

Introduction: To Distinguish Good from Evil

Let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Heb 6:1–2)

It seems as if the author of Hebrews counted among the simple and foundational teachings the idea that divine judgment is a reality that all followers of Jesus should be aware of before even attempting to move forward toward perfection.¹ The modern reader of the texts included in the New Testament, a collection unknown to the author of Hebrews, may be excused, however, for pointing out that there was considerable disagreement among early Christ-believers regarding most of these elementary teachings, including the theme of divine judgment. While counted among the foundational beliefs by all—and perhaps, for that very reason—divine judgment and its (non-apocalyptic and apocalyptic) consequences was a reality considered from different perspectives.

The basic conviction behind all ideas about divine judgment is the simple but, for most people in the ancient Mediterranean world, crucially important claim that a god or gods have an interest in and claim authority over human beings, the world, and events taking place in history.² Such beliefs may take various forms, depending on the

1. The author compares these teachings to food for infants, as opposed to solid food for the mature, who have been “trained by practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb 5:12–14).

2. Cf. Hermann Spieckermann, “Wrath and Mercy as Crucial Terms of Theological Hermeneutics,” in *Divine Wrath and Mercy in the World of Antiquity* (edited by Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann

religio-cultural and social context in which individuals and groups happen to live. What is so intriguing about these discourses on divine wrath and judgment is, however, that such notions, often harshly articulated, tend to mark the boundaries not only of mental constructs of an ideal world, but also of the social worlds in which the concepts are formed and incarnated.³ This means that judgment discourse becomes inherently important for authorities in various religious settings, since they may refer to such traditions or texts in order to mark the boundaries of their communities, outline what distinguishes the good life from its opposite, and emphasize the importance of obedience. Indeed, assertions making reference to divine judgment orient the reader toward the heart of fundamental issues of identity in any given text or community.

The analysis of ideas about divine wrath will therefore prove essential to the understanding of the overall pattern of thought of a specific text, as well as of core aspects of the identity and social practices of a religious group. It goes without saying that an understanding of the former, the pattern of the text, must precede insights into the latter, the social setting in which the text came into being, although it is true that only limited understanding can be achieved without reference to context. This book has its focus on the primary task of understanding the pattern of divine judgment in the text, and I have chosen to put the spotlight on what is probably the single most influential New Testament text of all times—the Gospel of Matthew. As it happens, this narrative is also more concerned with

Spieckermann; FAT 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 3–16: “Wrath and mercy of gods are among the most significant divine features of any religion in antiquity. [...] In any religious system the relation of wrath and mercy is considerably dependent on the interplay of authoritative texts and individual experiences treasured in the collective memory and interpreted by philosophical and theological experts” (3).

3. Cf. the more general discussion of the relationship between text and the formation of lifestyle in Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (London: T & T Clark, 2000) 9–14. See also, Stephen Westerholm, *Understanding Matthew: The Early Christian Worldview of the First Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006) 141–44, who discusses the implications of the fact that Matthew is a story about the past for the impact it may have on later readers as they understand their own lives in light of the story. See also idem, “Hearing the Gospels of Matthew and Mark,” in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings II: Hermeneutics, Reception History, Theology* (edited by Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 245–58.

divine judgment than any other early text written by believers in Jesus.⁴

Divine Judgment in Church and Academy

Over the centuries, the diversity found in the New Testament texts has inspired thinkers within both church and academy to describe, analyze, and claim as theologically or historically authoritative a variety of understandings of why and how the God of Israel would be judging the world. In the history of the church, certain periods have seen interest in divine judgment peak, often as such notions have become intertwined with other doctrines against the background of more general understandings of salvation and its requirements. It seems, for example, that God's judgment of the Jewish people and their "religion" became particularly important for the (non-Jewish) church fathers in late antiquity.⁵ Another illustration of this phenomenon, with enormous influence on the church theologically, and, as it turned out, organizationally, is the controversies during the Reformation in the sixteenth century, which related, in one way or another, to practices and debates in which ideas about divine judgment were a defining element.⁶

4. On the centrality of divine judgment in Matthew's Gospel, see, e.g., Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (edited by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held; London: SCM Press, 1963) 58–164, 62; Daniel Marguerat, *Le jugement dans l'évangile de Matthieu* (2nd ed.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995) 13; Blaine Charette, *The Theme of Recompense in Matthew's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic press, 1992) 13; David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 110. The correlation between this concern for divine judgment—and thus, also boundary-marking—on the one hand, and the extraordinary success of Matthew's Gospel in terms of its reception in various communities and societies as the Jesus movement spread and developed into what we know as Christianity, is intriguing, but lies beyond the parameters of the present study. It is, however, a topic worthy of further social-scientific-oriented reception-historical analyses. For discussion of this theme as it relates to the production of the Gospel in the first century, see Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127:1 (2008) 95–132.
5. See discussion in Anders Runesson, "Judging the Theological Tree by its Fruit: The Use of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew in Official Church Documents on Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings II: Hermeneutics, Reception History, Theology* (edited by Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 189–228, esp. 189–93.
6. Most famously, these debates orbited the sale of indulgences and Martin Luther's insistence on the doctrine of righteousness through faith alone (*sola fide*), without works.

Many of these debates have been replicated over the centuries in academic discursive trajectories focused on the New Testament texts, although the university setting has given birth to an understanding of authority as dependent on the proper use of historical-critical methodologies, rather than on rulings issued by ordained bishops and priests. For example, it has been quite common among Protestant scholars to assume, without discussion, the existence in the first century of “Jews” and “Christians” as distinct groups, and then to move on to construe their respective views on judgment, reward, punishment, and salvation as antithetical. First-century Jews, on the one hand, are said to have believed in “works righteousness” based on the ability of individuals to uphold the law; Christians (i.e., followers of Jesus), on the other hand, are claimed to have embraced a theological worldview in which judgment is not based on “the law,” or “works,” but on Jesus’s sacrifice, which is to be accepted in faith.⁷ Such interpretive procedures and the results they have produced have matched quite closely, and sustained, Protestant–Catholic debates that originated in the sixteenth century. “The Jews” or “the Pharisees” of the Gospel narratives have been understood to incarnate judgment-related doctrines ascribed to contemporary Catholics, and the hero of the texts (Jesus) has been made to conform to Protestant convictions.

Hermeneutically, there are, thus, two larger problems here that

7. See, e.g., the chapter entitled “Der Lohngedanke im Neuen Testament” in Günther Bornkamm, *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, band II (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959) especially 69–71. See also Wilhelm Pesch, *Der Lohngedanke in der Lehre Jesu verglichen mit der religiösen Lohnlehre des Spätjudentums* (Munich: Karl Zink, 1955) 143: “An die Stelle eines Gesetzeskodex tritt jetzt die unbedingte Nachfolge Jesu, an die Stelle der Selbsterlösung durch Gesetzeswerke die Erlösung durch das Blut des Erlösers Jesu. Damit ist jeder Formalismus und Legalismus für alle Zeit verurteilt.” Cf. the more general critique of similar perspectives by Charette, *Recompense*, 13: “Evidence of scholarly unease is seen in the fact that discussions of Jesus’ teaching on reward are frequently dominated by the issue of ‘grace versus merit’ and are concerned to highlight the differences of the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of early Judaism.” Of course, the seminal work of E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), especially the first part of the book, which is dedicated to understanding Second-Temple Judaism, has been of tremendous importance for the development of a new interpretive paradigm with regard to issues relating to judgment and salvation in Judaism. Still, there is always the risk even when painting a positive portrait of “the other” (in relation to Christ-believers) to create this “other” in one’s own (Christian/protestant) image, so that similarity is what constitutes the basis for appreciation. Cf. the recent critical discussion of Sanders’s main conclusions in Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006).

stand in the way for the historian interested in first-century ideas about divine judgment and salvation: inter-church debates as they took form in the Western churches during the Reformation and which have been replicated in academic discourses, on the one hand, and Christian anti-Jewish traditions with roots in late-antique concerns about construing and sustaining separate (non-Jewish) Christian and (Rabbinic) Jewish identities, on the other.⁸ These hermeneutical obstacles are related to several other key issues that tend to obstruct our view as we try to understand the New Testament, one of the most important and persistent being that of distinct Jewish and Christian identities. Scholars today, regardless of whether they are Jews or Christians or belong to or identify with any other denominational or non-denominational worldview and/or community, live in societies in which there are clearly identifiable institutional boundaries between mainstream Judaism and Christianity, between synagogue and church. Our own immediate context undoubtedly affects, unconsciously, the way we talk about and construe ancient groups and their convictions.

Further, it is also important to recognize the fact that since history is often perceived as playing a role in contemporary identity formation and preservation, and the first-century texts under investigation are considered sacred by Christians, it has been and continues to be all too easy for both Christian and Jewish scholars of the New Testament to identify in these texts beliefs which, in one way or the other, support present-day denominational boundaries. In such hermeneutical processes, the terminology used by the historian (“Jews” and

8. On the formation of Christian identity during the early centuries, including discussion of terminology, see Anders Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (edited by Bengt Holmberg; WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 59–92. The problem of protestant convictions coming through in historical research on Matthew has been noted by Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 49–50, who, as he comments on the Sermon on the Mount, writes: “[I]ts central thrust is the justification by grace alone of those who strive for righteousness. Such paraphrases may puzzle people who have been trained to think in terms of Protestant theology of justification. However, they will be familiar to those who proceed from Jewish thought.” Similar Protestant influence on the research process is also present in many studies on Paul and judgment. See David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) 1–7. Regarding the question of anti-Judaism as related to judgment discourse in Matthew’s Gospel, see the discussion in Marguerat, *Jugement*, 575ff.

“Christians,” “Judaism” and “Christianity,” “synagogue” and “church”) often complicates matters further, since it replicates modern ideas about distinct and even irreconcilable identities as if these were present in the first-century, an (often unstated) assumption, which is demonstrably false.⁹

Related to such mechanisms of interpretation is the tendency among some scholars to stress a single harmonizing perspective when investigating the various texts included in the canon.¹⁰ Such inclinations may be ascribed to more general human leanings toward uniformity rather than diversity as analytical work is to be synthesized and ancient meaning translated into modern sense. This interpretive habit may also, however, be understood as related to a theological paradigm in which theology is thought of as building more on a uniform construal of historical meaning than on the often ambiguous and diverse voices of the historical “other.”¹¹ When combined with the above problem of modern identity-sustaining hermeneutical mechanisms, this preference for uniformity in thought and practice, as applied to texts included in the Christian canon, is perhaps one of the more difficult obstacles to overcome for the historian.

Considerations such as these should lead, in my view, to a realization

9. “Christianity” (Greek: *christianismos*) as a term appears for the first time in the second century in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch. The term *christianos*, however, occurs only three times in the New Testament, and, arguably, does not mean what we today mean when we use the English term “Christian”; the term should, rather, be understood as a designation comparable to “Pharisee,” or “Sadducee,” indicating Jewish messianic convictions and lifestyles. See discussion in Runesson, “Inventing Christian Identity”; cf. idem “The Question of Terminology: The Architecture of Contemporary Discussions on Paul,” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (edited by Mark Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015) 53–77. Further, “Church” is erroneously used to translate *ekklēsia* in most English bibles; this term was one of many used in the first century, in addition to Greco-Roman uses, to designate synagogue institutions. For synagogue terminology and sources, see Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder, and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue From its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Source Book* (AJEC 72; Leiden: Brill, 2008). For a comprehensive analysis of Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christ-follower uses of the term *ekklēsia*, see Ralph Korner, “*Before ‘Church’: Political, Ethno-Religious and Theological Implications of the Collective Designation of Pauline Christ-Followers as Ekklēsia*” (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 2014).
10. A recent example of this may be found in Alan P. Stanley, *Did Jesus Teach Salvation by Works? The Role of Works in Salvation in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2006). Such tendencies, however, have been around for more than a millennium in the interpretation of the biblical texts.
11. On the relationship between history and theology, see the discussion in Anders Runesson, *O That You Would Tear Open the Heavens and Come Down! On the Historical Jesus, Jonas Gardell, and the Breath of God* (Örebro and Skellefteå: Libris and Artos, 2011 [in Swedish]), especially 131–65.

of the necessity of abandoning—on historical and theological (and ethical) grounds—any attempts at harmonizing the obvious diversity that inescapably must exist in all human societies and within all worldviews that individuals and groups happen to entertain. Indeed, the present study of judgment discourse in the Gospel of Matthew began as a study of divine wrath in the Synoptic Gospels. Very soon, I realized, however, that Matthew’s perspective differed in significant ways from Mark’s and, especially, Luke’s. This made it necessary to narrow down the investigation to deal with Matthew only, as a first step in a larger investigation. The First Gospel, it seemed to me then as it does now, has, contrary to the other Gospels, a very structured and coherent approach to divine judgment, as if this theme were at the heart of what the text is trying to communicate. As many have pointed out before and as we noted above, Matthew is more concerned with the judgment theme than any other New Testament text. Divine judgment is, indeed, at the center of the proclamation of the good news, according to this Gospel. This, in turn, means that if we can reconstruct Matthew’s perception of divine judgment, we will have reached a fuller understanding of the historical nature and aim of this text as a whole, which may then clarify its relationship to the other Gospels within which such care regarding consistency and emphasis is not discernable. In other words, renewed study of the judgment theme in Matthew’s Gospel will not only have implications for our appreciation of a fundamental concern in the theo-ritual pattern of this text, but will also contribute insights to the wider discussion of how to locate this narrative in relation to other contemporary texts and the socio-political and religious settings in which the Jesus movement emerged.

Some notes on Matthew’s Judgment in Recent Discussion

As can be expected, the present book is not the first to realize the importance of judgment discourse for the understanding of Matthew’s Gospel. While several studies have recently been published that focus on divine judgment and its function in particular texts, especially Paul

and the historical Jesus,¹² and while the judgment theme in Matthew was dealt with in several important articles in the twentieth century,¹³ our Gospel has received more comprehensive treatment, from different perspectives, in five monographs of particular interest to the present study, authored by Daniel Marguerat, Blaine Charette, David C. Sim, Petri Luomanen, and, most recently, Nathan Eubank.¹⁴

David Sim's survey of research on Matthew's apocalyptic eschatology and judgment still gives the best concise overview of the state of research, covering the most important studies and trends

12. For the historical Jesus, see Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in its Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); Steven Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgment and Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). In studies on Paul, analysis of the judgment theme is often interrelated with questions raised by the so-called New Perspective (or even more recently, the Radical New Perspective, now also called the Paul-within-Judaism perspective) and the problem of justification. Studies specifically addressing judgment include Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict*; Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Matthias Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde: Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik im 1 Thess und 1 Kor* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003); VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification*. For discussion of the theme of divine judgment in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish texts, including the New Testament, see Anders Runesson, "Judgment," *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld; Nashville: Abingdon, 2008) 457–66. The relationship between the motif of judgment, according to works in Ps 62 and the New Testament as well as other Jewish texts, is analyzed in Kyong-Shik Kim, *God will Judge Each One According to Works: Judgment According to Works and Psalm 62 in Early Judaism and the New Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011). The study of divine judgment in 1 Enoch and Sirach receives in-depth treatment in chapters five and six of Randal A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation and Judgment* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 165–247. Argall argues not only that these two works take different approaches to divine judgment, but also, that they do so in awareness of one another's traditions, presenting rival ideas on the matter. A wider approach to judgment in various ancient cultures (Israelite, Hittite, Babylonian, Iranian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Christian, as well as aspects of Indian and Chinese traditions) is found in J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Divine Verdict: A Study of Divine Judgment in the Ancient Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1991). See also, more recently, Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann (eds.), *Divine Wrath and Mercy in the World of Antiquity* (FAT 33; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). This volume addresses the relevant theme moving from the ancient Near East to Plato and the New Testament, and from there, into Late Antiquity, including also studies of Early Christianity and Islam, respectively. A more theologically-oriented approach was published very recently, indicating continued keen interest among scholars and students in these types of questions: Alan P. Stanley (ed.), *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).
13. But see also Luz special section on this theme in his commentary, *Matthew*, 3.285–96.
14. Marguerat, *Jugement*; Charette, *Recompense*; Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*; Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (WUNT 2.101; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013). On the history of research, note also the helpful discussion of the role of grace and works by Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 7–36. In addition to these studies, a doctoral thesis on the theme of soteriology was defended in 2014 at Murdoch University: Mothy Varkey, "Salvation in Continuity: A Reconsideration of Matthew's Soteriology" (Ph.D. diss., Murdoch University, 2014). This thesis has a special focus on the law and its salvific function in Matthew.

before 1996.¹⁵ Sim begins his discussion by noting Johannes Weiss' and Albert Schweitzer's emphasis on the apocalyptic theme more generally in New Testament scholarship, which relates closely to judgment discourse. Their approach, in turn, influenced key studies on Matthew, such as Burnett H. Streeter's 1924 publication.¹⁶ Streeter understood Matthew's emphasis on apocalyptic judgment and imminent end-time expectation to be the creation of an apocalyptic sect in the postwar period, dating the Gospel to ca. 85 CE and locating it in Antioch. This analysis of Matthew, which provides an important point of departure for Sim's own perspective on the nature and location of the Gospel,¹⁷ was, however, soon to become neglected.

Perhaps the most influential of all studies on Matthew with regard to our topic has been Günther Bornkamm's article "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew."¹⁸ Bornkamm argued that the eschatological orientation of Matthew's Gospel had the purpose of exhorting Christ-believers to attain the higher righteousness required by Jesus's teaching, in this way domesticating the apocalyptic theme of the Gospel in the service of community-building. The major effect of Bornkamm's work on scholarship was precisely this: Matthew's eschatology came to be seen as intertwined with his ecclesiology, and the function of judgment discourse was reduced to paraenesis meant to instruct Christ-believers in Matthew's present; Matthew's community was transformed into a non-apocalyptic, well-established group. In this context, Sim's quote from Howard C. Kee is worth repeating: "The

15. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 3–14. See also Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 7–34. For a recent discussion of scholarship on Matthew more broadly, see David C. Sim, "Matthew: The Current State of Research," in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in the First-Century Settings* (edited by Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 271; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 33–51, and Daniel M. Gurtner, "The Gospel of Matthew from Stanton to Present: A Survey of Some Recent Developments," in *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel, and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton* (edited by Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge; London: T & T Clark, 2011) 23–38. The following discussion will draw upon Sim's 1996 work to structure previous scholarship.

16. Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924).

17. See also David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

18. Günther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (edited by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held; London: SCM Press, 1963) 15–51. See also Bornkamm, *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum*.

church of Matthew, with the apostolic foundation going back to Peter as sovereign and arbiter ... is an established institution, not an apocalyptic sect.”¹⁹

Daniel Marguerat’s extensive treatment of the judgment theme in Matthew continues the research trajectory established by Bornkamm, and does so in a very comprehensive way.²⁰ There is much in his study to be commended. The judgment theme is rightly stated to be the center of Matthew’s thought,²¹ and the focus on the criteria of judgment, as based on Jesus’s interpretation of Jewish law, is certainly to the point, although such a claim does not exclude an interest on the part of the evangelist in the actual judgment act itself, as well as its consequences.²² It is also clear that divine judgment applies to all, including Jesus’s disciples. On this point, however, Marguerat’s use of terminology, in my view, leads the investigation in a problematic direction.

Marguerat’s argument takes as point of departure a terminological distinction between Israel and the disciples, as if for Matthew, Jesus and his followers would not be “Israel,” but rather, a new category, “the church.”²³ Matthew’s Gospel, however, does not support such a distinction.²⁴ As far as the criteria of judgment are concerned, there is only one major distinction between groups in Matthew, and that is between Jews and non-Jews.²⁵ The fact that the narrative then distinguishes between individuals and groups *within* Israel as either

19. Howard C. Kee, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1980) 143, as quoted in Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 7.

20. Marguerat, *Jugement*. Cf. discussion of Marguerat’s analysis in Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 6–9; Luomanen, *Entering the kingdom*, 21–23.

21. Marguerat, *Jugement*, 13.

22. Cf. the critique of Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 6–7, 9. On the extreme representations of violence in Matthew’s Gospel, see most recently, John S. Kloppenborg, “The Representation of Violence in Synoptic Parables,” in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in the First-Century Settings* (edited by Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 271; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 323–51.

23. The same problem is present in Wolfgang Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäusevangeliums* (3rd edition; Munich: Kösel, 1964). This leads Trilling to assume that “Israel” is rejected as “the Church” takes over. As we shall see, such conclusions are based on the use of modern terminology inconsistent with Matthew’s text.

24. On terminological issues, see above note 9. Similar terminological problems are present in Charette, *Recompense*, and many other studies on Matthew.

25. On this distinction, see further discussion below.

good or bad is a different issue altogether; the same criteria are valid for all who are Jews, including Jesus's disciples. It follows, therefore, that it would be incorrect to conclude, as Marguerat does, that "Israel" has been replaced by the "church."²⁶ The fact that *ekklēsia* was used as a synagogue term by other Jews in the first century further problematizes any such claims.²⁷ The importance for Matthew's judgment theme of the distinction between Jews and non-Jews, and the non-existence of a third category "church" in between, warrant further discussion and we shall therefore return to this issue below.

In addition, the fall of the Jerusalem temple, which Marguerat interprets as a key indication of God's rejection of Israel, must be re-considered. In Matthew's narrative, the temple's destruction is a catastrophe.²⁸ It is described as the ultimate, although by Jesus predicted, tragedy, since the temple is God's dwelling place (23:21) and its destruction is part of the devastation of the city of the great king (5:35), the holy city (4:5; 27:53). The Gospel blames the Pharisees and scribes associated with them for this cataclysmic event,²⁹ and the destruction of the city and the temple is understood as God's judgment, which, while caused primarily by the Pharisees, is affecting the entire people (cf. 21:33–46³⁰). Matthew's point, indeed the very heart of Matthew's message, would, in fact, be the opposite of Marguerat's claim: *despite* the fall of the temple—which most Jews would interpret not as Rome's triumph but as God's judgment on Israel³¹—Israel is *not*

26. Marguerat, *Jugement*, 239–407.

27. See, e.g., most recently, Ralph Korner, "Ekklesia as a Jewish Synagogue Term: Some Implications for Paul's Socio-Religious Location," *JJMJS* 2 (2015) 53–78 (<http://www.jjmjs.org/>). The interpretive dilemma created when ancient Jewish synagogue terminology is not taken into account can also be seen in the interesting, but problematically entitled edited volume by Charles E. Carlston and Craig A. Evans, *From Synagogue to Ecclesia: Matthew's Community at the Crossroads* (WUNT 334; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

28. On the place of the Temple in Matthew's Gospel, see Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) especially 98–126.

29. As implied by the narrative progression in Matt 23:1–24:2. Jesus's death, however, is presented in the passion narrative as largely unrelated to the Pharisees, and instead blamed on the priests and the elders of Jerusalem. See further discussion below, chapter 3.2.1.

30. It should be noted that Matthew combines in this parable accusations against Pharisees, on the one hand, and chief priests, on the other.

31. This pattern of thought goes back to the interpretation of the fall of the first temple in the prophetic literature and continues in Josephus, who is blaming Jewish "bandits" for the fall of the second temple. In Rabbinic literature (cf. *b. Yoma* 9b), "baseless hatred" is said to have caused God's wrath and the ensuing destruction in 70 CE. The same basic pattern of grave sin leading to

rejected. In fact, Jesus's sacrificial death (26:28) becomes necessary precisely *because* of the (narratively predicted³²) fall of the temple, "for he will save *his people* [*laos*] from their sins" (1:21).³³

Having evaluated Marguerat's study as the most comprehensive and final representative of the type of redaction-critical investigation that Bornkamm initiated, and building on the work of Graham Stanton, Donald A. Hagner, and O. Lamar Colpe,³⁴ David Sim approaches the topic from the wider perspective of apocalyptic eschatology with the ultimate aim of not only descriptively analyzing Matthew's text, but also offering an explanatory model for understanding why the text was composed the way it was.³⁵ His study is divided into three parts. Part one deals with apocalyptic eschatology and apocalypticism in general, with a special focus on its social setting and function. Part two presents an analysis of Matthew's Gospel, arguing convincingly that it presents us with imminent end-time expectations. Here, chapter five is dedicated specifically to the judgment theme and its connection especially to the resurrection and the re-creation of the cosmos. The third and final part proceeds to reconstruct the social setting of the Matthean community and the function of apocalyptic eschatology within such a setting. Sim paints a harsh picture of the situation in

the destruction of the temple, interpreted as punishment, is present in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham. See further below, chapters 3.2.1.2 and 3.2.2.1.

32. Craig A. Evans, "Predictions of the Destruction of the Herodian Temple in the Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls and Related Texts," *JSP* 10 (1992) 89–147, has argued convincingly that it is likely that the historical Jesus (as several other groups and individuals) claimed that the temple would be destroyed. When Matthew's Gospel is being written in the late first century, followers of Jesus probably experienced the destruction that occurred in 70 CE as "proof" that the eschatological events had begun, and this affected how the Gospel was composed, especially the emphasis on judgment in the text. But such theorizing is beyond the scope of the present study, which focuses on Matthew's narrative world. On the Jerusalem temple as defiled and rejected according to other Jewish groups, see also Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), chapter 5 (145–74).
33. For discussion of this point, see Anders Runesson, "Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Narrative World," in *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Memory of Susan Haber* (edited by Carl Ehrlich, Anders Runesson, and Eileen Schuller; WUNT 305; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 144–80.
34. Graham N. Stanton, "The Gospel of Matthew and Judaism," *BJRL* 66 (1984) 264–84; Donald A. Hagner, "Apocalyptic Motifs in the Gospel of Matthew: Continuity and Discontinuity," *HBT* 7 (1985) 53–82; O. Lamar Cope, "To the Close of the Age: The Role of Apocalyptic Thought in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. Louis Martyn* (edited by Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 113–24.
35. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*.

which the Mattheans lived in postwar Antioch. Alienated from other Jews (“formative Judaism”) and the gentile world, as well as from other Christ-believers who adhered to a law-free gospel, the Mattheans embraced apocalypticism and apocalyptic eschatology in order to legitimize their sectarian group, explain its current circumstances, and invalidate any alternative symbolic universes.

Sim’s study is refreshingly perceptive and cogently argued, not shying away from conclusions that make sense historically, but which may be perceived as theologically problematic by many today. Most of Sim’s insights are of lasting value, especially the insistence on the Jewish nature of the text and the community behind it, as well as the emphasis on Matthew’s acute sense of the imminent coming of the end times.³⁶ Sim’s approach does not, however, address all the problems in earlier redaction-critically oriented studies on divine judgment in Matthew. His study serves a partly different purpose, presenting the most thorough argument for an apocalyptic-eschatological reading of Matthew published so far. But this approach does not, in itself, invalidate attempts at understanding the pattern of thought and practice as it may be reconstructed from within Matthew’s narrative world itself; neither does it undermine a redaction-critical, or composition-critical, approach as such.

The two different approaches represent overlapping but ultimately different types of investigations, and results originating from one approach need not necessarily contradict conclusions drawn on the basis of the other. Rather, while not denying the intense apocalyptic eschatology of the text (indeed, I would argue that the text was authored precisely in such a mindset), we need to re-read Matthew, paying close attention to what are often considered non-apocalyptic features. Contra Kee, there is no obvious conflict between the idea of an organized community, which entertains views on judgment as active in the community in the present, on the one hand, and intense eschatological expectations, on the other, as also the sectarian writings

36. Regarding the social setting in which Matthew’s Gospel was authored, I have argued for a slightly different scenario in “Re-Thinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 95–132, where I locate the origin of the text in the Galilee, rather than in Antioch.

among the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate. The parenetic function of judgment discourse, and whatever role such may play in community-building, does not, in and of itself, exclude an imminent end-time expectation, but may be seen as an integral component of it.

The discussion of how Matthew narratively construes divine wrath and judgment is thus in need of further analytic-descriptive elaboration beyond Marguerat's study in order to address problems that can be solved within the same, or similar, methodological discourse. A new perspective is needed, based on more recent research on the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the Gospel. In fact, such an investigation may produce further support, in addition to the exploration of the larger context of the apocalyptic theme, for an understanding of Matthew's Gospel as a first-century Jewish text, and so contribute to the current more general shift away from reading the New Testament against the *background* of Jewish texts, towards, in my view, the more historically attuned approach, in which these texts are seen as (diverse) *expressions* of Second-Temple Judaism.³⁷

37. For such approaches see, e.g., John W. Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), who identifies and argues extensively for the book of Revelation as a Jewish, not a Christian text. See also Marshall's terminological discussion in "John's Jewish (Christian?) Apocalypse," in *Jewish-Christianity Reconsidered: Re-Thinking Groups and Texts* (edited by Matt Jackson McCabe: Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 233–256. Cf. the methodology of Serge Ruzer, *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), who explores the New Testament, especially Matthean passages, in search of common Jewish interpretive techniques, which later reoccurs in rabbinic writings. For Paul see, e.g., Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 3; Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress: 2008) 15. One of the latest contributions in this area is Daniel Boyarin's *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: New Press, 2012), a book that deserves careful attention. Boyarin argues that Mark's Gospel "is best read as a Jewish text, even in its most radical Christological moments" (127); indeed "Gospel Judaism was straightforwardly and completely a Jewish-messianic movement, and the Gospel the story of the Jewish Christ" (156). The "creativity" of Jesus and the Gospels, he further states, "is most richly and compellingly read within the Jewish textual and intertextual world, the echo chamber of a Jewish soundscape of the first century" (160). While I have worked on the present monograph (and earlier studies on Matthew) independently of Boyarin's book, I have come to similar general conclusions based on different types of analyses. I would certainly agree with Boyarin that these texts are best read from within a Jewish textual and intertextual landscape, if what we aim for is a historical understanding of them. See also Thomas R. Blanton IV, "Saved by Obedience: Matthew 1:21 in Light of Jesus' Teaching on the Torah," *JBL* 132:2 (2013): 393–413, who states that the author of Matthew "draws his inspiration" from "the symbolic world of early Judaism" (394), and Craig A. Evans, "The Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (edited by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007) 241–277, who argues that "[t]he Jewishness of Matthew is profound and systemic" (244).

As we address such issues, it is important, as Luomanen has pointed out, that Matthew's understanding of judgment and salvation is not analyzed through the lens provided by (traditional) readings of the Pauline literature, especially with regard to the themes of grace and works and their interrelationship in the judgment process. Luomanen, who introduces his analysis of the structure of Matthew's view of salvation as the first monograph devoted entirely to the soteriology of Matthew,³⁸ finds E. P. Sanders's comparison of patterns of religion to be useful in limited analyses such as those of the pattern of salvation in Matthew, *if* the approach is slightly modified in terms of the suggested "getting in – staying in" paradigm. As will be discussed below in chapter 2.8, I generally agree that what Sanders calls "covenantal nomism" provides an important theo-ritual matrix for understanding Matthew.³⁹ Luomanen's approach differs from the present study, though, in that it aims at relating the textual analysis to the socio-religious setting of Matthew's community,⁴⁰ and so lets the two tasks inform one another. In terms of conclusions, he focuses on Matthew's relationship with Judaism and argues that Matthew has broken with the local Jewish community and also shows "isolationist attitudes towards other Christian communities as well."⁴¹ For Luomanen, while Matthew seeks to legitimize his community through drawing on Jewish traditions, Jesus and his followers ultimately break "traditional Jewish law."⁴² Matthew's view on salvation aligns to some degree with Jewish covenantal nomism, but the role ascribed to Jesus leads Luomanen to conclude that "Matthew was not 'a proper Jew' any more."⁴³

While there is much in Luomanen's analysis that is insightful and valuable, the present study departs from his work, both in terms of

38. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 3.

39. For a definition of covenantal nomism, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75.

40. As does David Sim's monograph discussed above.

41. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 5.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, 5; on Luomanen's understanding of covenantal nomism in Matthew, see 281–84. Luomanen concludes that "Matthew's covenantalism is not Jewish anymore nor is it yet clearly Christian" (283). While the present study certainly supports the conclusion that Matthew's theo-ritual pattern of thought cannot be described as "Christian," I have not been convinced by Luomanen's arguments that it would not qualify as Jewish.

approach and some key conclusions, especially with regard to Matthew's take on Jewish law and its salvific efficacy. As will be argued throughout, *pace* Luomanen's assertions,⁴⁴ Matthew's Jesus complains not that his opponents are too strict in their observance of the law, but, on the contrary, that they are not rigorous enough. This inability of his interlocutors, primarily identified as Pharisees, to obey the Jewish law is the very reason why they will be condemned on the day of judgment.⁴⁵ In other words, the Matthean Jesus can hardly be described as entertaining a "liberal" attitude toward Jewish law, but should rather be thought of as belonging to a strict school of thought, according to which law observance carries within it salvific significance.⁴⁶

In terms of methodology, it is clear that understanding cannot be had beyond context. I have, however, aimed in this book to focus on the narrative world, as a first-century audience familiar with the socio-cultural and religious setting within which the text was authored would likely have interpreted it. Thus, the pattern of thought and practice in the text as it applies to the theme of divine wrath and salvation will not be explained primarily through references to the socio-cultural and religious location of the Matthean community/ies. Still, however, in order to achieve a plausible first-century reading of the Gospel, contemporary Jewish texts and traditions will have to be dealt with in comparative fashion since they provide a conceptual

44. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 283.

45. Cf., e.g., Matt 5:20, and cf. discussion in Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and his World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Note that not only Jesus's opponents, but also his followers are warned that lack of observance of the law (as Jesus interprets it) will result in condemnation, regardless of whether these followers acknowledge Jesus as their lord or not; not even their prophecies or their (successful) exorcisms invoking Jesus's name will do on the day of judgment if such observance is lacking (Matt 7:21–23).

46. As Matt 5:17–19 indicates early on in the Gospel, a perspective maintained through the narrative, as we shall see. For discussion, see also William R. G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 137–272. Loader, correctly in my opinion, emphasizes the continued validity of the law, including cultic law, although the latter is subordinated under the more important commandments requiring acts of compassion (271). As Loader writes: "Matthew's Jesus upholds Torah and sees his ministry in terms of both fulfilling the law and the prophets and making sure that Torah is rightly understood and fully obeyed. [...] For Matthew, Jesus is the judge to come, offering the grace of forgiveness and instruction, and warning of the consequences of rejection" (271, 272). Varkey, "Salvation in Continuity," develops this theme in even greater detail, showing that the law in Matthew has salvific efficacy. See also Blanton IV, "Saved by Obedience," 393–413.

context within which the Gospel text emerges as theo-ritually logical. Further, in order to understand Matthew's narrative references to groups such as the Pharisees, scribes, and the chief priests, it will be necessary to explain how these groups would have been placed on a first-century socio-political and religious map, since Matthew uses these characters to conceptualize the limits of salvation, and the location of these groups in Jewish society will shed light on Matthew's understanding of divine judgment.⁴⁷ My focus will remain, though, on the world of the text and how divine wrath and salvation is construed within this world.⁴⁸

While Sim and Luomanen work with both the text and its socio-religious location, Nathan Eubank's recent study directs our attention exclusively to the textual world and provides a detailed exegesis of the theme of divine judgment in Matthew. His analysis further supports, in my opinion, an inner-Jewish reading of the Gospel, which is, in some parts, similar to the conclusions of the present study. The book is divided into five chapters, beginning with a contextualization of Matthew's theology of recompense within Judaism and Christianity (chapter 1). The study then analyzes notions of heavenly treasures and debts (chapter 2), and the idea of filling up all righteousness as a way of achieving salvation through a process of re-payment of debts (chapter 3). Cross-bearing is conceptualized as work resulting in wages, and the wages earned include eternal life and positions of prominence (chapter 4). Part of this overall picture is also the idea of a ransom price being paid for those in debt, with reference to Matt 20:28: "[I]t is Jesus' active, obedient giving of his life that earns a surplus of heavenly treasure."⁴⁹ This surplus in wages with God is then used to repay the debt of sin for the many. This theme is then developed further in the final chapter, which deals with the passion and resurrection.

47. This will be addressed especially in chapter 3 below.

48. While the issue of the identity of the author and/or the communities using Matthew's Gospel will not be dealt with at any length in the present study, I would argue, based on previous studies, that the text was produced by an individual or small group identifying themselves as Jews and presenting their text as a form of (messianically oriented) Judaism to their audience. For details, see Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations."

49. Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, 157.

Eubank's analysis is detailed, and in most cases, convincing. His insistence in particular that the nature of a person's actions (or "works") is such that deeds performed in accordance with Jesus's interpretation of Jewish law, including the suffering that may follow from such life-choices ("cross-bearing"), will lead to an accumulation of "wages" to be paid to the doer primarily in the world to come.⁵⁰ Failure to live obediently will, conversely, incur "debt," which must be repaid.⁵¹ Still, while all this makes Matthean sense, I believe that further consideration of key concepts such as the covenant and its place in Matthew would have contributed to slightly different conclusions, in which what is often called grace ("to get something for nothing") would have infused the language of wages and debt with important nuances, especially in the case of the mechanisms affecting the possibility of salvation.

A theological theme such as that of judgment and recompense often leads scholars to approach their analysis of concepts as if they were stable throughout the text, as if the text were a map upon which themes are inscribed, so that wherever they would be found, they would signal and repeat established meaning. However, while mapping territory is an important part of the analysis, in my view, the text is better approached as a world in which the progression of the story,

50. On the language of debt (in the Q version of the Lord's prayer), cf. Giovanni Battista Bazzana, "Basileia and Debt Relief: The Forgiveness of Debts in the Lord's Prayer in the Light of Documentary Papyri," *CBQ* 73 (2011) 511–25. See also Gary A. Anderson, "From Israel's Burden to Israel's Debt: Towards a Theology of Sin in Biblical and Early Second Temple Sources," in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran. Proceedings of a Joint Symposium by the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature and the Hebrew University Institute for Advanced Studies Research Group on Qumran, 15-17 January, 2002* (edited by Esther G. Chazon et al.; STDJ 58; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 1–30. On "wages" as a biblical metaphor, cf. Tzvi Novik, "Wages From God: The Dynamics of a Biblical Metaphor," *CBQ* 73 (2011) 708–22, whose analysis covers the Hebrew Bible and Ben Sira.

51. An additional point is that, at least in my opinion, Matthew's language of wages and debts should be regarded as metaphorical in the sense that it points beyond itself to a reality, which is anchored in cult. That is, the cultic system as it exists within the law, and upon which the law is dependent (the purpose of the law is, ultimately, to make possible God's presence among his people), is what governs the human-divine relationship, including the reality of divine judgment and salvation. The imagery of "wages" and "debts" functions to point the audience to that reality, explaining in economic terms a cultic truth. While Anderson ("Israel's Debt," 1–2) is certainly correct that metaphors and their use structure the way phenomena are perceived, the opposite is also true, namely, that metaphors grow from specific cultural contexts within which they present things in certain ways, and on some level, make sense to those involved in conversation. This dynamic will be further explored in the analysis to follow in Part I.

in and of itself, is a carrier of meaning.⁵² In the narrative world into which the audience is invited, theological themes and concepts need to be understood dynamically in context, since theology is brought to the reader only through the mental picture of the world generated by the author. Thus, I would argue, we must be open to the possibility that Matthew's depiction of judgment and the criteria of judgment change as a consequence of key events taking place in the narrative (cause and effect). After all, the author wants to tell his audience something that cannot be communicated in the "sayings" style of the Gospel of Thomas. As I hope to show in the pages to follow, the fall of the temple and the resurrection of Jesus are two such game-changing events that explain the Gospel and its focus on divine judgment within and beyond the covenant between God and Israel.

The purpose of the present study, which will focus on the narrative progression of the story as well as utilize the developed form of redaction criticism often called composition criticism,⁵³ is to contribute to the descriptive-analytical discussion of the pattern of thought and practice in Matthew's Gospel as it applies to its central theme of divine judgment.⁵⁴ This approach, which will consequently not engage sociological issues or put forward explanatory models related therewith, recognizes that meaning is to be sought on the basis of the composition of the text as a whole, not only of the changes made in redacted material.⁵⁵ The basic premise accepted here is that

52. Cf. Luz, *Matthew*, 1.9, who asserts that "the Gospel of Matthew intends to be a *book of narration*" (emphasis original). It is appropriate, then, if we seek to recover first-century understandings of this text, to pay methodological attention to narrative aspects of the Gospel.

53. This methodology is presented well by Charette, *Recompense*, 16–19, who locates the approach between (traditional) redaction criticism and narrative criticism.

54. On the composite approach to methodology in investigations concerned with issues of a thematic nature, cf. most recently, Robert H. Gundry, *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate According to Saint Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) 4. In Gundry's study, "Matthew's Petrine texts will undergo treatment seriatim with the use of redaction, composition, and narrative criticism (although without their terminological paraphernalia)." For this type of approach, he finds support in Pheme Perkins' *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); see p. 54, where she states that she applies "an eclectic method of analysis that combines results of redaction criticism and narrative criticism" (Gundry, *Peter*, 4, n. 9).

55. Cf. Charette, *Recompense*, 17: "Composition criticism is the product of a recent trend in redaction criticism which, admitting the limitations of earlier forms of the method, recognizes that the concerns of the evangelist are to be found not merely in the study of the changes he has made to his sources but also in the study of the completed work he has produced."

Matthew's Gospel can be read as a highly structured and coherent text that makes (ancient) narrative and theological sense.⁵⁶

The composition-critical approach, applied in tandem with more general concerns focusing on the text as narrative, is important for several reasons. In terms of the meaning(s) triggered by the text, even passages retained verbatim from Mark receive new significance in the story as a whole, based on the literary context in which they have been placed. There is, further, no consensus regarding the sources used by Matthew. While most agree that Mark was the earliest Gospel, and that, in some form, it was used by the author of Matthew,⁵⁷ the existence of the hypothetical source Q is disputed.⁵⁸ Even if we acknowledge Markan priority, which is, in my view, the most plausible explanation of the material, this does not automatically result in the (historically very unlikely) scenario that Matthew would have known about traditions that occur in Mark's Gospel only from Mark's Gospel. Such considerations complicate any theory about the nature of Matthew's dependence on and use of Mark, without disputing that Matthew did indeed have access to Mark. In this situation, which is further problematized by recent research on the transmission of oral tradition in the first century, continuing into the second century alongside the

56. For a recent interpretation of Matthew's structure, see Anders Runesson, "Matthew, Gospel According to," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (edited by M. D. Coogan; 2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 2.59–78. The perspective here differs from the otherwise influential entry by John P. Meier in *ABD* 4.622–41, which is mirrored rather closely in the entry on Matthew in the *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* by Michael Joseph Brown (3.839–52).

57. There are some exceptions to this majority view. Recent studies by Armin Baum contest literary interdependence between the Synoptic Gospels. See his *Der mündliche Faktor: Analogien zur synoptischen Frage aus der antiken Literatur, der experimentalpsychologie, der Oral Poetry-Forschung und dem rabbinischen Traditionswesen* (Tübingen: Franke, 2008). Regarding Matthew's sources more specifically, see idem, "Matthew's Sources – Written or Oral? A Rabbinic Analogy and Empirical Insights," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (edited by Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 1–23.

58. See Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburgh: Trinity Press International, 2002). See also Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013) 117–285. For discussion of some implications for Matthew from a slightly different perspective, see Anders Runesson, "Giving Birth to Jesus in the Late First Century: Matthew as Midwife in the Context of Colonisation," in *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities* (edited by Claire Clivaz, Andreas Dettwiler, Luc Devilliers, and Enrico Norelli; WUNT 281; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 301–27, here 304–306. For the setting in which Matthew's Gospel was composed and used, including discussion of the Didache, see Anders Runesson, "Building Matthean Communities: The Politics of Textualization," in *Mark and Matthew. Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First-Century Settings* (edited by Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; WUNT 271; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 379–408.

written texts, it makes best sense in light of the purpose of the present study to build an understanding of Matthew's narrative on the text as we have it, rather than relying too heavily on hypothetical redactional activity, based on a disputed hypothetical source (Q) or on the assumed restricted access to Markan traditions from the Markan text alone.⁵⁹

Having said this, it is, of course, not possible to isolate a text and read it ahistorically, assuming that such a procedure would generate meaning in any absolute sense of that word; understanding evolves, always, in context. Whichever way we read, the text will instantly become embedded in ideas, concepts, and worldviews, which may or may not relate to the historical setting in which the Gospel was produced and first read. In order to attempt a historical understanding of Matthew's judgment theme, we need, therefore, to pay attention to various ways of understanding the world and God's wrath in the first century. Charette has rightly recognized that, "[a] thorough analysis which contributes to a more complete assessment of the subject requires the introduction of other elements from the Gospel [i.e. other than those passages which employ the vocabulary of recompense] which are related to the same framework of thought even though they utilize different terminology."⁶⁰ This leads him to widen the scope of his study to include "a significant part of the Old Testament."⁶¹ Thus, one of the objectives of his study is "to demonstrate that Matthew's conception of recompense can be understood fully in terms of his understanding of the Old Testament."⁶² He continues, consequently—and problematically—to state that "[t]he question as to whether (and if so, how) other writings subsequent to the Old Testament may have influenced Matthew is not of interest to the present study."⁶³

Charette's argument assumes that limiting the scope of the material

59. A renewed discussion of Matthew's sources is also of major importance for the reconstruction of the socio-religious and political setting in which the text was produced. I will address this issue in a comprehensive study on the Gospel of Matthew and its origin (in preparation). See also Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations"; idem, "Politics of Textualization."

60. Charette, *Recompense*, 16.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, 19.

63. *Ibid.*

used to historically embed his reading of Matthew's Gospel to the Hebrew Bible produces the best first-century understanding of "the purpose and function of the recompense theme within Matthew's Gospel" available to us.⁶⁴ However, as Sim's study has shown, since recompense language is part and parcel of later apocalyptic discourse, and Matthew shares many of the components of such language with other contemporary Jewish texts, such a limited choice of contextual material is methodologically problematic. Our understanding of Matthew's narrative needs to be informed by the ways the texts of the Hebrew Bible were read by Matthew's contemporaries, rather than by the ways they were originally meant to be understood.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the reluctance of Charette to use other ancient Jewish texts in his investigation has led to some less-than-convincing results when he sums up his findings and relates them to "covenantal nomism."⁶⁶ This does not mean, of course, that the Hebrew Bible, whose books were considered holy by Matthew, can be ignored when Matthew's ideas and concepts are analyzed; only that we need to expand the material to include later Jewish texts.

Charette's approach, especially its strategy of taking into account notions related to the judgment theme in order to shed light on the latter, is well-argued and indispensable for the topic at hand. However, of the related themes that he deals with, some key areas have not, in my view, been satisfactorily treated, such as the sacrificial cult and atonement as mechanisms integral to Jewish law. If these aspects of Jewish life are not treated as essential components of the law, the problem of grace, so elusive in Matthew, but so important in the history of scholarship on this Gospel, will become difficult to address. As David E. Holowerda has pointed out, "[w]hereas Matthew's emphasis on righteousness is apparent to all, his structures of grace are more implicit and thus more difficult to discover."⁶⁷ He notes that

64. *Ibid.*, 20.

65. The wish to understand the Hebrew Bible texts historically in their original contexts is a modern phenomenon unknown to (pre-Enlightenment) ancient writers.

66. Charette, *Recompense*, 166.

67. David E. Holowerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 114.

already Augustine saw this problem, and provided as a solution the suggestion that Matthew's Gospel assumed that readers had already, by grace, been given the spirit of God. For Augustine, then, the requirements of the Beatitudes were made possible for humans to live up to only after they had received the free gift of the spirit.⁶⁸ The question is, though, if Matthew merely assumes grace, or if the Gospel actually develops such structures. In order to answer this question, Holowerda focuses on Matthew's first chapters and the person of Jesus. Jesus himself manifests, according to him, God's act of grace toward his people: Immanuel. Once this gift has been given, the demands of the Sermon of the Mount follow. Obedience in relation to these demands constitutes the answer of the people to the gracious act of God.⁶⁹ In Matthew, Holowerda claims, "eschatology has become the barrier to legalism."⁷⁰

In a similar way, Ulrich Luz argues that the Gospel does indicate a pattern of grace, despite its heavy emphasis on works as the central criterion of judgment. He turns to the portrayal of God as father (*patēr*), as well as the fact that the judge will be Jesus, the son of man, in order to claim that Matthew is not promoting "works-righteousness."⁷¹ It seems, however, as if the nature of Matthew's pattern of thought resists this type of explanation, leading Luz to conclude that, ultimately, "[w]e remain in a quandary."⁷² The reason for this is Luz's foundational (Christian) convictions, which seem difficult to reconcile with Matthew's judgment discourse. He writes: "It seems to me that the notion of judgment according to works is a *theological impossibility* for the God who abides in Jesus of Nazareth and who defined himself in the resurrection. But it may be, that we as human beings need the idea of judgment to take God seriously as God. The idea may be an *anthropological necessity*."⁷³ While this may be true for Christians on a contemporary religious level, in my view, this type of discussion does

68. *Ibid.*, 115.

69. *Ibid.*, 115–16.

70. *Ibid.*, 117.

71. Luz, *Matthew* 1.379, commenting on Matt 7:21; *idem*, *Theology*, 61, 131–32.

72. Luz, *Theology*, 132.

73. *Ibid.*

little to explain what Matthew might have meant when he emphasized to such a degree the importance of divine wrath and weaved his story so intricately that whatever is meant by “good news” cannot be communicated beyond judgment discourses.

As noted above in relation to David Sim’s work, the eschatological character of Matthew’s Gospel cannot be ignored; end-time expectations play a critical role in the narrative. The evidence suggests, however, that God’s covenant relationship with his people Israel provides the basis for the eschatological activities of Jesus, and thus, for the judgment discourse of the Gospel. As we shall see, *pace* Holowerda, it is the Mosaic covenant, rather than eschatology, that provides the theological structure within which grace may be activated. In brief, there are some key concepts in the Hebrew Bible and in various forms in Second-Temple texts, which need to be part of our *Vorverständnis*, our pre-knowledge, as we approach Matthew’s construal of divine judgment. These include, especially, grace (which carries within it the related “compassion,” “unwavering love,” “favor,” and “mercy”),⁷⁴ covenant, law, atonement, and righteousness.⁷⁵ These concepts may be seen as the basic building blocks of the matrix in which Second-Temple period Jews expressed their various responses to the world around them referring to divine judgment. Our question

74. As Stephen Westerholm, “Grace,” in *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007) 2.657 points out, “the notion of grace is abundantly present even when the word is not used [in the Gospels and Acts].” In the case of Matthew, however, this is less clear than in, e.g., Luke, due to the former’s emphasis on judgment. On the meaning of “grace” in the Hebrew Bible, see Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Heseid in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978).

75. For discussion of the dynamics of these concepts in Second-Temple and Rabbinic (Tannaitic) texts, see Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Studies pre-dating Sanders’s work, which convey important insights with regard to our topic, include George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*. Vol. 1: *The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927); Erik Sjöberg, *Gott und die Sünder im palästinischen Judentum. Nach dem Zeugnis der Tannaiten und der apokryphisch-pseudepigraphischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1939); Henrik Ljungman, *Guds barmhärtighet och dom: Fariséernas lära om de två ‘måtten’* (Lund: C W K Gleerup, 1950). Michael Winnige, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul’s Letters* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995) identifies the Psalms of Solomon as a Pharisaic text, and is supported in this by Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1-5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 63. If this identification is accepted, this text should be regarded as especially important for the study of Matthew (cf. Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” for a connection between the Mattheans and the Pharisees).

as we approach Matthew's Gospel is, then, how this matrix may or may not help us as we try to reconstruct historically its narrative construal of divine judgment.⁷⁶ As will become evident, while it is difficult to paint a consistent picture of the judgment theme in the text if these concepts, so central to Jewish identity, are ignored, Matthew's theological pattern emerges as coherent once it is embedded and allowed to "move" within and be defined by this conceptual context.

Before we proceed to present the analytical work itself, a few words must be said about Jews and non-Jews as these categories are depicted in the Gospel in settings communicating ideas of divine wrath, judgment, and salvation. As we shall see, Matthew's view of judgment is dependent on this distinction to such a degree that the Gospel can hardly be understood without structuring the analysis accordingly.

Judging Jews and Non-Jews in Matthew

There is evidence in the Hebrew Bible as well as in several Jewish texts roughly contemporary with Matthew that non-Jews were often understood to be treated separately from Jews in various settings of divine judgment. Examples of this can be found, e.g., in Ezek 39:21; Joel 4 [Eng. 3]; Amos 1–2;⁷⁷ Zech 7:8–14; 9:1–8; Mic 7:11–13; Pss. Sol. 17:26–30 (cf. 17:43); 1 En. 91:7–16; 4 Ezra 13:33–49; 2 Bar. 72; T. Benj. 10:7–9.⁷⁸ A distinction between the judgment on Jews and non-Jews may also

76. It should be noted that the present study is not aiming at establishing a genetic connection between any of these texts, but rather to work with a theological theme within a historically plausible and more general conceptual setting.

77. Amos has separate judgments also for Judah and Israel. Note, especially, the shift in the criteria of judgment between the nations and Judah. The criteria concerning Judah are based explicitly on the Law, whereas this is not the case regarding non-Jews.

78. It is of some interest here to note the discussion of the passage from T. Benj. in Graham N. Stanton *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992) 213. Stanton quotes the following translation, with its second-century CE interpolation by a Christ-believer: "Then, too, all men will rise, some to glory and some to disgrace. And the Lord will judge Israel first for the wickedness done to him; for when he appeared as God in the flesh, as a deliverer, they did not believe him. And then he will judge all the Gentiles, everyone of them who did not believe him when he appeared on earth" (T. Benj. 10:8–9; cf. Robert H. Charles' translation in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. With Introduction and Critical and Explanatory Notes to Several Books* [vol. 2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913], as well as Howard C. Kee's edition in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [vol. 1; New York: Doubleday, 1983] 828). As Stanton notes, while this passage is written or redacted by a Christ-believer, "it may well be an expansion of an earlier Jewish tradition" (213, n. 2). Important here, though, is the fact that the text in *this form* is evidence that some believers in Jesus in the early second century maintained

be found, with some modifications, in New Testament writings such as Rom 2:9–10 and 1 Pet 4:17.⁷⁹ As Daniel Harrington has noted, in some texts, it is also clearly stated that the criteria of judgment regarding non-Jews will be dependent on their treatment of Israel.⁸⁰ 2 Bar. 72:4–5 proclaims that “[e]very nation which has not known Israel and which has not trodden down the seed of Jacob will live.”

As Harrington points out, these and similar texts provide a context in which to understand Matthew’s perspective on judgment, especially Matt 25:31–46 where the same principle is active with regard to who is being judged and why. We shall discuss this text in more detail in Part II of the study.⁸¹ Suffice it to say here that the *panta ta ethnē* (“all the nations”; 25:32), i.e., those who are being judged in this scene, refers specifically to non-Jews (who are not followers of Jesus).⁸² This judgment scene is thus distinguished from the many other statements on divine judgment, which apply to individuals and groups clearly identified as Jewish in the Gospel. Matthew, thus, seems to stand firmly in the Jewish tradition in which Jews and non-Jews will be judged separately. Further, we may note that the basic criterion of judgment in this text is how these non-Jews have treated “the least of my brothers” (25:40), meaning Jesus’s followers. This compares well with the quote from 2 Bar. 72 above, but also with the pattern of thought that surfaces in Gen 12:3, where those who bless Abraham will receive blessings from God, and those who curse him will be cursed.⁸³ The

the distinction between Jews and Gentiles in divine judgment, just as the original author of the text did in the second century BCE.

79. In 1 Pet 4:17, the common distinction between Jews and non-Jews is modified, stated instead to be between the “the household of God” and those who do not “obey the gospel of God.” By contrast, Romans maintains the language of Jew and non-Jew, but uses it to stress that judgment will befall both of these groups. See also 1 Cor 6:2–3, where *hoi hagioi* (“the holy ones,” i.e., the followers of Jesus addressed in the letter) are said to be the future judges of the world as well as of the angels; cf. Matt 19:28, where the disciples are to judge and rule the twelve tribes of Israel.

80. Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991) 359. Cf. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 127: “the criteria for judgment are usually tied up with the treatment of the righteous.”

81. See also Anders Runesson, “Judging Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: Between ‘Othering’ and Inclusion,” in *Matthew’s Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Professor Graham Stanton* (edited by Joel Willitts and Daniel M. Gurtner; London: T & T Clark, 2011) 133–51.

82. Cf. Stanton, *New People*, 214. The understanding of this passage is difficult, and the expression *panta ta ethnē* has been debated among scholars for decades. The position taken here is argued at some length in chapter 7.3, but see also chapters 5.2.3 and 5.3.

difference is, of course, that the Messiah is identified with those who follow him, and therefore, ultimately, the criterion of judgment is not concerned with behavior toward Israel, but toward that part of Israel which belongs to the messianic movement. Based on its affinity with the pattern of Gen 12:3, this criterion may be called the “Abrahamic principle,” or “a theology of the benevolent other,”⁸⁴ and we shall have occasion to return to this theme also with regard to Matt 10:40–42, which deals with positive Jewish attitudes toward (Jewish) followers of Jesus and the consequences of such attitudes.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the theme of judgment in Matthew should be analyzed separately with regard to Jews and non-Jews. In my view, there is nothing in Matthew’s narrative that justifies Charette’s claim that, in the end, Israel’s “unique status is annulled.”⁸⁵ As we shall see, based on an analysis of the judgment theme, paying close attention to the terminology used, Matthew displays no interest in erasing the basic Jewish worldview in which all other nations (*ethnē*) are understood as “the other,”⁸⁶ a notion which later (non-Jewish) Christian interpreters, for obvious reasons, have had difficulties accepting. The harsh judgment on some individuals and groups identified as Jewish in the narrative,⁸⁷ even when compared to non-Jews, is best explained on the basis of statements of severe judgment in the prophetic literature: it is precisely because these people are Jewish and have a covenant relationship with the God of Israel within which the law has been given that they will be judged harder than non-Jews, who repent or otherwise perform acts of loving-kindness toward Jesus’s followers.⁸⁸ Although often misrepresented in the literature, it

83. Cf. Deut 30:7; *Jub.* 31:17. For the connection between Gen 12:3 and Matt 25:31–46, see Charette, *Recompense*, 158–59 and discussion below in chapter 7.3.

84. See Runesson, “Matthew,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, 2.59–78, here 67.

85. Charette, *Recompense*, 160.

86. It is of some importance to keep in mind that this type of worldview does not in and of itself result in a negative view of outsiders. Righteous non-Jews could be thought of as having a share in the world to come, which is also the dominant perspective in rabbinic literature and later mainstream Judaism. We shall return to this below. The idea that only “insiders” would be able to attain salvation is more related to theological tendencies in later “particularistic” non-Jewish Christianity. See discussion in Anders Runesson, “Particularistic Judaism and Universalistic Christianity? Some Critical Remarks on Terminology and Theology,” in *JGRChJ* 1 (2000): 120–44.

87. Cf., e.g., Matt 11:20–24.

88. Cf. Josephus, who emphasizes that the fact that all Jews have been so thoroughly educated

is key to the interpretation of Matthew that divine condemnation is not understood as connected to a rejection of the Jewish people's status as the people of God; on the contrary, judgment is pronounced on the very basis of this status, which distinguishes them from other nations.

It is not uncommon, however, that scholars conflate pronouncements of judgment on various Jewish groups mentioned in the narrative into a single description of condemnation, and then use the name "Israel," or "the Jews," to identify the people judged. Whatever is said about, e.g., the Pharisees, tend to be seen as applicable to "Israel." Such interpretive practices, conscious or unconscious, inevitably lead to predictable conclusions regarding not only God's judgment on the people of God, but also God's rejection of God's people. We have already noted such tendencies in relation to Marguerat's study. Charette writes: "Within the context of the Sermon on the Mount the warning implicit in these words are addressed both to Israel and the disciples."⁸⁹ This use of terms implies the supposition that Jesus's followers are not included in "Israel," despite several clues in the text that seem to prevent such a conclusion.

The disciples are unquestionably depicted as Jews, and thus, by necessity, included in the category "Israel."⁹⁰ Further, no mission beyond "Israel" is permitted by the pre-risen Jesus (Matt 10:5–6, 23; 15:24), which means that any characters in the narrative that are portrayed as positive toward Jesus as a consequence of such mission must be considered to be identified as "Israel."⁹¹ Indeed, that which

in Jewish laws makes, in case someone broke the law, "evasion of punishment by excuses an impossibility" (C. Ap. 2.178).

89. Charette, *Recompense*, 81.

90. Cf. Bornkamm, "End-Expectation," 39, who likewise identifies, more generally, Matthew's perspective as Jewish, although seemingly lamenting this fact, using the word "imprisoned" to describe the situation of the "church" within Jewish tradition. See also J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 2006) 204. Discussing *ekklesia* in Matthew, Dunn argues that "behind it lies the familiar OT concept of the *qahal Israel*, 'the congregation of Israel.' In other words, we see a claim that the Matthean community represents the eschatological people of God (cf. also Matt. 19:28). This is clearly a claim from within the heritage of second temple Judaism, not from 'outside'" (emphasis original).

91. This excludes, of course, the Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21–28 and other clearly identified non-Jewish characters, which have not been the object of mission either by Jesus or his disciples, but nevertheless understand the power of the kingdom around the protagonist and want to have a share in it.

happens around Jesus, i.e., the first indications of the coming Kingdom of Heaven, are said to happen “in Israel” (Matt 9:33), and when these extraordinary events occur, “the God of Israel” is praised (Matt 15:31⁹²). In one of the Beatitudes, the land⁹³ is promised to “the meek” (Matt 5:5); this land was identified in 2:20, 21 as “the land of Israel.” Indeed, Matthew’s text does not say that the message of the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to “Israel” and the disciples, but to “the crowds” (*hoi ochloi*) and the disciples (5:1; 7:28). Once this use of terms to identify who is being the target audience in the various settings of the narrative as a whole is taken seriously, it becomes clear that not only do the two groups of disciples and crowds together make up Israel,⁹⁴ but also various other groups which are identified as Jesus’s opponents, such as the Pharisees. This will have implications for how we understand the judgment theme in Matthew as it is applied to different groups within the Jewish people. The disciples are not less “Israel” because they are assumed to be accepted by God, and other Jewish groups are not more “Israel” because they are assumed to be sinners and rejected by God.⁹⁵

92. As elsewhere in Jewish tradition, the God of Israel is also identified as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Matt 22:32).

93. The Greek word translated here as “land” is *gē* (Hebrew: *’eretz*), which can also refer to the earth. In this context, and in the light of Deut 4:1, Ps 37:11 (LXX 36:11), and Isa 61:7, it seems clear that what is referred to is the land of Israel. Cf. the interest in the land in Matt 4:13–16, 25; 10:23, and the wording of Did. 3:7: “Those who are mild tempered will inherit the land” (see Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998] 100). The later (non-Jewish) church has had an interest in spiritualizing land in ways detaching theology from politics; see, e.g., Jerome, *Comm. Matt.* on 5:4 [sic]: “He does not mean the Land of Judea or the land of this world.” See also discussion in John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 201–02. The language of inheriting the land was not uncommon in other Second-Temple Jewish texts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. For sources, see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; London: T & T Clark, 1988–1997) 1.450. This focus on the land and who will inherit it does not exclude the global perspective that is one of the outcomes of the resurrection in Matt 28:18–20. Clearly, the world has a center in Matthew, and this center is the land and Jerusalem, just like Rome was the center of the empire which the disciples are eventually called upon to engage. (On Matthew’s complicated relationship to Jerusalem, see most recently, Anders Runesson, “City of God or Home of Traitors and Killers? Jerusalem According to Matthew,” in *Cities of God? An Interdisciplinary Assessment of Early Christian Engagement with the Ancient Urban Environment(s)* [edited by David Gill, Paul Trebilco, and Steve Walton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016, forthcoming].)

94. This also means that when Jesus states in his conversation with the centurion in Matt 8:10, that he has not seen such faith anywhere in Israel, this includes the disciples, who are elsewhere accused of being of “little faith” (Matt 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Both the disciples and the crowds, who together make up the audience of the Sermon on the Mount, are said to be of “little faith” in Matt 6:30, despite the fact that they are positive toward Jesus. Lack of faith is not a distinguishing feature for “Israel” as opposed to Jesus followers; it is characteristic for many in Israel, including the disciples.

Since Matthew's main concern is divine judgment as it relates to the Jewish people, which can easily be seen from the frequency of judgment texts dealing with individuals and groups that are clearly identified as Jewish, we shall begin our investigation with judgment related to Israel (Part I). This means that the followers of Jesus will be dealt with under this heading too, as per the above discussion.⁹⁶ As we shall see, while Matthew's construal of judgment discourse related to Jewish characters in the text is quite complex and founded on certain principles, allowing for a coherent picture to emerge, non-Jews, who will be discussed in Part II, are dealt with in a much less developed way, as if the author's theological worldview only allowed them a marginal existence.

But, someone may protest, can we not argue on the basis of, e.g., Matt 28:18–20, that non-Jews have a more positive and prominent place in Matthew, even to the degree that what has been said about judgment on Jews up until that point in the narrative should be valid also in relation to non-Jews? Such considerations bring us to the issue of circumcision and the status of non-Jewish followers of Jesus in the text, and we therefore need to say a few preliminary words on this issue before we proceed to the detailed analysis of Matthew's judgment.⁹⁷ Did, in the narrative world of Matthew, non-Jews who in

95. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew. A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 293, is certainly correct in stating that "Israel" does not mean the "Church." However, among the texts he refers to in order to support his claim (Matt 8:11–12; 21:43; 22:7; 23:32–36; 27:25), not one contains the word "Israel." It seems as if Gundry, as so many other scholars, simply assumes that all people, or groups, that are rejected are "Israel," whereas those who are accepted in the narrative cannot be referred to by that name.

96. Cf. Bornkamm, "End-expectation," 39: "The Messiahship of Jesus and the validity of his teaching are, therefore, as we have already seen, presented and defended throughout in the framework of Judaism. [...] The struggle with Israel is still a struggle within its own walls. Thus Matthew's conception of the Church remains imprisoned in the Jewish tradition."

97. The issue of circumcision of non-Jewish converts to Matthean Judaism has been debated in several studies which are concerned with the social location of the Matthean community. See, e.g., Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History: 'Go Nowhere among the Gentiles...'* *Matt. 10:5b* (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1988) 181–85; David C. Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles," *JSNT* 57 (1995) 19–48, here 45. The question is, however, what can be said based on the text: what would a first-century audience have assumed with regard to this issue in the narrative world Matthew has created, and what would this imply for the construal of divine judgment? Cf. the discussion and critique in Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?" *CBQ* 62 (2000) 264–77. Since these questions are important for understanding the worldview implicit in the narrative, as well as Matthew's conception of the covenant, we shall have occasion to return to this issue.

some way related to Jesus or wanted to join the movement have to become Jews first, and keep the Jewish law, which would have required circumcision for males, before they received a share of the blessings that followed in the footsteps of the kingdom?

The Question of Circumcision in Matthew's Story World

The only Gospels mentioning circumcision at all are Luke and John, the former noting that John the Baptist and Jesus were circumcised, and the latter presenting a halakhic discussion on the relative weight of the Sabbath commandment, on the one hand, and the commandment to circumcise, on the other.⁹⁸ For John's Jesus, the command to circumcise is self-evidently more important than the Sabbath, a conviction presented as being shared between Jesus and his audience; this common conviction can therefore function as a hermeneutical platform from which other arguments about what constitutes "work" on the Sabbath may be launched.⁹⁹ Although Luke's brief references to his heroes' circumcisions may seem to be of relatively minor consequence, these references play a significant role when understood within the larger two-volume work of Luke-Acts, as is seen from how the latter book construes the place of circumcision in the early Jesus movement.

The author of Acts clearly maintains that Jews, including those who have become Christ-followers, need to observe the ritual of circumcision, since this practice is related to the covenant and the law. Non-Jews who want to join the Jesus movement, on the contrary, should not be circumcised.¹⁰⁰ The key problem that Acts aims to solve here is how salvation relates to circumcision, a question which is intertwined with the role of the covenant and the law. The author of Acts represents the opinion in the early movement that the net of

98. Luke 1:59; 2:21; John 7:21–24.

99. For John's Jesus, the issue is healing, which should not be understood as work, and thus should be allowed on the Sabbath (John 7:23). Cf. the similar type of argument in Matt 12:1–8, 11–12.

100. See, e.g., Acts 15:1–35; 16:3; 21:17–26. Cf. 1 Cor 7:17–24. Cf. discussion in Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 111–41.

salvation is cast wider than, and is not restricted by, circumcision, and thus, the law. Such an argument retains the basic distinction between Jews and non-Jews, but makes a case for a salvation-inclusive theology, which is similar to what we find in other Jewish texts, including later rabbinic Judaism.¹⁰¹ For the author of Acts, this conclusion is drawn by the leaders of the movement, notably Peter, James, and Paul, when they discover that God's spirit had already been poured over non-Jews before they had been circumcised. God acts first and people adjust their theology and ritual practice based on what is presented as empirical evidence.¹⁰² The question is now whether Matthew's Gospel presents us with a similar hermeneutical strategy.

Matthew never mentions the word "circumcision." No one would argue, however, that this would mean that the characters in the text identified as Jewish were thought of by the author or earliest audience of the Gospel as uncircumcised. Much of the discussion of the judgment theme in Matthew has been, in one way or the other, related to whether or not the Jews, *as a people*, have been rejected and whether the status of the Jesus movement as a "new" people of God implies the eradication of the distinction between Jew and non-Jew. The mission of Jesus in Matthew is often interpreted as construing all people as equal before God by making them all non-Jewish. Such a scenario would necessarily affect the criteria of judgment, which could then not be based on the Jewish law, or the covenant between God and Israel. Is this what Matthew is trying to communicate, meaning that the message would be very similar to what became mainstream Christian theology in later centuries, as formulated by the church fathers? Or are there indications in Matthew of the pattern present in Luke-Acts, that a distinction is maintained within the messianic community between Jews, who are circumcised, and non-Jews who are not?¹⁰³ In my view, neither of these models fit Matthew's text. We shall return to this

101. For terminology and discussion, see Runesson, "Universalistic Christianity?"

102. Acts 10:45–47; 11:17; 15:8–9, 12. James is presented as the one theologizing what has happened, based on a passage from the book of Amos that is interpreted as shedding light on what has transpired: Acts 15:14–18.

103. So, e.g., Isaac W. Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts* (WUNT 2.355; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

issue in Part II of the study, just mentioning briefly here some key considerations that motivate and explain the structure and organization of the current investigation.

First, there are no non-Jewish disciples of Jesus in Matthew's story; nor are there any followers of Jesus in the wider sense of that word who are not Jews. Indeed, non-Jews in Matthew are depicted negatively when generalized.¹⁰⁴ Thus, whatever is said about judgment that applies to followers of Jesus in Matthew is based on the assumption that the concepts that come with circumcision, i.e., election, covenant, and law, are active categories. There is no sign in Matthew's characterization of Jesus's message that Jews should abandon any of these aspects of their Judaism when joining him. On the contrary, Jesus's audience in the Sermon on the Mount, the crowds and the disciples, is explicitly told that the Jewish law remains valid in all of its details (Matt 5:17–19; cf. 23:23).¹⁰⁵

Having said this, there are two factors that complicate the situation. First, the narrative does make mention of a few non-Jews who are positive toward Jesus, and, in two cases, seek his help (Matt 2:1–12; 8:5–13; 15:21–28). Second, in the last two verses of the Gospel, Matt 28:19–20, the resurrected Jesus orders his disciples to actively convert all (non-Jewish) nations and make them disciples of Jesus.¹⁰⁶ Do any of these texts indicate that circumcision for (potential) converts is an active category, with implications for the criteria of judgment?

In the first case, the non-Jews mentioned play a marginal but

104. See, e.g., Matt 5:47; 6:7, 32; 10:5–6; 20:19, 25–26; 18:17; 24:9. For further discussion, see Runesson, "Judging Gentiles," especially 143–45. See also Sim, *Christian Judaism*, 245–55; Warren Carter, "Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?" *JNT* 26 (2004) 259–82, here 280–81.

105. Cf. Marcus Bockmuehl, "The Noachide Commandments and New Testament Ethics," *RB* (1995) 72–101, 92–93: "[A]lthough Matthew clearly tries to formulate a 'Jewish halakhah' (e.g. in 5.21–48; 19.3–9), many questions remain wrapped in diplomatic silence. Thus, issues like circumcision, purity and food laws are not dealt with, although leprosy (8.2f; 10.8; 11.5), evil spirits (10.1; 12.43) and, by implication, pigs (7.6; 8.30–32) are evidently still unclean. Purity, tithing and phylacteries are significant but depend on inward purity (15.19f; 23.5, 23, 25f.). Other than the teaching of Jesus, no clear criteria for Gentiles emerge." For further discussion of ritual and moral purity/impurity in Matthew, see Runesson, "Purity, Holiness, and the Kingdom of Heaven."

106. The meaning of the so-called Great Commission with regard to which group(s) of people are meant to be missionised has been and continues to be a matter of debate. The position taken here is argued at some length in chapters 5.2.3 and 5.3 below.

important role in the narrative, since they signal the attraction and subordination of the nations to the Jewish Messiah—a phenomenon which is interpreted as an eschatological sign.¹⁰⁷ These characters are thus not related to the question of circumcision, since the very fact that they are not Jews, that they are outsiders, is the interpretive basis for their function in the narrative. This is, in and of itself, enough reason to treat them separately from Jews in a study on judgment. What, then, about Matt 28:19–20 and the process of including non-Jews in the movement, which is now, after the resurrection, begun?

There can be no doubt that the vision here is to make non-Jews full members of the movement around Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel. How is this done? If circumcision is not assumed to be part of the process, this may lead to an interpretation of Jesus’s post-resurrection message to be one in which Jewish identity, especially the covenant and the law, had lost its theological importance. This could then be argued to shed light on Matthew’s story as a whole, so that everything that preceded this passage with regard to the law as a criterion of judgment would now be seen as invalid. Is this a reasonable assumption? There are three key words in these verses that speak against such a reconstruction: *mathēteuō* (“to make disciple of”), *baptizō* (“baptise”), and *didaskō* (“teach”).

The goal is to “make disciples” of all nations. This means to turn them into what Jesus’s current followers already were,¹⁰⁸ namely Jews who were following a person they had identified as the Davidic Messiah (9:27; 20:30–31; 21:9), the son of Abraham (1:1, 17), and the son of God (14:33). Further, throughout the story we have been told that these disciples have been instructed to adhere to the Jewish law in every detail. We are now, at the very end of the story, told that making disciples of non-Jews includes teaching them (28:20) what Jesus’s disciples had already been taught, namely, to adhere to the Jewish law

107. For discussion of such patterns of thought in Judaism, see Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007). On Matthew’s genealogy with regard to the presence of non-Jews in Jesus’s lineage, see Runesson, “Giving Birth to Jesus,” 301–27.

108. Cf. Bornkamm, “End-Expectation,” 43, who notes that *mathētai* is the distinctive designation for Jesus’s disciples throughout the narrative.

in ways superior to the customs and interpretations of the Pharisees (e.g., Matt 5:20; 15:6).¹⁰⁹ One would be hard pressed not to see in such a description of the process of making disciples a requirement, as a matter of course, of circumcision. This is so especially since, as we shall see, the law in Matthew functions within the covenant; without the covenant, whose ritual manifestation in terms of election is circumcision, the law would be without the context in which grace may be activated.¹¹⁰ A reasonable historical interpretation, then, would be that there are two identity markers that accompany being a “disciple” in this story: being Jewish, implying (for men) circumcision, and following Jesus, implying baptism.¹¹¹ As Amy-Jill Levine has argued, “there is no reason to see the command to baptize as a replacement for circumcision.”¹¹²

The baptismal formula “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” supports this view. Understood within the context of Matthew’s Gospel, the formula is specifying the nature of the group that non-Jews are to be incorporated into, namely, a Jewish messianic movement that claimed to be the product of and having its authority from the direct intervention of the spirit of God at the end of time, as revealed in the story of Jesus.¹¹³ From the perspective of the story world, this is what is important to emphasize, since these events, contrary to circumcision, are new and had fundamental implications not only for the people of Israel, but, as we now discover, for the whole world. There is no indication here of different criteria for Jews and non-Jews within the movement, contrary to what we noted in

109. Nothing in the narrative suggests that “heaven and earth had passed away” (5:18) when the Matthean Jesus commands his disciples to teach non-Jews everything they themselves had been taught. The law must, then, be seen as a narratively active category throughout the story.

110. Cf. Paul on the relationship between law and circumcision in Gal 5:3.

111. In Matthew, baptism is not mentioned in relation to Jesus’s followers, and neither Jesus nor his disciples are said to baptize anyone. The suggestion here that discipleship was understood by the author and the earliest audience of the text to require baptism also of Jews who were following Jesus is inferred from the fact that Jesus himself was baptized (Matt 3:13–17). Strictly speaking, though, baptism of disciples is only explicitly mentioned once, after the resurrection and only as related to non-Jews in Matt 28:19. There are few interpreters, however, who have suggested that such silence with regard to baptism of Jews in Matthew should be understood as a statement that Jews who follow Jesus need not be baptized.

112. Levine, *Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 181.

113. Cf. Matt 12:28.

relation to Acts. For Matthew, being a disciple takes one form only, and that form is Jewish, a religio-ethnic position closely related to that of the Pharisaic Christ-believers in Acts 15:1, 5, and, possibly, of Paul early on in his career as a (Jewish) missionary (Gal 5:11).¹¹⁴ In light of ancient approaches to conversion, and the notion that it would be impossible for someone to convert to Judaism since this is an ethnic category, Matthew presents, contrary to Luke-Acts and Paul, in which conversion is impossible/undesirable, an open and inclusive stance.¹¹⁵

In sum, when Matthew's narrative is considered as a whole, there is a consistent distinction made between Jews and non-Jews, even in the last verses of the Gospel. The non-Jews, to be the object of intense missionary activities, are envisioned as potential proselytes, i.e., they are to be convinced by Jesus's disciples to adopt a Jewish ethno-religious identity when they join the movement as new disciples. Matt 28:19–20 cannot, therefore, change our approach to the judgment theme in the Gospel, in which we have to treat all Jews, followers of Jesus as well as others, as being judged according to the same basic criteria. The non-Jews that do play a role in the story are of three basic types: enemies of the movement, people attracted to the movement, or people who do not know anything about Jesus or the disciples but react either positively or with indifference to Jesus's suffering followers. These three types of non-Jews, none of which are counted among Jesus's disciples, will be dealt with in Part II of the study. The dynamics of ethnic characterization in Matthew's narrative may be summarized in a chart as follows.

114. Cf. Terence Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostles Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 282, who argues that Gal 5:11 refers to Paul as a Jewish missionary before he became a Christ-believer.

115. See Runesson, "Universalistic Christianity?" for discussion. See also Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 147, who makes a similar point with regard to Luke and Paul.

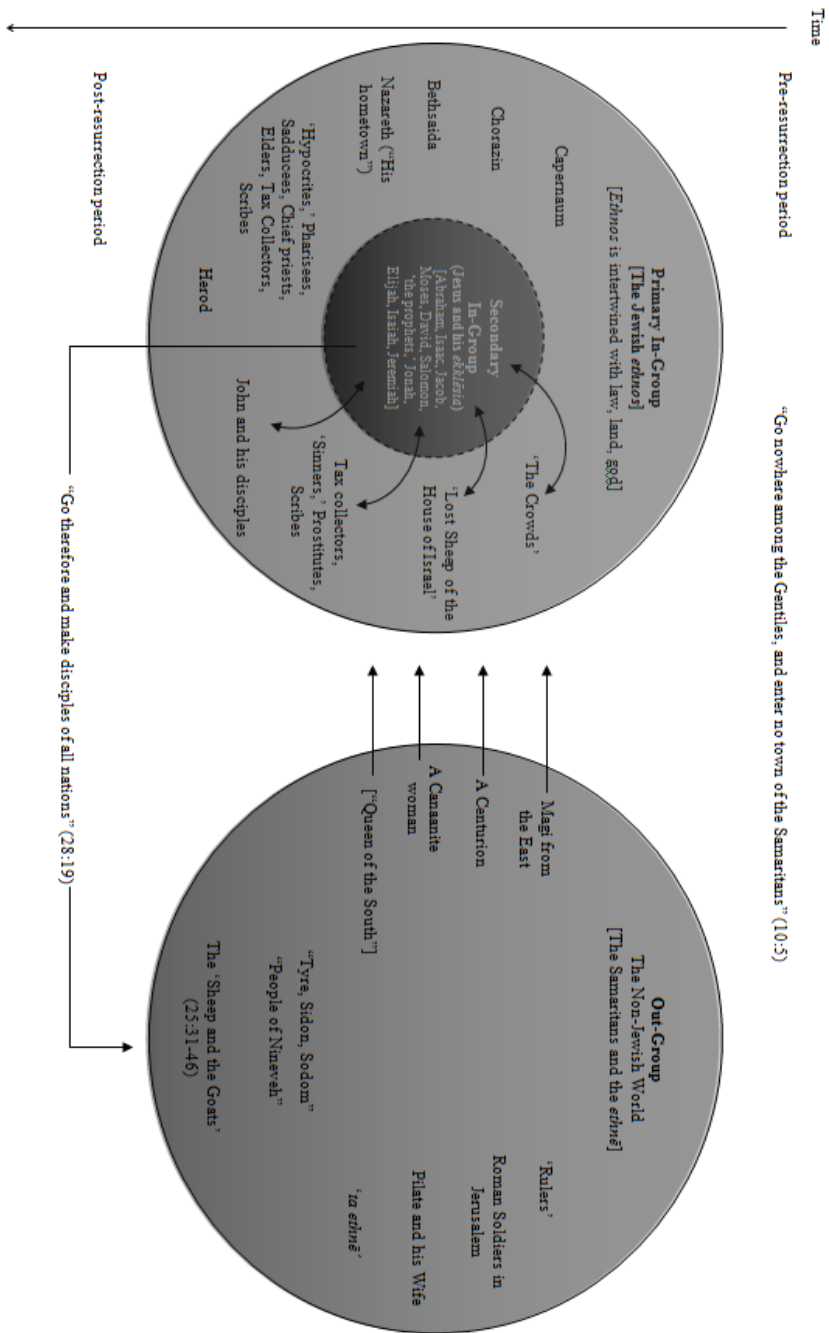


Fig. Int.1. Ethnic Identities in Matthew.

Enough has been said now about the motivation behind the basic structure of the study, and how it reflects the nature of Matthew's narrative, which carries within it a particular theology of divine wrath, judgment, and salvation. We shall begin our discussion of the eschatological situation of the Jewish people by considering the "when" and "how" questions, before dealing with, respectively, the criteria of judgment and the limits of salvation as they are construed in relation to specific groups in the Gospel.