

MATTHEW'S JESUS: THE DIVINE EXPOSED

by

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## DEDICATION

To my wife, Ashley, for loving and supporting me, and  
putting up with all my shenanigans.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my family, for instilling in me the values of patience, endurance, and hard work.

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## LIST OF USED ABBREVIATIONS

### *The Old Testament*

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Genesis         | Gen      |
| Exodus          | Exod     |
| Leviticus       | Lev      |
| Deuteronomy     | Deut     |
| Joshua          | Josh     |
| Job             | Job      |
| Psalms (Psalms) | Ps (Pss) |
| Isaiah          | Isa      |
| Daniel          | Dan      |
| Hosea           | Hos      |
| Jonah           | Jon      |
| Zechariah       | Zech     |
| Malachi         | Mal      |

### *Apocrypha*

|        |     |
|--------|-----|
| Sirach | Sir |
|--------|-----|

### *Dead Sea Scrolls*

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Rule of the Community,<br>Manual of Discipline | 1QS |
|--|-----|

### *The New Testament*

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| Matthew | Matt |
| Mark    | Mark |
| Luke    | Luke |
| John    | John |
| Acts    | Acts |
| Romans  | Rom  |
| Hebrews | Heb  |

### *Mishnah*

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Keritot   | m. Ker  |
| Sanhedrin | m. Sanh |

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

### Works Cited by Abbreviations Include:

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>                               | <i>ABD</i>  |
| <i>Biblica</i>   | <i>Bib</i>  |
| International Critical Commentary                            | ICC         |
| Interpretation   | Int         |
| InterVarsity Press   | IVP         |
| <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>            | <i>JSOT</i> |
| Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series | JSNTSup     |
| New American Commentary                                      | NAC         |
| New Cambridge Bible Commentary                               | NCBC        |
| <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>                               | <i>NIB</i>  |
| New International Greek Testament Commentary                 | NIGTC       |
| New Revised Standard Version                                 | NRSV        |
| NIV Application Commentary                                   | NIVAC       |
| Old Testament Library  | OTL         |
| Sacra Pagina   | SP          |
| Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series           | SNTMS       |
| <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>           | <i>TDNT</i> |
| <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>           | <i>TDOT</i> |
| Word Biblical Commentary                                     | WBC         |
| <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>    | <i>ZAW</i>  |

### Commonly Used Abbreviations:

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Ancient Near East | ANE    |
| Before Common Era | BCE    |
| Common Era        | CE     |
| Editor(s)         | ed.    |
| Septuagint        | LXX    |
| Translator(s)     | trans. |
| Verse(s)          | v(v).  |

## ABSTRACT

### MATTHEW'S JESUS: THE DIVINE EXPOSED

Under the direction of: CHRISTOPHER T. HOLMES, PhD.

There are various beliefs concerning different facets about Jesus. One of longest running debates about Jesus is whether or not he was human or divine. The purpose of this thesis is to examine one element that stems from the issue of Jesus's nature. It can be argued that the Synoptic Gospels support Jesus's divinity or humanness. This thesis examines the Gospel of Matthew in an attempt to show how the gospel portrays Jesus. This is not to say that Jesus was either human or divine, but that the gospel is multi-dimensional in its presentation Jesus. This examination is based on three different elements that can be seen in Matthew's narrative and rhetoric. The first element is the literary device known as an *inclusio*, formed by Matt 1.23 and 28.20, connoting divine presence. This *inclusio* provides a framework for understanding the Gospel. The second element concerns the reactions that Jesus receives based on his actions and words. The passages of Matt 14.22–33 and 9.2–8 portrays the reactions of worship and accusation respectively. The final element comes from the same passages, but it relates to the allusions made linking Jesus with the God of Israel. Through my research I found that though Matthew does present Jesus as a human who eats, sleeps, and bleeds, the gospel also presents Jesus's identity as being one with the God of Israel. Two books I would

recommend for further study are J.R. Daniel Kirk's *A Man Attested by God*, Larry Hurtado's *Lord Jesus Christ*.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Jesus has been one of the most controversial figures in history since Peter and Andrew began to follow him. He has been poked, prodded, and picked at from various angles by theologians, historians, philosophers, psychologists, biblical scholars, and pastors just to name a few. I want to add my voice to the long line of those that have studied this first-century carpenter.

This project is about divine presence and Christology in the Gospel of Matthew. In recent years, there has been a trend in scholarship that promotes a high Christology, led by those such as Richard Bauckham, Simon Gathercole, and Larry Hurtado.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars like Bart Ehrman and Daniel Kirk are of the opposite persuasion and support a low Christology.<sup>2</sup> To say that a Christology is “high” or “low” is to say that Jesus either came from heaven above, or earth below. In Ehrman’s vernacular, the issue is whether the earliest Christologies were “incarnational” or “exaltational.” This issue asks if Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Essays on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Simon J. Gathercole, *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); and Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014); J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

should be viewed as being God incarnate or as a human who was exalted at the resurrection. A person's view of Jesus can dramatically change depending on which side of the argument one lands.

In the beginning stages of this project, I planned to focus on how the exaltation sayings support an incarnational Christology. After researching the topic, however, I came to the point of asking how and does Matthew portray Jesus as Israel's God. I find this debate very interesting because it affects not only biblical studies and theology, but also the church.

#### Thesis Question and Sub-Questions

The journey to my current question was one of continual research and refinement. To engage scholarship, stay focused, and do sound research, I have limited my study to the Gospel of Matthew. My selection of Matthew is based on three points: 1) the understanding of Jesus's identity that is built into the framing of the Gospel, 2) the allusions to the Old Testament that portray Jesus as being the embodiment of God, and 3) the familiarity with Jewish belief and practice. With the above taken into account, the goal of my thesis is to answer the following question: In what ways does Matthew portray Jesus as God?

The focus of chapter two is on divine presence at the beginning and at the end of the Gospel. The clearest representation of divine presence is Matt 1.23, which states, "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us" (NRSV). Again, presence is demonstrated in Matt 28.28,

“I am with you always, to the end of the age” (NRSV). The question here is: Did Matthew intend these verses to be explicit statements of divine presence? Or is Jesus’s presence more symbolic, being akin to the Old Testament kings and prophets who represent or stand in for God?

The goal of chapter three is to answer the question: How do the reactions of various groups of people relate to the identity of Jesus? In Matt 9.2–8 and 14.22–33, various groups of people respond to Jesus in different ways. In Matthew 9, some accuse Jesus of blasphemy (v. 3) while others praise God (v. 8) for what he has done. In Matthew 14, the disciples are recorded as worshiping Jesus (v. 33). All of these responses to Jesus are related to who the people thought Jesus to be. Matthew weaves these references into the characterization of Jesus to make the reader question Jesus’s identity.

The texts selected for chapter three will also be the focal points for chapter four. In chapter four, however, it is Jesus’s actions and the allusions to the Old Testament and God’s role that will be examined. In Matt 9.2–8, Jesus is recorded as forgiving the paralytics sins, an action that I will argue that is mediated through the Temple, ultimately points to the prerogative of God. Likewise, in Matt 14.22–33, Jesus is portrayed as walking on water and calming the storm. This account links Jesus with the Old Testament texts where God controls and has dominion over the sea and nature, which also links this account to the *chaoskampf* motif.

Some of my limitations and assumptions need to be stated at the offset. I have already stated one of my limitations in focusing my research to the Gospel of Matthew.

Due to the scope of this thesis, I must further limit myself to select passages, which will be evident below. I am also limiting the scope of understanding of Matthew. I do not want to examine the Gospel as a document chosen by the early Church, for that would assume a presupposed way of thinking. I do want to study Matthew as a first-century document and in its earliest stages of transmission. The greatest assumption and largest threat to this study is that I come from an understanding that values a high Christology.

### Methodology

In 1974, Hans Frei, wrote *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*, in which he describes the seriousness of studying the Gospels as narrative. Frei notes the contribution of Christian Heyne, “He came closer than any other major figure at the end of the eighteenth-century to taking realistic narrative seriously as a literary explanatory category, and not merely as a clue to the historical or non-historical status of the stories.”<sup>3</sup> Since the time of Frei’s study, the use of narrative criticism in biblical studies has only grown. Following this approach, my study evaluates the final form of the text and how it would have been understood in the first century. In regards to my thesis and its confines, I have chosen to mainly work with narrative criticism.

According to James Resseguie, narrative criticism “focuses on how biblical literature works as *literature*. The ‘what’ of a text (its content) and the ‘how’ of a text (its

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<sup>3</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 186.

rhetoric and structure) are analyzed as a complete tapestry, an organic whole.”<sup>4</sup> Narrative criticism demands a close reading of the text. That is a reading that pays attention to the “words, images, metaphors, and small units of text.”<sup>5</sup> Close readings of the biblical texts depend more on asking questions of what is on the page than the contexts that may have shaped the text.

Another goal in using narrative criticism for my project is to read as the implied reader of Matthew. As Mark A. Powell notes, the implied reader “is the reader presupposed by the text.”<sup>6</sup> The implied reader is:

[A]n imaginary person who is to be envisioned as always responding to the text with whatever knowledge, understanding, action, or emotion is called for. Or, to put it differently, the implied reader of any given text might be described as the reader that the author appears to have had in mind when producing that text.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of the implied reader allows the modern reader to try to read and study Matthew as one of its first historical readers.

With all of this in mind, I examine Matthew as a piece of literature in its pre-canonical setting. For much of this project, I will not be concerned with authorship, dating, or sources but with the text and its rhetoric. Matthew has something to say, and it

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<sup>4</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 18–19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Mark A. Powell, “Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew” in *Methods for Matthew*, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Mark Allen Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 60.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

is trying to compel people to believe in Jesus/the Gospel. Taking this into account, I will also use rhetorical criticism. Resseguie writes, “Rhetoric delights while it persuades; it is an integral and indispensable part of every mode of discourse, whether written or spoken, for it is the means by which authors persuade us of their ideological point of view, norms, beliefs, and values.”<sup>8</sup> Examining Matthew’s rhetoric in the passages noted above, I hope to show how these relate to his views about incarnation and exaltation. Due to the nature of my third sub-question, I will use some historical-critical methods. Giving these considerations, I examine smaller units of the text (noted above), keeping in mind how this all related to the meaning and implications of the whole.

#### History of Research

Research in Christology can be done in various ways. When researching how Matthew portrays Jesus in his Gospel, one can find support for high and low Christology, including the idea of Jesus as wisdom, and Jesus as the new Moses, just to name a few. In this section, I will focus on those that support either an incarnational Christology or an exaltational Christology. Simon Gathercole divides his history of research on pre-existence in the Synoptics between “representatives of the consensus” (no pre-existence), “the optimists” (pre-existence is possible), and the “new history of religions school (earliest Christology is the highest).”<sup>9</sup> I, however, will limit my categories to the “incarnationalists” and “exaltationists.” These two groups will either be of the persuasion

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<sup>8</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son*, 2–17.

that Jesus is portrayed as divine or as human. This is only a brief treatment of some of the research that has been done. Other works on this topic will emerge in the following chapters.

### Incarnationalists

Simon Gathercole's book *The Pre-existent Son* is an argument for a pre-existent Christology in the Synoptic Gospels. His first argument or "prolegomena" is based on Paul's influence on early Christology in the Mediterranean pre-70 CE. If Paul espoused a high Christology early on, then it is more likely that the Synoptic Evangelists would have at least been aware of Christ's pre-existence, if not believers themselves.<sup>10</sup> Gathercole's second argument deals with the formula "I have come to..." Scholars that would deny a pre-existent Christology would contend that the "I have come" sayings belong to a prophetic, messianic, or some similar account of Jesus's ministry. Gathercole argues that a closer understanding of interpreting these sayings is found in "angelic parallels."<sup>11</sup> Gathercole argues the understanding of the "I have come" sayings from a divine/heavenly origin instead of an earthly/local origin.

In one of his most recent publications, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, Richard Hays argues that each of the New Testament Gospels argues and portrays Jesus "as the embodiment of the God of Israel."<sup>12</sup> The term "embodiment" is not a definite term for

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 23–82.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 83–176.

<sup>12</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 363.

Jesus's identity; luckily Hays, goes further in claiming all four Gospels draw "... on Old Testament, ... in ways both subtle and overt" in order to "portray the identity of Jesus as mysteriously fused with the identity of God."<sup>13</sup> Hays argues that each Evangelist uses and interprets the Hebrew Scriptures to convey their Christological affirmations. He bases his argument on a "figural reading" of the text.<sup>14</sup> This means that the Evangelists found insights to the figure of Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures and that they found in Christ new interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures. Throughout his book, Hays focuses on: 1) the Evangelist as interpreter of Israel's Scripture; 2) how the Evangelist invokes/evokes Scripture to re-narrate Israel's history; 3) how the Evangelist invokes/evokes Scripture to re-narrate the identity of Jesus; and 4) how the Evangelist invokes/evokes Scripture to narrate the church's role in relation to the world.<sup>15</sup>

#### Exaltationalists

Bart Ehrman is one of the most controversial New Testament scholars today. In his book, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*, Ehrman asserts that high Christology was a later development in Christian thought. The earliest Christology, on the other hand, aligns with a low Christology. Ehrman explains,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Hays quotes Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representations of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 73: "Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons in such a way that the first signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second involves or fulfills the first."

<sup>15</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 8–9.

“[T]he early Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in which Jesus never makes explicit divine claims about himself—portray Jesus as a human but not as God.”<sup>16</sup> Ehrman argues this on the several grounds. First, there were multiple figures in the ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds that were given divine status after death. Second, Jesus never makes explicit claims of divinity. Third, the resurrection is historically unattainable, and therefore, is not a justification of claiming divinity.

One of the most recent scholars to enter the discussion is J. R. Daniel Kirk, author of *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels*. Kirk posits that Jesus is an idealized human figure. He defines this category as

[N]on-angelic, non-preexistent human beings, of the past, present, or anticipated future, who are depicted in textual or other artifacts as playing some unique role in representing God to the rest of the created realm, or in representing some aspect of the created realm before God.<sup>17</sup>

Kirk takes to task the scholars listed above and others. Like Ehrman, he uses ancient writings, but he limits his focus to early Jewish figures such as Adam and Moses. He then examines the major Christological titles in light of idealized figures. Finally, Kirk opposes his dissertation director, Richard Hays, in a chapter that deals specifically with Israel’s sacred texts.

In light of the discussion, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion related to Matthew’s Christology through his portrayal of Jesus. I hope to show that Matthew

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<sup>16</sup> Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Kirk, *Man Attested by God*, 3.

depicts Jesus as the incarnation of Israel's God. If the research, however, points towards the opposing view, then I pray that I have the intellectual integrity to refine my stance.

### Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: With Us from the Beginning to the End

Chapter 3: Reactions to Jesus

Chapter 4: Allusions to the Divine

Chapter 5: Conclusion

## CHAPTER 2

### WITH US FROM THE BEGINNING AND TO THE END

As I mentioned in chapter one, this chapter focuses on the inclusio formed by Matt 1.23 and 28.20. Matthew opens and closes with the theme of Emmanuel or divine presence.<sup>1</sup> In Matthew 1, an angel tells Joseph of a prophecy claiming that a virgin shall bear a child, and his name will be Emmanuel. Matthew 28 completes the Gospel with Jesus's words promising that he will be with his disciples until the end of the age. In this chapter, I will look at Matt 1.23 (in conjunction with Isa 7.14) and 28.20 in their literary contexts, and then I will examine the meaning of the inclusio they form.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, these passages have been taken as signaling Jesus's identity as God or identifying a characteristic of Jesus. Some scholars hold to a high Christology in varying degrees, that Jesus came from heaven, lived as a human, but at the same time was Israel's God in the flesh. For example, Anna Case-Winters describes it in terms of revelation, "God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ is a decisive revelation of who God is

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars prefer the Hebraic spelling, "Immanuel," as opposed to the Hellenized, "Emmanuel." I use Emmanuel; some quotations, however, will have the other Hebraic spelling.

<sup>2</sup> An "inclusio" is a literary device in which "a word or expression brackets a portion of text by introducing and concluding it" (Matthew S. DeMoss and J. Edward Miller, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible and Theology Words* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 120). For study on Isa 7.14, see Appendix A.

and what God is doing everywhere and always. God's intentions and actions become 'transparent' in Jesus the Christ."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in his section on Jesus's identity Lee McDonald writes,

When these titles (i.e., Lord, Son of Man, etc.) are combined with the opening comments to Joseph about who Jesus is—namely, that he will be 'God with us' (1:23)—and with the closing words of the Gospel when Jesus says, 'I am with you always, to the end of the age' (28:20), there is little doubt in Matthew about the identity of Jesus. He is the very presence of God among humanity.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, Jack Kingsbury contends that these verses are primarily about Jesus's eschatological rule.<sup>5</sup>

It is not so for everyone. Other scholars, most notably Bart Ehrman and J. R. Daniel Kirk contend for a low Christology in varying degrees. They agree that Jesus was

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<sup>3</sup> Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew*, *Belief: A Theological Commentary On the Bible*, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw and William C. Placher (Louisville: John Knox, 2015), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Lee Martin McDonald, *The Story of Jesus in History and Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 104.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, *Proclamation Commentaries: The New Testament Witnesses for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 61. Though eschatology is not in view here, Kingsbury's mention of Matt 18.20 is note-worthy. The verse reads, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (NRSV). In much of his commentary on Matthew, Kingsbury relates 1.23; 18.20; and 28.20 to Jesus's eschatological rule, but also to the nature of the church (cf. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, *Proclamation Commentaries*, ed. Gerhard Krodel [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 27, 51). Case-Winters reveals another level of meaning. She maintains that 18.20 "calls to mind the rabbinic sayings about the *shekinah* (divine presence) in the midst of the community. 'If two sit together and the words of the law [are spoken] between them, the Divine Presence rests between them.' The promise of presence that appears here is central also to beginning and ending of the book of Matthew" (Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 226.) The value of 18.20 is important. Since I am focused on the inclusio itself, the weight of this chapter is related to issues surrounding 1.23 and 28.20.

a normal human and was elevated to the position of the divine. It is in this divide of belief that I want to focus my research. Does the Matthean inclusio lend support to a high or low Christology? How does the inclusio characterize Jesus? Does the narrative provide any clues in order to answer these questions? I believe the Evangelist uses the inclusio to make a statement about Jesus's identity, and if we look at how these verses function and relate to one another, then we can begin to see a portrait of Matthew's Jesus being formed. As it relates to the entire writing of Matthew, I will use this chapter as a frame of reference and interpretive lens for the following chapters. If we understand reactions to Jesus (chapter three) in light of the allusions to the Old Testament and God's role (chapter four) with the Matthean inclusio in mind, then Jesus's divine identity becomes easier to see.

### From the Beginning

The beginning of Matthew has a rich portrayal of Jesus. The Evangelist records how Jesus was to be understood, his lineage, and his miraculous birth. These records culminate in one particular understanding of Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us.

#### Matthew 1.23

From the beginning of the Gospel to its close, Matthew makes assertions about Jesus's identity. Matthew 1.23 refers to Jesus as "Emmanuel." Even before asserting that claim, Matthew makes several others. Jesus is called "Messiah," "son of David," and "son of Abraham," (1.1); also he is from the Holy Spirit (1.18), and he will be a savior from sins (1.21). Craig Keener explains that in ancient biography the authors of such works would focus on a person's public life, writing only the most relevant material from

other aspects of life.<sup>6</sup> In Matthew's case, this material surrounds the conception and birth of Jesus. Keener goes on to say, "One may likewise expect many features of Matthew's infancy narrative to prepare his audience for themes dominant throughout the Gospel."<sup>7</sup> Using Keener's insight, the Evangelist uses the Emmanuel theme in the inclusio to show that Jesus is the indwelling of Israel's God.<sup>8</sup> It is apparent that the narrative builds up the characterization of Jesus. The Evangelist does this by giving the core of who he believes Jesus is in the form of the above assertions. The core itself culminates in the birth of Emmanuel.

What is interesting about the quotation is that both Matthew and the Septuagint use *Ἰδοὺ*, meaning "Look!" or "Behold!" This is the emphatic form of *ἴδε*. The term can be compared to a camera shift from movie scenes that adds dramatic effect or makes the viewer aware of what is to be viewed. The Evangelist uses the quotation to signal an important lens for interpreting Jesus. In the act of beholding, the reader can no longer read passively over these descriptions of Jesus. The Evangelist draws the reader's attention to the culminating identity of Jesus in Emmanuel.

The question that remains is whether Emmanuel points to a symbolic role or a literal identity. As, Daniel Kirk notes "Emmanuel" does not necessarily connote divinity,

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<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 86.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The theme runs throughout the Gospel; cf. Matt 1.23; 14.27; 18.20; and 28.20.

“it can simply be a name given to express the belief that God is with God’s people.”<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, John Nolland poses the question, “Should we translate μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός as ‘God with us’ and understand that Matthew intends to make the equation ‘Jesus = God’?”

<sup>10</sup> These are some of the questions I deal with in this section, and to do that I have to turn to the verse’s contextual setting.

The Emmanuel reference is set in the context of the birth narrative, which is preceded by a genealogy. In its immediate context, the reference occurs within the reassurance to Joseph in the form of a dream (Matt 1.20–23). Mary was found to be with child while she was engaged to Joseph (Matt 1.18). Joseph, however, was a “righteous man,” and he hoped to divorce her quietly (Matt 1.19). Then, Joseph has a dream. In this dream, Joseph is assured that the child has been conceived of the Holy Spirit, that child will be named Jesus, that he will save his people from their sins, and that the birth of this child will fulfill Scripture. Matthew explains that the conception, birth, and naming of Jesus “took place to fulfill” the prophet’s words (Matt 1.22). The term for “took place,” γέγονεν, is a perfect active indicative verb. This verb tense describes a completed action, whose effects are still felt in the present. In relation the actions of the conception and birth of Jesus are moments that have taken place, but for those of the Christian faith these moments have had a lasting effect. I believe if the verb γέγονεν is tied in some way to

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<sup>9</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 369.

<sup>10</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary On the Greek Text*, NIGTC, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 101.

σώσει, meaning “he will save.” Could it be that Jesus is Emmanuel because of his ability to save his people from their sins? If this ability is in Jewish and Christian thought a uniquely divine attribute, it is. Thus, this would be the first instance of Jesus being equated with God. I believe this lends itself to answering Kirk’s and Nolland’s questions above, though they would disagree with me.

The Emmanuel statement in its literary context has at least two functions in the Gospel. The first function is to serve as an apologetic for the virginal conception. There were claims as evidenced in Celsus’ writing from the second century that Jesus was an illegitimate child of the Roman soldier, Panthera.<sup>11</sup> Daniel J. Harrington questions whether the idea of virginal conception generated this claim or was a reaction to it, and he concludes, “Since the textual evidence for Jesus’ illegitimacy is late, it seems best to take the charge as generated by the early Christian belief in the virginal conception of Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> Second, it seeks to define who Jesus is, which has already been noted above. Some New Testament writers trace divine sonship to various points in Jesus’s life. Paul at one point traces it to the resurrection (Rom 1.4). The Gospel of Mark sets sonship at Jesus’s baptism (Mark 1.11). The Gospel of Matthew, however, “tries to show how Jesus was Son of God from the very time of his conception.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Celsus, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christian*, trans. R. Joseph Hoffman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 57.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP 1, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991), 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Matthew explicitly sets Jesus's divinity at conception and asserts that Jesus has/will fulfill Isaiah's prophecy. All of this is centered around the supposition that Emmanuel is a claim made about Jesus, and not how others interpreted Jesus's presence. Nolland gives supporting arguments that conclude Jesus is God: 1) The Jesus of Matthew's Gospel is a more God-like figure in the responses that he elicits than in the case in the other Synoptic Gospels; 2) The nature of the presence of Jesus contemplated in 18.20, 28.20 is of a spiritual kind, which would fit a divine Jesus as well; and 3) The correspondence between Ἐμμανουήλ (God with us) in 1.23 and ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἶμι (I am with you) in 28.20 may allow us to find an allusion to the divine name in the "I am" of the latter.<sup>14</sup> Nolland, however, finds this support lacking, and offers seven counter points. Of these seven points, I believe my research challenges three: 1) in the Old Testament, names given from heaven point to God's actions, not the individual's; 2) "Jesus = God" is an overwhelming Christological statement in the account of Jesus's irregular incorporation into the Davidic line; and 3) "Jesus = God" in such a Jewish context and early phase of the narrative is too strong that it does not fit in the way a Christological perspective is allowed.<sup>15</sup> (I will treat the third in the following chapters.)

In response to Nolland's first point, I want to say that I agree, but the Evangelist is writing about Jesus and not an Old Testament character. The Evangelist is not concerned

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<sup>14</sup> Nolland, *Matthew*, 101–2

<sup>15</sup> For the complete list, see *Ibid.*, 102.

with typical usage about given names; rather he is about portraying who Jesus is in light of what had transpired. As Keener writes,

[I]t was reasonable for Matthew to see in Immanuel (cf. 8.8) a sign pointing to the ultimate presence of God and triumph for Judah in the Davidic Messiah who would be born to Israel.... Whatever Matthew's exegesis, his primary point is clear enough: Scripture reveals the divine plan, and those who trust its authority need doubt no miracle it promises.<sup>16</sup>

To Nolland's second point, I want to quote Harrington once more. Harrington writes, "Having established the legal Davidic paternity of Jesus through Joseph (Matt 1.1-17), the Evangelist now in Matt 1:18-25 wants to bring together that way of looking at Jesus ("Son of David") with the early confession that Jesus is Son of God."<sup>17</sup> Essentially, Harrington is saying, yes, Jesus is incorporated in the Davidic line, but that does not detract from Jesus being from above. I also point back to my remarks at the beginning of this section. It is attested that Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels.<sup>18</sup> It makes sense to begin this Gospel by connecting Jesus to the Jewish hope and expectation of a Davidic heir. Furthermore, Jesus is not only portrayed as the Son of David by way of title, genealogy, and adoption, but he is also portrayed as Son of Abraham, which includes

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<sup>16</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Harrington, *Matthew*, 39

<sup>18</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, NCBC, ed. Ben Witherington III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

hope for the gentiles.<sup>19</sup> It is not an either/or proposition, but a both/and which I believe points to a greater facet of Jesus's identity. As Jack Kingsbury writes,

Jesus Messiah is called the Son of Abraham, and as such he is the hope of the gentiles. He is also called the Son of David, and as such is the hope of Israel. Yet it is as "Emmanuel," that is to say, as the Son of God, that he is "God with us," the one in whom God actually dwells with his people of both Jewish and gentile origin.<sup>20</sup>

For Kingsbury Jesus as Emmanuel combines both the Jewish expectation and gentile hope. The Gospel draws our attention to Jesus as "God with us." I believe, being supported by those like Kingsbury and Keener, that the Emmanuel quotation is used to support a high Christology.

#### To the End

In the final chapter of Matthew, the Evangelist closes the *inclusio* with various allusions to Jesus's identity that further support a high Christology. The language and images used add further insight to the gospel's portrayal of Jesus. The Evangelist, reminds the reader that the Jesus portrayed throughout the gospel is still God with us "to the end of the age." Matthew 28.20

The Evangelist begins and ends Matthew in similar fashion, making subtle claims about Jesus's identity. Matthew 28.16–20 presents the reader with a concentration of Christological language. In their commentary, Davies and Allison explain this concentrated language. In verse 19 Jesus is called "the son," which is an allusion to Dan

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<sup>19</sup> See Gen 12.3. Part of God's promise to Abram is that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (NRSV). This promise is not just for the Jewish people, but necessarily includes the gentiles.

<sup>20</sup> Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 37

7.13–14, confirming Jesus’s role as “son of man.” Jesus claims authority in verse 18, suggesting the title “lord.” Jesus is presented as a teacher in verse 20 as he tells the disciples to teach “all that I have commanded you.” The commission to “all the nations” in verse 19 reminds the reader that Jesus is the son of Abraham (Matt 1.1). The final clause in verse 20 presents Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us (Matt 1.23).<sup>21</sup> Matthew 28.16–20 is one of the most quoted and practiced passages in the New Testament. It contains what many view their calling in life to be as disciples, the Great Commission. The original disciples returned to a mountain in Galilee (v.16). When Jesus appeared to them some worshipped but some doubted (v. 17). The risen Lord tells his disciples that all authority has been given to him (v. 18), and that now they are to go out and make disciples, baptize, and teach (vv. 19-20a), assuring them that he is with them until the end (v. 20b). Davies and Allison note, “Jesus—who as the exalted Lord remains teacher—has the last word.”<sup>22</sup>

There are other key elements that can be used to point to Jesus’s identity. In this pericope, Jesus appears to the disciples and “they worshipped him.” The act of worshiping in this instance (here προσεκύνησαν) does not mean to highly respect or hold in high regard, but it is synonymous with veneration. Those who worship him recognize Jesus for who he really is (God with us). According to Jewish law, the only entity that

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<sup>21</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 3:688.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:686.

should/could be worshipped was God. In essence, the act of worship signals who the disciples understood Jesus to be. Those that worship recognize Jesus for who he really is. In the commission itself, Jesus commands the disciples to baptize new converts in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To this Keener writes,

Disciples baptize not only in the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit, whom biblical and Jewish tradition regarded as divine, but also in the name of the Son. Placing Jesus on the same level as the Father and Spirit makes even more explicit what is implicit in Acts' 'baptism in Jesus' name' (Acts 2:23; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. 22:16)—that is, Jesus is divine (28:19).<sup>23</sup>

Second there is the issue of Jesus receiving  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha \ \acute{\epsilon}\xi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , meaning “all authority.” The term  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\zeta$  has a variety of nuances in Greek, in this case it has relative significance. When in the relative,  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\zeta$  has the connotation of superiority and totality. When Jesus says “all authority,” he means it. With this being the case, how does Jesus compare to God? If Jesus has *all* authority, and omnipotence is one of God’s attributes, Matthew’s Jesus seems to be claiming to his disciples something similar to John’s Jesus in 10.30 “I and the Father are one.” This can be seen further in the command to baptize “in the name” of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to Hans Bietenhard, “the name, person and work of God are—with various differentiations—inseparably linked with the name, person and work of Jesus Christ.”<sup>24</sup> It is in connection with the Son and Holy Spirit that the fullness of God’s name is found. This common name (Jesus Christ) expresses unity of

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<sup>23</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, 716-17.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Bietenhard, “ὄνομα” in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 5:242–83.

being.<sup>25</sup> Finally, there is Jesus’s reassuring claim that he will be present until the “end of the age.” This statement makes another Christological claim. It points to Jesus’s omnipresence, a characteristic given to deities alone.<sup>26</sup> The final verses of Matthew have been called a summary of the Gospel.<sup>27</sup> If this is true, it makes sense to have major Christological perceptions appear here.<sup>28</sup> Nolland notes, “‘The completion of the age’ is distinctive to Matthew in the New Testament. By echoing earlier uses, its use here calls to mind Jesus’ eschatological role as the Son of Man.” He goes on to assert that the time has come for the disciples to take up the mantle, which is held up by the commission of the risen Lord and by his final eschatological role. He writes, “During this period Jesus is understood to move to an offstage, but still central role.”<sup>29</sup>

What does this mean as far as Jesus’s identity? I believe that comes in the final clause. Matthew writes, “καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἶμι” (and behold I am with you). The “behold” (ἰδοὺ) and “I” (ἐγὼ) are in the emphatic form, “with you” (μεθ’ ὑμῶν) is reminiscent of Matt 1.23. Nolland suggests that this refers to the risen Jesus, and not God as such.<sup>30</sup> I am not sure if Nolland would agree, but I think it supports Keener’s assertion

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<sup>25</sup> See *Ibid.*, 5:271–80.

<sup>26</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, 618.

<sup>27</sup> See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:678–79.

<sup>28</sup> These perceptions include portraying Jesus as the new Moses and the Son of Man. For more see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:680–84.

<sup>29</sup> Nolland, *Matthew*, 1271–72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1271.

about the attribution of omnipresence (see above). Davies and Allison write, “‘I am with you’ recalls 1.23 and 18.20 as well as many biblical and extrabiblical texts about God being ‘with the saints.’ Here the dominant sense may not be so much that of divine presence as of divine assistance.”<sup>31</sup> In her commentary, Anna Case-Winters writes,

The good news with which the Gospel opens is the news of the fulfillment of the promise of “Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us’” (1.23). Now this final verse makes good on the promise. “I am with you always’ is the good news that is the final word of the gospel, and perhaps the only word we really need.”<sup>32</sup>

Nolland adds that the promise that ends the Gospel “makes clear that Jesus’ ministry has run its course and reached its goal. There is to be no post-resurrection resumption. Something new is to take its place now.”<sup>33</sup> Though it may be the final act of Jesus’s ministry, his story is left open-ended. Jesus is ever-present with his people. “The result is that the believing audience and the ever-living Son of God become intimate. The Jesus who commands difficult obedience is at the same time the ever-graceful divine presence.”<sup>34</sup> David Kupp writes, “He breathes no spirit in them, does not ascend and promises no *παράκλητος*.”<sup>35</sup> Why? Because Jesus is ever present with his people.

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<sup>31</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:687.

<sup>32</sup> Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 348.

<sup>33</sup> Nolland, *Matthew*, 1272.

<sup>34</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:688-89.

<sup>35</sup> David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSMS 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

### Presence, Identity, and the Inclusio

Writers use inclusios for numerous reasons. The literary device can be used to alert the reader to an important theme or to focus the reader's attention to how the material inside the inclusio relates to the inclusio itself. So what does all of this mean for Matthew? My goal up to this point has been to provide a framework for Matthew's portrayal of Jesus. In this section, I want to provide an understanding of how the inclusio functions and how it relates to the portrayal of Jesus in Matthew. I understand the Matthean inclusio to be the interpretive lens for understanding Jesus in the narrative. In his treatment of Matthew (specifically his section on Jesus as Emmanuel), Richard B. Hays notes that the motif "establishes the structural framework on which the story is built" and that the inclusio "frames and supports everything in between."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Kingsbury writes:

Matthew highlights the fundamental message of his "life of Jesus" in the key passages 1:23 and 28:20. These passages stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other.... Strategically located at the beginning and the end of Matthew's Gospel, these two passages "enclose" it. In combination, they reveal that the message Matthew proclaims with his kerygmatic story is that in the person of Jesus Messiah, his Son, God has drawn near to abide to the end of time with his people, the church, thus inaugurating the eschatological age of salvation.<sup>37</sup>

It is through this lens (as God with us) that Jesus's sayings and doings and the people's reactions to Jesus are to be interpreted. If I am correct, then the inclusio supports a high

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<sup>36</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 162.

<sup>37</sup> Kingsbury, *Jesus Christ*, 62.

Christology, and it characterizes Jesus as being equal to God. Kirk, on the other hand, interprets the data in light of his paradigm of “idealized human figures.”<sup>38</sup> Kirk’s goal is to show that the best way to view Jesus in the synoptic tradition (Matthew included) is as an idealized human and not as a divine being. He is not trying to prove Jesus was/is not God. He writes,

At the same time, I should be quick to add that Jesus as an idealized human figure does not eliminate the possibility that Jesus is (being depicted as) divine. While the force of my argument is, throughout, to show the sufficiency of the human category for explaining the many Christologies narrated in the Synoptic Tradition, this book should not be read as constituting a claim to the effect that Jesus is not, in fact, God, in the way confessed by many Christian traditions or that idealized human Christologies are incompatible with divine Christologies. Instead, I am arguing for the best way to read these particular books of the New Testament, claiming that the paradigm of idealized human figures makes the best sense of the data. Divine and preexistence Christology is attested to in other early Christian literature.<sup>39</sup>

Focusing on Matt 1.23 and 28.20, Kirk writes “the identity of Matthew’s Jesus is recapitulated in Jesus’s final words.... This pairing enables us to frame the question of Matthew’s Christology pointedly: in what sense is Matthew’s Jesus ‘God with us’?”<sup>40</sup> Kirk’s question here and the one mentioned above are valid and necessary. I, however, believe Kirk to be missing the forest for the trees.

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<sup>38</sup> Kirk, *A Man Attested*, 2. Kirks defines “idealized human figures” as “non-angelic, non-preexistent human beings, of the past, present, or anticipated future, who are depicted in textual or other artifacts as playing some unique role in representing God to the rest of the created realm, or in representing some aspect of the created realm before God.” See also Kirk, *A Man Attested*, 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

Looking at the inclusio and its meaning for the narrative, it seems that a reading that supports Jesus's divinity works best for the intent of Gospel. For Hays, Jesus's identity is not only bound to references made about him, but ultimately in the worship he receives as God with us. Hays concludes, "*Matthew highlights the worship of Jesus for one reason: he believes and proclaims that Jesus is the embodied presence of God and that to worship Jesus is to worship YHWH—not merely an agent or a facsimile or an intermediary*" (Hays' emphasis).<sup>41</sup> I do believe that we can all agree with Kingsbury that by focusing on Jesus we "shall come to know who God is and what the church is."<sup>42</sup> It is by looking to Jesus that we find the ultimate revelation of God, the purpose of the church, and the true meaning of what it means to be human.

#### Summary

In this chapter, I have looked at how the inclusio of Matt 1.23 and 28.20 function and relate to each other. In his role as God with us, Jesus is portrayed—as I argue below—that the divinity of Jesus is truly expressed. The divine presence that is alluded to in the inclusio is observable throughout Matthew. Thus, the inclusio serves as a framework in which readers are to not only interpret Matthew but interpret the person of Jesus.

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<sup>41</sup> Hays, *Echoes in the Gospels*, 175.

<sup>42</sup> Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 29.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REACTIONS TO JESUS

People can have all sorts of reactions to what is happening in the world around them. Jesus's words and deeds are no exception. According to the New Testament Gospels, he spoke with authority and did mighty deeds, and people reacted to him in different ways. In this chapter, I offer a few exegetical forays into passages that describe the reactions to Jesus: worship, on the hand, and accusations of blasphemy, on the other. First, Matt 14.22–33 provides the account of Jesus and Peter walking on water. In this passage, the disciples worship Jesus, and Jesus expresses control over nature. Second, Matt 9.2–8 is the account of Jesus healing a paralytic and forgiving his sins; this forgiving of sins leads to an accusation of blasphemy for doing so. In these examples, Jesus is either worshipped or accused of blasphemy, but the question remains as to why the Gospel portrays such reactions toward Jesus. My investigation of the inclusio formed by Matt 1.23 and 28.20 in chapter one provides a framework for understanding how we are to treat such reactions, as I attempt to demonstrate below. Jesus is accused of blasphemy because two opponents hear him make claims (or accept claims) about himself or do such things that are generally attributed to God. At the same time, Jesus is worshipped because Jesus acts or speaks in a way typically reserved for the God of Israel. If Jesus were making some claim to divine identity—at least in the minds of his followers and opponents—then there would good reason to accuse him. It is through the research

on of these passages, their relationship to the inclusio, and monotheism that I continue with my assertion that Matthew portrays Jesus as divine.<sup>1</sup>

### A Response of Worship

As previously stated, this section will focus on Matt 14.22–33. The scene of walking on water and his second calming of nature provides an exceptional display of Jesus’s divine nature/identity. Many focus on the element of discipleship in this text. Though this is a noble effort, it often detracts from the Christological import. For my purposes, I suspend discussion on discipleship to discuss those elements that focus on the nature and identity of Jesus.

#### Matthew 14.22–33

In this passage, the disciples are in a boat sailing on the Sea of Galilee (vv. 22–23). Sometime between the disciples departing and the next morning, the wind picks up and began battering the boat (vv. 24–25). Jesus came and began walking towards them “on the sea.” Naturally, the disciples recognize this as abnormal and believe that this being is a ghost (φάντασμα). Jesus, however, hears their cries of fear and reassures them that it is he (ἐγώ εἰμι [vv. 25–27]). Peter then tests Jesus, telling him to call him out onto the water (v. 28). Jesus calls, and Peter does as commanded. When he notices his surroundings, he begins to sink (vv. 29–30). Jesus then accuses the disciples of having little faith (ὀλιγόπιστε), and they return to the boat. When they get into the boat, the

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<sup>1</sup> For a study on monotheism see Appendix B.

wind stops (vv. 31–32). The scene closes with those in the boat worshipping (προσεκύνησαν) Jesus as the Son of God (θεοῦ υἱός).

The text from Matthew 14 could be read with a parallel story in Matthew 8, where Jesus calms the storm. In Matthew 8, Jesus is again shown to have authority over nature, but in this earlier case, the disciples are left asking, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matt 8.27, NRSV). John Nolland writes about the connection between the two stories: “The response here [in Matthew 14] builds on the question posed in 8:27, where the wording of the question has left no doubt for the reader that Jesus acts as God acts.”<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that, though they offered a correct response, it is possible that the disciples had yet to “grasp the full implications of Jesus’ claim,” as Craig Keener notes.<sup>3</sup> In any case, Hays is right to point out that both stories “rest on a common Old Testament substratum: there is only One who can command the wind and storm, only One who can stride across the waves.... The worship of the disciples acknowledges and declares Jesus’ identity with the one God of Israel, present in the midst of his people.”<sup>4</sup>

The question remains: why do the disciples worship Jesus? Within this story, there are several aspects that I find pertinent to answering that question. First, the scene

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<sup>2</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary On the Greek Text*, NIGTC, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 603.

<sup>3</sup> See Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 408.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 166–67.

takes place on top of the sea. Jesus is portrayed as having power and authority over the waters. This setting may bring to mind God defeating the sea/chaos during the creation.<sup>5</sup> Second, while Jesus assures the disciples, he says, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” There are two things about this response worth noting. It may echo the divine name from the Old Testament. The Evangelist’s use of ἐγώ εἰμι (literally, “I am”) parallels the way that God is named or speaks of Godself in the LXX. In addition, Jesus’s command, “Do not be afraid,” is typical of divine encounters in the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> Third, Jesus extends power to Peter, calling him out onto the water. If Jesus was merely human, how could he have given Peter the ability to walk on water? If Jesus is seen as divine, then Peter’s ability to walk to Jesus is found in the divine lending power to a human. Finally, as in Matt 8.23–27 (although more explicit in this passage), Jesus calms the wind that battered the disciples and their vessel. The supernatural phenomena and the connections in the Old Testament make up the catalyst for the disciples’ worship.

Now that I’ve given several reasons why the disciples worshipped Jesus, let us look at the meaning of the Greek word translated above as worship, προσκύνω. Those in the boat are said to προσεκύνησαν Jesus as the Son of God. This term connotes the

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<sup>5</sup> See Leslie J. Hope, “Creator of Heaven and Earth,” in *Exploring & Proclaiming The Apostles’ Creed*, ed. Roger E. Van Harn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 38–48; M. Eugene Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew,” *NIB*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 8:327–28.

<sup>6</sup> Nolland, *Matthew*, 601; see also Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew*, *Belief: A Theological Commentary On the Bible*, ed. Amy Plantinga Pauw and William C. Placher (Louisville: John Knox, 2015), 195.

actions of either bowing down or prostrating, among other possible definitions.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Kirk notes the term’s ambiguity between it being a sign of respect or one of religious worship. He then claims that Matthew has given ample hints—including connections with the magi and crucifixion narratives—that this scene supports a messianic interpretation. He writes,

Matthew’s readers have already learned that Jesus is son of David and son of Abraham. The roles Jesus plays in the narrative are thus laid out in terms of Israelite sovereignty over the world.... In the wake of the divine conception from the prior story (the magi narrative), the idea of Jesus as a king specially worthy of adoration from foreigners does not raise the Christology to the level of divinity.<sup>8</sup>

Heinrich Greeven, on the other hand, notes that this is not just a respectful action in cases concerning the disciples; rather it “is especially motivated by dawning recognition of the divine sonship.”<sup>9</sup> He also states that when προσκυνέω is used the object “is always something—truly or supposedly—divine.”<sup>10</sup> In my assessment, the act of worship is influenced by the disciples’ confession, Ἰσχυροῦς θεοῦ υἱὸς εἶ (truly you are the Son of God). With the admission of Jesus as the Son of God, and the power that Jesus exerts, the meaning of προσκυνέω should be read as that of religious devotion.

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<sup>7</sup> Heinrich Greeven, προσκυνέω, προσκυνητής, in *TDNT* ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 6:758–66.

<sup>8</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 374-75.

<sup>9</sup> Greeven, προσκυνέω, προσκυνητής, 6:763–64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 763.

Matthew 14.22–33 is an episode that portrays Jesus doing extraordinary acts, and the disciples response to those acts. Given what they have just heard and witnessed, the disciples claim Jesus to be the Son of God and prostrate themselves before him in worship. It is in their response of worship and addressing Jesus as the Son of God that Matthew emphasizes Jesus’s divine identity.

#### An Accusation of Blasphemy

Worship is not the only response we see in the Gospel. Those that do not see the truth in Jesus take his words and deeds as an offense to God, and they charge Jesus with blasphemy. There are several factors surrounding this charge. These factors include: monotheism, the role of priests and the temples, and the authority to forgive sins.

Matthew 9.2–8

In the case of Matt 9.2–8, the reaction to Jesus is quite different. The basic contours of the story can be sketched briefly. Some people bring a paralytic man to be healed by Jesus (v. 2). Jesus forgives the man’s sins, which leads some to accuse him of blasphemy (vv. 2–3). Then, “perceiving” the hearts of the scribes, Jesus asks a series of questions that could be pointing to his own self-understanding (vv. 4–5). This episode closes with Jesus commanding the paralytic to stand up and walk home, and the man does so. In contrast to the scribes’ reaction, the crowds “were filled with awe” and then proceeded to give God glory (vv. 6–8).

This story brings to mind a couple of questions. First, what is the nature of blasphemy in these verses? Scholars debate on what blasphemy actually consisted of

during this time.<sup>11</sup> Fredrick James Murphy notes that the *Mishnah* says that the “divine name must be pronounced aloud for there to be blasphemy (*m. Sanh 7a*).”<sup>12</sup> This is not what we find in Matthew, however. Jesus never mentions Yahweh, God, or the Father; he only forgives the man of his sins and allows him to walk. It is noteworthy to mention that Jesus speaks in a passive voice (θάρσει, τέκνον, ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι [Matt 9.2c]). Craig Keener claims that this means that, even though Jesus is speaking the words, it is the Father that is doing the forgiving.<sup>13</sup> While this may be the case, Jesus then claims that he, the Son of Man, has “authority on earth to forgive sins.” What are we to make of this? I am inclined to agree with Murphy as he writes, “In the New Testament, making oneself equal to God or claiming divine authority is considered blasphemy, as here.”<sup>14</sup> The key idea that Murphy brings up is the claiming of divine authority. As he explains elsewhere, “The scribes accuse him of blasphemy, since he arrogates to himself authority proper to God.”<sup>15</sup> From this I define blasphemy (simply) as the acts of either 1) uttering or

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<sup>11</sup> See Raymond Westbrook, “Punishments and Crimes,” *ABD*, ed. Davis Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:546–56; D. L. Bock, “Blasphemy,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013) 84–87.

<sup>12</sup> Frederick James Murphy, *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 98.

<sup>13</sup> Keener, *Matthew*, 289.

<sup>14</sup> Murphy, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 98.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 97.

implying the divine name in such a way that it brings shame or dishonor to God; or 2) giving or claiming that which is rightly due to God.

This leads us to the second question, why was Jesus accused of blasphemy? No one would accuse a person today of blasphemy if he/she forgave another or healed another in some fashion, so why accuse Jesus? There are two possible reasons. First, Jesus was claiming power that belonged to God. Who else can forgive people for their sins, except the one whom the sin is against? The psalmist writes, “Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps 51.4, NRSV). God is the only one who can truly remove the stain of sin.<sup>16</sup> Warren Carter writes “In 9:1–8 the scribes interpret Jesus’ words of forgiveness as blasphemy (9:2–3), as an unauthorized attempt to claim a role that belongs only to God.”<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that compared with Mark’s Gospel, Matthew omits the phrase “only God can forgive sins” (Mark 2.7). This phrase is implied in Matthew’s narrative even though it is not explicitly stated.<sup>18</sup>

The second reason deals with the temple cult and the religious leaders’ authority. Anna Case-Winters notes this power struggle writing, “Matters concerning God’s

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<sup>16</sup> Issues between the Levitical system and the removal of sin will be considered in the next chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 233.

<sup>18</sup> Craig A. Evans notes, “Because Matthew writes to and has in mind Jewish readers who know Jewish religious beliefs, he does not need to explain the grounds for blasphemy; that is, that only God can forgive sins (as in Mark 2:7, followed by Luke 5:21). Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, NCBC, ed. Ben Witherington III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 200. See also Keener, *Matthew*, 289–90.

forgiveness and expiation of sin were handled through the Temple system administered by priests. To make such an offer ‘outside the system’ is to abrogate their authority and assume their prerogative. This constitutes another kind of threat.”<sup>19</sup> The possible threat has religious, social, and economic undertones. The people would no longer have to sacrifice at the Temple for atonement. This would have effects on the economy since animals would no longer be needed for sacrifice, and the merchants that sold animals for such practices would be out of business. The temple cult and those associated with it would no longer be needed, and as such, Jesus was a possible threat to their establishment. Thus, the charge of blasphemy is not necessarily warranted by religious belief, but it could be made simply out of fear.

In examining this passage, the reader can begin to process the reasons why the scribes might accuse Jesus of blasphemy: 1) claiming a divine prerogative (i.e. forgiving sins); 2) invalidating the temple cult. What should be noted is that Jesus responds to this charge by proving his power and authority to forgive sins in a number of ways. The most obvious is the miracle itself. Craig A. Evans writes, “Assuring the paralyzed man that his ‘sins are forgiven’ would have been comforting indeed when it is remembered that sin and sickness were often associated.”<sup>20</sup> This leads to Jesus’s remark about the easier statement in verse five, “For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’?” (NRSV). The healing is harder because it can be verified whereas

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<sup>19</sup> Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 132–33.

<sup>20</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, 200.

the forgiving of sins cannot, which makes the forgiving easier. In other words, it is easier to say words of forgiveness than it is to effect healing. Thus, Jesus does the harder (i.e. heal the man's paralysis) to show that he can really do the easier (i.e. forgive the man's sins).<sup>21</sup> The Evangelist does not portray Jesus as merely rejecting the scribes' accusation, but portrays Jesus as knowing the minds of the scribes, by having the paralytic stand and walk and by claiming that the authority to do these things are his.

#### Informative Reactions

It has been my purpose to examine the two pericopes above in hopes of providing a basis for my claim that these reactions inform the reader to the reality of Jesus's identity. Both acts of worship and charges of blasphemy are reactions to what Jesus said and did, and these reactions should not come as a surprise. The two instances above are just a couple of references that I have pulled from Matthew's Gospel. In this section, I want to show how these reactions relate to the narrative as a whole.

First, I believe that these instances of worship and blasphemy should be read in light of the Emmanuel theme. In chapter one, I argued that, not only was the Emmanuel theme part and parcel of Matthew's shaping and portrayal of Jesus's identity, but, due to the *inclusio* formed by Matt 1.23 and 28.20, it is one of the controls for interpreting the Gospel. If we read the scenes of Jesus's deeds and words that evoke worship and blasphemy within the framework of Emmanuel, then it is conceivable that the Evangelist is using these events to symbolize something more than just the cultural values—though

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* See also Howard Clark Kee, "Medicine and Healing," *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 4:659–64.

they fit within values. That is to say, the Evangelist is using scenes of worship not just to connote honor or respect but religious devotion, while using scenes of blasphemy to allude to more than religious belief at the time. The Evangelist uses these scenes as sign posts pointing the reader to the special nature of Jesus.

Second, the passages I have chosen should be read with other occurrences of such reactions. Here I have in mind Matt 26.57–68 and 27.53–54. Matthew 26.57–68 is another scene where Jesus is accused of blasphemy. In this scene, Caiaphas puts Jesus under oath, demanding that Jesus state whether or not he is the Messiah, the Son of God (v. 63b). Jesus does not reject the claim and seems to add on the identity of the Son of Man from Dan 7.13. Jesus is seen as accepting the titles of Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man. And because of this, Caiaphas tears his clothes and twice accuses Jesus of blasphemy (v. 65). Again in this case, the divine name is not used. Anna Case-Winters reiterates, “It could be more widely applied to anything that constituted an insult to God. In this case, the blasphemy was Jesus’ claim—or failure to deny—that he was the Son of God (27:26).”<sup>22</sup> In contrasting the passages from Matthew 9 and 26, there are not many parallels. In Matthew 9, Jesus is seen forgiving sins, a divine prerogative. In Matthew 26, Jesus is accused because of his acceptance and usage of certain titles. The only parallel is that both of these texts contain a “Son of Man” reference.<sup>23</sup> Both of these texts, however, fit within my definition that in the eyes of the religious cult, Jesus not only accepted the

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<sup>22</sup> Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 299.

<sup>23</sup> For fuller treatment see James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 724–60.

titles used by the high priest and calls himself the “Son of Man,” but he also assumed attributes and accolades that were due to God alone. It is these attributes and accolades that evidence the worship of Jesus.

The scene from the cross is an interesting one. Surrounding the Romans’ confession is an eschatological scene of earthquakes and resurrections, which may have prompted such a confession “Truly this was the Son of God” (27.54, NRSV). I realize that no form of προσκυνέω is used. Yet, it is no less a worship scene. During this time, emperor worship was part of Roman religious practice. For example, Caesar Augustus would be honored as θεός (god) and θεοῦ υἱός (Son of God).<sup>24</sup> As is the case, the Roman soldiers would have associated the title, Son of God, with at least cultic worship and at most divinity itself.<sup>25</sup> To record the Romans’ confession, Matthew not only has Jewish persons recognizing the identity, but even the Gentiles recognize some semblance of Jesus’s divinity. Whether the centurion would have understood Jesus’s identity as God is indiscernible. The scene, however, gives the reader another clue about Jesus’s identity and nature.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert L. Mowery, “Son of God in Roman Imperial Titles and Matthew,” *Bib* 83 (2002): 100–10, here 106. He later goes on to note that several other emperors received cults, which suggests they received the same honors.

<sup>25</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Worship of Jesus and The Imperial Cult,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers for the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Boston: Brill, 1999), 257.

Lastly, I think all of these references should be read with Jesus's words from Matt 4.10 in mind. In the temptation scene, Satan shows Jesus all that he could possess if Jesus would only "fall down and worship me" (Matt 4.9, NRSV). To Satan's condition, Jesus responds with "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" We see that Jesus had some notion of proper worship (i.e. what it constituted and to whom it belonged) based on Deut 6.13.<sup>26</sup> If this is Jesus's mindset on the issue, then why is it that we read Jesus embracing the worship that he is given? It is for the reader to make the connection that Jesus believes that God alone should be worshipped, and, in his acceptance of worship from his disciples and others, the *reader* sees Jesus signaling to his intimate connection with God. As Craig Blomberg puts it, "Jesus' insistence on worshipping God alone makes the characteristic Matthean theme of worshipping Jesus (e.g., 2:2; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:17) all the more significant as evidence for his divinity."<sup>27</sup>

The Evangelist uses the act of worship and charge of blasphemy with these other texts to prompt the reader to ask, "Why?" Why are these people worshipping Jesus, if God alone is worthy of worship? Why did the religious sects accuse Jesus of blasphemy, if he was not aspiring to something beyond himself? More than making the reader

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<sup>26</sup> It is the wording of the A text of the LXX.

<sup>27</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 85–86.

question, these texts are meant to inform the reader of how the Evangelist and the Matthean community viewed Jesus.

### Summary

The goal of this chapter was to show how the act of worship (towards Jesus) and the charge of blasphemy (against Jesus) point to the same thing, his identity. In a time of strict Jewish monotheism, it is surprising that Matthew depicts certain Jewish and Gentile people worshiping Jesus either in physical homage or by uttering acknowledgment of his identity. Matthew 14.22–33 is one of the occurrences in which the disciples both prostrate themselves and speak of Jesus’s divinity. It should, however, be noted that just because they express this does not mean they fully understand what is taking place. Bauckham writes, “Matthew’s usage through the Gospel anticipates the last occurrence of προσκύνησις in his Gospel, when the full significance of the gesture finally becomes clear.”<sup>28</sup> Yet it is during this time that Jesus is accused of blasphemy. To be accused of blasphemy, Jesus must have been claiming and/or affirming something divine (e.g. prerogatives, nature, etc.). With this being the case, it seems that the Evangelist uses both positive and negative responses to inform the reader that Jesus is more than just a prophet, teacher, or even messiah.

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Throne of God and The Worship of Jesus,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers for the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Boston: Brill, 1999), 68.

As we read the Gospel, we must ask of these stories what they imply about the identity or nature of Jesus. Writing about worship (and blasphemy implied) Hays says,

Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as "God with us" and his use of the verb in settings where it unmistakably narrates an appropriate human response to Jesus' epiphanic self-manifestation (14:33, 28:9, 28:17) it is hard to deny that, in and through these references to worshipping Jesus, Matthew is identifying him as nothing less than the embodied presence of Israel's God, the one to whom alone worship is due, the one who jealously forbids the worship of any idols, image, or other Gods.<sup>29</sup>

If Hays is correct, and I am right about the Evangelist's use of these stories, then there is need of further study. Earlier I gave some reasons for why the disciples might worship Jesus in Matthew 14. The catalyst of worship and blasphemy is Jesus. This further study is the content of the next chapter and entertains how the Gospel portrays Jesus as God in his own words and actions.

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<sup>29</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 167.

## CHAPTER 4

### ALLUSIONS TO THE DIVINE

In the previous chapter, I examined the ways in which people responded to Jesus in Matthew. Due to the nature of such a study there were brief discussions of Jesus's words and actions that brought forth such reactions. Since much of the groundwork has been laid in the previous chapter, this chapter is less focused on the texts and more focused on the connections of such actions and words between Jesus and God as the Evangelist's audience might have understood them. As it concerns the storm miracles found in Matthew 8 and 14, I examine briefly the "substratum" that Hays refers to, which is that there is only One who can calm the sea and walk on the water.<sup>1</sup> I, in greater detail, examine the motif of Yahweh/God conquering or ordering chaos, symbolized by water, storms, and sea monsters. I believe that the Evangelist is using this echo, as well as others, to connect the Gospel with the Jewish faith and Israelite people for the purpose of casting Jesus in ways they will recognize. Following the discussion of Jesus and chaos, I focus on the Jesus's ability to forgive sins. The main issue in Matthew 9 is not only Jesus's authority but how it relates to God and the temple cult. If the notion of the uniqueness of God's ability to absolve sin—noted more explicitly in Mark's Gospel than in Matthew's—is true, then what it is the purpose of the temple cult in its role of

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter three, n. 4. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 166–67.

expiation of sin? Through this study, it will become apparent that the Evangelist uses certain images and rhetoric to further identify Jesus as God.

### God, Jesus, and Chaos

This section focuses on Jesus's authority over nature. Unlike in chapter three where I dealt specifically with Matthew 14 with a brief mentioning of Matthew 8, here both are treated congruently. In both Matt 8.23–27 and 14.22–33, Jesus is shown to have authority over nature by calming the storms and by walking on water. In Matthew 8, the disciples are recorded as questioning the identity of Jesus, and in Matthew 14 they respond by worshipping him. As already noted Hays correctly these acts with a substratum in the Old Testament.

One instance of this substratum comes from an allusion found in the creation narrative and other verses concerning God's relationship to the seas.<sup>2</sup> Herman Gunkel's classic work, *Creation and Chaos*, demonstrates the similarities of the biblical account with other creation accounts in the ANE.<sup>3</sup> What is common in these accounts is what is called the *chaoskampf* or "chaos myth." In their work, Douglas Knight and Amy-Jill Levine provide a definition for the chaos myth. They write, "The chaos myth takes the form either of a battle between opposing deities or of sexual reproduction, and in both

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<sup>2</sup> The term "sea(s)" is often portrayed as chaotic, if not evil.

<sup>3</sup> See Herman Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. K. William Whitney Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

cases the world emerges from the original chaotic substances.”<sup>4</sup> Readers of Genesis, however, do not see such a cosmic battle. Instead, they read of Yahweh sovereignly creating order out of chaos. Genesis 1.1 portrays God creating the heavens and the earth, and beginning in verse two, the reader receives commentary concerning the nature of the earth. The author records the earth was a “formless void (*tohu wabohu*) and darkness (*choseck*) covered the face of the deep (*tehom*), while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters (*mayim*)” (NRSV). In these verses, the formlessness and the deep are seen as forces of chaos. John Walton says, “In the ancient Near East the existence of chaos was a central concern. Within the cosmos, the raging sea and darkness are the forces of chaos.”<sup>5</sup> God, then is seen as ordering this chaos (*tehom*) into the waters (*mayim*).<sup>6</sup>

The chaos of Genesis is not without its influences from ANE literature. Douglas and Levine note,

The phrase usually translated “and darkness covered the face of the deep” is a fragment also shared with neighboring culture. In Genesis 1:2 the Hebrew word for “deep” is *tehom*, a linguistic cognate to Tiamat, the Babylonian goddess of the

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas A. Knight and Amy-Jill Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 200.

<sup>5</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 72.

<sup>6</sup> See John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 27–31, 72 – 74; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 29–35, 93–110; M. Görg, “*Tohu*,” *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Batterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 15:565–74; and E.-J. Waschke, “*Tehom*,” *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Batterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 15:574–81.

salt seas. She represents the great abyss, the endless seas around and under the earth. English translations rendering *tehom* as “the deep” are in effect watering it down, demythologizing it into a commonplace word, *Tehom* here and in its nineteen other biblical occurrences never has the article “the,” but is a simple noun, almost as if it were a proper name. This a better translation that preserves the personal, mythic aspect of the Hebrew idiom is: “and darkness covered the face of Deep.”<sup>7</sup>

Douglas and Levine suggest a reading of the biblical creation in light of God battling “Deep.” Making this interpretive decision gives *tehom* an anthropomorphic quality. It is not just a body of water; it is the personification of chaos.<sup>8</sup>

Reading this throughout the Old Testament brings new meaning where bodies of water or water-creatures are concerned, and also, those texts that allude to God walking on water or controlling storms. Bodies of water, and that which inhabits them, are seen as opposing God.<sup>9</sup> The Psalmist writes, “You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You crushed Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. You cut openings for springs and torrents; you dried up ever-flowing streams” (Ps 74.13–15, NRSV).<sup>10</sup> Allusions to battle can be seen in the dividing or holding the sea at bay as well as in conquering the dragons and Leviathan. God is seen as having control of the chaotic powers in God’s feeding of the creature, and

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<sup>7</sup> Knight and Levine, *Meaning*, 201.

<sup>8</sup> See Nahum M. Sarna, “Genesis” בְּרֵאשִׁית, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 3–7.

<sup>9</sup> See Jeffery John, *The Meaning in the Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 72.

<sup>10</sup> See also Pss 65.7, 89.6–10; Job 26.11–12; Jon 1.11–15; Sir 43.23–26.

the cutting off to provide water to flow and drying up other bodies of water. Echoes of battle and God being in control over seas and storms are seen in this Psalm and other Old Testament passages. In these Old Testament texts, God battles chaos—symbolized as bodies of water and the creatures that live within them—and due to God’s victory, God is portrayed as the ultimate power and as the one who controls chaos.

Drawing on this tradition, Matthew, portrays Jesus as calming the storms and seas and walking on the very surface of the water. Graham Twelftree views these miracles as portraying the highest Christology.<sup>11</sup> In the Old Testament, God is the only one who is capable of taming the chaos, whether in the form of water or storm. Even in the case of Moses and the Red/Reed Sea (Exodus 14), it is God who is pictured as having complete control.<sup>12</sup> Now, in Matthew, readers see claims about Jesus acting similarly. By having Jesus’s power and authority displayed by calming the storm and walking on the water, not to mention Jesus’s words “It is I,” the Evangelist uses this allusion rhetorically to support the claims of Jesus’s divinity made throughout the narrative.

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<sup>11</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 132.

<sup>12</sup> Terrance E. Fretheim links Passover and the crossing of the sea as “two-sided divine act of deliverance.” He then goes on to imply that God is the one in control. God not only rescues the Hebrews, but is seen influencing Pharaoh and parts the sea (according to Fretheim, this is another allusion to God’s relationship to the chaotic waters). Terrance E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Int, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 151–70. See notes on Exodus 14 by Edward L. Greenstein, “Exodus,” in *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks et al. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) 104–6.

J. R. Daniel Kirk, however, asserts that Jesus's power and authority to act as God acts should be read in light of Psalm 89.<sup>13</sup> It is his point that Jesus acts as God because God has empowered him to do so just as God is seen delegating power to figures in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup> This is based on his study of Old Testament figures that God empowered such as Moses, Joshua, and the Davidic king. There are some issues with his conclusion. First, I find that Jesus's authority and power is innate. Unlike, Old Testament figures, the narrative does not mention God specifically giving authority, nor does Jesus "receive" authority outside of Matt 28.18.<sup>15</sup> Jesus, though in the Father's will, is seen acting and speaking of his own accord. Second, Kirk notes that, if walking on water is a

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<sup>13</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 246–53.

<sup>14</sup> See Exod 14.16, 21; Josh 3.7; Ps 89.25.

<sup>15</sup> As it concerns Matt 28.20, the question is "What is the nature of this authority?" Is it something newly acquired, or is it an authority "whose reality has been challenged by the Passion events"? John Nolland writes, "It seems, then, that Mt. 28:18 is most likely to represent a reaffirmation of authority after the rejection of Jesus by the Jerusalem authorities which led to his death." John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary On the Greek Text*, NIGTC, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1264–65. The issue of Jesus's baptism could be cause for concern for my assertion. Matt 3.16–17, could be interpreted as God empowering Jesus to perform miracles throughout his ministry. The language, however, does not support this. Daniel J. Harrington notes that this scene is one of open-communication and identification. In the acts of heavens opening up, the Spirit's descent, and the voice identifying Jesus, we see new access for open-communication between God and humanity. And the *bat qôl* ("voice from heaven") in verse 17 beginning with Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ("This is my son") marks this scene as one of identification, not empowerment. See Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP 1, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991) 62–64.; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 132–35.

sign of divinity, then Peter is at least divine for a few moments.<sup>16</sup> What Kirk does not see, ironically, is that this scene portrays Jesus acting as God from Kirk's assertion above. Jesus is the one that empowers Peter to walk on the water. Just as God commands, and therefore, empowers those in the Old Testament, so too does Jesus command and empower Peter. Similarly, none of the Old Testament characters that God empowers delegates God's authority and power in the same way that Jesus empowers Peter. This human-to-human delegation, however, is not what Jesus does in Matt 10.1, "Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness" (NRSV). Jesus does not give something that was given to him by God but something that is his by nature. I can appreciate Kirk's assertion, but I do not believe that the narrative supports it. If, however, we read this scene not as an individual pericope, but as part of a story, then a natural reading supports the notion of Jesus's divinity.

#### The Power to Forgive Sin

In chapter nine of Matthew, Jesus forgives the sin of the paralytic, and thereby he grants him the ability to walk. Much ink has been put to paper regarding the connection of sin and illness.<sup>17</sup> The ability to forgive sin, however, is much more interesting. It was not the healing that brought about the accusation of blasphemy, but the forgiveness of sins. In chapter three, I examined the charge of blasphemy. Here, I provide deeper

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<sup>16</sup> Kirk, *A Man Attested*, 250.

<sup>17</sup> See Howard Clark Kee, "Medicine and Healing," *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:659–64.

account of Jesus's actions, especially when the Markan phrase "only God can forgive sins" (Mark 2.7, NRSV) is concerned. As mentioned above, since Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience who know their religious beliefs, he does explain the grounds for the blasphemy.<sup>18</sup> The readers and hearers of the Gospel could have inferred why Jesus was being charged (i.e. forgiving sins).

Not only do Jesus's actions and words claim divine power, but they also affect the people at that time. As we look at this topic, consideration to the cult and the role of priest must be examined. If the scribes believed that God is the only one who can forgive sins, then two questions must be considered. First, how are sins forgiven? And second what is the priestly function in this process?

First, we need to understand how sins are forgiven. Practically speaking, it is through sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> These sacrifices were originally made either at the Tent of Meeting (Lev 17.2–4) or at the Temple (Deut 12.5–7) during their respective eras.<sup>20</sup> Once the

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter three n. 18. Hebrews also mentions sacrifice and the belief that the spilling of blood was the requirement for the forgiveness of sins. "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9.22, NRSV). The notion of Christ's sacrifice on the cross is too broad to cover in the scope of this paper. It should suffice to note that Christ's sacrifice and the faith of those that believe in him work hand-in-hand to effect the forgiveness of sins.

<sup>19</sup> Leviticus 1–7 details all of the appropriate sacrifices that were to be made.

<sup>20</sup> God possibly granted the people concessions concerning temple sacrifice as traveling to Jerusalem every time an offering was to be made was impractical. "Yet whenever you desire you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, according to the blessing that the LORD your God has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or deer" (Deut 12.15, NRSV). See Jeffery H. Tigay, "Deuteronomy" דְּבָרִים, *JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia:

temple was destroyed and the deportation of Israelites ensued in 587 BCE, the sacrifices ceased.<sup>21</sup> Once the temple was rebuilt, the sacrifices resumed. Matthew implies that sacrifices are taking place. On multiple occasions, Jesus uses a quotation from the LXX version of Hos 6.6 in Matt 9.13 and 12.7, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (NRSV). Also, in chapter twenty-one, Jesus cleanses the temple of “money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves” (Matthew 21.12, NRSV).<sup>22</sup> The aforementioned texts would seem to suggest that during Jesus’s time, sacrifices was once again part cultic worship. Though sacrifice was important, as the words of Hosea and Jesus suggest, there is another element to the forgiveness of sins, faith or motive, which is discussed more in depth below.<sup>23</sup> The faith or motive of the people was to be expressed by the priest’s role as the representative of the community and the mediator between the community and God.

Second, the function of the priests needs to be examined. The priests were one part of community and of the religious cult. The function of the priests included temple administration, meditation between God and humanity, “especially in matters of sin and

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Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 124; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:2–21:9*, WBC vol. 6A, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 257.

<sup>21</sup> Many of the prophets expected a time when the sacrifices would resume (e.g., Zech 14:21; Isa 60:7; Mal 3:1-4).

<sup>22</sup> We know from m. Ker. 1.7 that there was protest due to the overcharging of doves, the poor-man’s sacrifice. See Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, NCBC, ed. Ben Witherington III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 360–63.

<sup>23</sup> See n. 27 below.

purification,” and perform ritual sacrifice on behalf of the community.<sup>24</sup> According to Walter Brueggemann, “The textual traditions concerning Israel’s worship are rich and diverse. They are agreed, however, in their primary claim that the cult, in its many forms and expressions, mediates Yahweh’s ‘real presence.’”<sup>25</sup> The key word in Brueggemann’s statement is “mediates.” If the cult, as a whole, mediates between God and humanity, then it can be assumed that the priestly function has a connotation of mediation.<sup>26</sup> In his study, John M. Scholer writes of the priestly function,

The value of the priestly function of sacrifice was in its mediatorial role. The priest’s offerings effected forgiveness. They made atonement for sins unwittingly committed. The offering of sacrifices purged the Temple of the ‘miasmatic’ impurity accumulating within it because of the sins of the people.<sup>27</sup>

Here again, we see the word mediate. Through the priests’ actions, forgiveness is “effected.” It should be noted as Brueggemann suggests that these sacrifices do not work *ex opera operato*.<sup>28</sup> This means that the sacrifice in and of themselves do nothing. It is the

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<sup>24</sup> Robert A. Spivey, D. Moody Smith, and C. Clifton Black, *Anatomy of the New Testament: A Guide to Its Structure and Meaning*, 7th ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 432.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 650.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 664.

<sup>27</sup> John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, JSNTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>28</sup> Brueggemann, *Theology*, 666. The Latin phrase means “from the work worked.”

faith and want of reconciliation that effects the forgiveness.<sup>29</sup> The forgiveness that priests effect is God's. Though the priest is the mediator, it is God who does the forgiving.

In the case of Matthew 9, it is the faith (πίστις) of those that bring the paralytic that moves Jesus to forgive the man his sins. If Jesus is only mediating between the paralytic and God, based on faith, then why accuse him of blasphemy? The text portrays Jesus as forgiving sins committed against God, as indicated by the paralysis, and not against him personally.<sup>30</sup> In the phrase “your sins are forgiven” (ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι), the verb “forgiven” is in passive voice. Due to the passive voice, the phrase could be taken to be a divine passive: God forgives the man's sins.<sup>31</sup> The Gospel, as we have it, does not allow for this interpretation, however. Verse six reads, “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας). This verse suggests that it is by Jesus's own authority that he forgives sins.<sup>32</sup> Gary S. Shogren notes

The point in the Son of Man saying as presently written is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man on earth, and as such will be the eschatological judge (Matt 25:31–46, Mark 8:38, John 5:22). Thus he is able in advance to pronounce acquittal and judgment (Matt 11:20–24 = Luke 10:13–15, among others).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Psalm 50; Isa 1.11–17; Hos 6.4–6; Amos 5.21–27.

<sup>30</sup> Gary S. Shogren, “Forgiveness (NT),” *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:835–38.

<sup>31</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 2:89.

<sup>32</sup> For more information, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:89–90.

<sup>33</sup> Shogren, “Forgiveness (NT),” 2:836.

In effect, Jesus is claiming personal authority to explicitly forgive sins committed against God.

This scene then expresses several important facets that inform Matthew's portrayal of Jesus. First, Jesus's divine power and authority are expressed in his ability to forgive the paralytic's sins. This leads to the scribes' accusation that Jesus has blasphemed. As Mark 2.7 explicitly says and from Matthew's version can be inferred, "Only God can forgive sins" (NRSV). I noted in the previous chapter that it was the Jewish belief that Yahweh/God is the only one who can forgive sins. As Jesus claims an authority that is treated and thought of as a divine prerogative, he can be viewed as claiming divinity itself. It is important to make the distinction that Jesus does not replace God but functions within the identity of God. With this in mind, what is the role of the priests? As we saw above, the priests function as mediators between God and humanity. The priests' actions gave them authority within the community. Jesus announced the forgiveness of sins, which as we saw indicated that he was in some sense bypassing the whole Temple cult, and therefore threatens the priests' authority.<sup>34</sup> Jesus actions and words in this scene express his latter claim, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here" (Matt 12.6, NRSV).

### Summary

In this brief chapter, I have looked at two major components of the examined texts from chapter three. I have examined how the actions of Jesus linked him to Israel's

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<sup>34</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 647.

God. The storm stilling and walking on water scenes connect Jesus with the *chaoskampf* motif found in Genesis and other Old Testament books. The account of Jesus forgiving the paralytic's sins also connects Jesus with a divine prerogative, thus giving him a unique divine function that only God is capable of doing. The various links that have been established in these passages—and throughout the entire Gospel—are sufficient to support a divine Christology. It should be stated again that these examples, and the entire Gospel should be read in light of the presence inclusio of Matt 1.23 and 28.20.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### General

The goal of the thesis was to look at some of the narratological and rhetorical features of the Gospel of Matthew and how they relate to the issue of Christology. The issue of Jesus's divinity has been debated since the time of the Early Church. There are well-known and very capable scholars today that have suggested forms of exaltational Christology based on readings of the Pauline letters and Synoptic gospels. This study has taken one example, Matthew's Gospel, and has attempted to show how the Gospel—as a whole and as individual stories—connects, portrays, and identifies Jesus with the God of Israel. Finding a divine Jesus in Matthew becomes less challenging when one perceives how the individual parts of Matthew relates to the whole, coupled with the use of allusions and echoes from the Old Testament. This was formulated in chapter one, in which I suggested that Matthew's portrait of the identity of Jesus becomes clearer by considering a controlling narrative construct and by examining two texts through different lenses.

#### The Controlling Framework

In chapter two, I suggested that the *inclusio* formed by Matt 1.23 and 28.20 should be the interpretive lens for reading the Gospel. The Gospel builds up the characterization of Jesus culminating in his identity as Emmanuel. The main question

here is whether the Evangelist is implying that μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός (“God with us”) should be read as Jesus being identified as God. As noted by Kirk in chapter two, this phrase could lend itself to a symbolic role.<sup>1</sup> Matthew’s Gospel ends similarly in its use of Christological language. The use of such language with the added elements of worship and authority give additional meaning to Jesus’s words, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι (and behold I am with you). The inclusio as it relates to divine presence and identity, provides an important interpretative lens for the text. Its purpose is to present the reader with the image that everything Jesus says and does should be interpreted as God with us.

### The Reactions

In chapter three, I examined different reactions Jesus received based on what he had said or done. The two reactions that I considered were worship and blasphemy. In 14.22–33, Jesus receives worship, while in Matt 9.2–8, he is accused of blasphemy. These two reactions should be understood within the context of the religious thought of Second Temple Judaism, which was known for its strict monotheism.

I first examined the story of Jesus walking on water/calming the sea. I asked why Jesus would have received worship, and concluded that the text contains several allusions to God from the Old Testament, including God’s power over nature, Jesus’s use of ἐγὼ εἰμι (I am), and his empowerment of Peter to do something extraordinary. On the other

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 369.

hand, others believe that this worship was a sign of respect, but with the confession of Jesus as Son of God, this seems unlikely.<sup>2</sup>

I then looked at blasphemy within the context of Jesus healing the paralytic. I asked what would have been considered blasphemy at that time, and I learned that it could have been a misuse of the divine name or attributing to one's self or others what rightly belonged to God. Then I asked why Jesus was accused of blasphemy. I resolved that it could have been him forgiving sins, or it was because he was challenging the temple cult.

In light of this, I then examined connections between the chosen texts and other such stories (Matt 26.57-68; 27.53–54) within the framework of the *inclusio*. The end result was seeing that the Evangelist was portraying Jesus as someone who deserves more than just respect and could transcend the religious beliefs of the time. The Evangelist was portraying Jesus as something and someone greater than what was expected; the writer was portraying Jesus as God.

#### The God Allusion

In chapter four, I took the same texts from Matthew and examined them in different perspectives. Both texts allude to Jesus being connected with God in particular ways. In each case, however, I found that Matthew is not making simple comparisons but linking the identities of God and Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> See Kirk, *A Man Attested by God*, 374-75; Heinrich Greeven, προσκυνέω, προσκυνητής, in *TDNT* ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 6:763–64.

The major concern of the Matthew 14 text is Jesus's power over nature. Jesus demonstrates this in his ability to walk in water and calm the storms/seas. This is an allusion to many Old Testament texts that refer to God as creating out of chaos, battling chaos and sea monsters, and walking on the waters. Matthew presents a substratum that there is only "One" who can do these things.<sup>3</sup>

In a different way, Matthew 9 again affirms Jesus identity. In the previous chapter, I look at the concept of Jesus forgiving sins in respect to the temple cult. In the Old Testament, the priest had special duties in the temple. They served as mediators between the people and God. I then took what I learned from studying the priests of the Old Testament and looked at how they compared with those found in Second Temple Judaism. The result was the same. The Second Temple priests served as mediators. Once it is understood that the priests served as mediators and not the actual guarantors of forgiveness, Jesus must be placed in a different category. In light of his comment about the Son of Man, it is clear that Jesus is the one offering forgiveness for sins committed against God, and is not a mere mediator. I find that in his ability to forgive sin directly, Jesus's identity is once again linked to that of God.

#### The Divine Jesus

This study is my attempt to enter into the discussion about the divinity of Jesus in the Gospels. Throughout my research, I was challenged by the writings of J. R. Daniel Kirk, Bart Ehrman, and others for they all had compelling arguments about how to read

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<sup>3</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 166-67.

the Gospels and therefore interpret the figure of Jesus. My reading and research of Matthew's Gospel, however, supported a high Christology.

One of the main objectives of a study such as this is to read the text closely and carefully to gain a deeper understanding of what has been declared. The Jesus I encounter in the Gospel of Matthew is one who is deeply and intrinsically connected to God. The structural framework, the reactions of the people, and the allusions made by the Evangelist all seem to suggest that Jesus's identity is analogous to God's.

The debate over Jesus's divinity has existed since the time of the Early Church, and it will continue probably for generations to come. The study I have offered does not seek to end this debate or make claims about faith. Rather, I have attempted to show that Jesus's identification with God can be seen in the Gospel of Matthew. Scholars and pastors alike may read Matthew and determine that Jesus was human, but nevertheless, believe through faith that Jesus is the Son of God. Others, however, may read Matthew as I do, and determine that the author put in frameworks and subtle hints that tell the reader that there is something unique about Jesus and his relationship to God. This should not cause strife for those in scholarship or in the Church. It should challenge students of the Bible and followers of Jesus to ascertain a faithful and genuine reading of the Gospels and understanding of Christ.

## APPENDIX A

### ISAIAH 7.14

The reference in Matt 1.21 is not original to Matthew. Here, Matthew quotes Isa 7.14. To properly understand the Evangelist's meaning, it is necessary to investigate the context and meaning of the saying in the book of Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> The prophecy comes from an oracle of Isaiah to Ahaz, king of Judah. In the text, God tells Ahaz to ask for a sign that has no restraints, "let it be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven" (Isa 7.11, NRSV). Ahaz refuses, explaining that "I will not put the LORD to the test" (Isa 7.12, NRSV). After Ahaz refuses, the sign of Emmanuel is given, and promises and consequences that results from Emmanuel's birth runs until the end of the chapter. The identity of Emmanuel is unknown in Isaiah; however, Matthew picks up this prophecy and applies it to Jesus. It would appear that Matthew uses this prophecy in two ways: first, to say that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of this new messianic hope; and second, as the sign of Emmanuel brought promise of hope and judgement, so too does the advent of Jesus. For the faithful there is promise of restoration and reconciliation between humanity and God, but for the faithless there is judgment and punishment.

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<sup>1</sup> If the original context is not considered, not only is Matthew's purposes for using Isaiah not understood, but the significance of naming the child Emmanuel becomes conjecture.

Isaiah's Emmanuel is never given a concrete identity. Even though Emmanuel is the controlling theme in both Isa 7.14 and Matt 1.23, it seems that scholars give more attention to the comparison of עַלְמָה ('almāh), בְּתוּלָה (b<sup>c</sup>tûlāh), and παρθένος (parthénos).<sup>2</sup> Focusing, here, on Emmanuel's identity, H. G. M. Williamson presents three main views of who Emmanuel could be: 1) another child of Isaiah (*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*), 2) a member of the royal household, or 3) no specific child, but children born to Judean mothers in the near future.<sup>3</sup> Murray Adamthwaite opposes at least the first two interpretations and opts for a reading that suggests that Emmanuel's identity is that of the faithful remnant.<sup>4</sup> Whatever one makes of the identity of Emmanuel, Brevard Childs is correct in saying, "It is an expression of trust in the presence of God integral to Israel's piety."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> עַלְמָה (maiden/young woman), בְּתוּלָה (virgin), παρθένος (virgin): The issue centers around meaning in various translations. In the Masoretic text, the author of Isaiah has chosen the word maiden or young woman. עַלְמָה comes from a word that means "to be full of vigor," "to have reached the age of puberty." In the LXX, the writers chose the word παρθένος meaning "virgin." The author of Matthew has chosen to keep the LXX translation of the text. Many English translations have kept the LXX meaning "virgin" even though there is a clear distinction between עַלְמָה and בְּתוּלָה, the Hebrew word for "virgin." See Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL, ed. James L Mays, Carol A. Newsom, and David L. Peterson (Louisville: John Knox, 2001), 66; See also W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 1:213–17.

<sup>3</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, "Book of Isaiah," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 375.

<sup>4</sup> Murray Adamthwaite, "Isaiah 7:16 Key to the Immanuel Prophecy," *The Reformed Theological Review* 59:2 (2000): 65–83.

<sup>5</sup> Childs, *Isaiah*, 66.

Though the identity of Emmanuel is not apparent for Isaiah, what comes with having “God with us” is. The name Emmanuel is used nowhere in the Old Testament outside of Isaiah, which makes discerning its context difficult.<sup>6</sup> It is clear that the child will be born in the near future, as he will be a sign of deliverance from the Syro-Ephraimite coalition.<sup>7</sup> Childs notes that there is a blending of promise and judgment.<sup>8</sup> The sign given to Ahaz (vv. 10–17) is a continuation of the challenge for faithfulness to the promise of God given to the house of David in verses 3–9.<sup>9</sup> Ahaz, however, has failed the challenge. Childs explains:

A wedge had now been driven within Israel that resulted in a tension both between the disobedient, empirical ruling Davidian and the true messianic representative of the throne of David (9:6[7]), as well as between faithless Israel destined for destruction and the faithful remnant who were signs of the new people of God (8:18).<sup>10</sup>

The sign functions as judgment for those of unbelief (v. 17) but also as a pledge of God’s continuing presence through salvation (v. 16). Judgment imagery is signaled by flies, bees, and thorn bushes (vv. 18–19); the saving of hair (v. 20); the eating of curds and honey (vv. 21–22); and briars and thorns (vv. 23–25). But as Childs notes, the name

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<sup>6</sup> There are close parallels in Ps 46.7, 11 Without a range of usage it is hard to get a proper sense of when, where, and why “Emmanuel” was used.

<sup>7</sup> Williamson makes note of this deliverance only; others, however, see only judgement. See Williamson, *Isaiah*, 375. Also, Childs cites Georg Fohrer, “Zu Jesaja 7, 14 im Zusammenhang von Jesaja 7, 10–22,” *ZAW* 68 (1956): 54–56, 66.

<sup>8</sup> Childs, *Isaiah*, 67–69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Emmanuel “must serve, not just as a pledge of judgment, but also as a promise of the future, the sign of which the name anticipates by its content.”<sup>11</sup> This can be seen in the possible hope and abundance in a land of curds and honey. Even though there will be devastation throughout the land, it will not last. In Isa 8.5–10, the counsel of nations will not prevail because God is with the Israelites. Childs provocatively states, “In sum, Immanuel is no longer the unborn child of 7:14, but the owner of Israel’s land and the source of the divine force that brings the plans of conspiring nations to naught.”<sup>12</sup>

What does this mean for Matthew’s Emmanuel? The identity of Isaiah’s Emmanuel is lost to us, but it is clear why the Matthew picked it up. The writer of Matthew lived in a world of Roman occupation, and yet he claimed that God was present and active through Jesus. By reflecting on Jesus’s actions and words, the Evangelist and the Matthean community envisioned the hope of salvation and the desolation of the wicked.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## APPENDIX B

### MONOTHEISM

The instances of worship and blasphemy in Matthew discussed in this thesis should be read in light of the monotheistic belief of Second Temple Judaism. It should be noted that the Jewish people were not always strict monotheists. The Old Testament seems to be a henotheistic text, which I understand to mean that the text urges the people to love, serve, and worship one God, without necessarily denying the existence of others. Adela Yarbro Collins alludes to this in her essay on the worship of Jesus:

For most Jews in antiquity, the crucial issue was not the uniqueness of God in a philosophical or theological sense, but the question of which god should be worshipped. The narrative account of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal addresses this issue in a classic way, as does the first commandment.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that this is the understanding before the second temple is built. Similar to Collins, Benjamin Sommer writes:

If we adopt the common definition of monotheism as the belief that no deities exist other than the one God, then the Hebrew Bible is not a monotheistic work.... The philosopher Hermann Cohen (1842–1918) and the biblical scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889–1963) proposed a different and more useful definition. For Cohen, it is God’s uniqueness rather than God’s oneness that is the essence of monotheism. What distinguishes the Hebrew Bible from other ancient Near Eastern texts is not that it denies that Marduk and Baal exist—it doesn’t—but that it insists that Yhwh, the God of Israel, is qualitatively different from all other

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<sup>1</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Worship of Jesus and The Imperial Cult,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers for the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Boston: Brill, 1999), 235.

deities: Yhwh is infinitely more powerful.... Monotheism, then, is the belief that one supreme being exists whose will is sovereign over all other beings.<sup>1</sup>

Sommer's definition applies to the Jewish culture before the Second Temple period. The *Shema* (Deut 6.4) and the first commandment (Exod 20.4; Deut 5.7) do not necessarily preclude the existence of other gods, but rather they insist that Yahweh is the head god.<sup>2</sup> E. P. Sanders notes that it can be argued that the Israelites were henotheists (belief in multiple gods, but Yahweh is chief God) who practiced monolatry (worship of that God) that gradually became monotheists (there is only one God).<sup>3</sup>

It is not until Second Isaiah that a sense of true monotheism as affirming the existence of only one god begins to take shape. For example, Isa 43.10-13 says,

You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, says the LORD. I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it? (NRSV).

The following chapter says in verses six through eight,

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. Do not fear, or

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Sommer, "Monotheism in the Hebrew Bible," 14 August 2017, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/people/related-articles/monotheism-in-the-hebrew-bible>

<sup>2</sup> Collins, "The Worship of Jesus," 236.

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 242.

be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one (NRSV)  
 Within these biblical texts readers begin to see a shift to a stricter way of thinking about monotheism. It is evident that as time goes on, the events such as exile, return, and the building of the second temple required the people to attempt to sustain religious life in the midst of other cultures.

After the Second Temple was built, as Lester L. Grabbe notes, “belief in one God” became bound to Jewish identity.<sup>4</sup> Josephus and the Qumran Community portray the commitment to God in the reverence for the *Shema*.<sup>5</sup> Josephus writes in *Antiquities*, “Let everyone commemorate before God the benefits which he bestowed upon them at their deliverance out of the land of Egypt, and this twice every day, both when the day begins and when the hour of sleep comes on” (Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.13 [Whiston]). *The Community Rule*, one of the scrolls found near the Dead Sea, says, “I will enter the Covenant of God, and when evening and morning depart I will recite His decrees” (1QS 10.10 [Vermes]). Both of these texts refer back to Deut 4.4–9 and how the people’s commitment of devotion is expressed solely to Yahweh. In Josephus, we read of the

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<sup>4</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000), 294.

<sup>5</sup> Deut 6.4–9: Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (NRSV).

people's commitment of devotion to Yahweh. Similarly, and even more clearly, we see a strict monotheism in Philo's works. In *The Decalouge*, Philo writes,

Let us, therefore, fix deeply in ourselves this first commandment as the most sacred of all commandments, to think that there is but one God, the most highest, and to honour him alone; and let not the polytheistic doctrine ever even touch the ears of any man who is accustomed to seek for the truth, with purity and sincerity of heart. (Philo, *The Decalouge* 14.65 [Yonge])

and

Therefore, God, removing out of his sacred legislation all such impious deification of underserving objects, has invited men to the honour of the one true and living God; not indeed that he has any need himself to be honoured; for being all-sufficient for himself, he has no need of anyone else; but he has done so, because he wished to lead the race of mankind, hitherto wandering about in trackless deserts, into a road from which they should not stray, that so by following nature it might find the best end of all things, namely, the knowledge of the true and living God. (Philo, *The Decalouge* 16.81 [Yonge])

From looking at Josephus and Philo, it becomes possible to see how monotheism is evidenced in the Jewish faith at this time. It also explains how Richard Bauckham can write, "That YHWH the God of Israel is the only God and that he alone may be worshipped were at the heart of Jewish religious self-understanding in the late Second Temple Period."<sup>6</sup> Bauckham's comments stand in opposition to Bart Ehrman, as the concept of monotheism brings with it the elements of divinity, veneration and worship.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Bauckham, "The Throne of God and The Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers for the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Boston: Brill, 1999), 43.

Bart Ehrman, finds continuums of divinity and humanity that allows the worship of other beings besides Yahweh.<sup>7</sup> Ehrman's case is that Jesus has been *exalted* to the position of Son of God, and therefore finds Jesus moving toward the divine continuum.<sup>8</sup> He goes on to note that angels and exalted human beings were worshipped as well. According to Richard Bauckham, however, there are two aspects of God that single the deity out:

Of the two key aspects of the uniqueness of God—sole Creator and sole Ruler—the first operates as a criterion of divinity very straightforwardly. No principal angles or exalted patriarch is portrayed as participating in the work of creation, and it has hardly ever been suggested that they are. God's wisdom and God's word, on the other hand, are regularly portrayed as participants in creation. We have seen that Jewish literature itself defines monotheism for us. It understands the unique divine identity as distinguished from all other reality especially in that God is sole Creator and sole Supreme Ruler of all things.<sup>9</sup>

The Jewish people, as we see them in Second Temple literature, the Rabbinic writings, and the New Testament, have made an elaborate system(s) to maintain their religious identity and faithfulness to the one God. These systems, however, do not explain why some Jews are seen worshipping Jesus within the monotheistic structures that were in

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<sup>7</sup> Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 4. "For them [ancient peoples], the human realm was not an absolute category separated from the divine realm by an enormous and unbridgeable crevasse. On the contrary, the human and divine were two continuums that could, and did, overlap."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Ehrman believes that both the Synoptics and John portray Jesus as divine but in different ways. In the case of the Synoptics, Jesus is seen being adopted or exalted to the divine status; while in John, Jesus is divine by nature or incarnation.

<sup>9</sup> Bauckham, "Throne of God," 48.

place. In the Gospel, there are numerous accounts of people—both Jews and Gentiles—worshipping and accusing Jesus. No accuses those that worship Jesus as being blasphemous, without attempt of explaining why. All of this affects the understanding of Matthew. Understanding how monotheism relates to the cultures of the New Testament allows for considerate reading of the portrayal of Jesus. In the texts considered, Jesus's words and actions alludes to those performed by God in the Old Testament. Jesus is portrayed as speaking and doing those things that are only done by God. Thus, it is my assertion that the identities of Jesus and God are intertwined, which is why Matthew allows Jesus to be worshipped and accused of blasphemy, and why the disciples are not accused of being heretics.

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