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# Jesus-Immanuel: Matthew's Narrative Christology of Divine Presence

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**JESUS-IMMANUEL:  
MATTHEW'S NARRATIVE CHRISTOLOGY OF DIVINE PRESENCE**

**“Jesus-Immanuel”**


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Seattle Pacific Seminary**

JESUS-IMMANUEL:  
MATTHEW'S NARRATIVE CHRISTOLOGY OF DIVINE PRESENCE

JACOB MICHAEL CARLSON

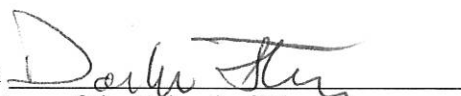
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## Introduction

What story does the Gospel of Matthew tell? In many ways, this is the major research question of this project. Particularly, what story does Matthew's Gospel tell us about Jesus of Nazareth? Christological studies of Matthew's Gospel are not sparse, but neither are they all in agreement with one another. Many of these studies focus on scrutinizing the various titles given to Jesus by the evangelist – primarily the titles “Son of David,” “Son of God,” and “Son of Man.” While these titular analyses have contributed greatly to the field of Matthean studies, they often focus so intently on these titles that they fail to account for the entire narrative of Matthew's Gospel. This has led me to ask one simple, yet complicated question – what story does the *entire narrative* of Matthew's Gospel tell about Jesus?

Matthean scholar Ulrich Luz has said, “The Gospel of Matthew is a book intended to be read as a whole and not in parts or pericopes. It is intended to be read not just once but several times.”<sup>1</sup> By saying this, Luz is indicating that Matthew's Gospel is a carefully crafted narrative. It includes a major *inclusio* spanning from beginning to end. Whereas an *inclusio* can often be used to begin and end a small portion of text to be held together (which Matthew does), Matthew utilizes one particular *inclusio* to encapsulate the entire narrative.

At the very beginning of his narrative, in chapter 1, Matthew tells of a messiah who will be called “Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (v. 21) and also be called “Immanuel, which means God with us” (v. 23). In the very last words of this gospel narrative, on the lips of this messiah himself while standing among his community

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<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 3.

of followers, Jesus tells his disciples “I am with you always” (28:20). That Matthew frames his entire narrative with this Immanuel motif requires that we look at the whole story in order to understand its Christology. This line of logic has been picked up by David D. Kupp who has said, “Nothing less than the entire gospel story will be required to fill the content of Jesus as savior and Emmanuel as God with us.”<sup>2</sup> This should shape the way that we read Matthew’s Gospel and our understanding of the Jesus it tells us about. Thus, we need to speak of a “narrative Christology.”<sup>3</sup>

To read Matthew’s Christology as a narrative Christology is to recognize that Matthew is doing something unique when compared to the other gospel writers. The inclusion of the Immanuel motif, running from 1:23 – 28:20, makes a specific contribution to Matthew’s understanding of Jesus as “God with us.” The reader of Matthew’s Gospel will recognize the explicit uses of this motif (Mt. 1:23; 18:20; 28:20), but might miss how this literary device runs through the entire narrative. To do so misses out on Matthew’s understanding of divine presence in the person of Jesus.

While Luz and Kupp are among a few scholars who have set out to analyze the narrative and Christological impacts of the Immanuel motif, I believe that they have neglected the connections of Jesus’s divine presence as it relates to *both* Jesus’s community of gathered followers *and* the activity of God’s Spirit. Matthew’s pneumatology and Christology are at times segmented from one another. Charette, however, recognizes that “for Matthew Christology cannot be separated from

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<sup>2</sup> David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God’s People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 57.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase “narrative Christology” is found in the work of Ulrich Luz. “The Immanuel Christology which frames Matthew’s story shows that Matthew’s Christology as a whole is narrative in character.” Luz, *Studies*, 85.

pneumatology. Inherent in the claim that Jesus is the Messiah is the reality of his intimate association with the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God that gives both impetus and direction to the messianic mission.”<sup>4</sup> Yet even he fails to connect Matthew’s Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology together. Through the entire Gospel of Matthew, alongside the Immanuel motif and connected to all three of its explicit uses, are the two connected issues of community and the Holy Spirit. While Jesus’s gathered community and the activity of the Holy Spirit in Matthew’s Gospel are spoken about or written on separately, they are rarely brought together. All of these issues and questions build to the thesis that this project seeks to elaborate upon and defend: Matthew’s Immanuel motif uniquely creates a narrative Christology that understands divine presence as a reality in the person of Jesus Christ that is expressed in his community of followers and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

In order to accomplish this task, we will give attention to the entirety of Matthew’s narrative. We will analyze the entire narrative for the ways in which it informs Matthew’s Christology, breaking the narrative into three major parts separated by each of the explicit uses of the Immanuel motif (1:23; 18:20; 28:20). Following each narrative section, we will go on to explore important matters that pertain to divine presence expressing itself in the community of Jesus’s followers as well as the activity of the Holy Spirit. The hope in doing all of this work is that the reader and researcher alike, much like Matthew’s audience, will see Jesus-Immanuel actively present within their own community of his followers and experiences with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>4</sup> Blaine Charette, *Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000), 22.

**Matthew 1:18-25****Narrative***Divine Presence and Israel's Past – Mt. 1:1-17*

As we seek to examine Matthew's entire narrative for the ways in which he wants his readers to see Jesus as the incarnation of divine presence, we do well to begin in the beginning. In Matthew's introduction he presents Jesus as the pivotal character in moving from God's presence with God's people in the past to God's presence with God's people in the future. By doing this, Matthew shows that Jesus represents both continuity and discontinuity in the history of divine presence with Israel. By continuity I mean continuous with previous understandings of divine presence, and by discontinuity I mean a variation of previous understandings. There are several elements in Matthew's opening chapter that depict this tension between continuity and discontinuity. The first major element is Matthew's presentation of Jesus's genealogy.

Matthew's unique introduction begins with an outline of the lineage of Jesus. Introducing this genealogy is the statement βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Much like his Markan source, Matthew wastes no time in stating that Jesus is the Christ (Χριστός, Mt. 1:1; cf. Mk. 1:1). Yet unlike Mark's opening statement that Jesus is "the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1), Matthew identifies Jesus as "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt. 1:1). This opening statement simultaneously identifies Jesus as the Messiah and situates him prominently within the Jewish tradition by identifying him with two of the largest figures in Jewish history – David, the great king of the united kingdom of Israel, and Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people. Matthew then goes on to outline a genealogy that shows Jesus as a direct descendant of these two figures along

with a host of others that includes “all the generations from Abraham to David,” “from David to the deportation to Babylon,” and “from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ” (v. 17). Matthew has carefully presented a genealogy that systematically roots Jesus in Israel’s past and outlined a history that would remind his readers of God’s presence in their ancestral history. That the Messiah would come from the lineage of Abraham and David and was an expectation held by some Jewish people, so this lineage would not be a surprise to many. In this way, the story of Jesus is continuous with understandings of God’s presence with God’s people. However, Matthew includes several individuals in his genealogy— four to be exact – that appear to be included to give surprise to his readership. The inclusion of these four people in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus are the counter-weight of discontinuity.

Included within the carefully crafted genealogy that Matthew offers is the presence of four women: Tamar (v. 3), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), and “the wife of Uriah” (Bathsheba, v. 6). This genealogy that includes major figures in Israel’s past but also includes these four women creates the type of continuity and discontinuity that Matthew wants his readers to be prepared for. When Matthew turns to the birth of Jesus, there will be elements that are continuous with Israel’s past and simultaneously innovative and will require a new reading of Israel’s Scriptures.

Matthew and Luke are the only evangelists to include genealogies in their gospels, but the inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba is entirely unique to Matthew. Herman Waetjen observes that there has been much effort in biblical studies to harmonize these two stories of Jesus’s ancestry, but he argues that it is more effective to “understand them individually and theologically in relation to the gospel in which they



appear and the thought of the evangelist which they are intended to express.”<sup>5</sup> It would be less appropriate to say that Luke *excludes* these women from his account than to say that Matthew has intentionally *included* them in his. While the inclusion of these four women are not the only differences between Matthew and Luke’s genealogies, it provides us important insight into Matthew’s narrative of Jesus, God’s divine presence, and the ways in which Matthew wants his audience to “re-read” their Scriptures in light of Jesus’s continuity and discontinuity with Israel’s past.

Commentators are quick to point out several factors that could relate to Matthew’s inclusion of these women in his outlining of Jesus’s ancestors.<sup>6</sup> Not only is their inclusion a surprise because they are women (women were not often mentioned in first century genealogies), but at least three of the four women are notably non-Jewish: Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, and Ruth a Moabite. Some see Matthew’s inclusion of them as a possible way to prepare his audience for an argument for a Gentile mission.<sup>7</sup> Others suggest that Matthew could be preparing his audience for a sexually risqué birth story that includes Mary, the mother of Jesus, becoming pregnant outside of marriage<sup>8</sup> by alluding to the sexually risqué histories of these women that are outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>9</sup> The inclusion of women in the genealogy, their Gentile descent, and their

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<sup>5</sup> Herman Waetjen, “The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 205.

<sup>6</sup> A helpful summary of the discussion has been constructed by Davies and Allison as well as Brown. W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, v. 1 (ICC, Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1988) 170-172. R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993) 71-74, 590-596.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Bauckham, “Tamar’s Ancestry and Rahab’s Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy,” *Novum Testamentum* 37, no. 4 (October 1995): 109-110.

<sup>8</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 79.

<sup>9</sup> Tamar slept with her father-in-law Judah under the disguise of a prostitute (Gen. 38). Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho (Josh.2). Ruth’s story, as outlined in the book that carries her name, has

potentially risqué histories all perform a function of interrupting what could otherwise be a more typical genealogy. They perform a function of discontinuity.

Especially performing this function is the inclusion of Rahab and her being cited as married to Salma and the mother of Boaz. Richard Bauckham asks the question, why is Rahab “considered the wife of Salma and mother of Boaz, when neither the Old Testament nor any extant Jewish tradition casts her in this role.”<sup>10</sup> The point is clear that the inclusion of Rahab in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus provides another discontinuous interruption to an otherwise typical genealogy.

As he presents Jesus in both continuous and discontinuous ways, Matthew shows that Jesus is both continuous and discontinuous with Israel’s past when it comes to traditionally held notions of God’s presence. Kupp notices this double performative action of the genealogy: “While the genealogy contextualizes the Messiah Jesus within the continuum of YHWH’s past involvement with his people, its broken pattern warns of a shift in the traditional order of divine presence in Israel.”<sup>11</sup> This warning that is given by Matthew’s encouragement of a re-reading of Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish history is what sets up the Immanuel motif and the recognition of Jesus as “God with us.” While divine presence has been experienced in various ways throughout Israel’s past, Jesus himself will embody God’s presence with his people in the future.

*Divine Presence in Jesus-Immanuel – Mt. 1:18-25*

Another major way in which Matthew shows that Jesus represents both continuity and discontinuity in the history of divine presence with Israel is through his birth

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been noted for the sexual subliminals that could be at play on the threshing floor when she approaches Boaz (Ruth 3). And Bathsheba is involved in an extra-marital affair with King David (2 Sam. 11).

<sup>10</sup> Bauckham, “Tamar’s Ancestry and Rahab’s Marriage,” 313.

<sup>11</sup> Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel*, 54.

narrative. Following the genealogy of Jesus that presents the Christ as both continuous and discontinuous with God's *past* presence with God's people, 1:18 begins Matthew's narration of God's *immediate* presence with God's people in similar fashion. In this concluding section to Matthew's first chapter, we begin to see the ways in which God's presence in the person of Jesus is expressed in his community of followers and the activity of the Holy Spirit in both "old" and "new" ways. Let us take a look at the general flow of the narrative.

Verse 18 introduces the Holy Spirit, a new character to the story at this point. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit." Joseph has been introduced by way of his family line dating back to Abraham (vv. 2-16), Mary has been introduced as Joseph's wife and the mother of Jesus (v. 16), and Jesus – Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ – has been the subject of the story since the opening verse. Joseph, being "righteous," decides to divorce Mary quietly until an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream, explains the situation, and tells Joseph that Mary will give birth to a son and that he "shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν, 1:21).

Immediately after Joseph is told to name the child Jesus, Matthew interrupts the narrative with his first of many Old Testament fulfillment quotations. "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" (vv. 22-23). Matthew then tells his readers that the baby boy is born and that Joseph does "as the angel of the Lord commanded him" and "called his name Jesus" (vv. 24-25).

The naming of the child is no doubt significant. Joseph is instructed to name the child “Jesus” and yet Matthew’s audience is also told that “they will call him Immanuel.” There are seemingly two names that are to be given and both of them are divinely assigned – one of them via an angel of the Lord and one of them via the Lord’s prophet Isaiah. Both of these parallel explanations of his name tell Matthew’s audience of Jesus’s unique mission. As “Jesus” he will save his people from their sins, and as “Immanuel” he will be God with us. The narrative that follows will tell Matthew’s audience about how Jesus-Immanuel will do both of these things. The double naming of Jesus-Immanuel and the rationale given for each of them are Matthew’s programmatic statements for Jesus as he narrates his Christology. According to Matthew, salvation and divine presence are the foci for Jesus’s identity and purpose.

What appears on the surface level to be a conflict of names between “Jesus” and “Immanuel” can be resolved by both the narrative itself and the verb tenses and forms utilized therein. Joseph is commanded by the angel of the Lord “You will call his name Jesus” (καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν) while the fulfillment quotation states that “they will call his name Immanuel” (καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ). While the parallel verbs are both in the future active tense, the naming of the child as “Jesus” is resolved in the immediate narrative future (v. 25). The difference in these verbs is that καλέσεις is in the second person singular when spoken to Joseph (“you will call”) while καλέσουσιν is in the third person plural (“they will call”). This is significant because in both the Hebrew and Greek versions of Isaiah 7:14 (the passage that Matthew is quoting), the text reads “you (second person singular) will call his name Immanuel.” Matthew has changed this verb to both fit his narrative and to make a point. The point that Matthew is

making is that this Christ will *both* save his people from their sins *and* be God with us. By changing the verb tense in the fulfillment quotation from second to third person Matthew's reader is able to better understand the flow of the narrative and why Joseph does not name the baby "Immanuel." Matthew has uniquely and creatively "added a new scope to the traditional story of the naming of Jesus. Of greatest importance to him is that Jesus is Immanuel."<sup>12</sup>

In order to expand on this, let us take a look at each of these names for a moment. Joseph is told to name the child Jesus "for he will save his people from their sins." The name Jesus itself comes from the Hebrew word יְשׁוּעָה (*Yeshua*) meaning "God is Salvation." Luz points out that Matthew is making a double messianic statement in the name and rationale given for the name. It first speaks to the context of some Jewish messianic expectations. That the messiah will be the savior of his people is a common Jewish hope.<sup>13</sup> The second messianic statement is that Jesus will save the people "from their sins," and this statement is not necessarily typical of Jewish expectation. As seen in Jewish texts such as *Ps. Sol. 17* and *I Enoch*, the messiah was expected to eliminate and/or judge sinners but not necessarily forgive sins. Matthew seems intent on making a specific messianic claim in Jesus that forgiveness of sins comes through him and – as the reader will continue to see throughout the narrative – that the forgiveness of sins continues to be effective in and through the community of his followers and the activity of the Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 97.

<sup>13</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 95.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. 9:8; 16:19; 18:18; 26:28.

The name Immanuel is presented by Matthew as a fulfillment of what the prophet Isaiah had spoken about. Matthew offers the translation of the name (Ἐμμανουήλ being a transliteration of the Hebrew עִמָּנוּאֵל) himself by stating that it “means God with us” (v. 23). In this way, even the naming of Jesus is both continuous and discontinuous with Israel’s past understanding of divine presence.

### **Community**

We have started to examine some of the important features within Matthew’s narrative from 1:1 through 1:25 as they pertain to his Christology of Jesus-Immanuel. These issues have helped to show how Matthew understands divine presence as a reality in the person of Jesus. Let us now take a look at how Jesus’s presence is expressed in his community of followers by tracing the narrative development of the phrase and concept of “his people” as spoken of in 1:21.

#### *“His People”*

During the double-naming of Jesus-Immanuel, the rationale that the angel of the Lord gives to Joseph for the name “Jesus” is that this child “will save his people from their sins” (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν, 1:21). The phrase “his people” (ὁ λαὸς αὐτοῦ) is crucial as we examine how “God-with-us” is a reality in the person of Jesus Christ that is expressed in his community of followers. Who are “his people” and what community is to experience his presence? In order to answer these questions, let us take a look at the ways in which the phrase “people” (λαός) develops throughout Matthew’s narrative.

Forms of the term *λαός* are used throughout Matthew's entire narrative to refer exclusively to the people of Israel and Matthew 1:21 is no exception.<sup>15</sup> By 1:21, Matthew has already situated Jesus clearly within a Jewish context. The term *λαός* itself retains a Jewish character to it. Within the narrative thus far, Matthew's audience has not been led to believe that the term "his people" should refer to anything other than God's chosen people of Israel. While Matthew's use of the term *λαός* stays consistent with this definition throughout the narrative, these "people" experience quite a turn of events in relationship to Jesus and the people within this group shifts throughout the narrative. Even though the term *λαός* is only used to refer to the people of Israel, the concept of Jesus's true community (what I am referring to as his gathered community of followers) develops parallel to this term throughout the entire Gospel. Who are Jesus's people? Who are the ones that he will save? Who is Jesus's community?

Matthew uses the word *λαός* or some form of it 13 times in his Gospel.<sup>16</sup> Prior to chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel, the term carries a somewhat positive or neutral connotation. In its first usage, the term is rather positive as it tells of a Messiah, Jesus-Immanuel, who will "save his people from their sins" (1:21). The word continues to garner positive usage as Matthew uses it within two fulfillment quotations (2:6; 4:16). As Matthew transitions to his part of the narrative that will highlight Jesus's teaching and healing ministry among the people of Israel, he leads in by saying that Jesus "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues...and healing every disease and every infirmity among the *λαῶν*" (4:23). All of these uses connote either positive or neutral meanings of the term.

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<sup>15</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Mt. 1:21; 2:4; 2:6; 4:16; 4:23; 13:15; 15:8; 21:23; 26:3; 26:47; 27:1; 27:25; 27:64.

The only instance in these opening chapters in which Matthew hints at the potential development of this term in a negative way is in his second use of it. In 2:4 Herod “gathers together all the chief priests and scribes of the λαοῦ” in order to inquire where Jesus is to be born. The reader will eventually find out that Herod’s purpose for doing this was to find the baby Jesus and have him killed, thus creating a tension for the reader early on. Joseph is told that Jesus will “save his people from their sins,” but very early on the reader finds out that the religious leaders “of the people” are gathering together in opposition to him. In fact, out of the 13 uses of λαός, five of them are linked to the phrase “chief priests and scribes/elders of the people.”<sup>17</sup> In each of these cases, whether they are questioning his authority (21:23), plotting his death (26:3), arresting him (26:47), or convicting him to be put to death (27:1), these religious leaders of the λαός are clearly in direct opposition to Jesus.

The term sees further development in chapter 13, especially as it pertains to the religious leaders, when Jesus begins to teach in a string of parables. His disciples ask him “Why do you speak to them in parables?” (v. 10). The question itself seems to create a separation between “them” and Jesus’s community of followers, but Jesus’s response gives a resounding affirmation. Utilizing a passage from Isaiah, Jesus tells his disciples that “this people’s (λαοῦ) heart has grown dull, and *their* ears are heavy of hearing, and *their* eyes they have closed...but blessed are *your* eyes, for they see, and *your* ears, for they hear.” We begin to see a separation between “the people” and Jesus’s gathered community of followers.

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<sup>17</sup> Mt. 2:4; 21:23; 26:3; 26:47; 27:1.



Matthew has not used the term λαός since chapter four when Jesus began teaching and healing among the people. After teaching in chapters 5-7 and healing in chapters 8-9 along with sending his disciples on a missionary journey exclusively to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6), Jesus’s tensions with the λαός begin to build as the term is connected to the religious leaders.

A similar sentiment is expressed when Matthew uses the term again in 15:8. This time Jesus makes his sharp statement directly to the religious leaders. In a situation where the Pharisees and scribes come to Jesus “from Jerusalem” (15:1, another cue from Matthew) and pit Jesus’s disciples directly against the teaching of the elders, Jesus spares them no candor. After telling them that they have “made void the word of God” (15:6) and referring to them with the label of “hypocrites” (v. 7), Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah saying, “This people (λαός) honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” The wedge is driven further between Jesus’s community of followers and the religious leaders of the λαός.

The opposition towards Jesus from the religious leaders of the λαός is one of the central tensions of Matthew’s Gospel, but it is not until Matthew’s description of Jesus’s trial in which the term λαός is used in a significantly negative manner. Up to this point, Jesus’s relationship with the people of Israel began with a statement that he will “save his people from their sins” (1:21), shepherd his “people Israel” (2:6), and teach and heal among “the people” (4:23). In chapter 27, however, the animosity that has been expressed by the religious leaders is expressed *en masse*. After Pilate symbolically washes his hands of Jesus’s blood, Matthew tells the reader that “All the people (πᾶς ὁ λαός) answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children’” (27:5). The tension that was created in the first

two chapters regarding the people that Jesus will save from their sins and those who gathered with Herod to find him as an infant has reached a climax.

We absolutely must note how the text of Matthew 27:5 specifically, and Matthew's usage of the term λαός generally, has played a detrimental role and disservice to Christian perspectives of Judaism. New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine points out that “from this verse, generations of Christians over hundreds of years concluded that all Jews for all times, and not just those present that fateful day, bore special responsibility for the death of Jesus.”<sup>18</sup> For too long and in too many instances, this abrasive and confrontational statement on the lips of πᾶς ὁ λαός has been used to promulgate hurtful attitudes towards Jews as “Christ killers.” Although the Roman Catholic church stated in 1965 that “neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during [Christ's] passion,”<sup>19</sup> this has not stopped authors, researcher, speakers, and preachers alike from teaching this verse in a hurtful way. While I am suggesting that the cry of πᾶς ὁ λαός in 27:5 is included to confront Matthew's audience, I am not suggesting that it is included to create anti-Jewish attitudes and actions by them. This text is part of a much larger theme that is taking place throughout the entire narrative that shows a growing separation between “the people” and Jesus's gathered community of followers.

The last usage of the term λαός occurs in a somewhat hopeful and possibly ironic way after Jesus's death and burial. Once again, the chief priests and the Pharisees “gathered together” and requested that Pilate reinforce the security of Jesus's tomb. Their

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<sup>18</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (NY: HarperCollins, 2006), 99.

<sup>19</sup> *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (October 28 1965). Article IV.

rationale? “Otherwise his disciples may come and steal him away and say to the λαός ‘He has risen’” (27:64). While Matthew’s depiction of the religious leaders has been grueling and antagonistic, he still seems to hold on to the hope that the λαός might come to believe due to the teaching of the community of the risen Christ.

By simply following the word λαός through Matthew’s Gospel, we are able to see how the definition of Jesus’s people (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, 1:21) develops from beginning to end. So who are “his people” according to Matthew? While the rising tension between Jesus and the λαός (specifically the religious leaders) builds, Matthew sketches another community that continually draws closer and closer to Jesus’s presence. Throughout Matthew’s narrative, Jesus’s disciples develop into his closest community worthy of the title “his people” that is spoke of in 1:21. It is apparent that Matthew is moving towards the inclusion of this different community of followers – the community of Jesus’s disciples who are in his presence and described as his church.

It was said earlier that the term itself develops throughout the narrative as well as the concept. While the development of the term has been traced here, the shaping of its concept will continue to be looked at throughout the narrative analyses of this study. The hope is to come to a greater understanding of who Matthew believes to be “his people” – those who will be saved by Jesus-Immanuel.

## **Spirit**

In returning to the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel narrative, we have already noted that Matthew has firmly planted Jesus within a strong Jewish context through the first 17 verses of his Gospel, and this context is extremely important as Matthew begins to tell the story of “the birth of Jesus Christ” in verse 18. The opening line of the Gospel

that states “The book of the genealogy (γενέσεως) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham,” along with the genealogy that continues to set a Jewish context, connects to Matthew’s birth narrative that begins “Now the birth (γένεσις) of Jesus Christ took place in this way” (v. 18). It’s within this same verse that the author explicitly mentions the character and subsequent actions of the Holy Spirit. At this very early stage in his Gospel, Matthew’s audience is alerted to the important role of the Spirit. So let us look at what Matthew is doing here in his infancy narrative as it pertains the activity of the Holy Spirit and God’s presence in Jesus-Immanuel.

### *Birth Narrative*

The story of a virgin giving birth to a divinely conceived child as told in Matthew 1:18-25 is not new to the modern reader of this Gospel. The global church has made this issue quite important over time and it has even found its way into the tradition’s creeds. Many scholars are quick to point out that this sort of a story would not be new to the ancient reader of this Gospel either. Stories of divine births without the participation of a human father appear in both Egyptian and Hellenistic traditions regarding the origins of kings, heroes, philosophers, and other important figures.<sup>20</sup> Yet Matthew’s inclusion of a virgin birth that involves the Holy Spirit of God serves to make a point about the activity of the Spirit as it pertains to the life, ministry, and on-going presence of Jesus-Immanuel.

The Jewish Annotated New Testament elaborates upon the term “Holy Spirit” in v. 18 by defining it as “God’s creative and enduring presence” citing several Hebrew and Rabbinic texts.<sup>21</sup> Matthew’s Jewish audience would certainly be familiar with the stories

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<sup>20</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Gen. 1:2; 2:7; 8:1; Ex. 13:21-22; Josh. 2:16; Ps. 1:11; b. Hag. 12a,b. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

of God's Spirit/breath/wind (both the Greek πνεῦμα and Hebrew רוּחַ allow for these translations) active at creation, the exodus, and other key moments in Hebrew history as well as throughout the writings of the prophets and wisdom literature. The unique connection that Matthew makes is that this creative and enduring presence – that was present at these crucial moments in Israel's history – plays an active role in the birth of Jesus-Immanuel who will both forgive the sins of his people and function as God-with-us.

While it is easy to get caught up in the logistics of a virgin being “found to be with child of the Holy Spirit” (v. 18), this would miss the point. Matthew does not attempt to rationalize the virgin birth, so for us to do so would be to miss out on what Matthew is actually trying to do. What Matthew does seem particularly interested in is firmly founding the activity of the Spirit in the life of Jesus-Immanuel. “The narrative does not intend to offer an explanation for the virgin birth...rather, it seeks to establish the role of the Spirit as a central element of the birth.”<sup>22</sup>

Within the first narrative sentence of Matthew's Gospel, following the genealogical introduction, the Holy Spirit is named as an important character. God's Spirit – a “creative and enduring presence” – is actively present in the birth of the one who is God's presence incarnate. “The remarkable conception of Jesus is the consequence of the Spirit's creative activity and results in the birth of one who embodies the presence of God.”<sup>23</sup> For Matthew, the connection between the activity of the Spirit and Jesus as God-with-us is inseparable, and he makes this clear in his birth narrative.

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<sup>22</sup> Keith Warrington, *Discovering the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Charette, *Restoring Presence*, 56.

We will see that this role of the Spirit is not only a central element of Jesus's birth, but that it is a central element Matthew's Christology.

### **Matthew 18:15-20**

#### **Narrative**

We have now started to see some of the ways in which Matthew lays the groundwork for his narrative Christology by means of his Immanuel motif. We have examined the ways in which Matthew prepares his audience for a new take on divine presence in the person of Jesus that is expressed in those who are known as "his people" and by the activity of the Spirit. Matthew continues to build upon this Immanuel Christology between the first two explicit Immanuel references in 1:23 and 18:20. From 1:23-4:12, Matthew covers an extensive time period that includes Jesus's family fleeing from Bethlehem to Egypt, their settling in Nazareth after returning from Egypt, Jesus's journey to the Jordan seeking baptism by John, and the 40 days spent in the wilderness after being led there by the Spirit. From this point, there are two major ways in which Matthew continues to develop his Christology of Jesus-Immanuel. He begins to develop the identity of Jesus's gathered community and he develops the concept of authority in Jesus's teaching and ministry. These two areas of development better inform the reader's understanding of Jesus as God-with-us, so let us examine a few of the ways in which they come up in Matthew's narrative from 4:12 to the end of chapter 17.

#### *Jesus's Presence in Galilee – Mt. 4:12-17:27*

In Matthew 4, Jesus begins to gather his community of disciples and he does so while in the region of Galilee. The geographical setting of Galilee receives much attention from Matthew in the span of just 14 verses. We are told that Jesus "withdrew

into Galilee” after John’s arrest (v. 12), calls his first disciples “as he walked by the Sea of Galilee” (v. 18) prior to going about “all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues...and healing every disease” (v. 23), and that “great crowds followed him from Galilee” (v. 25) and some of the surrounding areas. As Jesus begins to call his disciples and commence his ministry of teaching and healing, he does so in a land that Matthew has called “Galilee of the Gentiles” (v. 15).

We noted earlier that Jesus’s community of “his people” develops throughout the entire narrative. While we examined the various ways in which Matthew utilizes the term λαός (“he will save τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ from their sins,” 1:21), we briefly observed that Matthew also begins to develop Jesus’s disciples into his closest community worthy of the title “his people.” Here in chapter four, Matthew begins to lay the ground work for who he understands Jesus’s community of followers to be and who “his people” will be by including the calling of four Jewish fishermen in a region of “Gentiles (ἔθνῶν, v. 15).” While the religious leaders of the λαός are cast in opposition to Jesus more clearly as the story continues, Jesus’s disciples are the ones who will experience his presence among them (18:20) and be commissioned to the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) with the promise of his ongoing presence (28:20). This community will not be exclusively Jewish nor exclusively Gentile, but rather an inclusive, unique community of both Jews and Gentiles that expresses the reality of divine presence.

Matthew utilizes an *inclusio* to highlight the teaching and healing that Jesus does in Galilee. “And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people” (4:23; cf. 9:35). In his teaching on the mount and in his healings throughout the

region, Jesus continues to draw attention to his presence among “his people.” Jesus teaches his disciples to cultivate a “righteousness [that] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees” (5:20) and many of those who are healed and ministered to are mostly those who are socially marginalized – lepers, a gentile’s servant, those who were demon possessed, as well as a ritually impure woman. As Matthew continues to outline who exactly represents “his people” he begins to build a tension between Jesus and his religious contemporaries by continuously pushing the expected boundaries of “his people” to include such outsiders in his healings. As Matthew continues to develop the identity of Jesus’s gathered community, the borders of this people group are broadened to include outsiders. Meanwhile, the religious leaders continuously find themselves to be outside of the bounds of “his people” by standing in opposition to Jesus throughout the narrative.

In two separate moments out at sea, Jesus’s disciples cry out κύριε σῶσον (“Lord, save!”) harkening the reader back to the Jesus-Immanuel motif of 1:21. Keener recognizes this connection to 1:21 by stating that the cry of the disciples “for Jesus to ‘save’ them reflects a perfectly good use of the Greek term ‘save,’ but it probably also alludes on a literary level to Jesus’s broader mission.”<sup>24</sup> Matthew notified his audience in the first chapter that Jesus would “save his people from their sins,” and the petitions of the disciples to be saved brings us back to that concept. In both moments at sea the presence of Jesus among his disciples is what saves them from peril.

The first moment occurs in the midst of a storm when Jesus, who is asleep in the boat, is awoken by his disciples (8:23-27). Jesus’s divine presence exhibits tangible

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<sup>24</sup> Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 280.



power as he brings peace to the chaos. The second moment occurs when Jesus meets his disciples who are out at sea by walking over to them on the water (14:22-33). In both instances Jesus seems to be disappointed by the fear that his disciples exhibit due to their lack in fully understanding his presence. In both instances Jesus refers to them as *ὀλιγόπιστοι* (“ones of little faith” 8:26; *ὀλιγόπιστε* when referring singularly to Peter in 14:31). In the first instance, Jesus’s calming and powerful presence results in his disciples exclaiming in amazement, “What sort of man is this?” (8:27) – a question that Matthew has been wanting his readers to ask about Jesus-Immanuel all along. In the second instance, after Jesus saves Peter, the disciples answer their own question by stating, “Truly you are the Son of God” (14:33).

In both episodes the disciples are saved by the presence of Jesus after a moment of separation. Jesus shows his gathered community of followers that they are saved by his presence and thus a fulfillment of his double-naming as Jesus-Immanuel – God-with-us who saves. Likewise, both stories have the reader wondering exactly how the disciples exhibited little faith. Was it an inadequate understanding of the danger of the storm or of his presence with the disciples? One might be able to see in these two instances how Matthew is leading up to his understanding of Jesus’s presence “where two or three are gathered” in his name (18:20) even in his physical absence. That Jesus calls out his disciples’ little faith in regards to his presence while being simultaneously physically absent is also preparing the reader for the claim that Jesus will be with his followers “always, to the close of the age” (28:20).

As Matthew describes to his audience several episodes of various healing in chapters 8-9, one healing stands out in particular in chapter 9 as it relates the forgiveness

sins. As Matthew tells the narrative of man who was paralyzed being brought before Jesus, he draws a connection between authority and the forgiveness of sins. This connection is brought together as the man who seeks physical healing is offered the forgiveness of sins instead. The context of the story suggests that the man is seeking physical healing. The man's physical condition is described rather than his spiritual condition, and, after all, Jesus has been doing a lot of physical healing in the previous chapter. However, Jesus's first words to the man are "your sins are forgiven" (v. 2). It is only after Jesus is challenged by "some of the scribes" that he then *also* heals the man. At this, the crowds are described as being in awe and glorifying God "who had given such authority (ἐξουσίαν) to humans" (v. 8). In this healing event and the discussion that surrounds it Matthew connects the issue of authority (ἐξουσίαν) with the forgiveness of sins. The implications of this become clearer when we get to chapter 18 when Jesus gives authority to his gathered community.

In chapter 10 Jesus sends out the twelve disciples to teach and heal, thus commanding them to imitate what he has been observed doing in chapters 5-9. As Jesus sends them out, Matthew says that he first "gave them authority (ἐξουσίαν) over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease" (v. 1). Along with this authority, Jesus gives his disciples encouragement that they need not worry about what to say as they go on their mission "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν) speaking through you" (v. 20). The concepts of authority and the activity of the Spirit are then linked to Jesus's presence as his final statement in this initial commissioning is "he who receives you receives me" (v. 40). In chapter 10, Jesus's

presence is intricately interwoven with the presence of his disciples as they are sent out with authority and the encouragement of the Spirit's activity through them.

The proclamation of Jesus as the one who gathers "his people" by means of his active presence is expressed sharply to some of his opponents. The Pharisees point out to Jesus that his disciples "are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" (v. 2) following their plucking of grain on the Sabbath. Jesus states the power of his own presence to the skeptical Pharisees by stating "something greater than the temple is here" and in doing so declaring that his Immanuel presence is greater than that of the temple.

*Jesus's Presence Amidst the Gathered Community – Mt. 18:1-35*

The development of both the identity of Jesus's gathered community and the concept of authority in Jesus's teaching and ministry reaches a new height in chapter 18. This chapter contains the entirety of Jesus's fourth major discourse and it is most frequently recognized by scholars and readers alike for its focus on community. Jesus is gathered with his disciples and speaking to them alone at this time, and as he does he communicates to them the power and authority of his presence among them.

While the entirety of Jesus's discourse in chapter 18 has to do with community, much of its content deals with the issue of sin. Verses 6-14 deal with the issue of sinning against others and against one's self while verses 15-35 deal with the issue of someone else sinning against the implied you. The consequences in each of the scenarios are drastically different. In the event that someone "causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin" (v.6), Jesus says that it would be better that this person have a millstone tied around their neck and tossed into the sea. For the individuals to whom sin falls upon themselves or whose hand, foot, or eyes "causes you to sin" (vv. 8-9), Jesus

says that it is better to remove that body all together. In these cases of dealing with the sin one causes to others or to oneself, the measures are extreme.

Yet if a brother or sister “sins against you,” due diligence is required and a method for reconciliation is outlined. First, this individual is to be approached by the victim, then with the company of two or three others, then before the ἐκκλησία. The rationale that is given for this process is steeped in Jewish traditions such as the witness of two or three (cf. Deut. 19:15) and the language of binding and loosing that was used previously in 16:18-19 (“You are Peter...I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”). The difference between these traditions and what Jesus is telling his community of followers, however, is rooted in his very own presence ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν (18:20).

Jesus began this discourse on the community of his followers by bringing a child, one of the μικροί into the presence of his disciples (ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν, 18:2). He now promises his disciples that wherever two or three of his humble disciples “gather in [his] name” there he is in their midst (ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν, 18:20). Matthew is continuing to narrate his Immanuel Christology that understands divine presence as a reality in the person of Jesus Christ especially in this explicit use of the Immanuel motif here in chapter 18. In order to seek understanding as to how this divine presence is expressed in Jesus’s community of followers and the activity of the Holy Spirit, several factors must be examined including what Matthew is doing with the language he utilizes as it pertains to “gathering together,” the language of binding and loosing, and the role of the Holy Spirit

in the forgiveness of sins. So let us now turn our attention to these issues and seek to understand how they impact Matthew's Christology of Jesus-Immanuel.

## **Community**

### *To Gather Together*

It has been noted by many scholars that Matthew's Gospel seems to have been written to an audience that has some very strong ties to the Jewish tradition. Ulrich Luz goes so far as to say that "the Gospel of Matthew originated in a Jewish Christian community which was becoming more open to the Gentile Christian Church" that retained its particular Jewish Christian identity.<sup>25</sup> Luz suggests that Matthew's community lives at a "crossroads" in which they are attempting to understanding their seemingly failed mission to Israel and their call to the Gentiles. One way in which this is seen, and is important to this particular study, is the way in which Matthew plays with the language of "gathering together."

The word "synagogue" comes from the Greek verb *συνάγω* which most frequently means "to gather together." Hence, a synagogue (*συναγωγή*) is a place of gathering together. Matthew utilizes this word or some form of it quite frequently in his Gospel. In at least 24 instances,<sup>26</sup> Matthew employs this word in his narrative – all the while creating a tension for the Jewish reader of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew's use of some form of the word *συνάγω* is done in a way that describes the division between Jesus's opponents and the community of Jesus's followers associated with his presence.

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<sup>25</sup> Luz, *Studies*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Mt. 2:4; 3:12; 6:26; 12:30; 13:2, 30, 47; 18:20; 22:10, 34, 41; 24:28; 25:24, 26, 32, 35, 38, 43; 26:3, 57; 27:17, 27, 62; 28:12.

The verb is used to negatively describe Jesus's opponents and, conversely, it is used to positively state the way that Jesus gathers together his community.

Herod, Jesus's earliest opponent in Matthew's narrative, is described as συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς ("gathering together all the chief priests and scribes," 2:4) in order to hunt down the newly born Christ. Συνάγω is utilized to negatively characterize the gathering together of Jesus's opponents quite frequently in the latter half of Matthew's narrative following chapter 18. At several points, some of the Jewish religious leaders gather together in order to plot Jesus's arrest (see 22:41; 26:3, 57; 27:62). The Roman government also gathers together with the religious leaders leading up to Jesus's arrest and crucifixion (see 27:17, 27). The last use of συνάγω occurs in 28:12 when some of the guards who were watching Jesus's tomb, the chief priests, and the elders συναχθέντες in order to corroborate a plan of deceit about the location of Jesus's post-crucifixion body (28:11-15).

Conversely, συνάγω is also used in referring to the gathering together of Jesus's community of followers, albeit in a positive sense. John the Baptist says of Jesus that he will "clear his threshing floor and συνάξει his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn" (3:12). This statement signifies both the tension between Jesus's opponents and disciples as well as positively enforcing that Jesus will gather together his followers. In chapter 13, Matthew crafts Jesus's third major discourse and does so using primarily parables. Jesus begins these parables as the crowds συνήχθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν (13:2) and goes on to tell them several parables that relate to "gathering together."

In one story, Jesus tells of the kingdom of heaven as a field in which an enemy has planted weeds among the wheat (13:24-30). The servants working in the field ask the

field owner if they should “gather” (συλλέξωμεν, v. 28) the weeds that have been planted. The owner says, “No, for while gathering up (συλλέγοντες, v. 29) the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at the harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘First, gather up (συλλέξατε, v. 30) the weeds and bind them together in bundles to be burned, but gather (συναγάγετε, v. 30) the wheat into my barn.’” Matthew seems to be intentionally utilizing different words for “gather” as he continues to reconstitute the understanding of synagogue for his audience. Forms of the verb συλλέγω (“to gather”) are used throughout the entire parable until the eschatological statement is made about the owner telling the workers to συναγάγετε (“gather together”) the wheat into his barn. In this manner, Matthew continues to show that it is the presence of Jesus-Immanuel that constitutes the new gathering place – certainly something that a Jewish Christian community that is beginning to identify itself less and less with the συναγωγή and more and more as Jesus’s ἐκκλησία would need to hear.

An extremely important piece that Matthew includes as he seeks to reconstitute his audience’s understanding of synagogue takes place in chapter 12. At the beginning of this chapter Jesus suggests that divine presence is a reality in him by saying “Something greater than the temple is here” (12:6). Not too far after this the narrative moves into “their synagogue” (τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν, 12:9) where Jesus is met with opposition after the healing of a man’s hand. It is in this context that Matthew tells his audience that the Pharisees begin to plot “how to destroy” Jesus (12:14). The conflict reaches a climax when Jesus is accused of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebul. Jesus’s response to the claim consists of the statement that “whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not συνάγων with me scatters” (12:30). In this passage Matthew creates a

contrast between gathering/being with Jesus and scattering/being with Beelzebul. To gather with Jesus-Immanuel is to be “with” Jesus-Immanuel.

In 18:20 Jesus tells his disciples, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” According to some rabbinic traditions, God’s presence (Shekinah) was promised when ten men were gathered together (the minimum prerequisite for a synagogue).<sup>27</sup> The presence of the divine was also promised to wherever two or three gathered together to study Torah.<sup>28</sup> That Jesus is claiming that he will be present wherever two or three are gathered in his name is especially important for Matthew’s reader after being told that Jesus is to be Immanuel – “God with us” (1:23). Keener states that in 18:20 Jesus is very clearly stating that he himself “fills the role of the Shekinah, God’s presence, in the traditional Jewish saying.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus’s presence itself is thus the presence of the divine that is expressed in the gathering together of his followers. It is no doubt that Matthew is drawing the attention of his audience to traditional Jewish practices. Jesus’s statement in 18:16 that “every word must be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses” comes directly from Deuteronomy 19:15: “A single witness shall not rise up against a person on account of any iniquity or any sin which they have committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.”

By stating that Jesus is present where two or three of his followers are gathered together, Matthew is stating that Jesus reconstitutes what it means to *συνάγω*. He does this by using this word and its various forms throughout his narrative. While Matthew’s

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<sup>27</sup> Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 455.

<sup>28</sup> Abot. 3:6; Ber. 6a.

<sup>29</sup> Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 456.



audience would be familiar with a traditional understanding of a synagogue as a place of gathering in the midst of divine presence, the first evangelist plays with the word *συνάγω* to show that Jesus truly is Immanuel. Matthew is communicating that God is present within the gathered community of Jesus's followers.

## **Spirit**

### *“Bind” and “Loose” as Language of Authority*

In Matthew 18:18, Jesus tells his disciples “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” As Matthew has sought to develop the concept of authority as it pertains to the presence of Jesus, it is important that we see the issues of binding and loosing as language of authority. We must also uncover the connection between authority and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Once we recognize these things, we are able to understand the interconnectedness of Jesus's presence with his gathered community and the role of the Spirit.

Binding and loosing have been terms used within the Jewish tradition for quite some time. In several Jewish texts, the words binding and loosing refer to the authority to interpret the law and thereby to evaluate fidelity to the law.<sup>30</sup> This interpretation of the law had a legal significance to it. To bind and to loose meant to “forbid and permit” according to several rabbinic teachings.<sup>31</sup> It carried a weight of authority with it. Implicit to an understanding of binding and loosing is the concept of authority. Whether it be understood as teaching authority, legal authority, disciplinary authority, or the authority to forgive sins, binding and loosing are terms of authority.

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<sup>30</sup> Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 430.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. m. Pesah. 4.5; b. Ter. 5.4. Levine and Zvi Brettler, *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 31.

There are many scholars who recognize that the authority that is given from Jesus to his gathered community in Matthew 18 is one of disciplinary authority. Keener points this out by stating “most scholars thus recognize that this passage applies to church discipline”<sup>32</sup> as he agrees with them. According to Bornkamm, 16:19 refers to “teaching authority”<sup>33</sup> while 18:18 refers to “disciplinary authority.”<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Luz suggests that the authority to bind and loose seems connected to the disciplinary actions of excommunication.<sup>35</sup> But to understand this authority as disciplinary authority is to forget the context in which this passage is found – the context of sin and the forgiveness of sins. Within the larger context of the entire discourse (18:1-35), the authority to bind and loose appears to have more to do with forgiveness than excommunication.

Davies and Allison take this context seriously and understand that the authority that Jesus is giving his disciples is the authority to forgive sins.<sup>36</sup> Not only is the sinning brother or sister to be offered at least three opportunities of repentance (vv. 15-17), but Jesus demands that his disciples forgive without measure (vv. 21-22). As Jesus’s community forgives others, they imitate the forgiveness that God has extended to them (vv. 23-35; cf. 5:48). Forgiveness is to be pursued and sought after just as a man with one hundred sheep would leave behind the ninety-nine to find the one that is lost (vv. 12-14). Gundry envisions this same kind of authority by stating that “the agreement (in 18:19)

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<sup>32</sup> Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 455.

<sup>33</sup> Davies & Allison, *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 639.

<sup>34</sup> Gunther Bornkamm, “The Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose’ in the Church in Matthew’s Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 104.

<sup>35</sup> To be sure, vv. 15-18 have a history of interpretation that includes early Christian communities using this statement to justify a practice of excommunication. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary* ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 455.

<sup>36</sup> Davies and Allison, *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 804.

has to do with forgiving sin” and “that no sin committed by a brother [sic] in the church goes beyond the possibility of forgiveness.”<sup>37</sup>

At this point, we must be drawn back to Matthew’s opening scene and make the connection between Jesus’s gathered community being given the authority to forgive sins and the presence of Jesus-Immanuel, because if we do not we can easily misunderstand at best and abuse at worse the authority to forgive. In chapter 1, Joseph was told that he was to name the child that Mary was pregnant with “Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (v. 21). We have already discussed the importance of the phrase “his people” and its development throughout Matthew’s narrative, but intricately linking Jesus to his people is his saving them from sins. The double-naming of Jesus-Immanuel with the double rationale of saving his people from their sins and being God with us is of great importance. The Gospel writers, including Matthew, seem very aware of the commonly held notion that God alone has the power to save from or forgive sins. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus forgives the sins of a man who was paralyzed when some legal experts question him saying, “Only the one God can forgive sins” (2:7). Yet Matthew’s Gospel does not include this statement that his source, Mark’s Gospel, does include. Matthew uses this same story in chapter 9 of his Gospel. It comes after Jesus has performed several physical healings and it is somewhat of a surprise when this man with a physical disability approaches Jesus, seemingly expecting physical healing as well, and receives forgiveness of sins. Since only God can forgive sins yet Jesus’s name means that “he will save his

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<sup>37</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 369.

people from their sins,” for Matthew it is extremely important to relay to his readers that Jesus is in fact “God with us.”<sup>38</sup>

Now in chapter 18, Jesus gives authority to his gathered community to forgive sins. However, this authority is mediated by the presence of Jesus-Immanuel himself. While Jesus performs the divine function of forgiving sins (1:21; 9:6) his disciples are only able to participate in this practice when “two or three of them are gathered in [his] name” (v. 20). And when they are gathered together, it is Jesus’s presence with them (ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν, v. 20) as “God with us” (1:23) that gives them the authority to bind and loose.

We have now examined the ways in which binding and loosing is authoritative language – specifically in regards to Matthew’s understanding of the forgiveness of sins – along with a discussion on the connection to the presence of Jesus with his gathered community, but we have yet to discuss the connection to the Holy Spirit. While it is the Gospels of Luke and John that typically garner the most attention when it comes to a biblical theology of the Holy Spirit, several scholars have noted that Matthew’s pneumatology is no less important albeit a bit more subtle. In particular, Hawthorne and Montague have argued that much of Matthew’s understanding of the Spirit corresponds to his understanding of authority.

Hawthorne states that the word “authority” (ἐξουσία) “to describe the words and works of Jesus” is an “implicit reference to the Holy Spirit present and at work in him.”<sup>39</sup> He analyzes the presence of the Spirit at key moments in Jesus’s life (birth, baptism, temptation) and notes that “the Spirit descended upon him, entered into him, filled him

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<sup>38</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power* (Dallas: World Books, 1991), 58-59.

<sup>39</sup> Hawthorne, *Presence and the Power*, 156.

without measure, and remained within him” and that everything he did was due to the “directing and empowering impulse of the Spirit of God.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, the authority that is given to Jesus’s disciples by the presence of Immanuel in chapter 18 is connected with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Montague, in his biblical theology on the Holy Spirit, speaks of Matthew’s pneumatology as “discreet”<sup>41</sup> in comparison to the other Gospels. Through his analysis, he likewise comes to the conclusion that the concept of authority is directly related to the activity of the Spirit. He analyzes the ways in which Jesus’s possession of the Spirit is manifested throughout Matthew’s Gospel in his charismatic teaching and healing activity that is observed as possessing ἐξουσία (7:29; 9:8).<sup>42</sup>

For both Hawthorne and Montague, Matthew’s concept of authority is analogous with the activity of the Spirit in and through Jesus. Here is where we are able to make some of the connections between the presence of Jesus, his gathered community and their reception of authority, and the activity of the Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is active through the authority that Jesus possesses, and if Jesus gives this authority to his disciples (10:1; 16:19; 18:18; cf. 28:18-20), then the authority that Jesus’s gathered community possesses due to his presence with them (18:20) is none other than that which comes by the Spirit of God.

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<sup>40</sup> Hawthorne, *Presence and the Power*, 145.

<sup>41</sup> George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: The Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 302.

<sup>42</sup> Montague, *Holy Spirit*, 310.

**Matthew 28:16-20****Narrative**

We have now analyzed some of the ways in which Matthew uniquely creates a narrative Christology that portrays divine presence as a reality in the person of Jesus through the first two explicit references to his Immanuel motif (1:23; 18:20). As Matthew progresses towards the final stages of his Gospel of Jesus-Immanuel, let us take a look at the story between 19:1 and 27:66 in order to keep the entire narrative in perspective. In this section, we will seek to uncover the ways in which Jesus is “with” his gathered community. A primary way in which this takes place is via the opposition that continues to develop between the religious leaders of the people and Jesus and his disciples.

*Jesus’s Presence in Jerusalem – Mt. 19:1-27:66*

Matthew ends his presentation of Jesus’s discourse on community with a statement similar to the conclusion of the other four speeches: καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους (Mt. 19:1; Cf. 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 26:1). Not only does this statement conclude Jesus’s discourse through chapter 18, but it signals a major shift for the narrative moving forward. In chapter 16, following Peter’s confession of Jesus as “the Christ, the son of the living God” (v. 16), Matthew tells the reader, “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem” (v. 21). Matthew, now at the beginning of chapter 19, reminds his reader of Jesus’s movement towards Jerusalem. “Now when Jesus finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan” (v. 1).

The tension between Jesus and his opponents seems to build as Jesus moves closer and closer to the holy city of Jerusalem. Jesus reminds his community of followers once again of the inevitable conflict that will ensue upon his presence dwelling in Jerusalem. “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day” (20:18-19). By distinguishing the path of Jesus and his disciples (“we”) from the chief priests and scribes, Matthew continues to show the separation between Jesus’s followers and the religious authorities. Throughout these final chapters, Matthew continues to identify his gathered community and “his people” in contrast to the religious leaders of the people.

Matthew tells his audience that the first action of Jesus upon his entrance into the city is to go into the temple and clear it out. This deeply symbolic move reminds the reader of Jesus’s statement in 12:6 that “something greater than the temple is here.” Jesus’s promise of the power of his presence as the dwelling place of the divine is made explicit as Jesus performs miracles ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ (21:14). Over the span of two days Jesus heals “the blind and the lame [who] came to him in the temple” (21:14) and taught in the temple as well (v. 23). On both days, Jesus is met with opposition from some of the religious leaders and is asked, “By what authority (ἐξουσία) are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority (ἐξουσίαν)?” (v.23). Up until this moment, Jesus has been recognized as having authority by the crowds (7:29; 9:8), he has given authority to his disciples (10:1; 16:19; 18:18), and defended his own authority (9:6). Now, the

religious leaders themselves recognize Jesus as possessing authority and the power of the Spirit.

Jesus's conflict with his opponents only continues to mount. From 21:23 to 22:46, Jesus has several confrontations with the religious leaders including the Pharisees (21:45; 22:15-22, 34-46), the Sadducees (22:23-33), and the chief priests and the elders (21:23-22:14). Matthew finishes the conflicts with Jesus having the final word, leaving his opponents speechless. From that point on "no one dared to ask him anything anymore" (22:46) and Jesus turns his attention to the crowds and his disciples. Jesus denounces the religious leaders in a series of woes while still in the temple. The tension between Jesus and his opponents drives the wedge further between those who gather together in the συναγωγή and those who gather in the presence of Jesus-Immanuel as part of his ἐκκλησία.

Matthew's concern for teasing out "his people" (1:21) and a reconstitution of the συναγωγή as his ἐκκλησία comes rushing together in Jesus's parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31-46). Jesus says that "all the nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) will be "gathered together" (συναχθήσονται) before the Son of Man and that he will separate the sheep and the goats. And how this separation will occur is based upon those who were able to identify the presence of Jesus-Immanuel with "the least of these" (25:45). The metaphysical nature of Jesus's presence that is found where two or three gather in his name (18:20) can also be found by showing love and acting out of compassion towards the socially marginalized.

As Matthew goes on to describe Jesus's last meal with his disciples he shows how the presence of Jesus-Immanuel is revealed in the simple elements of broken bread and



shared wine. When Jesus presents the cup to his disciples, Matthew makes an important distinction from the way that Mark and Luke tell the narrative.

Luke: τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν  
ἐκχυννόμενον

Mark: τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν

Matthew: τοῦτο...ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς  
ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says that the cup is his "blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (τοῦτό...ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον, Mt. 26:28) which is consistent with the Markan material (cf. Mk. 14:24), but where Matthew differs significantly is in the addition of "for the forgiveness of sins" (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν). In making this addition, Matthew is drawing his reader back to the statement of the angel about the birth of Jesus-Immanuel that he will "save his people from their sins" (1:21). The powerful symbolic significance of the bread and the cup is no doubt carried on by Jesus's followers after his resurrection. The presence of Jesus with his disciples at this last meal is something that his community will continue to experience each and every time that they gather for the Lord's Supper.

Throughout the entire chapter of Matthew 26, the language of both Jesus and the narrator "heightens the symbolism of the meal and subsequent events"<sup>43</sup> as it relates to Matthew's Immanuel motif. One example of this is the presence of nine uses of the word μετά + a genitive (vv. 18, 20, 29, 36, 28, 40, 51, 69, 71). Jesus sits at table "with" the twelve, foretells of being "with" them in his Father's kingdom, goes "with" them to

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<sup>43</sup> Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 97.

Gethsemane, prays and watches “with” them in the garden, while they are “with” him at his arrest, and noticed as being “with” Jesus by others outside his trial. In this chapter, Matthew draws Jesus’s gathered community closer and closer to him as they find themselves in the presence Jesus as these stories progress.

The double-naming of Jesus that took place in the first chapter of the gospel moves into a significant stage of development as Matthew narrates the death of the one who was sent to save his people and embody God with us. Jesus has been telling his disciples that he “must go to Jerusalem and suffer...and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” Jesus began to tell his disciples this at the same point in Matthew’s narrative as when Peter confessed that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16-21). Now, at the death of Jesus-Immanuel, he is again proclaimed as “the Son of God” (27:54), this time by a Roman centurion. While it seems that the divine presence of Immanuel has turned into divine absence during the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, the reader still remembers Jesus’s statements about his resurrection. It is then at this point, at Jesus’s resurrection, that Jesus’s presence with his community of followers takes on a cosmic and eternal dimension that has been hinted at since 1:23 and 18:20.

*Jesus’s Ongoing Presence – Mt. 28:1-20*

After the resurrection, Jesus-Immanuel persists in being present with his gathered community. Matthew tells the story of the exceptional faithfulness of Jesus’s closest female followers. Present at the crucifixion, and at his burial, they now return to the tomb. While Jesus is seemingly abandoned by his male followers, these dedicated women, filled with both joy and fear (28:8), are the first to encounter the risen Jesus as he instructs them to tell the rest of his disciples to meet him in Galilee.

For the sixth time now, Matthew tells of Jesus as being on top of a mountain at a major point in the narrative. First, in the story of his temptation (4:8), followed by Jesus's first major discourse (5:1-8:1), the healing and feeding of many (15:29), the sight of the transfiguration (17:1-9), and Jesus's fifth major discourse (24:3). Here, once again on top of a mountain, the now resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples. It is here that Jesus has "all authority" (v. 18), commands his followers to make disciples of "all nations" (v. 19) teaching them to observe "all" that he has "commanded" them (v. 19) with the promise that he will be with them for "all of the days" (v. 20). The conclusion brings the reader right back to the beginning. The promise of Jesus, one who would "save his people from their sins" (1:21) as "Immanuel, which means 'God with us'" (1:23) now stands *with* his disciples, speaking *with* them, and promising to be *with* them always.

### **Community**

#### *"I Am with You Always"*

Matthew's final five verses create an intricate and powerful ending to his gospel of Jesus-Immanuel. Let us take a moment to examine the unique and extremely important way that Matthew ends his story as opposed to those written by the other synoptic evangelists. By doing this work, we will be able to continue to see the elements of divine presence in the person of Jesus as a reality expressed by his community of followers and the activity of the Holy Spirit.

The scene that Matthew ends his Gospel with is just as important as the words that he uses to do so. According to Matthew, Jesus has not disappeared leaving his disciples afraid (Mk. 16:8); nor has he ascended into the sky and left his followers to worship God (Lk. 24:50-53). A story that began with the promise of "God with us" has

ended with Jesus saying “I am with you always” while remaining with them. Not only does Jesus say that he will be with them always, but the narrative leaves Jesus in the presence of his community of followers. In this way, Matthew has created a *unique* narrative Christology that reveals Jesus-Immanuel as the incarnation of divine presence with his people. No title of Jesus dominates this final section of the Gospel – “Son of Man,” “Son of David,” or “Son of God” – but rather the Immanuel motif that has run throughout its entirety.<sup>44</sup>

Matthew set the tone for his narrative Christology with a fulfillment quotation that stated “Look, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel” (1:23). Now, at the end of the story, Jesus-Immanuel who has shown himself to truly be “God-with-us” tells his community of followers, “Look, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20). These two verses frame the entirety of the narrative and draw the reader from beginning to end and back to the beginning again.

Matthew concludes his Gospel not with his own words, but rather with the words of the risen Jesus who is present and speaking with his disciples. His last words most certainly carry a great weight for the community of Jesus’s followers as they present a command to be baptizing (βαπτίζοντες) and teaching (διδάσκοντες). Both verbs are present active participles. This, along with the present active indicative statement “I am with you always” (ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας), roots this final statement of Jesus firmly in the present.

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<sup>44</sup> Luz notes the lack of Matthew’s primary Christological titles in this conclusion to the Gospel. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 634-635.

## Spirit

*“In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”*

The last words of Jesus to his followers, as Matthew uniquely presents them in his Gospel, include the command to “be baptizing (all the nations) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19). The reader of Matthew’s Gospel should not be surprised by the language of the individual phrases “of the Father” (τοῦ πατρὸς), “of the Son” (τοῦ υἱοῦ), and “of the Holy Spirit” (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος). These words have been throughout the entire narrative. While they have been used singularly and in pairs throughout the story of Jesus-Immanuel, πατήρ, υἱός, and πνεῦμα are all three brought together for the first time in these last words of Jesus. Let us first take a brief look at how these words have been used throughout Matthew’s Gospel to conceptualize the divine prior to analyzing the importance of them coming together in Jesus’s final words with his community of followers.

Matthew has conceptualized the Divine as “Father” (πατήρ) quite a bit up to this point in his narrative. In the Sermon on the Mount alone, God is referred to as “Father” 16 times – both as “your Father” and “my Father.” Over 40 times, Matthew uses the word “Father” to speak of God and *only* on the lips of Jesus. Likewise, the references to the Son (υἱός) are also extremely frequent. Jesus has referred to himself as the “Son of Man”<sup>45</sup> throughout the narrative while individuals ranging from the Jewish community to a Canaanite woman to the narrator himself have called Jesus “Son of David.”<sup>46</sup> Jesus is

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<sup>45</sup>The title υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is used in Matthew’s Gospel 30 times. Cf. Mt. 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 24, 45, 64.

<sup>46</sup>The phrase υἱὸς Δαυὶδ is used exclusively by people other than Jesus in reference to him (except for the one time that the angel of the Lord uses it to refer to Joseph, 1:20). Cf. Mt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15.

also hailed as the “Son of God”<sup>47</sup> several times, and at one point Jesus refers to himself as simply “the Son.”<sup>48</sup> The language of the Spirit (πνεῦμα) as a divine being has also been used by Matthew throughout his story, although with some variance. The Spirit is described as “of God” twice (3:16; 12:28), as “Holy” five times (1:18, 20; 3:11; 12:32; 28:19), and singularly as “Spirit” four times (4:1; 12:18, 31; 22:43).

These words have also been used in combination with one of the others at various moments in the narrative. In 11:27, following Jesus’s woes to the cities that had seen his miracles and not repented, Jesus says, “All things have been delivered to me by my Father (τοῦ πατρὸς μου); and no one knows the Son (τὸν υἱὸν) except the Father (ὁ πατήρ), and no one knows the Father (τὸν πατέρα) except the Son (ὁ υἱὸς) and anyone to whom the Son (ὁ υἱὸς) chooses to reveal him.” Once again, the hearer of these words recognizes the language of authority (i.e., “all things have been delivered to me”). While the connection between the Father and the Son has been referenced several times (e.g., Jesus’s statement in his first sermon that the one who does the will of “my Father who is in heaven” will enter the kingdom of heaven) their relationship is unquestionable after 11:27.

The Father is likewise linked with the Spirit in Jesus’s sending of the twelve disciples in chapter 10. Jesus tells his disciples that they need not worry about what to say on their journey “for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ πατρὸς) speaking through you” (v. 20). The connection between the Spirit and the Father is not the only point that Jesus seems to be making. The fact that the “Spirit of your

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<sup>47</sup> Some variation of υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is used 9 times in Matthew’s Gospel. Cf. Mt. 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54

<sup>48</sup> In Mt. 11:27, the simple phrase “the Son” is used 3 times in quick succession by Jesus himself.

Father” speaks through Jesus’s community of followers is extremely important as well. The authority that Jesus has is extended to his disciples. Later on in this very same charge, Jesus tells his disciples “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me” (v. 40). The groundwork for the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit is being laid.

During the scene in which Jesus is baptized by John (3:13-17), Matthew tells his audience that the heavens were opened when Jesus came out of the water with two major signs of divine presence endorsing the one they will call Immanuel. The first is the descent of “the Spirit of God” (τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 17) upon the baptized Jesus. The second is a “voice from heaven” (φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν) saying, “This is my beloved Son (ὁ υἱός μου) with whom I am well pleased” (v. 18). Matthew draws connections between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit early on at this important stage of Jesus’s ministry as well.

While Matthew does not shy away from the language of Father, Son, and Spirit, chapter 28 is the first time that these words are strung together in such an explicit way. In this final command to Jesus’s community of followers, the disciples are told to be baptizing the nations “in the name of the Father (τοῦ πατρὸς), and of the Son (τοῦ υἱοῦ), and of the Holy Spirit (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος).” This command is connected to and preceded by Jesus’s statement that “all authority (πᾶσα ἐξουσία) in heaven and on earth” has been given to him. It is because of the authority, “all authority” in fact, that Jesus’s community of followers are commissioned.

We have already discussed at some length the important value of seeing authority as being connected with God’s Spirit. However, several scholars whose work has been

extremely important in this study suggest that Matthew does not connect the authority of the Spirit to the authority of Jesus-Immanuel as he commissions his disciples. Montague suggests that Matthew's depiction of Jesus "does not need the Holy Spirit to mediate his presence to the church, for he never really left it."<sup>49</sup> Kupp also suggests that "for Matthew Spirit language is secondary to his community's primary experience of the present, risen Jesus,"<sup>50</sup> with no requirement or involvement of the Spirit. "It is noteworthy how silent Matthew is about the Spirit," states Luz. "Matthew speaks of the abiding presence of Jesus instead of the Spirit."<sup>51</sup>

But is Matthew so silent about the Spirit? Are the abiding presence of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit so entirely separate from one another? Does Jesus's ongoing presence with his church mean a lack of "need" for the Spirit? If we answer yes to these questions, then why, in a Gospel so focused on the continued incarnate presence of Jesus do we also get an emphasis on the Spirit? Even more so, why does Matthew emphasize the activity of the Spirit precisely in those places where Jesus's ongoing presence is highlighted most clearly (1:18-25; 18:15-20; 28:16-20)? Based upon the evidence that we have examined in this study, it is hard to see how the presence of Jesus-Immanuel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit could be separated and segmented. Instead, we have observed just how the activity of the Spirit is intricately interwoven with the presence of Jesus with and among his gathered community throughout Matthew's Gospel.

Here at the end of Matthew's Gospel the reader not only observes Jesus's command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they are also

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<sup>49</sup> Montague, *Holy Spirit*, 308.

<sup>50</sup> Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 230.

<sup>51</sup> Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 635.



reminded of Jesus's own baptism. In both of these instances, Matthew has emphasized the interconnectedness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Jesus came up from the water at his baptism, Matthew says that "the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove...and a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son'" (3:16-17). The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, although not formulaically named, are all present and active as Jesus begins his mission. In like manner, as Jesus commissions his gathered community just prior to their mission, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the name under which his disciples are to baptize more followers. Gundry remarks on the significance of this for Matthew's Gospel as every other baptismal statement in the New Testament that speaks of baptism is only in the name of Jesus.<sup>52</sup> If Matthew was more concerned with the abiding presence of Jesus *instead of* the Spirit, then why would he be the only biblical author to speak of baptism in the name of the Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit? Once again, we are able to observe the important role that the Spirit plays in Matthew's Gospel, in his Christology, and in his ecclesiology.

As we look at the final command that is given to Jesus's disciples ("make disciples...baptizing... and teaching," v. 19) along with the final promise that Jesus leaves them with ("I am with you always," v. 20), it is easy enough for us to see the important connections between the gathered community of Jesus's followers and the activity of the Spirit. We are also able to notice, by means of the Immanuel motif, how these are expressions of divine presence in the person of Jesus. As Matthew concludes his Gospel with Jesus actively present and with his people, it is difficult to imagine that

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<sup>52</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 596.

Matthew does not hope that present and future communities that gather in Jesus's name experience this same active presence of Jesus-Immanuel.

### **Conclusion**

We have now observed the various ways in which Matthew's Immanuel motif uniquely creates a narrative Christology that understands divine presence as a reality in the person of Jesus Christ that is expressed in his community of followers and the activity of the Holy Spirit. The *inclusio* that frames the entire narrative portrays Jesus as God with us to the end of the age. Throughout the whole story we have followed this presence motif and seen how Matthew's concept of Jesus-Immanuel goes beyond the three explicit mentions in 1:23, 18:20, and 28:20. Nothing short of the entire gospel shapes Matthew's understanding of Jesus's presence.

We have taken note of how Matthew understands this presence as a lived experience for those who are part of the gathered community of Jesus's followers. The development of the term and concept of "his people" alongside the reconstitution of what it means to "gather together" have provided us the opportunity to see who Christ is with always. While Jesus's opponents find themselves growing in tension and distance with Jesus, his disciples find themselves being drawn closer into his presence.

We have also uncovered features of Matthew's narrative that prevent us from ignoring how the presence of Christ is connected with the activity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is present and active at key moments in Matthew's narrative. Not only does the Spirit play a vital role in the birth of Jesus-Immanuel, but Matthew also connects the Spirit to all three explicit uses of the Immanuel motif. By recognizing binding and loosing as language of authority and that Matthew's concept of authority is connected to

the Spirit, we were able to observe the importance of authority as it is given to Jesus's followers.

In seeking an answer to the initial question of the story that the entire narrative of Matthew's Gospel tells of Jesus, it has become apparent that it tells the story of Jesus-Immanuel. Jesus Christ – the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Man, the Son of God – is God with God's people. Matthew tells the story of how God gathers God's people, gives them authority, and promises to be with them always. It is a story in which God's presence is realized in the activity of God's Spirit. Matthew's narrative is one in which God's presence is found in the person of Jesus, experienced within his gathered community of followers, and dynamically expressed in the movement of the Spirit.

It has been intentionally stated that Matthew's Immanuel motif tells the story of divine presence as a *reality*. This is Matthew's goal, to communicate to his audience that God's presence is not a mere concept or abstraction, but that it is an actuality. The implications go beyond Matthew's initial audience and they extend to the gathered communities of Jesus's followers around the world in this very age – surely to the end of the age and always. Matthew's story, and his whole story at that, continues to tell modern readers, audiences, and the global church alike that God is with us and that God is with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

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