between God and Satan; the last triad, directed to the disciples, is paraenetic, exhorting and warning the readers not to be like the unbelievers in the preceding triads.¹⁸

There are two inconsistencies here: First, there are three parables in the last two sections as opposed to one in the first; second, Matthew has reversed the order of discussion and interpretation in the last section. The first problem may be explained by Matthew's desire to include all these parables in the discourse (some are clearly related). In addition, Davis and Allison also refer to the eschatological discourse, where Matthew follows the same procedure; first he follows Mark's discourse, then he starts producing triads.¹⁹ The second problem is more difficult; if Matthew really intended this structure, why did he not present the parable of the dragnet first, then the treasure and the pearl, and finally the interpretation of the dragnet? One reason might be that he thought the parable of the dragnet too short to split from its interpretation. A more important reason might be that Matthew wanted verses 51-52 as a fitting conclusion to the whole discourse, and he saw that instead of leaving this conclusion outside the structure, he could include it since it discusses the householder's *treasure*, and thus creates an *inclusio* with *the parable of the treasure* around this third section similar to what the parable of the sower and the weeds create with their respective interpretations.

None of these four outlines provide a totally consistent division of the material, though the public/private model and this last triadic outline seem to do it best. I favor this last model because its two inconsistencies are quite easy to explain, and it solves the more difficult problems of the other outlines. It avoids the public/private distinction and

¹⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 402-403, 431-432, 448-449.

¹⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 371-372.

can account for verses 10-23 and the separation of parables from their interpretations, since these frame each unit.²⁰ Next, it does not depend on the dubious parallel of the sower and 13:52. Finally, the two last sections each contain a triad of parables, and Matthew has provided both triads with each their set of similar introductions. While the public/private model also keeps these two triads separate, the triadic feature tends to drown among the rest of the material in the first section. When the triads form the basis of each their section, they carry a structural purpose, and if we accept Davies and Allison's interpretations of the parables, they also reflect the separate focus of each triad. Matthew's creation of triads in other sections adds to the credibility of this model. It has been adopted by Senior, Garland, Nolland, Luomanen, and Ewherido.²¹

Verse 36

What about Hagner's statement about the change of setting in verse 36? In his opinion "no convincing structural analysis can afford to ignore this break."²² Is the change in location and audience a feature so protruding that we can not conceive of Matthew having structured this discourse in any other way than with a break at this verse? Not necessarily. Chapters 11-12 are like the parable discourse primarily made up of speech material, and the structure we have argued for there, and also Luz' structure, for that matter, does not follow the movement of Jesus or the change in audience. Neither did these elements determine the arrangement of chapters 8-9.

For Luz, the symbolic import of verse 36, where Jesus "turns from the people and to the disciples" is an additional reason to see a division here.²³ A lot of weight has been put on this verse; it has even been called the turning point of the whole Gospel.²⁴ The contrast between the disciples and the crowds in this discourse invites such a conception. It is a neat scheme: Jesus speaks to the crowds; then he breaks with them and speaks to the disciples. But as mentioned, verses 10-23 disrupt this scheme. And we should note the similarities in the change of setting in verse 10 and verse 36. In verse 10 the disciples

²⁰ Gundry sees the same reason for the separation of parable and interpretation: Gundry, *Matthew*, 251.

²¹ Senior, *Matthew*, 148; Garland, *Reading*, 144-145; Nolland, *Matthew*, 51-52; Luomanen, *Entering*, 122-123; Ewherido, *Judaism*, 75-77. Ewherido combines the two last units and thus also gets the benefits of Gundry's model.

²² Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 364.

²³ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 230.

²⁴ Fenton, *Matthew*, 225.

come (προσέρχομαι) to Jesus and ask why he speaks in parables. In verse 36, after Jesus has left and entered the house, the disciples again come (προσέρχομαι) to him with a question. In both verses we go from a public to a private setting. Contra Luz, Jesus does not in verse 36 leave the crowds *in order to* teach the disciples.²⁵ He leaves both the crowds and the disciples, and subsequently the disciples come to him, like they did in verse 10. Actually, though generally overlooked, verse 36 is largely a reproduction of Mark 7:17, where Jesus also moves from the crowds to a house where he explains a parable to the disciples. Matthew's changes to Mark do not indicate that Matthew wanted to stage a symbolic rejection of the crowds or Israel. The verb used for Jesus' withdrawal from the crowds, ἀφίημι, frequently used by Matthew, has no connotations of a demonstrative departure. In two cases where Jesus leaves his opponents after heated discussions (16:4; 21:17), Matthew uses καταλείπω for the act of leaving, a redactional word he uses only one other place (4:13) in addition to a Scripture quotation (19:5).²⁶

Perhaps did καταλείπω have a stronger ring in Matthew's ears than ἀφίημι,²⁷ but this act might also for Matthew have *had* a symbolic undertone. But it is merely an undertone, and it was not Matthew's focal point. As both P. Luomanen and Ewherido have argued, *Mark* is the key to understanding Matthew's outline for this discourse.²⁸ Matthew took what he adopted from Mark and made it the pattern he would repeat to make a triad. Verses 10 and 36 are both molded after Mark 4:10, and the narrative interruption of verses 34-37a is shaped after the ending of Mark's discourse (Mark 4:33-34). Matthew's last triad expands Mark's statement in 4:34b; that Jesus explained everything to the disciples in private. Matthew's addition of parables to the disciples was probably to avoid that the parable discourse led his readers to a sense of superiority and self-righteousness: Despite being granted understanding, disciples are not immune to conceit; they must guard their treasure (vv. 44-46), and make sure they do not fall into the sin of Israel and are likewise judged (vv. 47-50).²⁹ We see the same concern here as in

²⁵ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 9.

²⁶ Gundry suggests that this word in Matthew's use implies "judgmental abandonments," although his case for such a connotation in 4:13 is somewhat strained: Gundry, *Matthew*, 59-60, 324, 415,

²⁷ κατά can have a connotation of hostility, cf. *BAGD* (A2b); Matthew uses ἀφίημι for the act of forgiving.

²⁸ Luomanen, *Entering*, 122-123; Ewherido, *Judaism*, 75-77.

²⁹ This is the common interpretation for these parables. E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 448-449; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 397, 400; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 116-117, 124-125; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 280, 284.

the parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14), where Matthew creates and adds a paraenetic parable (22:11-14) to a Q parable depicting Israel's great mistake (cf. Luke 14:16-24).³⁰

Since verse 36 on its own does not indicate that it was intended as a metaphor for a rejection of Israel, its symbolism should be limited to the extent Jesus' act of speaking in parables implies such a rejection—an issue we must wait to settle.

3.2 The Narrative of the Parable Discourse

The parable discourse is, unlike the other great discourses, repeatedly interrupted by the narrator; in all six times (vv. 10-11a, 24a, 31a, 33a, 34-37a, 51b-52a). These comments either introduce a question or an answer by the disciples (vv. 10, 36, 51b), a new parable/saying by Jesus (vv. 24, 31, 33, 52a) or a fulfillment quotation (vv. 34-35). In the other discourses a similar narrative interruption is found only in the church discourse, where Peter asks about forgiveness (18:21-22a). Many of the interruptions in the parable discourse could have been omitted without any loss of meaning.

Except for these narrative interruptions, the only pericope in this discourse that is neither a parable nor an interpretation of a parable is the reason for parables (13:10-17). Because Jesus in this passage answers the disciples' question of why he is speaking to the crowds in parables, it is part of the narrative framework of the discourse, and crucial to understanding it as an event in the main narrative. We therefore begin with this text.

3.2.1 The Reason for Parables (13:10-17)

Matthew has followed Mark in the placement of the reason for parables (cf. Mark 4:10-12), between the parable of the sower (vv. 3b-9) and its interpretation (vv. 18-23). The parable of the sower tells of three categories of sowed seed that fail to produce fruit and one type of seed that bears fruit. The interpretation explains the seeds as the word of the kingdom; it sometimes fails to produce fruit either because of the evil one, lack of perseverance, worries, or temptations; but it does produce fruit when it is *understood*.

³⁰ Cf. W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 19-28* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 193-208; Gundry, *Matthew*, 432-441; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Hermeneia; trans. James E. Crouch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 45-57.

Matthew has made some significant changes to Mark: In Mark Jesus' answer has two parts; a saying about the privilege of the disciples and the non-privilege of "those outside" (4:11), corresponding to Matthew's 13:11; and a quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10, which shortened becomes Matthew's allusion in 13:13. Matthew adds the maxim from Mark 4:25 and places it between the two parts of Jesus' answer (Matt 13:12), then adds to the answer a macarism about the disciples from Q (vv. 16-17, cf. Luke 10:23-24).

Verses 14-15 are problematic. These quote directly from Isaiah 6:9-10, which just has been alluded to in verse 13. This "doubling" is untypical of Matthew, and it is also conspicuous that verses 14-15 interrupt the antithetical parallelism of verses 13 and 16. Further, it is untypical of Matthew to have a fulfillment quotation that is non-Messianic—not about Jesus—and that quotes the Septuagint verbatim. These and other considerations have led many scholars to believe that these verses were interpolated into the text early after Matthew had it finished.³¹ The two verses are solidly attested in the manuscripts, and there are some reasons for regarding them as original,³² but since they are questioned by many, I will make my case without them. More directly than verse 13 these verses equate the listening crowds with the people of Israel and blame them for closing their eyes, but I will still argue below that these elements are presupposed in the allusion in verse 13. However, by removing verses 14-15, the element of predestination is somewhat reduced, since Israel's failure to respond to Jesus now might not be predicted or foreordained.

Without verses 14-15, Jesus' reply to the disciples' consists of two parts; first, the answer to why Jesus speaks in parables (vv 11-13); second, a macarism about the disciples in antithetical parallelism to verse 13 (v. 16), with an elaboration (v. 17). There are a number of difficulties with this text, and no commentator seems able to find a totally consistent way to relate it to the rest of the discourse. The most difficult part is verses 11-13, and we will go through these verse by verse.

³¹ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 393-394; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 38-39; Stanton, *Gospel*, 349; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew, and Its Use of the Old Testament* (2nd, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 129-132.

³² Robert H. Gundry, *The use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 116-118; idem, *Matthew*, 257; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 374; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 237-238.

Verse 11

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὅτι ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἐκείνοις δὲ οὐ δέδοται.

And he answered them, “because³³ to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

The disciples have already been granted (δέδοται). The passive form indicates that it is God who has made this decision.³⁴ The ἐκείνοις clearly refers to the crowds, to whom Jesus speaks in parables (cf. vv. 2-3, 10). The term τὰ μυστήρια is part of the Markan text Matthew adopts (cf. Mark 4:11), and Matthew never uses the word elsewhere. In antiquity μυστήριον usually had to do with esoteric religious knowledge, but in Jewish thought it got a specific connotation from its use in the Septuagint version of Daniel, where it refers to knowledge of God’s end time plans (2:28-29). This is largely how the word is used in the Pauline writings and the Apocalypse.³⁵ Kingsbury argues that Matthew uses the plural form, not singular as Mark, because he wanted to include ethical aspects of Jesus’ teachings as well as eschatological.³⁶ This can be no more than a theory. That ethics, in a Jewish setting or in Matthew should be seen as mysterious and available only to people with special revelation is not intuitively plausible. More mysterious are the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messianic kingdom. According to Davies and Allison, the consensus definition of the synoptic use of this term is “*the presence of the kingdom in Jesus and his ministry.*”³⁷

Whatever Matthew’s exact conception of τὰ μυστήρια was, we assume that the disciples, granted insight into these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, also would be able to understand the parables, since these describe aspects of the kingdom of heaven.³⁸

³³ I understand ὅτι as causative and not recitative, corresponding to the διὰ τί of 13:10. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 389; Bastian Van Elderen, “The Purpose of Parables according to Matthew 13:10-17,” in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 182.

³⁴ Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 372; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 43.

³⁵ “Mysterion” in TDNT (abr.), 615-619.

³⁶ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 44-46. Cf. H. B. Green, *Matthew*, 132.

³⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 389. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 376; Hill, *Matthew*, 226; Van Elderen, “Purpose,” 183-185.

³⁸ Cf. vv. 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52.

But strangely enough they do not appear to understand the parable of the weeds (v. 36).³⁹ Before the interpretation of the sower Matthew has removed Jesus' statement about the disciples' lack of understanding (v. 18, cf. Mark 4:13), and he has made the disciples ask about the reason Jesus speaks in parables, and not as in Mark "about the parables" (v. 10, cf. Mark 4:10). In verse 51 the disciples assure Jesus that they have understood ταῦτα πάντα—all *this*. Except for in verse 36, then, it appears that Matthew wanted to present the disciples as understanding. But that the disciples in verse 11 are *given to know* does not necessarily mean they *already know*. The privilege they are given could include the privilege to stand in a disciple relationship to Jesus, to be able to ask him and hear him explain when they do not understand.⁴⁰ This is the most consistent way to relate this verse to the rest of the discourse. Jesus' answer to the disciples' question in this verse therefore seems to be that the disciples will (now or eventually) understand the parables while the crowds will not. Thus Jesus is in one sense primarily speaking the parables to his disciples. Why he speaks to the crowds if they are unable to understand is yet unclear.

Verse 12

ὅστις γὰρ ἔχει, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ καὶ περισσευθήσεται· ὅστις δὲ οὐκ ἔχει, καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

The γὰρ reveals that this verse is a supporting argument to the previous verse. It is a general principle that illustrates and explains the specific situation of the disciples and the crowds. Thus, ὅστις ἔχει must refer to the disciples, and ὅστις οὐκ ἔχει must refer to the crowds. We further assume, if this principle explains verse 11, that what the disciples already have and the crowds do not is a preliminary knowledge or understanding of the

³⁹ Lohmeyer has according to Kingsbury, *Parables*, 95, suggested that the disciples in v. 36 do not ask for an *explanation* (διασάφησον), but for a *report* (φράσσον), which is a less attested textual variant. Kingsbury seems inclined to follow him. Cf. *ibid*, 41-42, 49. In light of 15:15-16 the suggestion is unlikely.

⁴⁰ So Dan O. Via, "Matthew on the Understandability of the Parables," *JBL* 84 (1965): 432; Michael J. Wilkens, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Use of the Term* (NovTSup 59; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 143. cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 247.

mentioned mysteries. This suits the conclusion to the interpretation of the sower, which makes *understanding* of the word of the kingdom a prerequisite for bearing fruit (v. 23).

Thus verse 11 and 12 give each their reasons for the disciples' understanding; in verse 11 it is a result of God's decision; and in verse 12 it is based on their possession of knowledge. The conventional use of γὰρ indicates that the latter precedes the former; verse 12 is the cause or the reason for verse 11.⁴¹ Thus, God's giving or taking away in verse 12 is the cause for the disciples having and the crowds not having the grant of knowledge in verse 11. Because the disciples had a preliminary knowledge, they have by God (divine passive) been granted more knowledge into these mysteries. On the other hand, the crowds, who did not possess this preliminary knowledge, have by God been deprived of what little understanding they had, and have not been granted knowledge of the mysteries. For this to be an answer to the disciples' question, the meaning must be that Jesus speaks to the crowds in parables because they have been deprived of the ability to understand them, while the disciples' ability has been enhanced. Thus Jesus can speak his mysteries to both groups, but only the worthy will understand them.

Strictly, then, as the crowds have already been deprived of what they had, there is nothing more to take from them. But Matthew is usually not bound by strict logic. In addition, the principle of this verse is general and given in the future tense. Therefore we might expect the disciples to be given even more, in an ever increasing manner or until they have abundance,⁴² and the crowds might lose even more. If so, does Matthew think of a specific loss? If the crowds lose what the disciples gain, they presumably lose the ability to understand the mysteries or the privilege to hear Jesus explain these; that is, Jesus will no longer teach them. Or perhaps Matthew had in mind the suggestion the crowds had just made, with doubt, that Jesus might be the Son of David (12:23).⁴³ Perhaps such embryonic understanding of Jesus is what they will lose, and thus be open to the sway of their leaders (cf. 27:15-25)? Or Matthew might be thinking of Israel's privilege as stewards of the Old Testament mysteries of the Messianic kingdom,⁴⁴ or the

⁴¹ "γὰρ" in *BAGD*.

⁴² Contra Kingsbury, *Parables*, 46. Because Kingsbury does not infer from v. 36 that the disciples still lack some knowledge, he sees the grant of knowledge in v. 11 as absolute; the disciples have no need of more, and the abundance they are promised is rather the kingdom itself. This view has had little following.

⁴³ A question introduced by μήτι usually invites a negative answer. Cf. "μήτι" in *BAGD*. See below.

⁴⁴ Van Elderen, "Purpose," 186.

stewardship of the kingdom itself.⁴⁵ The latter is what will be taken away from the people or its leaders according to 21:43 (cf. 8:11-12). That the maxim in 13:12 is used again in the parable of the talents in 25:29 might speak for this interpretation. There the talent is taken away from its steward and he is judged for his wickedness and laziness and thrown into outer darkness. Both the loss of stewardship and loss of entrance into the kingdom may thus be in view; both are fates of Israel from Matthew's perspective. We will return to this question in chapter 5. For now we merely note what is evident: the disciples and the crowds will go in opposite directions; the crowds will not become disciples.

Verse 13

διὰ τοῦτο ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λαλῶ, ὅτι βλέποντες οὐ βλέπουσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες οὐκ ἀκούουσιν οὐδὲ συνίουσιν

Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

With διὰ τοῦτο Jesus refers back to the διὰ τί in verse 10, and gives the final answer to why he speaks in parables. The paradox of seeing/hearing but still not seeing/hearing must be a way of saying that while they do see and hear, they do not see and hear the true reality or significance of it. In other words; they do not *understand*. The seeing and hearing corresponds to the two sides of Jesus' ministry, one oral and one physical, which indicates that the *understanding* in view in this passage is the *recognition of Jesus*.

Jesus' answer alludes to Isaiah 6:9-10, where the people of Judah are criticized for their obduracy.⁴⁶ Matthew substitutes ὅτι for Mark's ἵνα, something that makes the people's lack of understanding a *reason*, and not as in Mark, a *purpose*, for the parabolic speech. In Matthew Jesus speaks to the crowds in parables *because* they can not see, hear, or understand. Matthew has thereby reduced this text's potential to indicate that God had predestined the crowds' hardening. The same reason may lie behind Matthew's choice to omit the last part of Mark's quotation (μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῆ ἀυτοῖς—

⁴⁵ E.g. Kingsbury, *Parables*, 48; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 246.

⁴⁶ In LXX the people have clearly hardened their hearts, but in the Masoretic text Isaiah is called to go out and harden the hearts. Even in the latter the preceding obduracy of Judah is presupposed (see below).

otherwise/lest they might repent and be forgiven), a clause that could imply that God sought to avoid the peoples' repentance.

That Jesus speaks in parables *because* the crowds lack understanding has by some been interpreted to imply that Jesus by using parables, simple everyday imagery, wanted to help the crowds understand the realities of the kingdom.⁴⁷ This interpretation presupposes a reading of verse 11 where it is not God's will that the crowds should be without knowledge, something that contradicts verse 12.⁴⁸ It also ignores the accusation inherent in the Isaiah allusion. With the words in Isaiah 6:9-10 Isaiah was to announce to an unrepentant people that their period of grace was over; that judgment was waiting. It is unlikely that Matthew invoked this Scripture to express Jesus' sympathy for the crowds; it more likely implies that they were firmly obdurate, perhaps even beyond repentance.

This leads us to another misinterpretation. Verse 13 is not a parallel to verse 11; it is not just reiterating that the crowds have not been given the understanding to recognize Jesus.⁴⁹ While verse 11 describes a sovereign choice by God, verse 13 implies a choice of obduracy by the people. If both verses are taken merely as a decision in heaven, perhaps because one does not find that the crowds until now have deserved the accusation of obduracy, the parable discourse as an event becomes God's sovereign choice to bring those in the know further in knowledge and exclude those who lack knowledge—a form of elitism. This does not square well with Jesus' mission to save God's people from their sins (1:21) and search out the lost sheep of the house of Israel (15:24).

Though many modern critical scholars affirm a certain aspect of predestination in Matthew, only a few emphasize this aspect over human responsibility in this text.⁵⁰ The overwhelming majority believe Jesus in 13:11-13 explains his parabolic speech as a result of the people's choice and guilt.⁵¹ Many elements, both from the Jewish background and

⁴⁷ So Filson, *Matthew*, 160; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 462; Van Elderen, "Purpose," 189.

⁴⁸ When Matthew inserts the maxim from Mark 4:25 into Jesus' answer, he gives the impression that those who lack knowledge should not be given more. The crowds as a collective unit have not been granted this privilege of knowledge; the intention is therefore not that Jesus spoke to reach the few with understanding.

⁴⁹ Contra Van Elderen, 188.

⁵⁰ It is emphasized by certain American evangelical scholars: E.g. Blomberg, *Matthew*, 215-216; Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew 13-28: The Churchbook* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 10-12. France, *Matthew* (2007), 507, 512-513; Morris, *Matthew*, 339, 341; Turner, *Matthew*, 339.

⁵¹ E.g. Beare, *Matthew*, 294; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 392; C. A. Evans, *To see and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (JSOTsup 64; Sheffield: Sheffield

in Matthew's thinking, speak for this interpretation: (1) In the wisdom literature the concepts of wisdom and understanding had a moral side. Wisdom was available to the one attuned to God, who did not become proud and trusted in one self, and one's obligation was to ask and search for such understanding (Prov 2). Thus God's act of revealing and hiding should not be understood as a completely arbitrary choice, but as a response to receptivity.⁵² (2) The judgments of God on his people in the Old Testament were always caused by their evil conduct. (3) The imagery of *seeing* and *hearing* is often in the prophets used to denote obduracy.⁵³ (4) Though Isaiah in 6:9-10 was called to go and harden the hearts of Judah, they were at this point already unrepentant.⁵⁴ (5) Finally, Matthew rarely employs the theme predestination, but he often highlights Israel's guilt.⁵⁵

Since there is an accusation of obduracy in Matthew's allusion, the crowds have at this point already seen and heard without understanding or repenting. Verse 13 is thus not primarily a description of the crowds' inability to understand the parables Jesus now is speaking; they describe a condition they already had. And this condition is probably the basis for God's taking away of understanding in verses 11-12. The argument is as follows: The crowds have failed to understand and repent (v. 13), and God has therefore taken away their ability to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (v. 12), so that they now are unable to understand the parables (v. 11). The exact opposite is true of the disciples; because they have been open to God and understood what they have seen and heard (cf. v. 13), they have been found worthy of more understanding (v. 12): the insights into the mysteries of the kingdom, including the parables (v. 11). In speaking his parables Jesus wanted to conceal from the obdurate and reveal to the receptive.

We may still ask why Jesus did not just lay out his mysteries plainly to the disciples in private. Is he, like Isaiah, announcing that the crowds are beyond repentance;

Academic, 1989), 110; Garland, *Reading*, 147; Gundry, *Matthew*, 256-257; Green, *Matthew*, 132; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 372-373; Hare, *Matthew*, 147, 149-150; Hill, *Matthew*, 227; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 49; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 246; Meier, *Matthew*, 144-145; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 125; Schweitzer, *Good News*, 299; Senior, *Matthew*, 150; Witherington, *Matthew*, 264.

⁵² E.g. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 318, 373.

⁵³ E.g. Is 43:8; Jer 5:20-23; Ezek 12:2.

⁵⁴ Cf. Evans, *See and Not Perceive*, 26-36.

⁵⁵ Israel and her leaders are clearly blamed for the loss of the kingdom: 21:13, 28-32, 33-43; 22:1-10; 23:37-24:2. Obduracy, not a non-moral lack of understanding, was the reason Capernaum will be judged harder than Sodom (11:23-24). The Pharisees are evil, not ignorant (12:34, cf. 21:28-22:10; 23:1-36), as is the whole generation (12:38, 45, cf. 23:37-39; 27:15-25). Predestination might be presupposed in 21:42.

that judgment is inevitable? Acknowledging that Matthew has adopted both the idea of a parable discourse to the crowds and the Isaiah allusion from Mark, we should be cautious about too many inferences. Matthew's focus appears to be the crowds' obduracy and lack of understanding. And as we will see, his interest was primarily in the disciples.

Verses 16-17

We need only make a few points from verses 16-17: In these verses from Q (Cf. Luke 10:23-24) Matthew found an antithetical parallel to the Isaiah allusion in verse 13. What the disciples see and hear in verse 16 is what the crowds do not see and hear in verse 13, probably the true significance of Jesus and his ministry. If Matthew carries this out consistently, then this is also what the prophets and righteous men in verse 17 yearn to see. But verse 17 is usually interpreted somewhat independently from the previous verses; the prophets longed to see and hear the actual manifestations of the kingdom, the proofs of its arrival (cf. 11:4-5), not Jesus' ministry's true significance despite its small and veiled appearance.⁵⁶ In this case the privilege of the disciples is no longer their deeper understanding, but that of witnessing the deeds of Jesus, a privilege the crowds also had. It is quite typical of Matthew to juxtapose pericopae from different traditions although the congruence between them is less than perfect,⁵⁷ and verse 17 may therefore bring in a slightly different aspect. In any case we are here confirmed that the seeing and hearing in this passage is concerned with Jesus' ministry. With verse 17 Matthew may have implied a criticism of those who witnessed it, but failed to respond accordingly.

3.2.2 The Reason for Parables and the Parable of the Sower

Understanding is a concept central to 13:10-17, and *συνίημι* (to understand) is used in verse 13 for the first time in the Gospel. It is used three more times in this discourse (vv. 19, 23, 51), two of which are added by Matthew to the Markan interpretation of the sower. As the reason for parables is placed between the sower and its interpretation, there is more than likely a connection between these texts. According to verse 19, the first

⁵⁶ E.g. Garland, *Reading*, 147; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 247.

⁵⁷ E.g. God's revelation of Jesus in 11:25 vs. "no one knows the Son except the Father" in 11:27; making the fruit good in 12:33 vs. being unable to speak good in 12:34; easier not to marry in 19:9-10 vs. difficult to be unmarried in 19:11-12; the desire to keep the fruit in 21:33-41 vs. not producing fruit in 21:43.

category of people who hear (ἀκούω) the word of the kingdom do not understand it, and the evil steals the word. The people of the fourth category, on the other hand, hear and understand, and hence bear fruit. With the combination of *hearing* and *understanding*, these two categories correspond to the previous pericope's crowds and disciples, which may serve as examples in this parable. But the scope of the parable is wider than the situation in the previous passage since it has two additional categories. One category fails to bear fruit because it yields to the pressure of persecution (v. 21); the other is choked by worries and temptations (v. 22). Both descriptions suit the situation of Matthew's readers better than the crowds in the narrative, and thus we should not take this parable to speak about the event of the parable discourse. But if we allow some cautious inferences, we note that the categories exemplified by the crowds and the disciples are in each end of the spectrum; there is no category described in more negative terms set aside for such people as the religious leadership. And the crowds, lacking understanding and not perseverance or self-discipline, never seem to have begun the journey of discipleship. The disciples, who on the other hand have understanding, will bear fruit as a result.

3.2.3 The Narrative Interruptions

Verses 34-35 conclude the four first parables. With this the crowds disappear from view, and we hear nothing of their responses to the discourse. It is not a focus of Matthew's. The general statement in verse 34, χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐδὲν ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς—*without parables he spoke nothing to them*, should be restricted to this discourse, although some have thought it to describe a policy Jesus would stick to for the rest of his ministry.⁵⁸ It follows the summary, *all these things* (ταῦτα πάντα) *Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables*, and ταῦτα πάντα is clearly limited to what has just been spoken.

Like in his other fulfillment quotations, Matthew's focus in verse 35 was on Jesus, the Messiah,⁵⁹ and his intention was not to indicate that the crowds' obduracy, implied in the parabolic speech, was foreordained or predicted. Matthew wanted to use this verse from Psalm 78 which explicitly refers to παραβολαὶ to show how Jesus was the prophesied Messiah, and he needed to attach it to a reference to Jesus' speaking in

⁵⁸ So France, *Matthew* (1985), 221.

⁵⁹ Cf. Luz, *Matthew* 1-7, 130.

parables. Since these references all emphasize that Jesus spoke to *them/the crowds* in parables, the quotation came to be placed in an apparent subordination to this focus.

We have already looked at verse 36 and concluded that its primary function is the change to a private setting. That Matthew now expands the little note in Mark 4:34b and creates a whole section spoken to the disciples reflects Matthew's interest in the disciples in this discourse, as did Matthew's added macarism in verses 16-17.

In verse 51, after Jesus has interpreted the weeds and spoken three more parables to the disciples, the disciples answered in the affirmative to Jesus' question of whether they had understood ταῦτα πάντα, which we can translate *all this* or *all these things*. It may refer specifically to the last triad of parables; it may also include the interpretation of the weeds (which leaves many elements unexplained); or it may refer to the whole discourse. In light of verses 11-12, we should probably think of the disciples as having understood the whole discourse. They thus prove that they are granted knowledge of the mysteries (v. 11) and are ready to bear fruit (v. 23). Although the disciples presumably have understood all these parables, we saw elements in the parable of the sower that likely belong beyond the narrative level, and we should therefore be wary of ascribing to the disciples a detail-level understanding of these. But we can probably assume that they have understood Jesus as the Messiah and that the kingdom has arrived with him. If not, Jesus' praise of the disciples is surprisingly generous: the disciples have understood what they had seen and heard (vv. 13, 16), and they belong to the group who understands "the word of the kingdom" (v. 23). And from the parables they presumably understand that the Son of Man has sown the seed of the kingdom (v. 37); that the kingdom, though small at first, is of great worth (vv. 44-46) and will grow into fullness (vv. 31-33); and that the Son of Man eventually will come with judgment and remove the obstacles of the kingdom (vv. 41-43).⁶⁰ According to the mentioned consensus definition of the mysteries of the kingdom, the disciples understand, at least to a degree, *the presence of the kingdom in Jesus and his ministry*. And thus they probably understand Jesus as the Messiah.⁶¹

In verse 52 we come to Jesus' puzzling saying about *every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom*, a saying found only in Matthew. None of the twelve were

⁶⁰ Cf. e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*.

⁶¹ Cf. Morris, *Matthew*, 340.

according to Matthew former scribes.⁶² Again it may look like Matthew wanted to use a tradition that did not correspond perfectly to its context, but still had an important message related to the theme. This saying, too, was perhaps meant more for the readers than for the disciples in the narrative.⁶³ It may still say something about the disciples. The *διὰ τοῦτο* (*therefore*) refers back to the disciples' ability to understand (v. 51), and thus *every scribe who has become a disciple* is most easily taken as a description of the disciples.⁶⁴ Because they understand the parables, or the mysteries of the kingdom, they are able to bring out *things new and old*. It is tempting to read this saying in light of the fulfillment quotation in verse 35, because the *things hidden from the foundation of the world* are indeed old. As *scribes*, the ability of the disciples to bring out these old mysteries is perhaps specifically connected to interpretation of murky Scripture passages. As the disciples have demonstrated understanding of Jesus' preaching and teaching (vv. 13, 16, 23), the sayings of Jesus may be what is meant with the *new*.⁶⁵ The crowds understand neither the old mysteries contained in the parables or Jesus' plain teaching (v. 19). But the disciples, understanding both, have the ability to see that the promise of the Messiah and his kingdom has been fulfilled in Jesus. If Matthew intended this verse to apply to the disciples on the narrative level, then we here receive confirmation about the disciples' understanding of Jesus.⁶⁶ Verse 52 is still an ideal, and with the possibility of this verse speaking more to the readers than the disciples of the story, we should be cautious about ascribing to them a stage where they have already "graduated" as scribes.

3.3 Conclusion – The Event of the Parable Discourse

In this chapter we have sought to understand the parable discourse as a narrative event, without taking too many clues from its narrative context. We have seen that Matthew to a great degree is relying on Mark: The idea of a discourse in parables to the crowds is from

⁶² The scribe that came to Jesus in 8:19 should not be regarded as a disciple. See below.

⁶³ Cf. the mention of *scribe* in 23:34. See also Howell, *Inclusive*, 224-225.

⁶⁴ David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (JSNTSup 25; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 140-141.

⁶⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 447-448. This reading can explain why Matthew places *new* before *old*, since he shows great reverence for Jesus' sayings and lets them interpret Scripture. Cf. Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch & Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983), 59.

⁶⁶ Orton, *Scribe*, 140-153.

Mark; Jesus' explanation for this action is also largely determined by Mark; and as we saw in the previous chapter, also the placement of the discourse follows Mark. But Matthew has made more room than Mark for the disciples, and he appears in this discourse more interested in them than in the crowds. Matthew has also enhanced the contrast between these two groups: He has removed some Markan elements that imply a lack of understanding on the disciples' part, added statements about their understanding, and underlined that the crowds only received parables they were unable to understand.

Jesus had several reasons for speaking to the crowds in parables. The fundamental *cause* appears to be that the crowds had failed to heed the call to repentance. Therefore God had removed their feeble understanding and excluded them from the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, with the effect that they now did not understand the parables. Jesus' *objective* appears to be that he wanted to communicate these mysteries to his disciples—who were found worthy, presumably because they had recognized Jesus and repented—while at the same time hiding these mysteries from the crowds. Jesus *might* also have wanted with this act to announce that the crowds were beyond the point of repentance and headed for judgment.

If this discourse is embedded in the narrative, we would expect the preceding narrative to show the obduracy of the crowds and their failure to understand what they see and hear in Jesus. We expect the opposite about the disciples; that they have shown openness to the things of God and an understanding of what they have seen and heard in Jesus. We expect at least the beginning stages of the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah and the kingdom's arrival in his ministry. In the narrative following this discourse we would expect, if this discourse is an ordinary event, the crowds to continue in their obduracy and lack of understanding, and possibly that they are further deprived of understanding and begin a regress in their recognition of Jesus. We expect the disciples to come out from this discourse with a deeper understanding of Jesus and his ministry and the kingdom's demands upon them, and that they continue to grow in these areas. We also expect to see a change in Jesus' ministry; at least that he continues to veil the mysteries of the kingdom from crowds.

3.4 Observations on the Nature of the Parable Discourse

Before we turn to the relation of the parable discourse to the preceding and following narrative, we will include two observations about this discourse that have direct bearing on some of Luz' arguments against it as a regular part of the narrative, arguments that belong neither to the preceding or following narrative, but.

3.4.1 The Parable Discourse as Story

The first observation concerns the prominent narrative aspect of the parable discourse, which distinguishes it from the other great discourses. Part of Luz' reason for seeing the parable discourse as a "manifesto to the reader that interrupts the narrative" is his view of all five of the great discourses as addressed primarily to Matthew's readers, "*spoken, as it were, 'beyond the window' of the Matthean story of Jesus.*"⁶⁷ As we saw in the introduction, such a view of the discourses, usually with an emphasis on paraenesis, has been around since Bacon. Bacon saw that the theme of judgment is brought up toward the end of all these discourses,⁶⁸ and, indeed, often the judgment of *believers* is clearly in view.⁶⁹ For Luz the important clue is that these discourses primarily are addressed to the disciples, whom the readers are likely to identify with.⁷⁰ Kingsbury has gathered a convincing collection of examples from all the five discourses showing that Jesus in these sometimes speaks "past" the characters of the narrative, and addresses circumstances that are alien or irrelevant to them at that particular point in the story, but very relevant to disciples at the time of Matthew.⁷¹ We have seen two such examples in the interpretation of the sower. Thus Matthew betrays that the real audience of the great discourses is his readers. As Luz observes, the "discourses" in chapters 11, 12, and 23 are quite different. Here the disciples do not make up the audience, but Jesus is criticizing the people and the religious leaders. And thus these three discourses play a much larger role in developing the main conflict of the Matthean story, that of Jesus and Israel. Unlike the five

⁶⁷ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 12.

⁶⁸ According to Bauer, *Structure*, 28-29.

⁶⁹ Esp. 7:21-23; 10:37-39; 18:22-35; 24:45-25:46. And we have seen that the parable of the dragnet (13:47-50) also may have had a paraenetic purpose.

⁷⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 12-13. Cf. above, ch. 2, n. 13.

⁷¹ Kingsbury, *Story* (2nd ed.), 107-109.

discourses they “move the action along” and therefore “stand within the Matthean Jesus story.”⁷²

But although there is a sense in which the parables of the parable discourse are addressed to the disciples and to Matthew’s readers, it is no doubt also addressed to the crowds. And unlike in the sermon on the mount, they can here hardly be called “potential believers.”⁷³ In fact, the criticism of them in 13:11-13 is not too different from some of the criticism in the three shorter discourses (esp. 11:16-19; 12:39-42). Thus there is some potential in this discourse to add to the conflict of the narrative. By this we do not intend to question the notion that the content of the parable discourse primarily was directed at Matthew’s readers. The gospels in general, especially Jesus’ sayings, were presumably preserved because they were seen as authoritative and relevant for the believers of that day, but our study is limited to the discourse’s relation to the Matthean narrative.

It should also be noted that some of the other discourses might also play a role in the narrative, even though they perhaps do not “move the action along.” The sermon on the mount describes the teachings of Jesus, the demands of God upon Israel. When the reader hears these and understands that they are reasonable, even to some extent traditional from a Jewish standpoint, Israel appears more obstinate and guilty than if we only had a summary statement about Jesus’ teaching. In addition, the Jesus reflected in this Sermon appears as wise, authoritative, righteous, and compassionate (e.g. 5:3-9, 20; 7:28-29), while his opponents appear as the exact opposite (5:20; 6:1-2, 5, 16). The characters of Jesus, the religious leaders, and Israel receive important coloring from this discourse, and that affects the reader’s understanding of the narrative.

Likewise with the mission discourse, which is Luz’ prime example of the discourses’ lack of effect on the narrative; the disciples are sent out according to 10:5, but they never leave—Jesus leaves instead (cf. 11:1).⁷⁴ Matthew may have had reasons not to narrate the mission of the disciples and their return to Jesus,⁷⁵ but the discourse still plays an important role in the narrative. It follows the presentation of Jesus’ ministry in chapters 5-9 and his lament that “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (9:37).

⁷² Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 12.

⁷³ Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 186.

⁷⁴ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 12.

⁷⁵ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 239.

With the many parallels between Jesus' commands to the disciples and his own ministry, this discourse implies that Jesus wanted to expand his ministry to reach more of Israel. The sending of the disciples is therefore an extra effort on Jesus' part to see Israel repent and experience the fruits of the arriving kingdom. Since the disciples' mission never is described,⁷⁶ and these predictions are all the reader hears about the event, the discourse functions as an account of the disciples' mission. The disciples are sent, and the reader is left with an impression of how they fared.⁷⁷ Here this discourse fills a gap in Matthew's material. He has stories showing Jesus reaching out to the people (chs. 8-9), and pericopae showing Jesus' response to the rejection of the people (11:16-24), but he does not have stories showing that the people at large, not just the religious leaders, rejected Jesus.⁷⁸ Jesus' predictions of opposition in chapter 10 fill that gap and prepare the reader for the references to the people's lack of repentance in chapter 11.⁷⁹ That Matthew has taken one of Jesus' harsh rebukes of the Galilean cities (11:24, par Luke 10:12) and incorporated it into the mission discourse as an advance warning (10:15),⁸⁰ indicates that for Matthew the disciples' mission was part of the basis on which Israel is judged. The mission discourse as an event therefore adds to Israel's stubbornness and guilt, and this further justifies the judgment on Israel and the transfer of the kingdom, which is important for Matthew's case for the Gentile mission (cf. 8:11-12; 21:43; 28:18-20).

Thus, if we return to the parable discourse, we can not rule out in advance that it plays a part in the developing narrative. With the element of conflict present in the parable discourse, it may even "move the action along." As we have seen, Kingsbury does *not* conclude that the parable discourse merely interrupts the narrative, although he, like Luz, finds the primary purpose for the discourses in their address of the readers.⁸¹ But although Jesus in the parable discourse sometimes speaks past the characters of the story, he is more clearly than in the other discourses addressing the characters, because he repeatedly interrupts the discourse and lets us know that Jesus now turns to his disciples,

⁷⁶ Matthew could have had several reasons for not recounting this mission. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 239.

⁷⁷ Though the situation of Matthew's readers comes more into view from 10:16, the focus of the first part is on the disciples' mission. See esp. 10:5b-6.

⁷⁸ Cf. Fenton, *Matthew*, 173.

⁷⁹ Cf. Frankemölle, *Jahwe-Bund*, 343.

⁸⁰ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 179.

⁸¹ Kingsbury, *Story* (2nd ed.), 106. Similarly: France, *Evangelist*, 154, 251-254.

now to the crowds. In a way, Matthew keeps the reader within the story. According to Kingsbury one of Matthew's devices for speaking past the characters of the story and reaching his readers was his use of "long stretches of uninterrupted direct discourse." By these Matthew enables Jesus "to draw the implied reader to his side and to school him or her in his evaluative point of view."⁸² This device is evidently not employed in the parable discourse, except for, perhaps, in the last part (vv. 37-50). Thus the parable discourse is a *story*. The question is whether this little story is a part of the main story, or whether, as Luz asserts, it is more a symbolic story set in parallel to the main narrative.⁸³

3.4.2 The Themes of the Parable Discourse

Our second observation regards the themes of the parable discourse, some of which can only be discerned on the symbolic level of the parables. Luz distinguishes, much like we have just done, between the narrative interruptions of the parable discourse and "the *content* of the discourse," which I take to mean the words of Jesus.⁸⁴ He finds a certain connection between the interruptions and the narrative context as verses 34-35 remind him of 11:25, and thus speak of the understanding given the disciples, a theme that also is reflected in the following narrative in passages where the understanding of the disciples is highlighted (16:12; 17:13, cf. 15:10). But Luz alleges that the *content* of the discourse has a weak connection to the narrative, because many of its concepts are abruptly new and different from what we find around the discourse: The word *parable* has not been used; there has been no reflection on the nature of the kingdom of heaven; the theme of understanding is new; and hardened hearts have not been mentioned.⁸⁵

First, Luz does not appear totally consistent in how he treats the theme of *understanding*. When discussing the narrative interruptions, he sees this theme implicit, and finds that it is prepared for in 11:25 and revisited in 16:12 and 17:13. When discussing the *content*, where the theme of understanding indeed is explicit (vv. 13, 19, 23),⁸⁶ Luz says that this is a new theme, and therefore an argument for a weak connection to the context. Since the theme of understanding is brought up explicitly both in the

⁸² Kingsbury, *Story* (2nd ed.), 110.

⁸³ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 295.

⁸⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 228.

⁸⁵ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 228.

⁸⁶ Also v. 51, if we regard it as part of the *content*.

reason for parables, in the interpretation of the sower, and in the conclusion (v. 51), and is implicit in the narrative interruptions, it rather serves to hold the two aspects of the discourse together. And if this theme has connections to the surrounding narrative, then both the narrative framework and the content may be connected to this context.

Though the *parables* certainly are very different from the material in the surrounding narrative, this does not mean they do not have connections to this narrative. Since the parables are symbolic, and as such work on a different level, one step removed from the tangible circumstances of the narrative context, they must be interpreted before their connection to the context can be determined. Similarly about the concept *the kingdom of heaven*, which these parables are said to describe. This concept is from the narrative standpoint relatively obscure and yet largely unknown, and not easily connected to specific events that have preceded the discourse. But both the interpretations Jesus gives and the imagery of these parables themselves tell us that these parables are not really attempts at portraits of the kingdom itself. They rather portray the interaction between the kingdom and humans in the world, and as such they *can* be tied to events in the surrounding narrative. Davies and Allison capture this in their summary of the contents of the discourse as “the kingdom and its fate in the world.”⁸⁷ That is a theme that can be related to most chapters of the Gospel, but not the least to those immediately preceding the discourse. The same can be said about the concept of *hardened hearts*;⁸⁸ it is well illustrated before the discourse, although there is no explicit reference to it. In other words; some of Luz’ arguments about the discourse’s lack of connection to the narrative are based solely on *form* and not on *theme*, which we have seen is a more important aspect for Matthew as he edits and arranges the material of his Gospel.

With these two observations, that the five discourses taken as a unified device do not prohibit the parable discourse from participating in the narrative, and that we should look for connections in *theme* rather than *form*, we are now ready to examine the narrative leading up to and following the parable discourse.

⁸⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 449.

⁸⁸ This is explicit in the Scripture quotation in 13:14-15, verses that we have left out, but which Luz retains.

Chapter 4: The Narrative Preceding the Parable Discourse

When we in this chapter seek to determine whether the parable discourse is a coherent continuation of the preceding narrative, we must begin with the crowds and the disciples, to see if their behavior makes them deserving of the treatment they receive in chapter 13, and if their understanding corresponds to how Jesus here describes it.¹ We will also look at how *the crowds* relate to descriptions of the larger people of Israel, and how they in the section immediately preceding the discourse, chapters 11-12, relate to “this generation.” Finally we will look for direct links between chapters 11-12 and the parable discourse.

4.1 The Crowds before the Parable Discourse

When Matthew speaks of the people of Israel, he uses two terms; *λαός* and *ὄχλος*. The former is in Matthew, as it is in the Septuagint, usually used when the emphasis is on *Israel*, on the whole people as a nation;² the latter was normally used generically of a large group of people gathered in one place, or about the general populace.³ Matthew’s use of *ὄχλος* is in this sense conventional, although he alternates between the singular and plural form, without any traceable distinction in meaning.⁴ Matthew has adopted the use of *ὄχλος* from Mark, although he has multiplied its references, and as Mark he usually uses it about the groups of people that at a particular time and place interacted with Jesus. Thus we see the term used only between 4:25 and 27:24, concentrated in Jesus’ ministry. A few times *ὄχλος* is used for groups that did not gather to see and follow Jesus; for instance about the people that mourned a girl’s death (9:23), for the group sent to arrest Jesus (26:47), and about the general populace (14:5; 21:26). When used for the people that *follow* Jesus, these people should not be viewed as a fixed body of people: Sometimes Matthew speaks of *a crowd* (e.g. 8:18); other times *the crowd(s)*

¹ For the reasons mentioned in the introduction I can in this and the next chapter only make limited use of narrative studies of the crowds and the disciples like Warren Carter, “The Crowds in Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 55 (1993); and Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew’s Narrative Portrait of Disciples: How the Text-Connoted Reader is Informed* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997).

² H. Strathman, “*λαός*,” *TDNT* (*abr.*), 499-502. Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 35, 85-86; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 210; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 95.

³ “*ὄχλος*,” in BAGD.

⁴ Cousland, *Crowds*, 38-39.

(9:8); sometimes the group is especially large, as in 4:25 (ὄχλοι πολλοί); other times they fit inside a house (12:46); sometimes the crowds are gathered from a wide geographic area (4:24-45); other times only from a certain place (9:1-8). The make-up of the crowds changes, but they always appear to consist of Jews,⁵ and they appear to represent the same stratum of the populace, the common people. Matthew seems to distinguish them from the religious leaders, which are consistently portrayed in a more negative light.

In Matthew's shortening of Mark, the actions of the crowds are often among the elements he omits.⁶ Thus Matthew reveals that his interest in this "group" is limited. When ὄχλος is used for those who followed Jesus, the crowds are presented quite consistently, often reacting in a similar way. They are more stereotyped than in Mark, usually speaking and acting in unison.⁷ Some have therefore suggested that they should be regarded as a *character* in Matthew's story.⁸

Before the parable discourse the crowds appear in summary statements, discourses, and miracle stories. Matthew usually makes sure to describe them as part of the "scenery" as he begins or ends a major section. Thus we meet them in the summary at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (4:23-25), at the introduction and conclusion to the sermon on the mount (5:1; 7:28-29), at the beginning and conclusion to his miracle section (8:1; 9:33), and in the transition into the mission discourse (9:36). In the "response-section" (chs. 11-12) they appear after the introduction (11:7), and in the final pericope (12:46). The crowds also appear a few times within chapters 8-9 and 11-12.

The references to the ὄχλος in 4:25 and 9:36 follow and build on the parallel formulaic summaries in 4:23 and 9:35. In both Matthew goes from speaking about the general people, the λαός in 4:23 and the πόλεις in 9:35, to the specific crowds Jesus encountered. The two texts show us that the crowds for Matthew are representatives of the *people*—often inhabitants of the *cities*. They are not mentioned in the summary in 11:1, where only the cities are mentioned, but as soon as Jesus is finished with John's disciples, the crowds alone are his audience (11:7). In 12:15 Matthew speaks of *many* (πολλοί) who followed Jesus and were healed, and we should probably think of these no

⁵ Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 75-76, 86-95.

⁶ Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 41.

⁷ Cousland, *Crowds*, 43-44.

⁸ Cousland, *Crowds*, 43-51; Kingsbury, *Story*, 23-24.

different than the crowds.⁹ In all these occurrences, and in the introduction and conclusion to the sermon on the mount, the crowds are primarily *recipients* of Jesus' ministry. He, the shepherd of the lost sheep (9:36; 10:6), goes to them in compassion, and they flock to him with their needs. At the end of the sermon on the mount the crowds also act as *witnesses* to Jesus' extraordinary wisdom and authority (7:28-29, par Mark 1:22).

In the miracle stories the crowds mostly act as witnesses. They do not have needs, but they watch *individuals* come to Jesus with their needs. They are mentioned in three stories in chapters 8-9 and one in chapter 12. Cousland holds the crowds in the story of the dead girl (9:18-26) outside his examination of Matthew's use of the crowds because they have not gathered because of Jesus.¹⁰ They react more negatively than they do in the other stories, by laughing at Jesus when he tells them the girl sleeps, and they are forced to leave (9:24-25). In the three other stories they react to Jesus' miracles in the exact same miracle stories where the religious leaders react. They are awestruck (φοβέομαι) and glorify God while the scribes say Jesus blasphemes (9:3, 8); they are amazed (θαυμάζω) at his power and exclaim that they have never seen anything like it in Israel while the Pharisees say his power is demonic (9:33-34); and they are astounded (ἐξίστημι) while the Pharisees say he is in league with Beelzebul (12:23-24).

All these contrasting elements Matthew has taken from his sources (Cf. Mark 2:4, 12; Luke 11:14-15.). But he has also added statements uttered by the amazed crowds, and increased the positive elements: In 9:8 they are amazed at *Jesus' authority as forgiver*, likely also as *healer*, and in 12:23 he has added that they ask themselves whether Jesus might be *the Son of David*. Thus we see that the crowds are not employed primarily to contrast the leaders, but to draw attention to Jesus. They are eye-witnesses who testify to his unprecedented ministry. As has been pointed out by many, the crowds in Matthew are not unlike the *chorus* of the Greek drama, which "amplifies the significance of the protagonist's action and interprets it for the audience."¹¹ But this role is not limited to the crowds. In almost all of Matthew's miracle stories there are "responses" that serve to underline the miraculous aspect or a theological point.¹²

⁹ On the textual issue of this verse, see below.

¹⁰ Cousland, *Crowds*, 40.

¹¹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 45. Cf. e.g. Kingsbury, *Parables*, 26; Keener, *Matthew*, 671.

¹² Cf. 8:4, 17, 27, 34; 9:26, 31; 12:14.

What can we deduce about Matthew's view of the crowds in these texts? The important act of the crowds in the summary statements and scenic descriptions may be that they *follow* (ἀκολουθέω) Jesus. This term is usually associated with discipleship, and according to Luz it is in Matthew even an "ecclesiological term."¹³ For Cousland it is significant that Matthew uses it eight times about the crowds—four of them redactional insertions.¹⁴ Jesus' discussions about discipleship no doubt reveal that the term is an important one,¹⁵ and when Jesus calls disciples, it is sometimes with an imperative form of ἀκολουθέω (8:22; 9:9). But we should not infer from this that ἀκολουθέω used of the crowds imply that they are *potential disciples*.¹⁶ Despite the term's symbolic importance, Matthew did not find it required that Jesus use it in the paradigmatic calling of the first four disciples (4:19, 21). And ἀκολουθέω is apparently not too "ecclesiological" to be used in an ordinary sense, without metaphorical implications (9:19; 26:58). We should also be cautious about inferring too much from word statistics. After Jesus has called his disciples to follow him, Matthew never again states that they follow him around because he simply presupposes that they do.¹⁷ But Matthew does omit Markan elements that may indicate that *other* followers than the twelve belonged to the private sphere of Jesus.¹⁸

In the references to the crowds' following of Jesus Cousland finds their main characteristic reflected; *need*.¹⁹ He observes that healings often take place around these references, and points out how Matthew in two of his four redactional insertions of ἀκολουθέω about the crowds also adds that Jesus healed them (14:13-14; 19:2). According to Cousland, such references are therefore not about *potential discipleship*, but they set the stage for Jesus' compassion and miraculous power, and thus reflects Matthew's Christological focus. This is undoubtedly Matthew's primary purpose, although we have seen that the crowds draw attention to Jesus not only through their needs, but also as they *witness* his miracles. In the last two of the four instances where Matthew has added that the crowds followed Jesus, the crowds watch *individuals* being

¹³ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 162.

¹⁴ Cousland, *Crowds*, 145-146.

¹⁵ Cf. 8:19-23; 10:37-39; 16:24-27; 19:16-30

¹⁶ Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 163.

¹⁷ The only exception is when Jesus sends them out (10:5). We do not hear of them until 12:1. On 8:23, see below. That Matthew presupposes that the disciples' always followed Jesus is especially clear in 19:27-29.

¹⁸ Cf. Mark 2:15, diff. Matt 9:10.

¹⁹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 165, 172.

healed (8:1; 20:29). The more important aspect to note in all the four redactional insertions is that Matthew adds that *great crowds* followed Jesus (8:1; 14:13; 19:2; 20:29). His point is primarily to show that Jesus' ministry is something out of the ordinary. Great crowds come from far away (4:24-25) and follow Jesus because the wisdom and power they see in him have never been seen before in Israel (cf. 9:33).

Since the crowds react to Jesus' deeds in such contrast to the religious leaders, they leave a positive impression with the reader. They appear to be more than just *open* to Jesus. As they glorify God for Jesus' deeds (9:8), they show that they understand where Jesus has his power from. And in 12:23, likely in a redactional addition (Cf. Luke 11:14), Matthew lets the crowds ask the question: μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς Δαυίδ; —*this cannot be the Son of David, can he?* The introductory μήτι indicates that the crowds expect a negative answer, but they are still not expressing *disbelief*.²⁰ Their question stands in contrast to the Pharisees' accusation, and thus appears as a positive utterance, a step in the direction of faith, although they do not yet really believe their own suggestion.

The Messianic title *Son of David* is in addition to an occurrence in the Gospel's introduction (1:1) used directly for Jesus in six passages (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15), always by non-disciples. It is the only Christological title uttered by non-disciples, except for *lord* (e.g. 8:2; 17:15), which is not intended with its full Christological implications on the narrative level.²¹ The title *Son of David* is also used for Joseph, by an angel (1:20), and although Matthew's point there is to reiterate Jesus' descent from David through Joseph (cf. 1:16), the fact that it is not, so to speak, *blasphemous* to use it on others, indicates that this title does not embody the full import of Jesus' office. Clearly, it does not reflect the level of insight in Peter's confession of Jesus as "Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16), and Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees in 22:41-46 may indicate that the general understanding of it was inadequate, since the title might not imply that the Messiah exceeds David.²² Still it is an important

²⁰ So Matera, *Plot*, 249.

²¹ Matthew lets the reader understand early that Jesus is Lord in the divine sense (3:3), but when κύριε is used to address Jesus by supplicants, Jesus never takes that as an indicator of faith in itself (e.g. 8:1, 6), or eulogize them for their insight (cf. 16:16-17). κύριε is also used in secular settings (13:27; 21:30). Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 20.

²² Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (2nd ed; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 134. Against viewing *Son of David* as reflecting a particularly deep understanding when used with the particle: Cousland, *Crowds*, 175-176.

Messianic title in Matthew, judging from its use in the superscript at 1:1 and Jesus' appreciation for it as it is uttered by children in 21:15-16.

Of the six times *Son of David* is used directly for Jesus, all except the occurrence at Jesus' triumphal entry (21:9) are uttered as Jesus is healing and exorcizing. In Jewish legends David's son Solomon was a mighty healer and exorcist.²³ This is no doubt why the crowds in 12:23 mention this title; although they can not really believe it, Jesus' miracle suggests that he is the Son of David. Unlike its use on Joseph, the idea here is clearly that Jesus might be the *Messiah*. Especially troublesome for the parable discourse is that this speculation takes place so close to the discourse—in fact, it appears to take place the same day (cf. 13:1). Now, Matthew is not very concerned about the temporal aspect of Jesus ministry,²⁴ and 13:1 was perhaps only meant to link the parable discourse to the preceding pericope 12:46-50 (see below), but the proximity to the parable discourse is enough to make the reader puzzled when reading the reason for parables.

As Jesus later enters Jerusalem, the crowds will again use the title: “Hosanna to the Son of David” (21:9). Here they no longer hesitate, but hail him outright as the Messiah. Thus we may wonder if Matthew means to show a development in the crowds' understanding. They go from glorifying God “who had given such authority to *men*” (9:8), to suggesting tentatively that Jesus might be the Son of David (12:23), to hailing him as the Son of David (21:9). Perhaps, but the primary purpose is in none of the cases to describe the crowds. As we have said, the crowds' testimony to Jesus' authority in 9:8 serves a Christological purpose. That they say “to men” (τοῖς ἀνθρώποις), and not to *a man*, indicates that Matthew's focus was elsewhere than on the crowds' level of faith.²⁵ In 21:9 *Son of Man* is, like in 12:23, employed for a Christological purpose, although here it is not the healing or exorcism that makes Jesus a parallel to Solomon, but his royal entrance to Jerusalem. Solomon similarly rode on a donkey in Jerusalem when anointed

²³ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 135-136.

²⁴ Cf. e.g. 14:13-36: According to 14:15 it was already evening, but Jesus feeds 5000 men with their families, walks on water and apparently rows (14:32) with the disciples to the other side, where word goes out to the whole region (ὅλην τὴν περίχωρον), and people bring their sick and are healed (14:34-36)—all apparently in one evening. Matthew is usually vague on *time*: To indicate that some time has passed, he can use summary statements (4:23-25; 9:35; 11:1), ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ—at that time (11:25; 12:1; 14:1), aorists (e.g. 8:5; 14:13), τότε (e.g. 12:22, 38) or ἀπὸ τότε (4:17; 16:21).

²⁵ The plural is usually explained as a way of revealing that the church is given the authority to forgive (cf. 18:18). E.g. Cousland, *Crowds*, 278; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 95-96; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 28.

as king (1 Kings 1:33).²⁶ And unlike in 12:23, the setting now requires that the crowds as *chorus* hail the arriving king with conviction—as at a triumph. Thus the “development” might merely reflect Matthew’s particular focus in each episode. At the most Matthew was *secondarily* describing the crowds’ growing understanding.

If we return to 12:23; at this point two blind men have already addressed Jesus as *Son of David* (9:27), without *μήτι* or a question mark. And these explicitly confirm that they *believe* Jesus is able to heal them (9:28). Compared to the faith of these two, the crowds’ “faith” is not that great. They actually lag behind many of the individuals Jesus heals in chapters 8-9 (cf. 8:2, 10; 9:2, 18). Whereas these individuals come *expecting* that Jesus will heal, the crowds are *amazed* (ἐκπλήσσομαι, 7:28), awestruck (φοβέομαι, 9:8), in marvel (θαυμάζω, 9:33), and astounded (ἐξίστημι, 12:23). If we are to view the crowds as one character, they are surprisingly slow to learn. And they fit the description of Israel in Jesus’ statement about the centurion: “In no one in Israel have I found such faith” (8:10). In this light the reason for parables gives a rather appropriate description. “*While seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*” The crowds have seen and heard Jesus, but still they do not understand that he is the Messiah.

To sum up; we have seen that the ὄχλος, when referring to those that follow Jesus, have two primary roles before the parable discourse; as needy *recipients* of Jesus’ ministry, and as amazed *witnesses* to the same. In both roles they serve as a foil to Jesus’ ministry, highlighting its unprecedented character. They are described quite consistently as open to Jesus ministry; they recognize, unlike their leaders, that God is behind it, but they are still hesitant to embrace Jesus as the Messiah.

4.2 The Disciples before the Parable Discourse

The term μαθητής is used 71 times in the Gospel of Matthew. Except for a few references to the disciples of John (9:14; 11:2) and the Pharisees (22:16), and a few generic uses (10:24, 25, 42.), it is always in plural and refers to Jesus’ twelve disciples.²⁷ Three times Matthew merely describe these as *the twelve*; another three as *the twelve disciples*.²⁸ That

²⁶ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 116-117.

²⁷ For a discussion of 8:21, see below. Regarding Joseph of Arimathea in 27: 57, cf. below, n. 29.

²⁸ οἱ δώδεκα: 20:17; 26:14, 47; οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταὶ 10:1; 11:1; 26:20 . Plus 10:2: τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων.

Jesus, unlike Mark, does not use this term more often is most likely because Matthew *identifies* the term οἱ μαθηταὶ with the twelve.²⁹ He probably presupposed that all twelve were present at 5:1, though he at this point only has narrated the call of four (4:18-22, cf. 8:21-22; 9:9), and he does not name all until 10:2-4. Calling disciples is one of the first things Jesus does in his ministry—before he engages with the crowds (cf. 4:25). Their purpose is clear from the start; they are to follow Jesus and learn to “fish men” (4:19).

Jesus’ ministry is before the parable discourse primarily focused on Israel, and the disciples are somewhat anonymous. We are for the most part left to assume that they quietly follow Jesus around. Only once, in the story of the stilling of the storm (8:23-27), do they open their mouths. What characterizes the disciples most before the parable discourse is not so much what they say and do, but that Jesus calls them; to follow him (4:18-22; 8:21-22; 9:9) and to be sent out from him (10:1-5).

But one of the few things that *can* be said about the disciples’ actions in the first half of the Gospel is noteworthy, even though Matthew has taken it from Mark. As Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, they *immediately* (εὐθέως) drop their nets and follow Jesus (4:20). James and John likewise; they *immediately* leave their father and their boat (4:22). Further, in Matthew 8:19-22 we hear first of a scribe that wants to follow (ἀκολουθέω) Jesus, “wherever you go.” Jesus lets him know the cost; not having a home or a bed. Without revealing the scribe’s response, the story moves on to one of Jesus’ disciples who asks for permission to go and bury his father. Jesus tells him to leave that to the dead, and again we are not told about this man’s reaction. But in the next verse (8:23), in a redactional sentence, we hear that the disciples *followed* Jesus into the boat (cf. Mark 4:35-36). The implication is; the disciple, who either was or first now became one of the twelve, follows Jesus, with no hesitation, after having received the command;³⁰ the scribe, who was not a disciple,³¹ did not. Matthew nowhere else explicitly mentions that

²⁹ Ulrich Luz, “The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew* (ed. Graham N. Stanton; London: SPCK, 1983), 99; Wilkens, *Disciple*, 167. At the end we hear of women who had ministered to Jesus (27:55-56, 61; 28:1), and Joseph of Arimathea, who had ἐμαθητεύθη—become a disciple of Jesus (27:57); none of them explicitly designated with the noun μαθηταὶ.

³⁰ “ἕτερος τῶν μαθητῶν”: Whether an existing disciple now asked for a leave or he just here became a disciple, his commitment is the same. His request is reasonable, and not a sign of lacking commitment.

³¹ Contra Robert H. Gundry, “On True and False Disciples in Matthew 8:18-22,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 434; Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew, and his world of thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 108. Both find the “ἕτερος” used on the disciple to indicate that the scribe also was a disciple.

the *disciples* followed Jesus, only that the individual disciples followed him when called (4:20, 22; 9:9). Thus, one of Matthew's concerns here was probably to show that this individual also did. At the same time he is able to show that *all* the disciples, as opposed to the scribe, had the commitment to follow Jesus despite its cost. Unlike the crowds who follow Jesus out of curiosity and need, the disciples follow out of *obedience*.³²

The immediate and total commitment of the disciples stands in clear contrast to the lasting hesitation of the crowds. Thus, Jesus' choice of the twelve disciples is not arbitrary. Only they fit his requirements of discipleship: They have left family (4:22, cf. 10:37), possessions, and sources of income (4:20, 22, cf. 19:21), and when Jesus sends them out, he can therefore presuppose their readiness to suffer and die for him (10:17, 28; cf. 16:24-27).³³ The disciples have by following Jesus also displayed righteousness and obedience to his teachings. They do not store up for themselves treasures on earth (6:19-21), but serve only one master (6:24), seek the kingdom first, and trust in God's provision (6:25-34). Jesus can thus refer to them as οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος, the bridegroom's "best men" (9:15). It is not totally surprising and undeserved, therefore, that Jesus right before parable discourse points to the disciples only, as those who do "the will of my Father" (12:49-50). That Matthew directs this praise only at the disciples and not, as it might be interpreted in Mark, also to the crowds (cf. Mark 3:32-35), indicates that although we have not seen from the crowds any direct *disobedience* to Jesus' demands, any "sins of commission," they have still failed to act in obedience to him.

But it is their *understanding*, not commitment and righteousness, the disciples are praised for in the parable discourse. Though the disciples' understanding of Jesus is never revealed in this part of the Gospel, we assume that their commitment to him must stem from a high view of him. That they are sent out to preach the good news, to announce that Messianic kingdom is near (10:7), indicates that they understand him as the Messiah.

But there is one episode that seems to reveal that their understanding did not greatly exceed that of the crowds'. After the disciples proved their commitment by

The grammar does not demand this reading. Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 157-158. Further, in Matthew the disciples consistently address Jesus as "κύριε" (lord), like the disciple in 8:21. The scribe addresses Jesus with "διδάσκαλε," something that only the rich young man and representatives of the religious leadership do (12:38; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36). Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 17-18.

³² Cf. Edwards, *Disciples*, 30.

³³ Cf. Wilkens, *Disciple*, 150.

following Jesus in the boat in 8:23, a storm rises and is stilled by Jesus. The disciples *are amazed* (θαυμάζω), just like the crowds (8:27; cf. 9:33). But though we are left with the impression that the disciples fail to measure up, and Jesus criticizes their lack of faith (8:26), we may excuse them a bit, because the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching (7:28-29), healing of a paralytic (9:8), of two blind men (9:33), and a blind demoniac (12:23); all elements that they, according to Matthew, probably should expect from their Messiah (2:6; 8:17; 11:5; Deut 18:15). In addition, recurring amazement over healings does not exactly reflect *understanding*. Authority over wind and waves is something different: It might in itself be seen as a more powerful miracle; Jesus had not displayed this power before; and it was not typically expected from the Messiah—rather, to still the storm was traditionally an act of God (esp. Psalms 65:7; 89:7; 107:29).

It is difficult to know to what degree Matthew is here portraying the disciples. We know he has a greater interest in the disciples than in the crowds, and on one level he certainly wants to teach his readers something about faith. But he might, again, primarily be interested in Christology. That Jesus stoically asks, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” while the wind is roaring and the waves are splashing, testifies to his extraordinary character. And the role of the *chorus* here befalls the disciples (there was no one else in the boat). The last verse is indeed interesting. When introducing the disciples' question, Matthew does not designate them as disciples, but in a rewriting of Mark he merely calls them “men” (ἄνθρωποι), which he does nowhere else. The *men* exclaim: “What kind [of man/being] (ποταπός) is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” While some have suggested the question is uttered by other *men* than the disciples, it is probably more likely, as Gundry has proposed, that *men* contrasts the “divine majesty” displayed in the miracle.³⁴ Matthew's use of ποταπός (what kind), not Mark's τίς (who?), may support this notion, because the disciples open up the possibility that Jesus is of a different kind than ἄνθρωποι. Thus Matthew uses *men* to suggest that Jesus is more than *a man*, quite appropriate after Jesus has performed an act of God.

In this light, there is a notable difference between the disciples' question here and that of the crowds in 12:23. The crowds wrestle with the thought of Jesus being the earthly *Son of David*; the disciples wonder whether Jesus might be divine. Later, also in a

³⁴ Gundry, *Matthew*, 156-157. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-20*, 75.

boat, as Jesus again displays power over the water, they conclude that he *is* divine (14:33).³⁵ But for now, by Matthew's use of *ποταπός*, no specific title is associated with Jesus, and Matthew preserves the climax of the disciples' confession for the later episode.

4.3 The Crowds and the Disciples Compared

We have seen that the disciples are distinguished from the crowds by their immediate and total commitment to Jesus and their obedience to his teachings. The crowds fail to obey Jesus' demands and follow him for other reasons than obedience. As trusted representatives of Jesus, the disciples also reflect a greater *understanding* of Jesus; they understand him as the promised Messiah. Perhaps therefore they never lift their voice in surprise or astonishment as Jesus heals. But when he stills a storm they reveal that they have not understood him as the *Son of God*. Their understanding is still superior to that of the crowds, who continue to be surprised at Jesus' healings and are not yet willing to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, even when seen as an earthly figure.

When we study these two groups in isolation, their differences stand out, and the parable discourse does not seem so unfair to the crowds. But it is still out of step with the preceding narrative that the crowds must take the brunt of Jesus' criticism, because Matthew has not portrayed them as the disciples' opposites. Rather, they have been a supporting voice to Jesus' ministry, countering the attacks of the religious leaders. So although we have found in the disciples the kind of behavior we in the conclusion to the last chapter said we needed to connect the parable discourse to the preceding narrative, we have not quite seen the expected obduracy in the crowds. But; Israel's leaders are not the only ones who have not been supportive of Jesus' ministry. From Jesus we hear that "this generation" has ignored his call to repentance (11:16; 12:39-42). Since we have said that the crowds are representatives of the people of Israel, and "this generation" appears to refer to the same, we need to examine how these terms relate to each other.

³⁵ In the worship of Jesus, his divinity is presupposed. Cf. 4:10.

4.4 The Crowds and the People of Israel

In Cousland's opinion Matthew had a very deliberate approach to the concept of ὄχλος, whom he shaped and stylized into a consistent character with a "distinctive and unified *persona*."³⁶ For this reason Cousland keeps the crowds separate from other general descriptions of the people of Israel for the duration of Jesus' ministry. Before 4:24 and after 27:24 Matthew prefers to use λαός about the people, but during Jesus' ministry Matthew does not use λαός except in Scripture quotations and in his formulaic term for the Jewish leaders.³⁷ This is, according to Cousland, because Matthew during Jesus' ministry clearly distinguishes between the leaders and the crowds, the two "refracted constituents" of Israel.³⁸ This is not at all obvious in chapters 11-12, where the general term "this generation" might be seen to span both laity and leaders. Cousland takes somewhat lightly on these chapters as he merely states in passing that the antipathy here displayed against Jesus "comes largely from the Jewish leaders and not from the crowds, whose attitude is throughout the two chapters expressly contrasted with that of their leaders."³⁹ As Cousland in general does not study texts where ὄχλος or λαός are not used, he may in fact miss out of important clues to determining whether the crowds can be distinguished from the people as a whole. We therefore need to challenge Cousland's understanding of the crowds as a precisely shaped and distinct entity and examine how this term relates to general descriptions of the people of Israel.

On the basis of similarities between *many* of Matthew's uses of ὄχλος, Cousland posits an extensive consistency in Matthew's application of the term.⁴⁰ But we have seen how ὄχλος is used of other groups than those who followed Jesus, and also about the populace in general. If Matthew was very deliberate in his presentation of the crowds, we would have expected him to avoid ὄχλος where the mourners laugh at Jesus (9:23-24), and to clarify that the crowds Jesus is speaking to in 26:55 actually was the crowd

³⁶ Cousland, *Crowds*, 45.

³⁷ Scripture quotation: 15:8. "The chief priests and the scribes/elders *of the people*": 21:23; 26:3; 26:47; 27:1. In an exception to this λαός is also used in 26:5.

³⁸ Cousland, *Crowds*, 94.

³⁹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 10.

⁴⁰ Here he was preceded by Wilkens, *Disciple*, 170.

coming “from the chief priests and elders of the people” (cf. 26:47).⁴¹ Even if we exclude the passion narrative and limit ourselves to the crowds that followed Jesus, the crowds do not always act as consistent as Cousland seems to suggest. After hushing on two blind men crying out to the Son of David in 20:30, they go on to hail him as the Son of David in 21:9, and explain to those watching that Jesus is, not the Messiah, but *the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee* (21:11, see below). Their behavior and the understanding it reflects are not exactly consistent. As we will see, Matthew has, just like in the miracle stories, some clear Christological reasons for the crowd’s behavior in these two episodes.

That the crowds in Matthew (those who follow Jesus) act more as a person than they do in Mark is probably not so much due to a defined *persona*, but rather to the fact that Matthew sharpens the function of the recipients and audiences of Jesus’ ministry to make them clearly and loudly speak his theological points. Also Cousland acknowledges that Matthew’s extensive pruning of Mark shows his primary interest to be Christology.⁴² Since Matthew so clearly reveals that his interest is not in the crowds, we should be cautious of ascribing to him a very deliberate shaping of this concept. Most likely the crowds do not act as they do because they act out their *persona*, but because Matthew at different points in the narrative has particular theological or literary purposes for them to fill. We can therefore assume that Matthew’s use of the crowds is somewhat *pragmatic*.⁴³

Cousland also alleges that Matthew has tightened up the concept of the crowds by consistently applying the term ὄχλος, whereas his predecessor Mark had *several* terms for such groups of people.⁴⁴ But at this point the difference between the two is hardly noticeable. Cousland’s argument rests on the use of πλῆθος in Mark 3:7-8 and πολλοὶ in Mark 6:33,⁴⁵ and his textual decision not to read “πολλοὶ” in Matthew 12:15.⁴⁶ Except for Mark’s use of πλῆθος, Matthew leans heavily on Mark. As Cousland himself points out; Matthew’s arbitrary use of ὄχλος in the singular and plural is due to Matthew’s

⁴¹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 227-230 views this crowd as the same unified character as in the rest of the Gospel. If so, they are certainly not acting consistently, as this occurs before they side with their leaders in 27:20.

⁴² Cousland, *Crowds*, 41.

⁴³ Cf. Carter, “Crowds,” 64; Luomanen, *Entering*, 125.

⁴⁴ Cousland, *Crowds*, 39.

⁴⁵ Mark’s other uses of πολλοὶ are not necessarily synonymous with ὄχλος, as Cousland also indicates; *Crowds*, 37.

⁴⁶ Cousland, *Crowds*, 31-32, n.3 favors the variant “ὄχλοι πολλοὶ,” which has good support, but not among the oldest manuscript. Metzger and the UBS Committee opt for “πολλοὶ.” Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 26.

preference for the plural, but his adoption of Mark's singular in Markan texts.⁴⁷ Similarly, Matthew can follow Mark and *not use* ὄχλος of people that well could fit the term, for instance by using a verb form implying “they” as subject without specifying that it was the crowds/people (e.g. 8:16; cf. Mark 1:32). Or Matthew can deviate from Mark and specify the subject by an expression other than ὄχλος, for instance “the whole city” (8:34, cf. Mark 5:14)⁴⁸ or “the men of that place” (14:35, cf. Mark 6:54). Matthew's redaction reflects neither a great interest in the crowds nor a desire to create a consistent character.

Other places, too, Matthew does not use ὄχλος where the people or a crowd is in view. And though Cousland has not treated such instances, they are quite telling because they reveal that for Matthew it was not the ὄχλος/ὄχλοι as a *distinct entity* that was important. In 9:2 it is an implied “they” or “his own city” that bring Jesus' a paralytic, and in 13:54 it is an implied “they” or “his hometown” that are amazed at Jesus' wisdom and power. In these cases Matthew merely wanted to say that *the people* of these particular towns acted in a certain way. Although these actions are typical of Matthew's ὄχλος, he did not find it crucial to ascribe them to the ὄχλος, and this indicates that for Matthew it was *the people* of the different places that were in interaction with Jesus, not the *character* ὄχλος/ὄχλοι. Sometimes Matthew just needed *someone* to give a response that highlighted the exceptional character of Jesus' ministry (e.g. 9:31); other times it was important that *large crowds* gathered around Jesus (e.g. 15:29); and other times, again, it was important that *the people* (of Israel) was the object of Jesus ministry (e.g. 14:19). Matthew's use of ὄχλος is *generic*; it is a *term* more than a *character*, and the clue to understanding his use of it is not to see a distinct entity behind it, but to see how Matthew at several different points in his narrative needs a term to denote *the people* or *a crowd*.

Neither should we think that the crowds underwent *a development* during the course of Matthew's narrative. The mention of *Son of David* in 12:23 and 21:9 does not reflect that the *distinct character* of the crowds underwent such a development.⁴⁹ Matthew might have conceived of a general development in *the people*, because he generalizes them, lets them be of one mind and speak with one voice, and lets them all

⁴⁷ Cousland, *Crowds*, 37.

⁴⁸ Here Matthew largely follows Mark 3:14.

⁴⁹ Cousland, *Crowds*, 49.

undergo a change in 27:20 (see below). But though the crowds often represent the *λαός* (4:23-25) and the “lost sheep of Israel” (9:36; 10:6, 15:24), they do not do so here. The recognition of Jesus as Son of David is limited to the group that followed Jesus while “the whole city” was bewildered (21:10). We will return to these texts in chapter five. More pertinent now; if Matthew used the term *ὄχλος* generically of *people*, and these often are representatives of Israel, then the parable discourse should not just be measured according to how the crowds are presented before the discourse, but how *the people of Israel in general* are presented, also where the *ὄχλος* have not been mentioned.

4.5 Jesus’ Invective against “This Generation” in Chapters 11-12

We saw in our discussion of the unity of chapters 11-12 that this section contrasts those who believe in Jesus with those who do not, and that the weight is on unbelief. We also saw that the Galilean cities (11:20-24) and the Pharisees (12:1-37) both become specific examples of the general lack of faith and repentance by “this generation.” Jesus attacks these types of stubborn unbelief by accusing “this generation” of failure to respond to both John and himself (11:16-19); by asserting that they are “evil and adulterous” when demanding a sign to believe (12:39); by prophesying that they in the judgment will be accused by Nineveh and the Queen of the South for their lack of faith and repentance (12:41-42); and that they will end up in a state similar to that of a demoniac who has been freed but ends up in a worse bondage. The obduracy reflected in this criticism is a just basis for exclusion from the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Before we look further into chapters 11-12, we need to make a point Cousland largely passes over, but which might tie the crowds to the unbelief of the people at large. Though 12:23 rightly makes the *ὄχλος* a positive contrast to one example of unbelief, they are mentioned twice more in this section. When Matthew writes in 12:46, “while [Jesus] was still speaking to the crowds . . .,” the crowds, in addition to—or including—the scribes and the Pharisees (12:38), are made the audience of Jesus’ tirade against “this generation” in 12:38-45. 12:38 might indicate that the criticism primarily is directed at the scribes and the Pharisees, but if we look at 11:7, we see that also here the crowds—now alone—are staged as the recipients of Jesus’ invective against “this generation” (11:7-24). It is to them Jesus says, “he who has ears to hear, let him hear” (11:15) when

speaking about John, whom “this generation” had failed to recognize. Further, the woes on the Galilean cities are given in the second person, as if the crowds *were* these cities. This may not have been Matthew’s intention, but since he many places thinks of the ὄχλοι as people of the cities (e.g. 9:35-36; 14:13), we ought to wonder if he here envisioned the crowds as inhabitants of the cities Jesus is rebuking (cf. 11:1). Notably, Jesus did in neither of these passages speak to the disciples, although 12:49 reveals that they were present at least during the last diatribe.

4.5.1 Lack of Repentance Already in the Past?

Interestingly enough, the criticism in chapter 11 is just as surprising as Jesus’ treatment of the crowds in the parable discourse. In 11:16-18 Jesus states that “this generation” failed to believe John the Baptist, but in 3:5-7, on the other hand, we get the impression that the whole people came out to John and were baptized, and in 14:5 and 21:26 we hear that the people regarded John as a prophet.⁵⁰ It is almost equally surprising to hear that Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum failed to believe Jesus (11:21-24) after what looks like a successful ministry in Galilee, with the people of Capernaum glorifying God for Jesus’ powers (9:8).⁵¹ As we have seen, the people’s attitudes to Jesus and responses to his ministry usually express faith in chapters 4-9.⁵² The people’s responses to Jesus are therefore presented notably more negative in chapters 11-13 than in the narrative before.

There are two ways to view the sudden somber tone in chapter 11, just like there are two ways to view the sudden harsh treatment of the crowds in the parable discourse: One can see these descriptions and events as firm parts of the narrative despite the tensions they create; or one can find the tensions too great, and see them as hints to read these texts *proleptically* or on a different level. Like with the parable discourse, Luz argues that the unbelief and opposition referred to by Jesus in chapter 11 has not yet taken place in the narrative—they are “incorrectly located.” Therefore; Jesus predicts judgment based on later events.⁵³

⁵⁰ But in 17:12: “They” (implied in οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν), the people or their leaders, “did not recognize him.”

⁵¹ Jesus’ own city (9:1) is Capernaum, not Nazareth (4:13).

⁵² 4:24-25; 7:28-29; 8:2, 8-9, 16; 9:8, 18, 20-22, 27-28, 32-33.

⁵³ Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 152. Cf. p. 217-221 regarding a similar text in ch. 12.

Though a proleptic reading is possible for some of the texts both in chapter 11 and 12, 11:20-24 clearly refers to unbelief in the past. The miracles Jesus did in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum have already taken place—without the peoples’ repentance. That their promised judgment still lies in the future does not change the fact that their lack of repentance is presented in past tense (οὐ μετενόησαν, v. 20). That this is now in the past is further indicated in the next pericope, 11:25-30, which as the third unit in this section is set in contrast to the two previous units, and should be taken as an explanation to both. In 11:25 God is said to have hidden (ἐκρύψας) “these things”—in past tense. As 11:5 clearly refers back to the ministry of Jesus recorded in the preceding chapters, this whole chapter should be understood as Israel’s response to these events. And as chapter 12 is part of the same section, we should probably read the criticism of the same “generation” in 12:39-45 against the same background, not just referring to the opposition of the Pharisees just narrated, but seeing this opposition of the Pharisees as an expression of the wider obduracy manifested in different layers of the Jewish society.

The conflict between this material and the earlier accounts of Jesus’ ministry should not lead us to read these texts proleptically, but we should rather recognize that the material Matthew had at hand not so readily fell into the storyline he had in mind. The discrepancy between the people’s responses in chapters 3-9 and Jesus’ account of the people’s responses in chapters 11-12 is explainable. We understand why few accounts of people’s rejection of Jesus made it through tradition and into Matthew’s Gospel. If stories described Jesus ministering and the people rejecting his words and his miracles, they were not likely to produce much faith, and would be counterproductive to Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew *can* recount stories where the people are amazed at Jesus’ wisdom and power, but still reject him (13:53-58), and he can recount Jesus’ own accounts of his rejection (e.g. 11:16-19, 20-24). But even with such material, he is limited to what his sources offer. Thus, when Matthew for Christological reasons has enhanced the people’s positive responses in chapters 8-9, chapter 11 brings an abrupt change to the narrative.

But this turn is not totally unprepared. We have seen how the opponents of Jesus appear already in chapters 8-9. There is also a strong indication of Jesus’ dissatisfaction with the faith of the people in general when he remarks before healing the centurion’s servant that he never has seen such faith with anyone in Israel, and then goes on to

prophecy Gentile salvation and judgment on the “sons of the kingdom” (8:10-12). And as we have suggested, with chapter 10 Matthew seeks to bridge the gap further by Jesus’ descriptions of opposition to his gospel by the people in general. The events referred to by Jesus in chapter 11 should therefore not be seen as “incorrectly located” in Matthew’s narrative.

4.5.2 The Extent of the Unbelief

If “this generation’s” lack of repentance in chapter 11 is in the past, what is the extent of it? Though Jesus only lashes out against three Galilean cities, he is not particularly focused on these, and his point is not that these cities in unison rejected Jesus, while other cities were still open to him. Rather, as 11:20 says, these were the cities where *most* of his miracles were done. If *they* did not repent, we are probably not to assume there had been repentance where fewer miracles were done.⁵⁴ Jesus was not in interaction with the whole people of Israel at one time, and the only way to narrate his rejection by the people in general, was to use passages where Jesus was rejected by certain groups (e.g. 12:22-29) or by the people of certain cities (13:53-58). With a shortage of such traditions, to describe a widespread rejection of Jesus Matthew had to use *Jesus sayings* that reflected his rejection by parts of the population (e.g. 11:20-24; 12:30-37) or by the people in general (e.g. 11:16-19; 12:38-45). As we have argued, the structure in chapters 11-12 indicates that the negative passages here should be taken as *examples of unbelief*. And “this generation” should be taken as a general reference to the people of Israel living at the time of Jesus.⁵⁵ The unbelief is thus at this point a widespread phenomenon.

If we take the last passage of chapters 11-12 into account, then *widespread* may be an understatement. In this last of the three “contrast-units,” only the disciples are pointed out as doers of the will of God (12:49-50)—a clarification of Mark, where the whole crowd might be understood as referents (Mark 3:31-35). Thus no one else appears to obey the demands of Jesus. This seems to be Kingsbury’s basis for describing the rejection of Jesus as “total” by the beginning of the parable discourse.⁵⁶ That this is Matthew’s intention is not entirely certain. The disciples no doubt have a special position,

⁵⁴ So also Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 152.

⁵⁵ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 8-18, 260; Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 148.

⁵⁶ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 18.

but we have seen in the miracle stories that individuals who came to Jesus were praised for their faith (8:10; 9:2, 22, 29), and at the end of the Gospel we also hear of certain women that had followed and ministered to Jesus, and apparently had not turned against him (27:55-56, 61; 28:1). We also hear of Joseph of Arimathea, who had ἐμαθητεύθη—become a disciple of Jesus (27:57). It is therefore possible that Matthew saw the disciples more as a *symbol* of the few who did believe Jesus. The narrow limitation to the disciples at this point should perhaps be explained on the transparent level; that Matthew here primarily thought of the church. Our recourse to the transparent level does not, however, imply that this text is no real part of the storyline. Thus, as regards the extent of the unbelief of Jesus described in chapters 11-12, *widespread* is to be preferred over *total*.⁵⁷

Luz believes Jesus' invitation in 11:28-30 shows that the situation at this point still is open and that Jesus still calls "all Israel" to access God.⁵⁸ But that the verses should be so understood on the narrative level is not obvious. In 11:25-30 there is no reference to an audience, and both at 11:25 and 12:1 we have the vague temporal marker "ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ" (at that time), indicating that this situation is different both from the preceding and the following episodes. Its connection to the narrative is therefore very loose. Further, the invitation in 11:28-30 follows and is closely linked to 11:27. Here Jesus speaks of himself in a manner very untypical in Matthew. He openly discloses his close relationship to the Father in a way that appears to place them on equal footing, and he gives the audience a very direct invitation to "come to me," and not, for instance, to "repent", as has been his typical message (cf. 4:17). I would allege that this invitation should rather be understood as an address to the reader than to the people of Israel within the narrative. And to the reader this may well be an invitation to "all Israel."⁵⁹ Even if we read it within the parameters of the story, the prospect of this invitation's acceptance seems somewhat limited; to the "infants" (11:25) and to the "no one ... except ... anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal [the Father]" (11:27). Only the disciples have at this point been described to stand in the kind of intimate and revelatory relationship to Jesus that 11:27d presupposes.⁶⁰ We have a similar phenomenon in 12:50. The "whoever" that

⁵⁷ Cf. above, ch. 1, n. 34.

⁵⁸ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 129, 172. Also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 323.

⁵⁹ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 291-292; Cousland, *Crowds*, 289; France, *Matthew (2007)*, 448.

⁶⁰ 4:19; 5:1-2; 9:15; 10:19-20, 24-25, 27, 32, 37-40.

does the Father's will is in itself an open reference, but it is qualified by Jesus pointing to his disciples. Thus, by the end of chapter 12 Matthew indicates that the disciples are the only fertile ground for the kingdom.

4.6 Links between Chapters 11-12 and the Parable Discourse

We have seen that chapters 11-12 describe a lack of belief in Jesus that was predominant already by the beginning of the parable discourse, and we have seen that the people as a whole has taken part in it. In the parable discourse Jesus is therefore not facing innocent supporters that merely lack knowledge, but he is facing representatives of the people that have failed to respond to his message. We will look at connections between the parable discourse and chapters 11-12 that further confirms this view, and we will see that it is not the case, as Luz argued, that the parable discourse has a weak connection to the context.

First we can note that the crowds Jesus addresses in the parable discourse seem to be somewhat continuous with the crowds he spoke to right before, when pointing out the disciples as his true family (12:46). He specifies, unlike Mark, that the parable discourse takes place ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ—the same day (13:1, cf. Mark 4:1). Rarely is Matthew this specific.⁶¹ We have warned against assuming that everything that has happened since the last temporal marker (12:1) consequently takes place the same day, but it is likely that Matthew at least wanted to connect the discourse to 12:46-50. In both texts the line is drawn between the disciples and the rest of the people, and only the disciples are praised. For Luz this text is an argument for the discourse's weak connection to the narrative, because with the mention of Jesus' family members, it is "directly linked" to the episode following the discourse (13:53-58), and the narrative therefore continues right where it left off as if nothing has taken place in between.⁶² This argument would be valid only if 12:46-50 had no thematic connection to the discourse, but it does—and as we will see—so does 13:53-58. Together the two stories underline the theme of the discourse; the

⁶¹ The passion story is an exception. His other specific expressions: ἐν κείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ in 22:23; ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ in 18:1; 26:55; and "six days later" in 17:1.

⁶² Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 228.

understanding of the disciples and the hardening of Israel. Thus they form an inclusio around the discourse that *anchors* it to the narrative rather than excludes it.⁶³

There is a notable parallel between the parable discourse and chapters 11-12. In 11:2-3 John sets the theme for chapters 11-12 by his question concerning τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (the works of the Christ/Messiah). As Jesus' answer in 11:4-5 shows, in Jesus' opinion his own miracles are proof that he is "the coming one," and he asks John's disciples to go and report about the miracles they ἀκούετε καὶ βλέπετε (hear and see). This is the same combination of ἀκούω and βλέπω, although in reverse order, that dominates the reason for parables: The crowds neither see nor hear (v. 13); the disciples do see and hear (v. 16), and the prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear (v. 17). We have already discussed the two types of "seeing and hearing" in these verses. In 13 and 16 they describe the ability to see and hear the true reality behind what one physically sees and hears, but in verse 17 the physical seeing and hearing is more likely in view. The latter is also the case in 11:4. Though the reversed order of the words indicates that Matthew was not consciously linking the two, both passages refer to Jesus' audible and visible ministry, and the combination of ἀκούω and βλέπω is found nowhere else in the Gospel but these two passages. Thus the specific accusation leveled against the crowds in 13:13 seems to be that they have failed to understand and repent in light of Jesus' ministry described in *chapters 5-10*, and that the parable discourse continues on the theme of Israel's unbelief from chapters 11-12. Jesus' accusation against "this generation" in 11:16-19, that they are like the children who do not want to dance to his tune, embodies the same indictment, and it is fitting not only for those hostile to Jesus, but also for the crowds who despite their seemingly positive responses to Jesus' ministry never move beyond amazement and make a commitment to Jesus' message.

In 11:25 Jesus speaks of the Father having *hidden "these things"* (ἐκρυψας ταῦτα). As we have seen, this thanksgiving follows the two preceding units in chapter 11; "this generation" did not respond to Jesus' invitation to join his feast (11:2-19), and the Galilean cities would not repent in face of Jesus' mighty miracles (11:20-24). In that light "these things" (ταῦτα) that God has hidden from the wise and intelligent in 11:25 must

⁶³ Esp. Garland, *Reading*, 143-144; Overman, *Church*, 188. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 461; Keener, *Matthew*, 371; Turner, *Matthew*, 361.

have to do with the *recognition of the presence of the kingdom in Jesus and his ministry*,⁶⁴ which was, according to Davies and Allison, the standard interpretation of the “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” in 13:11.⁶⁵ This has been revealed to “infants” (νήπιος), a term in the Septuagint used for the simple and righteous,⁶⁶ and in the structurally corresponding text in 12:46-50 we have seen the disciples singled out by Jesus as those who do the will of God. The disciples do what “this generation” and the Galilean cities have failed to; they have recognized the identity of Jesus and the significance of his ministry (11:25), have joined his feast (9:9-13), and repented to a life in the will of God (12:49-50). The negative side of this, that God has ἔκρυψας ταῦτα, is, as also Luz has recognized, a parallel to 13:35 and its reference to *the things hidden* (κεκρυμμένα). In both cases what is hidden has to do with the kingdom’s veiled appearance in Jesus.⁶⁷

4.7 Conclusion

We have seen that the people of Israel in Matthew usually come into view as *crowds* that flock to and witness Jesus’ ministry. Though Matthew employs the crowds pragmatically, usually as a foil to Jesus’ ministry that highlights its unprecedented character, they never display understanding, commitment, and obedience to Jesus on level with the disciples. Further, when Matthew focuses more directly on the people of Israel, this people is presented as unbelieving, as having ignored Jesus’ call to repentance. Thus, when the crowds in chapter 13 are understood as part of the people of Israel, and not as a literary character, the parable discourse follows the preceding narrative coherently. That Matthew saw this discourse as a continuation of the theme of chapters 11-12 is quite clear from the structural arrangement of these two chapters. Unbelievers and believers are here contrasted in correspondence with the crowds and the disciples in the parable discourse.

⁶⁴ So e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 276-277; Gundry, *Matthew*, 216.

⁶⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 389.

⁶⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 275

⁶⁷ We should not necessarily assume that Matthew had a consistent and elaborate understanding of how the deeper knowledge of Jesus was hidden and revealed first *during* Jesus ministry and next as a *result* of the response to the ministry, whether the mysteries first were only hidden from the wise and arrogant, or also from the rest of the people and thus bring up again the problem of predestination. Matthew was not systematic theologian, and he probably brought together 11:25 from Q, 13:13 from Mark and Isaiah, and 13:35 from the Psalms because of their related words and themes, which bind chs. 11-12 together with 13.

We have also seen that 12:46-50 prepares for the discourse as it singles out the disciples from the crowds, and we have seen verbal and thematic parallels between the two sections, such as the *seeing/hearing* and the *things hidden*.

Since Matthew evidently shaped these two sections deliberately to interact with each other, it is clear that he in the placement of this discourse did not just for pragmatic reasons follow Mark's order. The parable discourse was not for Matthew just a "manifesto to the reader" that could transmit its message wherever it was placed; it was part of his plan for the first half of the Gospel. Matthew might have been inspired by Q to create a thematic arrangement with a Messianic argument, but he did not merely end this argument with an "altar call" in 11:28;⁶⁸ he extended it, perhaps because a Messianic apology in his situation required a stronger defense against the objection that the Messiah's own people had rejected Jesus. Matthew therefore added descriptions of a more hostile and unreasonable rejection of Jesus (ch. 12) and a discourse where Jesus revealed the mysterious aspect of the kingdom and explained Israel's lack of recognition by way of their blindness (13:1-52), an attribute the people was well known for.

This does not mean it is a mere coincidence that Matthew like Mark preferred to let the parable discourse follow the Markan controversy stories in chapter 12. It is possible that Mark also intended the parable discourse to answer to the unbelief described here.⁶⁹ As we have seen in chapters 8-9 and 12, Matthew often agreed with and preserved connections in Mark.⁷⁰ But Mark's predestinarian aspect he could not pass on. Like he changed the $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ to $\delta\tau\iota$ in 13:13 (Cf. Mark 4:12), and thus made clear that Jesus' rejection of Israel was a *result* only, not a cause, of the people's hardening, he also by his thematic arrangement inspired by Q made clear how Israel had closed her eyes to the abundant Messianic proofs of Jesus' ministry, and thus chosen her hardening.⁷¹

Matthew's puzzling departure from his thematic and logical progression after the parable discourse makes us wonder if he, either from fatigue or limitations of material, was unable to carry through what he appears to have begun in chapters 1-13. We hope to

⁶⁸ So Robinson, "Trajectory," 627.

⁶⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 289.

⁷⁰ Cf. also Davies and Allison's chart, *Matthew 1-7*, 100-101. When Matthew transposed Markan sections, he often retained the relative order of pericopae.

⁷¹ In this sense the miracle stories reflect the conflict with Israel. Contra Hans Kvalbein, "Has Matthew abandoned the Jews" in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein; WUNT 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 59-61.

find the answer to this question as we in the next chapter look at the relation of the parable discourse to the following narrative.

Ch 5 – The Narrative Following the Parable Discourse

After the parable discourse Matthew recounts Mark in order starting at Mark 6:14. Only the two stories of blind men healed by saliva (Mark 7:31-37; 8:22-26), the alien exorcist (Mark 9:38-39), and the widow's offering (Mark 12:41-44) are omitted. The material is no longer grouped in thematic clusters; Matthew simply passes on Mark's mix of themes and genres. The triadic structures disappear, except—perhaps—for in the discourses. Matthew continues to carry out his structure of alternating narrative and discourse, but no longer does it reflect changes in content as consistently as it did in chapters 1-13. This is seen in his placement of the church discourse, which most likely was determined in part by two Markan passages;¹ in part by a desire to begin his next section with the journey to Jerusalem. The result is that the Markan “journey to Jerusalem” (Mark 8:22/27-10:52)² is divided in two, and similar material (passion predictions, scholastic dialogues) is thereby separated. It also has the result that the marked change in content that appears with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem (Matt 21:1), as the scholastic dialogues end and Jesus takes on the Jewish leadership, now happens in the middle of the narrative section 19:1-24:2. Matthew's most likely outline for these sections is that 13:53-17:27 describes the continuing ministry in Northern Israel; 19:1-24:2 describes the journey to Jerusalem and Jesus' disputes with the Jewish leadership there; and chapters 26-28 tell the passion story.

5.1 The People after the Parable Discourse

After the parable discourse there are until the passion story few texts that speak of the people of Israel in general. The mentioned Isaiah quotation in 15:8-9 speaks of the *λαὸς*, but Matthew might have intended it mostly for the scribes and the Pharisees, to which it is spoken (cf. 15:1, 10): this passage is not seated in a section like chapters 11-12 that deals with unbelief among people in general, and its theme of hypocrisy is in Matthew more typically directed at the leaders than the people. If its description of a whole *λαὸς* in

¹ Matthew takes Mark 9:33-37 and 9:42-48 as his starting point (he omits the pericope in between) and attaches material of related subjects from Q and M.

² See e.g. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 62-64.

hypocrisy was meant on the narrative level to characterize also the rest of the people, then it confirms the message of chapters 11-12, and reflects no new developments.

As before, Matthew after the parable discourse usually uses ὄχλος about the people Jesus engages with. A few exceptions we have already touched on (13:53-58; 14:34-36), and we will include these when we now try to establish how Matthew presents the people of Israel after the parable discourse.

Matthew's references to the people are now largely determined by Mark, and they usually appear in the same episodes as in Mark. Only a few references to the people are omitted. The people are, most notably, removed from the audience of Jesus' saying about the cost of discipleship (16:24; cf. Mark 8:34) and Matthew omits Mark 12:37; that the people enjoyed listening to Jesus speaking about the Son of David (cf. Matt 22:46). The other omissions are most likely shortenings of the same nature as before the discourse.

Little seems to be changed in the people's behavior. They continue to follow and gather around Jesus (14:13, 35; 15:30; 19:2; 20:29), and their responses to his healings are much like before: In a healing summary that replaces one of the omitted healings (Mark 7:31-37) the crowds are amazed (θαυμάζω) and glorify God (15:31)—like in 9:8. Here Matthew has adapted Mark 7:37 and added the element of glorification. In 22:33 the crowds are astonished (ἐκπλήσσομαι) at Jesus' teaching—like in 7:28—after hearing Jesus prove the doctrine of resurrection from the Law, an element taken from Mark 11:18. The role of the crowds as a *chorus* to Jesus' ministry has not changed.

In the episode immediately following the parable discourse, Jesus' rejection in Nazareth (13:53-58), the people are not just a *chorus*. Since this is Matthew's only story from Jesus' ministry where his rejection by the people, and not just the leaders, is narrated,³ we might assume that Matthew wanted it to illustrate the people of Israel in general.⁴ But although this episode perhaps was intended to symbolize the rejection of Jesus by his own, the Nazarenes' familiarity with Jesus, which is the reason for the rejection, is specific to Nazareth, and so is their unusual unbelief (13:58). The story might still teach us something important about the people in general. Since even the Nazarenes are astonished (ἐκπλήσσομαι) at Jesus wisdom and power (13:54), the reader learns that

³ Although something similar happens in Gadara (8:34), it is there, we have argued, only a marginal theme.

⁴ Cf. Green, *Matthew*, 138: *Nazareth* is not specified because the event is symbolic for all Israel. πατρις is ambiguous and can mean both *hometown* and *hometown*.

such responses are not to be equated with faith. Thus the sudden change in the people's attitude to Jesus in the passion story becomes less surprising.

As crowds follow Jesus toward Jerusalem, we also have an episode where the people reveal a negative side (20:29-34, cf. Mark 10:46-52). Two blind men cry out for Jesus' mercy, addressing him as *Son of David*. The crowds rebuke them, perhaps because they find the title inappropriate, but more likely because they think the blind men's behavior inappropriate (cf. 15:23). The blind men are not silenced but cry out to the Son of David again, and after asking them what he can do for them, Jesus is moved with compassion and heals them. Here, more than in Mark, the crowds are made a negative contrast to the compassionate Jesus,⁵ and are given a role usually played by the religious leadership. This is not, however, Matthew's way to reveal that the people lacked understanding or righteousness, for he has twice given the same unpleasant role to the disciples (15:23; 19:13). Matthew's concern is that Jesus' traits will stand out clearly.

But perhaps Matthew also intends that this event opens the crowds' eyes to see that Jesus really was the Son of David, so they can hail him as such in the following story, the triumphant entry (21:1-11, par Mark 11:1-10). The same crowd appears to be in view (cf. 20:29; 21:1). This does not mean, we have argued, that there is a development in the understanding of the crowds *as a character*, nor in the people as a whole. Whether the crowds' insight came from the blind men or not, Christology is again Matthew's focus, and the crowds are again the *chorus* whose refrain contribute to the Messianic scene, where Jesus comes like Solomon as the Son of David (cf. 1 Kings 1:33).⁶

In the same story, in 21:10, the crowds are asked, in a redactional addition, who Jesus is, not unlike what the disciples are asked by Jesus in 16:15. Their answer is: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ προφήτης Ἰησοῦς ὁ ἀπὸ Ναζαρέθ τῆς Γαλιλαίας—*this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee* (21:11). Scholars differ on whether this statement implies understanding of Jesus as the promised eschatological prophet (cf. Deut 18:15).⁷ Though Matthew is interested in presenting Jesus like Moses,⁸ he is not too interested in *prophet*

⁵ Matthew lets the whole crowds participate in the rebuke of the blind; he leaves out that the crowds call the blind to Jesus; and he adds that Jesus heals in *compassion*. Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 193-194.

⁶ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 128.

⁷ Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 213-217.

⁸ Cf. Allison, *Moses*.

as a Christological title. Only once, when Jesus is rejected in Nazareth (13:57),⁹ does it possibly have this connotation, but there the implication is rather that he is a prophet like other prophets—therefore rejected. In Matthew *prophet* is often connected with persecution and death (5:12; 14:5, 10; 23:29-37), and this is probably the primary intent of the use also in 21:11: Jesus is not just the Messianic king; he has come to suffer, like other prophets do in Jerusalem (cf. 23:37). And like the other prophets, Jesus is sent to Jerusalem with a message—the temple cleansing—which Jesus is just about to carry out (21:12-17). Matthew might have intended the use of *prophet* in 21:11 to give the educated reader a reminder of the eschatological prophet, but the crowds do not describe him as *the prophet like Moses*, or simply, *the prophet*, but as a prophet specified by his origin in Nazareth.¹⁰ That the crowds simply understand Jesus as *a prophet* seems to be confirmed when we a little later hear that the chief priests and Pharisees did not dare to arrest Jesus because they feared the ὄχλοι, who regarded him as *a prophet* (21:46).

If the crowds “confess” Jesus merely as *a prophet*, then it is a notable contrast to the disciples’ confession (14:33; 16:16). And it gives the impression that their newfound (perhaps) understanding of Jesus as the Son of Man was shallow.¹¹ They prove this shallowness when they, as members of the λαὸς (27:25) fall for their leaders’ persuasion in 27:20. But again; Matthew’s use of *prophet* in 21:11 was not to reveal the crowds’ shallow understanding of Jesus as the Son of David, but to reveal Jesus.

The previous two stories may reveal little about the general perception of Jesus in the populace since they primarily are concerned with Christology and the crowds are not here representative of the general populace. But the people also come into view in a few passages where salvation history and the conflict with Israel is more in focus. Twice the Jewish leadership is restrained from killing Jesus because they fear the people. The ὄχλοι who regards Jesus as a prophet in 21:46 may primarily have in view the crowds who just designated him as such. But in 26:5, where there is no mention of *prophet*, λαὸς is used. In the Barabbas episode (27:15-26) persuasion is needed to turn this λαὸς against Jesus (27:20, 25). From these passages we should be able to infer that the people in general had a high regard for Jesus, in line with the positive responses of the crowds throughout the

⁹ τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ is Nazareth. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 454.

¹⁰ So also Cousland, *Crowds*, 217. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 10.

¹¹ Cf. Kingsbury, *Structure*, 22.

narrative. But the Barabbas episode also reveals that the people's understanding of Jesus was shallow and that they lacked commitment. Although Matthew undoubtedly lets the leadership play the leading role in the murder of Jesus, he is not trying to excuse the people; compared to Mark he enhances their responsibility for Jesus' death.¹²

How are we to relate the crowds' behavior to the parable discourse? For the most part little is changed; they follow Jesus and are amazed as before. Some also come to the insight that Jesus is the Son of David, an insight we do not from the parable discourse expect them to be capable of. But this incident might be a compromise to Matthew's scheme because of the Christological point Matthew wanted to make here. But there also appears to be a general favor with Jesus, perhaps a widespread understanding of him as a prophet, which also is a little surprising. This is not so much in conflict with the parable discourse, where the crowds have come to hear Jesus, but it is in greater tension with chapters 11-12, where the people are portrayed as unresponsive to Jesus, and presumably unwilling to riot for his sake. On the other side, *prophet* and *Son of David* are inadequate titles for Jesus in themselves, and nothing indicates that the people have repented and committed themselves to Jesus and his message since 12:50. The shallowness revealed in the Barabbas episode indicates that repentance and understanding are still lacking.¹³

5.2 The Disciples after the Parable Discourse

Whereas the disciples before the parable discourse rarely came on stage but waited in the shadows while Jesus ministered to the people, the situation is the total opposite after the discourse. More space is now given to Jesus' interaction with his disciples than with the people, and the disciples' actions and words are frequently recounted. For instance, in four of the five miracle stories in the narrative section following the parable discourse, the disciples play important roles.¹⁴ And in the only miracle story where the disciples play no role in Mark's version, Matthew gives them a role (15:21-28, cf. Mark 7:24-30). The disciples step even further into the light in the many scholastic dialogues they have with Jesus. There were none of these before the parable discourse, and the discourse may

¹² Cf. Cousland, *Crowds*, 231-235; Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 588-592.

¹³ Cf. Carter, "Crowds," 64.

¹⁴ 14:13-21, 22-33; 15:32-39; 17:14-21, [17:24-27]. In the next narrative section (chs. 19-23), two stories can possibly be called miracle stories (20:29-34; 21:18-22), and only in the latter are the disciples involved.

itself be regarded as the first. We can count seven of them in 13:53-17:27,¹⁵ and perhaps also seven in the rest of the Gospel, if we count the last two discourses.¹⁶

The sudden focus on the disciples should in itself indicate that a certain “turn” has taken place with the parable discourse, although it is largely is taken over from Mark. This focus is a very dominating feature until Jesus reaches Jerusalem (21:1). From then on the narrative is more concerned with the conflict between Jesus and his opponents, the fate of these opponents and their nation, and the passion of Jesus. With an abundance of material regarding the disciples to consider, we must concentrate on the elements that most tellingly reveal their level of *understanding* and *faith*. What we will see is that Matthew highlights both the disciples’ possession of *and* their shortage of these virtues.

Despite an unmistakable interest in the disciples after the parable discourse, they are often given roles that primarily serve Christological purposes, just like we saw with the crowds. Much like the crowds hushed on the two blind men, the disciples, in a redactional addition, ask Jesus to send a Canaanite woman away (15:23, cf. Mark 7:27). Similarly they rebuke those who bring children to be blessed by Jesus (19:13-5, par Mark 10:13-16). In both cases the disciples’ actions highlight the surprising character of Jesus’ ministry; that he also had an eye on the Gentiles, and that he was concerned for the weak and “little ones” (cf. 18:6).¹⁷ Though Matthew’s focus was primarily on Jesus in these stories, he clearly had nothing against portraying the disciples as misunderstanding Jesus.

In the two feeding stories (14:13-22; 15:29-39) the disciples have a similar function. As in Mark they point out to Jesus the impossibility of feeding the people (14:17, cf. Mark 6:37-38; 15:33, cf. Mark 8:4), and thereby highlight the greatness of his miracle. We may make a point out of their obtuseness, that they the second time have not learned their lesson, but Matthew does not make this point here, and most likely he is again focusing on Jesus and the theological import of the miracle.¹⁸

But there are also stories where Matthew’s interest is more in the disciples. In 13:53-17:27, and in this section alone, Matthew four times adds sayings by Jesus about *faith*: to Peter after failing to walk on the water, “You of little faith ...” (ὀλιγόπιστος,

¹⁵ 15:10-20; 16:5-12, 13-20, 21-28; 17:9-13, 19-20, 24-27.

¹⁶ 18:1-35; 19:10-12; 19:23-20:16; 20:20-28; 21:20-22; 24:3-25:46; 26:6-13.

¹⁷ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 339-340, 505-506.

¹⁸ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 480-485.

14:31); to the persistent Canaanite woman, "... great is your faith!" (πίστις, 15:28); to the disciples, concerned about having forgotten bread, "You of little faith!" (ὀλιγόπιστος, 16:8); and again to the disciples, now for failing to exorcize a demon, "Because of your little faith" (ὀλιγοπιστία, 17:20). That Matthew three times so shamelessly draws attention to this deficiency with the disciples might be seen as a problem for the parable discourse, but we should note a few things. In two of these passages, where walking on water and moving mountains (17:20) is in view, it is just as much the high standard of Jesus as the shortcomings of the disciples that form the basis of Jesus' criticism, and the disciples do not appear in such bad light. Peter did in fact take a few steps on the water (14:29). We discern in such passages an exhortation to Matthew's readers never to be complacent, but to keep growing in faith (cf. 21:21-22).¹⁹ The criticism of lacking faith in 16:8 is more restricted to the narrative, and more troublesome for the parable discourse. There is no excuse for the disciples' obtuseness regarding Jesus' ability to provide bread. But in this story Matthew makes certain changes to Mark, so that the disciples after all do not appear in such bad light, but this leads us to the theme of *understanding*, which should be looked at in the context of two other passages.

Matthew has a redactional focus on the theme of *understanding* similar to that on *faith*.²⁰ The disciples' lack of understanding is explicitly pointed out in 15:10-20 (par Mark 7:14-23), where Jesus, after rebuking Pharisees and scribes (15:1-9), tell the crowds a parable, introduced by the exhortation, ἀκούετε καὶ συνίετε (hear and understand!), familiar words from the parable discourse. Peter asks Jesus to explain the parable (15:15), like the disciples did in 13:36, but unlike in the parable discourse, Jesus here assumes that the disciples by now have this kind of understanding, and he appears almost surprised that they are ἀσύνετοί (without understanding, 15:16) and asks, "do you not understand ..." (voέω, 15:17). He nonetheless gives them the explanation they need (15:17-20).

A little later the situation we just discussed occurs (16:1-12). The disciples not only reveal their lack of faith in Jesus to provide food, but they also misunderstand Jesus' metaphor²¹ about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew does nothing to

¹⁹ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 408.

²⁰ Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law" in *TIM*, 106-112, noted this a half century ago.

²¹ We would assume that 16:6 could be called a parable like 15:11 (cf. 15:15), but perhaps Matthew, like Mark, only wanted to identify as parables what was spoken to the crowds.

cover up the disciples' shortcomings; twice Jesus explicitly points out their lack of understanding (νοέω, 16:9, 11). But compared to Mark, Matthew softens Jesus' criticism, most notably by omitting the quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10 (cf. Mark 8:18), which in the parable discourse was applied to the crowds (13:13). He further adds that the disciples eventually understand (συνίημι) the metaphor (16:11-12). Both the term συνίημι and that the disciples understand with the help of Jesus, bring memories of the parable discourse.

The third and last place where the theme of understanding is brought up after the parable discourse is in the dialogue following the transfiguration (17:9-13, cf. Mark 9:9-13).²² Matthew omits that the disciples wondered what it meant to rise from the dead (Mark 9:10), and after Jesus has spoken to them about Elijah, Matthew adds that the disciples understood (συνίημι) that this was about John the Baptist (17:13). Matthew also changes the disciples' response to the second passion prediction: they are *grieved* (17:23), instead of not understanding it and being afraid to ask Jesus (Mark 9:32).

By Matthew's omissions and additions a development is visible in the disciples' understanding in 13:53-17:27. In the first of the three passages they do not understand, and must have the parable explained to them; in the second Jesus merely needs to point out that they should be able to understand, and then they do; in the third passage, the disciples right away understand on their own. We also note that Matthew, unlike Mark, reserves νοέω for the verses that emphasize the disciples' lack of understanding, and that he uses the parallel συνίημι when he highlights their understanding.²³ By keeping these verbs apart, it is possible that Matthew wanted to clarify that the disciples *in themselves* were prone to misunderstand the things of the kingdom, but that they by the grant of God and the help of Jesus could overcome this weakness. At least, by not using συνίημι for their lack of understanding, the connection to the parable discourse is not disrupted.

Do these three passages prove that the parable discourse is a regular event in the narrative? Luz does not think so, even if he notes their connection to the discourse.²⁴ If

²² The only other place where συνίημι or νοέω are used is in 24:15 in the direct exhortation to the reader: ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω (let the reader understand). In addition, 22:29 and 24:39 mention *lack of understanding*—on the part of the Sadducees and those in the time of Noah.

²³ In 15:16-17 (par Mark 7:17) Matthew merely follows Mark; in 16:8-11 Matthew omits, along with the Isaiah quotation, two Markan uses of συνίημι (Mark 8:17, 21); in 17:13 Matthew uses συνίημι in an unparalleled sentence.

²⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 228.

one takes the disciples' affirmation of understanding in 13:51 to imply that they after the parable discourse are at an advanced level of understanding, then these three passages certainly do not seem to build on that platform. But such a reading of 13:51 is probably mistaken; the disciples never in the Gospel reach such a stage (cf. 26:56, 69-75; 28:17b). 13:51 should be limited to the parables in the discourse, and as we concluded on 13:11, part of the disciples' privilege was their right to ask and learn from Jesus the things they did not understand. That the disciples never before the parable discourse, but very often after, exercise this right can be taken as an argument for the discourse as an event in the Matthean narrative. But even more telling is it, despite Luz' hesitation, that the promise of more understanding in 13:12 is being fulfilled, that the disciples now twice are explicitly said to *understand*, just like they do in 13:51. And as we will see, the promise of understanding is being fulfilled in other passages as well.

The contrast of the disciples' shortcomings and their growing understanding is also central to the passages where the disciples confess Jesus as Son of God. In the story of Jesus and Peter walking on the water, we have this contrast twice. At first, as the disciples see someone walking on the water, they cry out in fear (14:26). But in the end they confess, "You are certainly God's Son" (14:33). This confession has not been made before, and reminds us of their question when Jesus silenced the storm: "What kind is this one?" Matthew's redaction of Mark is here considerable. In Mark the disciples react to Jesus' walking on the water with astonishment (ἐξίστημι), "for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened" (Mark 6:51-52).

Conversely, Peter begins with incredible faith; first by asking Jesus' to ask him out on the water; next by stepping out (14:28-29). But he ends up in fear and sinks, and Jesus consequently describes him as ὀλιγόπιστος—one of little faith (14:30-31). His step out on the water was still a step in the right direction.²⁵

Peter is also in the spotlight when he a little later confesses Jesus as "the Christ/Messiah, Son of the living God" (16:16). Peter's insight goes deeper in Matthew than in Mark, where Jesus merely is confessed as "the Christ/Messiah" (Mark 8:29). Matthew also adds that Peter's insight was from God (16:17), and we are reminded both of 11:25 and 13:11-17. It is not a trivial insight, because in Matthew Jesus praises Peter

²⁵ Cf. Wilkens, *Disciple*, 151.

for it and makes him the foundation of his church (16:17-19).²⁶ But the next moment, as he rebukes Jesus for speaking of his suffering (16:22), Peter reveals that he still lacks understanding—seriously enough for Jesus to call him Satan (16:23).

For Matthew, the disciples' obtuseness goes hand in hand with their God-given insights. That they lack understanding does not indicate that the event of the parable discourse, and the grant of knowledge, has not taken place. Rather, that the disciples after the parable discourse grow in understanding, *despite* their human weakness, shows that God actually is fulfilling his promise. We also note that the disciples' deficit does not put them on level with non-disciples. In Matthew, more than in Mark, Jesus recognizes their efforts and the quality of their discipleship, and he promises them prominent roles in the kingdom, as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28, cf. Mark 10:29).

The reason we should see the disciples' growing understanding as a result of the parable discourse is that Matthew detaches himself from Mark's outline, and moves important themes closer to the discourse. In Mark Peter's confession and the ensuing passion prediction (Mark 8:27-38) constitute an important turn in the narrative. Even though Matthew expands the account of Peter's confession, and makes it a fundamental ecclesiological passage, he emphasizes church related themes already *before* Peter makes his confession. Matthew's redactional emphases on *faith* and *understanding* are also seen before Peter's confession (14:31; 15:10-20, 28; 16:8, 9-11). Most important, Matthew adds the disciples' confession before Peter's confession.²⁷

Though the disciples' confession steals some of the climax from the Peter event,²⁸ Matthew compensates Peter for it in this section. Except being mentioned as the first disciple to be called by Jesus (4:18; 10:2), there has been no special focus on Peter before the parable discourse, and his names, Simon and Peter, have been mentioned only three times. In 13:53-17:27 he is mentioned 13 times. In Mark Peter assumes a prominent position after his confession, and Matthew has adopted four Markan passages where

²⁶ πέτρα probably refers to Peter, not to his confession. E.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 627.

²⁷ The disciples' confession is most likely redactional, shaped after Peter's confession. It is possible, though not likely—see below—that there was an oral tradition behind Peter's walking on the water and that 14:33 was a part of this, but the confession is better understood as a response to *Jesus'* walking on the water.

²⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 496.

Peter after this event acts as a spokesman for the disciples.²⁹ But Matthew also adds references to Peter *before* his confession, most notably by adding Peter's walking on the water (14:28-33),³⁰ to the Markan story of Jesus walking on the water (14:22-27; Mark 6:47-52). Matthew also makes Peter the disciples' spokesman before his confession, as he alone asks about the parable's meaning (15:15), whereas all the disciples ask in Mark 7:17. We should also note the story about Peter and the temple tax (17:24-27). This story, in which we witness Peter's exclusive relationship to Jesus, is unique to Matthew, but it is probably not his own creation.³¹ Thematically there is no obvious place for this story in Matthew's arrangement, and one is prone to think that Matthew placed it here, right before the church discourse, at least in part because of his special focus on Peter in 13:53-17:27.³² In the next narrative section (chs. 19-23) Matthew reveals no special interest in Peter, and actually changes one of Mark's two references to Peter, so that the disciples all ask about the withered fig tree, instead of just Peter (Matt 21:20, cf. Mark 11:21).

As we look at Matthew's redaction after the parable discourse—his focus on faith, understanding, confession, and Peter—it becomes increasingly likely that Matthew thought of 13:54-17:27 as one section, and that the theme on his mind was related to the disciples and the church. This theme links the discourses on each end of this section to each other. In the parable discourse the disciples are presented as the only ones who understand, the only fertile ground for the seeds of the kingdom, and they are promised more understanding. In 13:54-17:27 the disciples *are* given more understanding, despite their continued weakness, and they confess Jesus as the Son of God. This confession leads Jesus to establish his church, the community in focus in the church discourse. If we hold the parable discourse outside the storyline, the sudden emphasis on the disciples and their sudden growth in understanding come totally unprepared. Thus, if nothing else, the parable discourse has been a turning point in the story of Jesus and his disciples.³³

²⁹ 16:22, cf. Mark 8:32; 17:4, cf. Mark 9:5; 19:27, cf. Mark 10:28; 26:40, cf. Mark 14:37. On Mark 11:21, see below.

³⁰ The vocabulary of this story is redactional, and although Matthew may have had an oral source for the story, the attachment to Jesus' walking on water is probably his own choice. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 497; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 318.

³¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 649, 737-738; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 414.

³² Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 738.

³³ As observed by both Combrink, "Structure," 82-83, and Wilkens, *Disciple*, 146-147.

5.3 The Ministry of Jesus after the Parable Discourse

We have just seen that there is a change in Jesus' ministry after the parable discourse, that he focuses more on his disciples. In a number of the scholastic dialogues, Jesus is the one who takes initiative and begins to teach them (16:6, 13, 21; 17:22, 25; 19:23; 24:2). We can also see Matthew's focus on faith and understanding in this light. Although the texts that speak of the disciples' little faith are especially suited as paraenesis to Matthew's readers, they can also be understood within the narrative as a way for Jesus to prepare and equip his disciples for a ministry without his physical presence.³⁴ In this light we can also understand that Jesus involves his disciples in the two feeding miracles (14:13-21; 15:32-39). With their parallels to the last supper, these episodes allude to the church's role in the Eucharistic ritual.³⁵ That Jesus now teaches his disciples is in line with the privilege given them in the parable discourse and its promise of more understanding (13:11-12).

Part of Jesus' ministry to his disciples in 13:53-17:27 is to reveal more of himself. Both his walking on the water (14:22-33) and the transfiguration (17:1-8), which cause worship, confession, and prostration from the disciples (14:33; 17:6), are types of *epiphanies* where such revelations take place.³⁶ It was their initial understanding of Jesus that formed the basis for the disciples' promise of *more* (13:12), and now they are given more of what they had. God also gives the disciples such revelations (16:17). Thus, the Christological focus in this section, which is an end in itself to Matthew, is given a credible placement also on the narrative level—as part of the story of the disciples.

Since there is so much material concerning the disciples after the parable discourse, the reader is left with the impression that Jesus spends less time ministering to the people. There are only three healing accounts of individuals (15:21-28; 17:14-21; 20:29-34), all from Mark (cf. Mark 7:24-30; 9:14-29; 11:1-11). As mentioned, Matthew omits the two accounts where Jesus heals by the means of saliva (7:31-37; 8:22-26). But interestingly, Matthew has many more healing summaries than Mark, who only has one in 6:53-59. Matthew adopts this summary (14:34-36), and then he adds four more. One

³⁴ Turner, *Matthew*, 357.

³⁵ Cf. Allison, Moses, 238; Gundry, *Matthew*, 292; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 314-316.

³⁶ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 497-498, 685, 703.

replaces one of the omitted healings (15:29-31; cf. Mark 7:31-37), and becomes a prelude to the feeding of the four thousand (15:32-39). Matthew also adds a healing summary to the beginning of the feeding of the five thousand, in place of Mark's summary of Jesus' teaching (14:14, cf. Mark 6:34). The two last healing summaries also replace references to Jesus' teaching in Mark (19:1, cf. Mark 10:1; 21:14, cf. Mark 11:18). The summaries give us the impression that wherever Jesus went, the people streamed to him, and he responds to their needs with healings—still with compassion (14:14, cf. 9:36).

But summaries of Jesus' teaching and preaching are now conspicuously absent. Before the parable discourse *teaching* and *preaching* were closely linked to *healing*. The parallel summaries of 4:23 and 9:35 mention all three activities, and as they frame in the sermon on the mount and the miracles in chapters 8-9, the ministry of Jesus is thoroughly portrayed as one in both word and deed. Why do we never hear Jesus preach after 11:1, when he begins his rebuke of Israel? And why does Matthew change three Markan references to Jesus' teaching, so that Jesus only heals? Having seen that the parable discourse builds on the unbelief of Israel in the preceding narrative, and that it has initiated a new phase in the relationship between Jesus and his disciples, we are inclined to suspect that there also has been a change in Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry.

Kingsbury's answer to the continued healing ministry, but the absence of teaching/preaching summaries, is that the nature of Jesus' ministry in word is different from his ministry in deed. Jesus' teaching and preaching have the purpose of leading people into the kingdom of heaven; they appeal to the will of the listeners, and demand them to make a choice of whether to accept or reject the will of God.³⁷ Jesus' healing ministry does not make the same demands, and according to Kingsbury Matthew lets it continue because he still wants to present Jesus as Israel's Messiah.³⁸

Kingsbury's brevity on this matter is unfortunate, especially since there is an obvious obstacle to his thesis: There are clear references to Jesus' teaching after the parable discourse. This fact can not be annulled by the observation that nobody accepts Jesus' teaching, or that the references to teaching occur in debates or in "the scenic

³⁷ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 29.

³⁸ Kingsbury, *Structure*, 21.

framework of a pericope.”³⁹ To my knowledge, no one has accepted Kingsbury’s arguments on this matter,⁴⁰ but we will nonetheless find reason to side with him, and we hope to amend some of his shortcomings.

After the parable discourse Jesus speaks to the Jewish leaders on a number of occasions, but always in a sharp, accusatory tone.⁴¹ He also speaks to the crowds on two occasions. In the first (15:10-11) he calls them to him as if he wants to teach them, but what he gives them is a parable which he does not expect them to understand (cf. the καὶ in 15:16). Matthew apparently did not intend that Jesus spoke to the crowds only in parables from the parable discourse onwards, because the second time he speaks to them, he does so openly (23:1-12). From this passage it is clear that Matthew did not apply the reason for parables consistently to the narrative after the parable discourse. This is also seen in 21:45, where Jesus speaks parables his opponents understand.

Surprisingly, 23:1-12 is spoken to the disciples as well as the crowds, as if they were one group, or as if the crowds were still potential disciples. Thus Jesus seems to be teaching the people.⁴² But Matthew does not designate these sayings as *teaching* (διδασχί), as Mark does (cf. Mark 12:38). It is also Matthew’s choice to include the disciples in the audience (cf. Mark 12:37). The likely reason is that some of these sayings, such as, “do not be called *rabbi*” (23:8), by Matthew primarily were intended for his readers.⁴³ The reason he did not move these sayings into one of the five discourses, was probably because they thematically fit in with Jesus’ exposure of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23. These become a negative model of warning for Matthew’s readers. At the same time, on the narrative level, the sayings are better suited for the crowds, because they are all particular examples of the exhortation to do whatever the scribes and Pharisees command but not what they do (23:2). This would be a strange

³⁹ For the most thorough critique of these arguments, see Cousland, *Crowds*, 105-108.

⁴⁰ Cousland, *Crowds*, 105, refers to a few scholars with similar views. Syreeni, *Sermon*, 112, is in partial agreement when asserting that Matthew phased out the crowds as audience after they in ch. 13 were rejected (cf. below, n. 46), but was not able to synchronize this theme with his use of the crowds as followers and witnesses to Jesus’ ministry. See also France and Green, ch. 1, n. 37.

⁴¹ 15:3-9; 16:2-4; 19:4-9; 21:16, 21:24-22:45; 23:13-36; 26:55-56. His answers in his trial are less polemical: 26:64; 27:11.

⁴² According to Luz Jesus here addresses the people of Israel who have not yet separated from him: Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 99.

⁴³ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 280; David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (NovTSup LII; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 57-63; Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 108.

exhortation to give the disciples, who already have a Rabbi whom they are fully committed to obey; one who will be with them even when physically absent (28:20). Therefore, even if Jesus' advice sounds like teaching, Matthew keeps the crowds as audience; the scribes are "their scribes" (7:29).

If we turn to explicit references to Jesus' teaching and preaching, we can quickly be done with *preaching*, because as we have indicated there are no such references. Four times in Matthew Jesus is said to preach (κηρύσσω) to the people (4:17, 23; 9:35; 11:1), and Jesus' preaching (κήρυγμα) is indirectly referred to in 12:41, as an event in the past. Especially from 4:17 and 12:41 κηρύσσω seems to imply a call to *repentance*. In light of 13:13 it would be futile to continue to call a deaf people to repentance. Some of Jesus' sayings in chapters 11-12 also seem to indicate that Israel has made up her mind and that her judgment is inevitable (cf. 11:22, 24; 12:41-42, 45).

The terms διδάσκω/διδαχή appears, especially from 5:2 and 7:28-29, primarily to denote exposition of the law and ethical instruction.⁴⁴ These two references designate the sermon on the mount as teaching, a designation none of the other discourses receive. That does not mean Matthew did not perceive them as such. The similar conclusion formula indicates that they are somehow related, and the command in 28:20 to *teach* the nations to observe *all that Jesus has commanded* might imply that the discourses are *teaching*. As Jesus in 24:3 sits, like rabbis often did,⁴⁵ this discourse comes across as teaching. That Jesus in Matthew *spoke* (ἐλάλησεν) instead of *taught* parables (cf. Mark 4:2), might have less to do with the content than the fact that Matthew saw *taught* as inappropriate for a discourse not meant to be understood by its direct addressees. He might still have regarded the content as teaching. If so, we note how the crowds in the discourses go from being included in Jesus' teaching (chs. 5-7), to being excluded from understanding Jesus' teaching (ch. 13), to being physically excluded from the teaching (chs. 18, 24-25).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Günther Bornkamm, "End Expectation and Church in Matthew," in *TIM*, 38, n.1; Kingsbury, *Parables*, 28-29. That Matthew distinguishes between the terms is also reflected in how the disciples when sent out the first time only are commissioned to preach (10:7), but after having been authorized to decide doctrinal matters (16:19; 18:18), they are sent out also to teach (28:20). Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 635-640, 787. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 168-169, underlines rightly that the two terms can not be fully distinguished from each other.

⁴⁵ Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 183.

⁴⁶ Cf. Syreeni, *Sermon*, 111. The mission discourse disrupts this scheme, being particular instructions for the disciples' mission *to the people*. They are at this point still included in Jesus' teaching, as 11:1 shows.

Of references to Jesus' teaching in Mark, Matthew after the parable discourse omits seven (Mark 6:6b, 34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:38);⁴⁷ keeps three (13:54, cf. Mark 6:2; 22:16, cf. Mark 12:14; 26:55, cf. Mark 14:49); and transposes two (21:23, cf. Mark 12:35; 22:33, cf. Mark 11:18d). The reference in 22:16 does not imply that Jesus taught after the parable discourse; it merely refers to Jesus' reputation as a godly teacher. For the remaining four references we need an explanation for why they were retained.

If we begin with 22:33; Jesus' outcry against the merchants on the temple square (Mark 11:17-18) probably does not qualify as διδασχί for Matthew;⁴⁸ thus Jesus has at this point not yet taught in Jerusalem. Matthew therefore finds a more appropriate place for the people's astonishment at Jesus' teaching in his long debate with his opponents in the temple (21:23-23:39). In 22:33, after Jesus has chastised the Sadducees for their lack of Scripture knowledge, and in a supreme rabbinic fashion proven the doctrine of the resurrection from the Torah (22:23-33), Matthew therefore lets the *chorus* of the crowds step in and highlight Jesus' divine wisdom and authority. We have seen how Matthew is fond of this device, and we can easily see why Matthew was eager to preserve this element in Mark 11:18d. Though Jesus' exposition of Scripture in 22:33 is called διδασχί, it is not part of Jesus' *teaching ministry* and not meant to lead people into righteous living; Jesus is being tested by his opponents, and he refutes their false teaching.

The transposition in 21:23 might reflect the same Christological tendency as 22:33. Matthew moves the reference to Jesus' teaching up from the middle of the mentioned temple debate (Mark 12:35b) to its introduction, thereby both providing a setting for the debate, and, more importantly, again connecting Jesus' teaching to *authority*.⁴⁹ In Mark Jesus was *walking* in the temple when asked about his authority to do "these things" (Mark 11:27-28). By having Jesus teach when the chief priests and elders ask their question, Matthew makes "these things" also refer to Jesus' teaching, not just his temple cleansing. The effect is that Matthew underlines to the reader Jesus' heavenly rabbinic anointing, and thereby reveals the theme for the whole ensuing debate.

⁴⁷ Mark 6:6b can be regarded as a transposition. See below.

⁴⁸ Cf. above, n. 44, especially Bornkamm. Matthew is more consistent in his use of this term than Mark, who can use it for many types of utterances from Jesus, even passion predictions: Mark 8:31; 9:31.

⁴⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 158.

The problem for Kingsbury's thesis is that Jesus' teaching here is not only a response to his opponents; Jesus seems to have entered the temple *to teach*.

In 26:55 Matthew has Jesus asking the high priest's men why they come armed as if to arrest a ληστής, (robber/rebel), when he every day sat unprotected while teaching in the temple. His question highlights the hypocrisy of the Jewish leadership, a typical refrain in Matthew.⁵⁰ The chief priests appear afraid of the people, while the courage of Jesus becomes evident, both now in Gethsemane and when he earlier was teaching in the temple. This verse is even more problematic than the previous, because, unlike the two previous references to Jesus' teaching in the temple, we now learn that Jesus *repeatedly* taught there. But again Matthew may have had good reasons for keeping it. The saying in 26:55, of which the καθ' ἡμέραν (every day) is an important part, contrasts Jesus with the Jewish leaders, and perhaps more importantly, it also provides an apologetic against accusations of Jesus as a failed rebel leader.⁵¹ There is also the chance that Matthew conceived of Jesus' teaching in the temple as different from his "going around teaching" in the summary statements of 4:23, 9:35 and 11:1, possibly as a teaching directed at his followers. If so, it probably did not matter if Jesus taught repeatedly or only once.

Matthew's reason to keep the reference to Jesus' teaching in 13:54 (par Mark 6:2) is presumably the same as in 21:23 and 22:33. Here too the people marvel, but now at both Jesus' wisdom and power. But this verse is the most difficult to square with Kingsbury's thesis. In Nazareth Jesus seems to actively seek out people who had not yet accepted his message, and he does so right after he veiled his teaching from the crowds. The Nazarenes' amazement both at Jesus' wisdom and power is of course a major reason for Matthew to keep the reference. But it still requires a great portion of pragmatism for him to keep this reference precisely here. Considering that Matthew is not too afraid of tensions and inconsistencies, this is not impossible. Perhaps he felt that since the passage with 12:46-50 framed in the parable discourse and underlined its message,⁵² it formed the basis for Jesus' parabolic speech more than it illustrated Jesus' ministry subsequent to

⁵⁰ Cf. 3:7-9; 5:20; 6:2, 5, 16; 9:13; 12:7, 11-12, 33-35, 39; 15:3-9, 13-14; 16:1-4; 21:23-46; 22:18; 23:2-36; 26:15, 55, 59; 27:3-7, 18, 20; 28:11-15

⁵¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 514-515.

⁵² Cf. above, ch. 4, n. 63.

it.⁵³ Or perhaps more likely, since Matthew does not say that Jesus preached in 13:54, something we would expect based on the summaries in 4:23, 9:35 and 11:1, he might have envisioned this instance of teaching as different from Jesus' earlier teaching paired with preaching. If Matthew regarded Jesus' statement about prophets' reception in their hometowns (13:57) as a general maxim, then perhaps Jesus went to Nazareth knowing he would be rejected, maybe even to prove their obduracy.⁵⁴ Despite the tension the story creates here, Matthew might also have had reasons to let it follow the discourse and not move it up into chapters 11-12, where it thematically would fit well: The *inclusio* with 12:46-50 was probably one reason. Another could be that he wanted this story, in which Jesus is designated *prophet* (13:57), to immediately precede the account of the execution of John the Baptist (14:1-12), who also is here explicitly called *prophet* (14:5). Thus John's execution would serve as a foreshadowing of Jesus' fate,⁵⁵ and Matthew could make sense of the otherwise awkwardly placed account of John's execution.

Now to Matthew's omissions; do they support Kingsbury's thesis? Matthew's definition of *teaching* is stricter than Mark's,⁵⁶ and three of Matthew's omissions should probably be explained on this basis (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 11:17).⁵⁷ The reasons for the four remaining omissions (Mark 6:6b, 34; 10:1; 12:38) are harder to pinpoint.

Mark 6:6b is a transition statement between Jesus' rejection at Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6a) and the mission of the twelve (Mark 6:7-13). It could have been treated as a transposition, because the verb combination "περιῆγεν ... διδάσκων" (was going around teaching), is adopted by Matthew in 9:35 (and 4:23). It therefore looks like Matthew transposed it together with the disciples' mission and made it the basis for his introduction to the mission discourse. Since the Markan summary statement does not mention *healing*, it may look like it also has inspired Matthew's summary in 11:1, where

⁵³ For Green, *Matthew*, 139, this is a turning point; "from this point on [Jesus] is separated from his people."

⁵⁴ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 29, regards the Nazarenes as "manifestly obdurate already." See also Davies' and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 264-265: Jesus' ministry is not pointless despite a negative response.

⁵⁵ Dale C. Allison, "Foreshadowing the Passion," in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 225-226.

⁵⁶ Cf. above, n. 44, 48.

⁵⁷ Cf. Matt 16:21; 17:22; 21: 13. E.g. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 381. Though 11:17 is more rebuke than teaching, it might perhaps be seen as Scripture exposition, which in light of 22:33 can be called teaching. But in 22:33 Jesus defends a doctrine, and thus the term διδαχή may be appropriate although Jesus is *debating*, not teaching. In 11:17 the activity is in view, and Jesus is not here teaching (διδάσκω) the merchants.

only *teaching* and *preaching* is in view. Thus we may ask why Matthew appears so eager to make use of elements from this summary statement before the parable discourse and not after. As a transition statement it does not in Mark belong any more to the disciples' mission than to the rejection at Nazareth. Had Matthew added healings to this summary statement as he did in 9:35, and left it after 13:58, then it would have made a good transition to John's execution. That episode is brought up because Herod hears word of Jesus' miraculous ministry (14:2), and this would have followed quite naturally if we had just heard that Jesus was travelling around and ministering, as opposed to the note that Jesus only did a few miracles in Nazareth (13:58).

Mark's reference to *teaching* in 12:38 we have already touched on. It introduces the material Jesus expands and uses in 23:1-12. If Matthew could call the sermon on the mount *teaching*, he could presumably have called this *teaching* as well. Especially 23:5-7 is very reminiscent of parts of that sermon (cf. 6:1-18). But Matthew adjusts Mark so that Jesus *spoke* (ἐλάλησεν) instead of *taught*, just like in 13:3. But whereas the latter could have been changed because Jesus did not speak with the intention of being understood, in 23:1-12 his message is not hidden in parables. Thus we are prone to think that Matthew wants to avoid giving the impression that Jesus here taught the people. As we have seen, Matthew still had his reasons for retaining the crowds as part of the audience, and for keeping this little discourse here where Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders.

In the two last omissions (14:14; 19:2), Matthew replaces Jesus' teaching in Mark with healings. We saw that there are three such substitutions. One we have already noted may be explained on the basis that in 21:14 Jesus has in Matthew's eyes not yet taught in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11:18). Because the context there demands that Jesus is doing an activity, one that irritates the high priests, Matthew makes Jesus heal instead of teach.

In 14:14 (cf. Mark 6:34) the context again requires that Jesus was doing an activity; one that kept the people with him long enough to become hungry. Davies and Allison suggest Matthew here substitutes *healing* for *teaching* because he felt, like Luke, that Jesus' compassion more appropriately was followed by healings (par Luke 9:11).⁵⁸ This may be part of the reason. One place Matthew adds *compassion* (σπλαγχνίζομαι) to a healing miracle (20:34, cf. Mark 10:52), indicating that the two elements for him

⁵⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 479.

belonged together. But he also omits compassion from another healing (8:3, cf. Mark 1:41), and we also see Jesus' compassion stirred by the people's hunger (15:32), and their general "lostness" (9:36). Considering that there are three of these substitutions after the parable discourse, and only in this one *compassion* is an element, we suspect there is also another reason.

The last remaining omission is in 19:2 (par Mark 10:1). Although we have heard that Jesus went around to "all the cities" (9:36), we assume that he has concentrated on the northern parts of the country, since we in 19:1 hear that Jesus now left Galilee. He was on his way to Jerusalem (16:21; 21:1), and came to the parts of Judea east of Jordan, a place we assume he has not been before. In Mark Jesus now begins to teach—ὡς εἰώθει—*according to his custom* (Mark 10:1). Why does not Matthew let Jesus teach here, considering he is in a new place where people might not have heard his message? Luz suggests that Matthew wants to frame in chapters 19 and 20 with references to healing (cf. 20:29-34); thereby showing that Jesus was "faithful to his mission to all the people until the end."⁵⁹ Gundry suggests that Matthew wants the healings to authenticate the teaching Jesus has just given the disciples in the church discourse.⁶⁰ In response we may ask why Jesus did not teach as well as heal, and we are inclined to answer: because it was no longer Jesus' *custom* to teach the people.

We should also mention 15:29, although there is no omission there of a Markan reference to teaching. In 15:29-31 Matthew replaces the healing in Mark 7:31-37 with a summary of healings. Before he began to heal, Jesus went up *the mountain* and *sat down*. In Matthew there is an important connection between *teaching* and *sitting*.⁶¹ From 5:1 and 24:3, where Jesus also sits on a mountain, and 13:1 where he sits by the sea, we would expect Jesus now to teach or give an oral discourse, but Jesus only heals. Perhaps was Matthew here inspired by an oral source in which Jesus also sat on the mountain before feeding the people,⁶² but why would not Matthew expand this summary with teaching, and use this opportunity to again portray Jesus as a teacher in the mold of Moses, since he elsewhere is so eager to underline the authority of Jesus as teacher and

⁵⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 488.

⁶⁰ Gundry, *Matthew*, 376.

⁶¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 424-425; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 183.

⁶² Cf. John 6:3; Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 343-344;

here appears to deliberately allude to Moses?⁶³ The pattern is at this point quite clear; Matthew after the parable discourse avoids, as much as he can, portraying Jesus as teaching the people.

To sum up; Matthew has retained four references to Jesus' teaching, but only once (13:54), do we hear directly that Jesus taught the people. In the three other references to, we hear Jesus correct the Sadducees' doctrinal error, and we hear that he taught in the temple—to an unspecified audience. With all four of these references there are aspects that strongly coincide with Matthew's tendencies, and these could have led him to keep the references despite the tensions they made in his scheme. We have also seen that Matthew on four occasions omits Markan references to Jesus' teaching without obvious reasons, and that he on one occasion fails to add this element where we would expect him to. Though we can think of different possible reasons for most of the omissions, if we can find *one* explanation that accounts for them all, this one is to be preferred. Thus we should conclude that Matthew after the parable discourse *seeks to avoid* references to Jesus' teaching.

5.4 Conclusion

Not much appears to be changed in the people after the parable discourse. They continue to flock around and follow Jesus, and they are still amazed at his works. Though a part of the population reflect some progress in their understanding of Jesus as they hail him as the Son of David, they also speak of him generically as a prophet. Most likely it is Matthew's pragmatic employment of the crowds as *chorus* that is the reason for this group's short—and still inadequate—understanding of Jesus. As the whole people finally turn against Jesus with hostility, they reveal that whatever levels of understanding were among them, it was a shallow understanding that had not led to repentance.

We do see changes in the disciples, and it is especially clear in 13:53-17:27. It is not as if they start out on a higher level of understanding, but the disciples appear to make use of the privilege given them in the parable discourse and frequently ask Jesus when they need understanding, as they began to do in 13:36. Thus they demonstrate, as

⁶³ Cf. Allison, *Moses*, 241.

opposed to the people, “the potential and desire to understand.”⁶⁴ And this bears fruit; by Jesus’ help the disciples now show progress in their understanding: In the only three passages where συνίημι is used after the parable discourse, they go from needing an explanation to a parable, to understanding a metaphor about leaven as soon as Jesus tells them this understanding is within reach, to understanding on their own that John was the promised Elijah. Their growth in understanding is also revealed in their worship of Jesus and confession of him as Son of God—and in Peter’s walk on the water.

There are also clear indications of a change in Jesus’ ministry. He continues to heal the people, but he no longer goes out preaching and teaching. Though he at a few points engages with them in some form of teaching, Matthew’s intention appears to be that Jesus no longer seeks to bring the people of Israel into the kingdom. Jesus instead focuses on the disciples. It is not only *they* who come to *him* with questions, but *he* often takes initiative to teaching *them*, sometimes also by revealing to them aspects of his nature that are hidden from others. Further, he underlines their need for faith, and involves them in his miracles.

All these three sides of the narrative following the parable discourse correspond with the event of this discourse: The people of Israel, despite still being open and sympathetic to Jesus, never move into a state of repentance and commitment; the disciples display growth in understanding; and Jesus turns from those who are blind and deaf to his message, and concentrates on those who understand him and bear fruit. Thus the parable discourse appears as an event with real, causal effects on the narrative.

⁶⁴ Wilkens, *Disciple*, 146.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

In this study we have sought to determine how the parable discourse is related to the Matthean narrative. We have seen that this text recounts how Jesus turns to parabolic speech when speaking mysteries of the kingdom, thereby hindering the crowds from understanding them, while allowing his disciples to understand. The reason for this action is that the crowds have failed to choose a path of understanding, and hence have not responded to Jesus' call to repentance. The disciples, on the other hand, have understood what they have seen and heard in Jesus and committed themselves to his cause. Therefore they have been given to know these mysteries, which will lead to fruit for the kingdom.

There are mainly two reasons to regard the parable discourse as an event somehow placed outside Matthew's storyline, as Luz and Cousland do. First, Jesus' negative assessment of the crowds in this discourse does not seem to square with their awe for Jesus both before and after. Second, Jesus here withdraws his plain speech from the people, as he withdraws himself physically, whereas he openly ministers to the people both before and after. We have not found these tensions great enough to follow Luz and Cousland. Rather, recognizing that tensions are a part of Matthew's composite work, we have found that the parable discourse is both prepared for and has effects on the narrative.

If we begin with the preceding context, there is a clear difference in commitment between the disciples and the crowds, and also a notable difference in their understanding of Jesus and his ministry: While the disciples display perfect obedience and commitment, the crowds hesitate; and while the disciples apparently see Jesus as the promised Messiah, and wrestle with the thought that he might even be more than a human figure, the crowds struggle even to see Jesus as an earthly Messiah, despite the proofs of his ministry. Further, although the treatment of the crowds still comes across as harsh, since they have been open and sympathetic to Jesus, and not hostile as their leaders, there are two aspects of Matthew's narrative which, when understood rightly, solves this apparent difficulty. The first is that the crowds do not make up a distinct entity or character, but that it merely is a term for the people of Israel who at any given time and place meet with Jesus. We therefore need to consider how the people in general have been presented, not just how the crowds have behaved. Second, we need to understand what Matthew

intended to be the section preceding the parable discourse, and how he intended it to be understood. In our investigation of Matthew's structure, we found this section to be 11:2-12:50, and we saw that its primary function was to present *responses to Jesus' ministry*. Here we learn that Israel at large have failed to believe Jesus, and that only the disciples have responded with faith and obedience, although a wider future acceptance of Jesus among the Gentiles is promised. In this section the general populace are as guilty of unbelief as their leaders, and on this background the parable discourse is not harsh when it portrays the crowds, representatives of the people of unbelief, as obdurate.

As Jesus in the parable discourse excludes this people from the knowledge of the kingdom, he effects no change in them. Though 13:12 might imply that they *in the future* will suffer a loss, they neither gain nor lose anything in this event. Therefore, turning to the narrative following the discourse, that the crowds now act no differently is no reason to regard the discourse as an event outside the storyline. That parts of the people after the discourse for a brief time appears to *grow* in their understanding of Jesus, on the other hand, could be a reason, unless we recognize Matthew's pragmatic use of the crowds as *chorus* to Jesus' ministry and his tolerance for inconsistencies. That the whole people of Israel, without the dissent of larger groups, finally turns with hostility on Jesus reveals that their recognition of him all along was shallow, and that Jesus' criticism in the parable discourse was well founded.

Unlike the crowds, the disciples are not unaffected by the parable discourse. They are told about their privilege to understand the mysteries of the kingdom, are given specific knowledge in the parables, and promised more such knowledge in the future. This corresponds well to what we see after the discourse, especially in the section immediately following, 13:53-17:27. There is now a notable change in the disciples: whereas we never before heard the disciples ask Jesus a question, they now make frequent use of their privilege and ask when they lack understanding. That they have grown and continue to grow in understanding is also clear, as Peter asks to be called out on the water, the disciples confess Jesus as Son of God, and they understand a parable and a saying about Elijah. The unique position given the disciples in the parable discourse also seems to have an effect on them, because in a way the disciples assume the

posture of *church* already right after the parable discourse; Peter begins to act as their leader and spokesman, and they serve the people in events that foreshadow the Eucharist.

There is also a clear change in how Jesus now relates to the disciples and the rest of the people of Israel. He frequently teaches the disciples and involves them in miracles; he stresses their need to grow in faith and understanding, and he reveals more of his true nature. He thus fulfills the promise of knowledge made to them in the parable discourse. We also see a change in Jesus' ministry to the people, although this aspect is somewhat obscured by Matthew's balancing of different objectives. Though Jesus continues to heal those with needs and engage in debate with the people and their leaders, he no longer appears to seek their repentance and righteous living through his teaching and preaching.

Our study has shown that the parable discourse is an event firmly imbedded in the Matthean storyline. It is not explainable only on the transparent level; neither is it prolepsis or a prophetic act that predicts the people's future loss of understanding; and neither is it just a symbolic one-time event revealing and criticizing the people's obduracy. The discourse is more than criticism; it marks a shift in Jesus' ministry. This is the first time Jesus does not appear to seek Israel's repentance, and for the rest of the story his ministry to Israel is limited to acting out his compassion for the needy by healing them, and to speak and prophesy against Israel and her leaders. This implies that Jesus has given up on Israel, and that—as is evident—his hope for the kingdom now lies with the disciples and the Gentiles. Although Jesus has invested in his disciples also before the parable discourse, it first now becomes clear that the disciples are not just called to patch up the old wineskins of Israel, but that they will form the nucleus of a new people that will take Israel's place. Both the founding of the church and the transference of the kingdom is here anticipated. Only a short and intensive "program" of training and revelation is needed to lead the disciples to the insight and maturity they need to be authorized as God's church (16:18-19; 18:18-20).

This study has largely affirmed Kingsbury's designation of the parable discourse as a turning point. In one sense the turn begins in chapter 11, because it is here that the people's responses to Jesus' ministry and the judgment he in return promises them makes it clear that Israel will reject her Messiah. It is therefore somewhat misleading to present the Gospel of Matthew as a perfectly balanced and symmetric arrangement with a turning

point in the center, as exponents of chiastic outlines of the Gospel often did.¹ But though Jesus begins to predict judgment on Israel in chapter 11, the parable discourse still deserves to be called the turning point: while chapters 11-12 primarily are concerned with the unbelief itself, the parable discourse focuses on Jesus' reaction to it and the changes to his ministry, and this is where the spotlight moves from Israel to the disciples—the solution to the problem of Israel's rejection. Combrink might not have been too far off when he ascribed to Matthew the intention to balance Israel's negative response before the discourse with the disciples' positive response after the discourse.² In any case, the sudden shift of focus reveals that for Matthew this discourse was a turning point.

To view the parable discourse as a turning point as dramatic as we have done here is not common. It is common, however, to view this discourse as a real event in the narrative, especially signaling an increased focus on the disciples. But as we saw in the introduction, many are hesitant on the basis of chapters 11-12 to describe Israel's unbelief as endemic, and very few believe Matthew meant that Jesus now gave up his efforts to lead Israel into the kingdom.

One point must be made about the implications of our view. That Jesus now ends his efforts to lead Israel to repentance does not imply that Matthew here dogmatically excluded ethnic Jews from the kingdom, or that they are excluded from the mission to πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 28:19. There are many reasons to think that for Matthew the Jewish mission was still open, both in this narrative and in his own day,³ though he was probably less than hopeful of a great harvest. That Jesus gives up his efforts toward Israel, must be understood in light of Matthew's argument: As the "many women" and Joseph of Arimathea in chapter 27 reveal, it was not as if the twelve disciples alone were the remnant out of a people totally corrupt, but Matthew exaggerates Israel's opposition to Jesus to bolster his case for the establishment of the church—made up of both Jews and Gentiles—as the legitimate new people of God, a case Jews at his time no doubt had good Scriptural arguments against. And having been almost unanimously rejected, it was

¹ Here Luz has a point: *Matthew 8-20*, 229.

² Combrink, "Structure," 83.

³ 23:39 seems to imply an opening. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 323-324. Also 10:23; by not recounting the disciples' return (cf. 11:1), Matthew avoids the implication that this mission was over. For other arguments cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 23-24, 243-244; Kvalbein, "Abandoned," 54-58; Ulrich Luz, "Has Matthew abandoned the Jews?" in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein; WUNT 127; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 64-65.

futile for Jesus to continue his call to Israel. Still it was Israel as a corporate entity that rejected Jesus, and it was corporate Israel that consequently would lose kingdom, land, and religious institution; not the individual Jew.

To tie up some loose ends; we speculated, with reservations, in chapter three whether Matthew with his Isaiah allusion in 13:13 intended the parable discourse to announce that Israel was beyond repentance and was unavoidably headed towards judgment. In light of what has just been said, this is *possible*.⁴ If so, it is based on the people's lack of repentance in the "ministry events" in chapters 5-10, not on the murder of Jesus, on which basis two later passages express the same notion (21:43; 27:25).⁵

We also postponed our verdict on 13:36. Though we noted that Matthew left no indications that this verse should be taken symbolically, we allowed that it may symbolize the essence of the discourse as a whole. It may therefore symbolize Jesus' shift of focus from those who would not listen to those who would. But if Jesus' physical departure from the crowds is given too much weight, which we argued against, and one views the parable discourse as a "departure from Israel," then his continued interaction with the people after the discourse is a problem. Perhaps Luz' emphasis on 13:36 is partly to blame for his view of the parable discourse as a preview of the Gospel's ending.

Chaos and Order in Matthew

It is time to gather some of the insights we have gained into Matthew's process of composition, and shed some light on questions that have remained unanswered in Matthean scholarship. Two seemingly contradictory aspects of Matthew's Gospel that often have puzzled scholars have to a large degree determined this study. On the one hand the Gospel is evidently well planned and thoughtfully arranged; on the other, tensions and inconsistencies abound.⁶ We have seen many examples of both. The parable discourse is centrally placed on the battlefield of the Matthean "forces" of chaos and order: the discourse appears right where Matthew leaves his careful thematic arrangement

⁴ Like in Isaiah's case this need not entail that they are forever beyond repentance.

⁵ 27:25 should not be taken as a self-curse on the Jewish race, but an etiology of Israel's loss of land and institutional religion. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 592.

⁶ E.g. Filson, "Broken Patterns"; Stanton, "Origin," 1898.

and begins to follow Mark's thematically haphazard order, and it is because of *chaos*, the tensions to the main narrative, that the parable discourse poses a problem for the reader.

But we have seen that there is more *order* to Matthew's Gospel than has often been recognized the past two decades. Based on the unifying structure and theme in chapters 11-12 and Matthew's concentrated redactional focus on the disciples and the church in 13:53-17:27, we have found reason to endorse Allison's adjusted version of Bacon's structural outline. But unlike Allison (with Davies), we assert that Matthew *had* a blueprint for the composition of his Gospel, and it did not end at 12:1 or 13:53. Fatigue may to some degree account for the gradual decline in creativity seen in the substructures in the five discourses (or lack thereof in chs. 24-25?), but contra Gundry; Matthew stayed alert throughout his Gospel, both in his redaction and in the creation of literary connections. Davies and Allison's suggestion that Matthew at 13:53 discovered he was out of Q material, and therefore followed Mark, is thus implausible. Robinson was probably closer to the truth; the thematic organization in the first half stems from Matthew's inspiration from Q to make his Gospel progress thematically, as a logical argument. But as we have argued, his inspiration from Q lasted beyond chapter 11—even beyond the parable discourse.

I propose that Matthew followed Mark in the second half of his Gospel because he was quite content with how Mark's narrative developed with an increasing focus on the disciples before the passion.⁷ But he wanted to make adjustments to the first half. In Matthew's Jewish context, Mark's focus on the disciples and the church lacked a compelling rationale. Though Jesus met opposition from the Pharisees (esp. Mark 2:1-3:6) and his family (Mark 3:20-35), the people had welcomed him (Mark 1:22, 27-28, 32-33, 45: 2:1-4, 3:7-8, 20), and the church's replacement of Israel seemed to be based solely on predestination (Mark 4:11-12). Matthew therefore changed Mark's ἵνα to ὅτι in 13:13 and used Q's arrangement before the parable discourse, since it made clear that the rejection of Jesus was the choice of a stubborn people. Thus; it was for the sake of his apologetic argument that Matthew arranged his material thematically in chapters 1-13;

⁷ Cf. Fenton, *Matthew*, 235, who suggested Matthew was content with Mark, but without suggesting why. Mark increases his focus on the disciples from ch. 6: Cf. Mark 6:31, 37, 50; 7:2, 17-23; 8:1-10, 14-21, 8:27-9:50. Cf. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 381.

not just because of his fondness for thematic order. And the reason he did not rearrange the rest of the Gospel thematically, was that his argument now was clear. He was not fatigued; he further enhanced the focus on the disciples and the church in 13:54-17:27, and he also continued to sharpen his argument until the end (e.g. 27:25, 62-66; 28:11-15).

Despite Matthew's ingenuity in balancing the preservation and reshaping of traditions, his masterful braiding together of his sources, and his elaborate structural arrangements, he was forced to make certain compromises, and he chose primarily to sacrifice his Gospel's *narrative coherence*. It is because Matthew wanted an overall logical argument that chapters 11-13 end up in tension to the surrounding narrative, and it is because he wanted the theological points of individual passages to come across clearly that he allowed tension within or to other passages, as when the crowds hailed Jesus as Son of David in 21:9 and called him a prophet in 21:11. Matthew gave priority to his theological, apologetic, and paraenetic points, and his narrative was a vehicle for these elements, not an end in itself. Our initial reluctance to answer the question of this study by way of a narrative approach was therefore legitimate.

When we in this study have confirmed Kingsbury's thesis from 1969 about the parable discourse as a turning point in the Matthean narrative, we have, interestingly enough, ended up with a structural outline in conflict with the one he suggested a few years later. That Kingsbury relied less on redactional and more on narrative considerations, may to some extent account for this disagreement. But though we have found Allison's structure to best reflect Matthew's compositional process and main apologetic argument, we acknowledge that Matthew is a multifaceted work, and other outlines may reflect better other aspects of the Gospel.

To place the parable discourse in its narrative and argumentative context, I suggest the following sketch of Matthew's narrative argument: *Jesus, confirmed as the Messiah, Son of God by angels, God, and the devil, calls Israel to repentance (chs. 1-4), while proving his Messianic authority through teaching (chs. 5-7) miracles (chs. 8-9). Despite Jesus' deeds, and despite his disciples extension of these deeds (ch. 10), Israel fails to believe and repent (chs. 11-12). Consequently Jesus ends his ministry of repentance to Israel, and turns instead to his disciples, whom he initiates into the mysteries of the kingdom, explaining the kingdom's seeming failure (ch. 13). Jesus*

endows the disciples with understanding and revelation in preparation to be his church (chs. 14-17), sets up the ideal of love and inclusivity for this community (ch. 18), and continues to teach the disciples until arriving in Jerusalem. Here he exposes the corrupt Jewish leadership, predicts judgment over their religious institution and nation (chs. 18-23), and warns his disciples to be different (chs. 24-25). Led by offended and threatened leaders, Israel gives Jesus up to be crucified, but he rises from the dead and commissions his church to go out and build the new people of God, made up from all nations (chs. 26-28).

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