AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION
OF MATTHEW 7:21-23
TO THE OBEDIENCE THEOLOGY
OF MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

A PH.D. THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This investigative study determines the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel using the grammatico-historical exegetical method for the purpose of evaluating whether these verses present an OT-law-based entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It further assesses the validity of David Sim’s charge that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline. It argues that the concepts of “greater righteousness,” “doing the will of the Father,” Jesus “knowing” someone, and the avoidance of being an “evil doer” all contribute to what is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Mt 7:21-23 contributes to Matthew’s obedience theology through assuming Jesus as the law’s eschatological fulfiller and one to whom total surrender is due as the divine Lord, the Eschatological Judge, and the “Ultimate Knower” of men’s hearts and lives. To properly obey, one is to respond to Jesus with a totally humble heart and life that exhibits “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented positive experiential relationship with the Father, Jesus, and others, as defined solely by Jesus. The focal point of obedience in Mt 7:21-23 is Jesus. The authority of Jesus and the expected compliance to him revealed in this passage and Matthew as a whole, as well as the effect of his teachings upon the OT law, supports the conclusion that obedience in Matthew is not OT-law-based but faith-in-Jesus-based. From this conclusion and a proper lexical understanding of ἀνομία, it is determined that Sim’s charge of anti-Paulinism, with respect to this passage, rests on an unsound appraisal of Matthean obedience theology and is invalid.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful wife

Linda

who has been my constant and patient supporter

in my endeavor to complete this thesis and this degree.
APPROVAL SHEET

Glenn W. Giles

Read and Approved By:

Dr Ray L Parker, Chairperson
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CHAPTER I: RESEARCH CONCERN

Since the middle of the 20th century various scholars have claimed that the Gospel of Matthew is anti-Pauline. In 1951 S. G. F. Brandon argued that Matthew was not just anti-Pauline but anti-Paul. He claimed first of all, in the backdrop of Paul’s rebuke of Peter in Antioch (Galatians), that in order to “combat the rising reputation of Paul,” Matthew presented Peter as being “first” (Mt 10:2) among the apostles, (hence, he was greater than Paul). Matthew, he claimed, also added to Mark’s account the statement that Peter was the rock upon which Christ would build his church in Mt 16:17-19, a further indication of Petrine superiority over Paul.

Brandon secondly claimed that Mt 5:17-19 was a “personal attack” against Paul in its pro-Torah stance that Jesus did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Thirdly Brandon claimed that the Parable of the Tares was “an attack on Paul’s policy of allowing the morally lax Gentiles into the Church” (Mt. 13:36-43).

Later, Gerhard Barth (1963) claimed that Mt 5.17ff, 7:15ff, and 24.11ff were written against “antinomians” but stopped short of claiming these were written personally against Paul. Hans Dieter Betz (1985), while seeing anti-Paulinism in the Sermon on the Mount, also stopped short of claiming it as a personal attack on Paul. He stated, for example, concerning the false prophets of Mt 7:15-20, “There can be no doubt that these false prophets are Gentile Christian missionaries like Paul, who proclaim the gospel apart from the law.” In 1991 Alan F. Segal

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2 Brandon, 232-33.
3 Brandon, 233.
4 Brandon, 236.
5 Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew (London: SCM Press LTD, 1963), 159.
wrote the following concerning the term “lawlessness” in Mt 7:23 and 24:12: “This seems to me to be an oblique reference to Paulinism, or extreme Paulinism.” These scholars since Brandon, while claiming Matthew was addressing anti-Paulinism, stopped short of Brandon’s position of claiming that the text was written against Paul himself.

This changed however in 1998 when David Sim, while acknowledging that Brandon’s argument was a “failed attempt,” resurrected and modified Brandon’s position in his book *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community.* Here Sim claimed to have supplied “evidence” which Brandon lacked to argue for Matthew being explicitly anti-Paul. Sim declared that in Mt 5:17-19; 7:13-27; 13:36-43; and 16:17-19 “Matthew vigorously attacks Paul and his law-free gospel” and that these texts show “Matthew’s implacable opposition both to Paul himself and to his law-free version of the gospel.”

In 2000, David Catchpole continued to echo the anti-Paulinism argument from the perspective that Matthew’s Christianity was a “Christian Judaism” as opposed to a Jewish Christianity. He concluded that “at the very least . . . Matthean Christianity is fundamentally at variance with Pauline Christianity and that the real Christian threat which concerns the evangelist may well come from the direction of the Pauline tradition.”

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8 Sim, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism,” 777.
10 Sim, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism,” 778.
11 Sim, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism,” 199.
12 Sim, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism,” 200.
14 Catchpole, 59.
In the ensuing years, Sim published articles on Mt 7:21-23 (2007)\(^\text{15}\) and Mt 28:16-20 (2008)\(^\text{16}\) expanding on his thesis of Matthew being anti-Pauline and anti-Paul. He also published an article comparing Matthean and Pauline intertextuality in an attempt to establish that Matthew had access to Paul’s writings and thus could very well have opposed him (2009).\(^\text{17}\) In Sim’s view, Brandon’s position was correct and historically “Matthean scholarship has been moving towards a position whereby Brandon’s basic insights can and should be resurrected.”\(^\text{18}\)

Foundational to these charges is the argument that Matthean theology opposed Pauline theology with respect to observance of the OT law and one’s entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is asserted that Matthew requires those who would follow Jesus to observe the OT law while Paul holds to a faith-based gospel in which obedience to the law is not necessary. In an attempt to further evaluate this claim, this study examines Matthew’s theology of obedience with a focus on one of the proposed texts which Sim claims is anti-Pauline: Mt 7:21-23. It states,

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Mt 7:21-23).\(^\text{19}\)

Research Problem

As noted above, the association of obedience to the OT law and faith in Matthew and Paul continues to be debated. David Sim claims Mt 7:21-23 gives an anti-Pauline perspective with


\(^{18}\) Sim, “Matthew’s Anti-Paulinism,” 767.

\(^{19}\) All Bible quotations unless otherwise noted are from Kenneth Barker, ed., *The NIV Study Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).
respect to obedience to the law and entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew states that “only he who does the will of my Father” (NIV, emphasis mine) will enter the kingdom of heaven and that those who do not do the Father’s will are “workers of lawlessness” (ESV, emphasis mine).

Sim claims that Matthew’s “workers of lawlessness” in this passage refers to “Pauline Christians” and shows that Matthew was pro-OT-law or pro-Torah. For Matthew, in Sim’s view, one would necessarily have to obey the Torah to enter the kingdom of heaven. If so understood, this passage would seem to teach that Matthew held to an OT-law-based obedience for entrance into the kingdom of heaven in contrast to what seems to be Paul’s teaching of a law-free faith-based obedience for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This issue is the crux and basis for this present study.

In order to comprehensively evaluate Sim’s claim one must delineate both the nature of the notion of obedience in the theology of Matthew in all the passages for which Sim makes his claim as well as the notion of obedience in Paul. The research in this study has as its goal to examine one aspect of the Matthean side of the issue presented above: The determination of the nature of obedience in Matthew’s gospel as seen through Mt 7:21-23. An in-depth study of the biblical concepts of (1) “lordship,” (2) “doing the will of the Father,” (3) “entrance into the kingdom of heaven”, (4) “knowing” in the phrase “I never knew you,” and (5) “lawlessness” in Mt 7:21-23 and its context, may shed new light on the essence of Matthew’s theology of obedience and the validity of Sim’s claim.

Research literature does not indicate these concepts in this passage and in Matthew have been adequately explored with respect to how they contribute to Matthew’s theology of obedience for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In all of literature surveyed in connection with this study, only one doctoral dissertation and one BD thesis have been found which deal

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exclusively or extensively with Mt 7:21-23. In addition, only one book has been found which attempts a comprehensive examination of Matthean ethics. It is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of this passage and open up new doors of insight into Matthew’s theology of obedience and thereby provide a basis for a better evaluation of anti-Pauline charges against it.

**Research Thesis**

This study examines the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel.

**Research Question**

What is the message of Mt 7:21-23 with respect to the notion of obedience to the disciple of Christ?

**Delimitation**

In order to narrow the scope of this paper, this study will be delimited to an in-depth focus on the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to Matthean obedience theology. Other Matthean passages which speak to the concept of obedience will be studied but the focus of this study will be on the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to this theme. Paul’s theology of obedience and theologies of

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obedience of other Bible authors and books such as John, James, Hebrews, etc., will not be examined in this study.

Focus Statements

In order to explore the research thesis of this study in detail, the following focus statements have been adopted:

1. To discover the nature of “Lord, Lord” in Mt 7:21-22 and its contribution to Matthean theology of obedience.
2. To determine the nature of “doing the will of the Father” as a means of entering the kingdom of heaven in Mt 7:21, the Sermon on the Mount, and Matthew’s gospel as a whole.
3. To determine the nature of the notion of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” and its impact on Matthean theology of obedience.
4. To discover the nature of “knowing” in Mt 7:23 and the Old and New Testaments, and how this concept may speak to obedience in Mt 7:21-23.
5. To determine the nature of the term “lawlessness” (ESV, Mt 7:23) and how it may reflect on the involvement of the law in Matthew’s obedience theology.
6. To determine whether or not the nature of obedience in Mt 7:21-23 is OT-law-based.

Procedural Overview

In developing this thesis, Chapter 2 reviews previous research on the concepts relating to Matthean theology of obedience. This includes previous research on (1) the general orientation of
Matthean obedience and (2) literature specific to the exegesis of Mt 7:21-23. Concepts discovered are then summarized and evaluated and opportunities for knowledge advancement enumerated.

Chapter 3 is an exegetical investigation of the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 and its contribution to the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel. In accomplishing this task, specific attention is given to this passage’s place in the context and structure of the Sermon on the Mount and how the major themes of the Sermon on the Mount inform the meaning of Mt 7:21-23. Jesus’ relationship with the law and as well as the notion of the concept of “greater righteousness” in the Sermon on the Mount are examined as major factors influencing the meaning of this passage. The particular concepts of “Lordship,” “doing the will of the Father,” “entrance into the kingdom of heaven,” “knowing,” and “lawlessness,” are then investigated from the perspective of how they function in Mt 7:21-23 and how they contribute to Matthean obedience theology. A conclusion is then drawn concerning the notion and nature of Matthew’s theology of obedience with respect to entrance into the kingdom of heaven in Mt 7:21-23.

Chapter 4 presents a survey of the general nature of obedience and Jesus’ relationship with the law in Matthew outside of Mt 7:21-23 with the goal of determining their general uniformity and harmony with the nature of obedience discovered in Chapter III. The concept of “authority” and its transference to Jesus is examined through a study of the authoritative titles given to Jesus, the use of the term ἐξουσία in Matthew, and a special look at Mt 21:43 and 28:19-20. Then a study of Jesus’ relationship to and effect upon the OT law in Matthew is examined. After this, the uniformity of obedience discovered in Mt 7:21-23 with Matthew as a whole is evaluated. Next, an assessment of the Matthean side of the crux of this study as to whether obedience in Matthew is OT-law-based is undertaken. Finally, an evaluation of Sim’s claim that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline is addressed.
The Conclusion summarizes the implications and application of this research. Here the Research Concern of this study is reviewed, the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel is restated, and conclusions concerning the nature of obedience in Matthew’s gospel as a whole are made. After this, further research needed to more fully evaluate the notion of obedience in Matthews’ gospel as well as the charges of Matthew being pro-law and anti-Pauline are outlined. Finally, Matthean obedience-expectations of a disciple of Christ for entrance into the kingdom of heaven are delineated with a focus on the contribution of Mt 7:21-23.

Research Assumptions

The research in this study assumes a conservative Christian World View perspective and adopts grammatico-historical exegesis of the text as the basic methodology to be used in determining the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 and the notion of obedience in Matthew. I will thus accept the perspective that Matthew faithfully transmitted the words of Jesus in his gospel without creating words and placing them in the mouth of Jesus with new meaning for Matthew’s audience from a “post-Easter” perspective. Although interactive discussions with higher critical and literary critical methodologies will be entertained and their results adopted when it is determined that they contribute to the thesis of this study, the grammatico-historical approach will be the foundational methodology followed in this study. In addition, general gospel hermeneutics as outlined by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard in their comprehensive study entitled *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* will be assumed in this study.

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25 I will be considering the text of Matthew as it stands today without much interaction with Textual, Source, Form, Redaction, or Tradition History Criticisms.
CHAPTER II: THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE IN MATTHEW
AND MATTHEW 7:21-23

IN INTERACTION WITH PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In setting the stage for a look at how Matthew 7:21-23 contributes to the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel, this chapter will review previous research focused on Matthean theology of obedience and the present passage under consideration. Research on (1) literature dealing with the general orientation of Matthean obedience, and (2) literature specific to Matthew 7:21-23 will be summarized and evaluated.

The Nature of Matthean Obedience

The notion of “obedience” in Matthew will be developed as this research progresses. However, a starting simple working definition of “obedience” can be found in the concept of “compliance” which has been given the definition of “a yielding to a wish, request, or demand.” Compliance or obedience would seem then to involve a person who yields to follow direction given by another in a manner consistent with the will of the one who initiated the direction. In this section of this chapter, I will be reviewing a work that looks at the nature of obedience in Matthew that is necessary for one to be in compliance with authority in Matthew. This will, as a result, require that the subject of “ultimate binding authority” in Matthew be examined since how this authority is determined, manifested, established, and administered is key.

28 The American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. “Compliance.”
to understanding appropriate obedience or compliance. This will be investigated in this chapter but more thoroughly in Chapters III and IV.

There are very few monographs, if any, that are exclusively dedicated specifically to the comprehensive nature of Matthean “obedience.” In fact, in my research, I have only found one monograph which attempts to formulate a comprehensive view of Matthean ethics: Roger Mohrlang’s *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives.* Therefore, it is Mohrlang’s work that I will review in-depth in this section of this chapter. While Mohrlang attempts to formulate a comprehensive ethic for both Matthew and Paul individually and then

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29 In my research I did not find even one monograph devoted solely and exclusively to the general orientation necessary for obedience in Matthew. Mohrlang, p. 5, states that, up to 1984 when he wrote his book, “There is no single study . . . that provides a truly comprehensive account of Matthew’s ethical viewpoint.” He goes on to state that the works of G. Barth (including “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. G. Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1963), pp. 58-164), E. P. Blair (*Jesus and the Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960)), and G. Strecker (including his *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1962)) “come closest to doing so” but still are not “comprehensive.” Mohrlang also seems to be correct when he notes that there have been many works on Matthean ethics but they have been “centered on the Sermon on the Mount, which was all too often treated independently of the rest of the Gospel” (p. 5). Hence, they have not included a comprehensive view of Matthew’s view of obedience. (For the purposes of this study, I am using the term “obedience” in Matthew as the proper compliance or action proceeding from Matthean “ethics” or Matthean philosophy of right and wrong). Therefore I will attempt in this study to view the whole of Matthew and not just the Sermon on the Mount in determining the contribution of Matthew 7:21-23 to the obedience theme of Matthew’s Gospel.

This focus on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew in connection with obedience theology seems to continue even after Mohrlang’s comment. For example, Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), focus on the Sermon on the Mount to “reclaim Jesus Christ for Christian ethics and for the moral life of the churches” (p. 11) and to show that the “Christian life consists of following Jesus-obeying his teachings and practicing the way of life he taught and modeled” (pp. 11-12). This excellent study focuses mainly on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and not the whole of the Gospel of Matthew to formulate what it means to “obey.” To their credit they do attempt to place the ethics found in the Sermon on the Mount in the broader context of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God and do “consider the whole of the canon as authoritative for Christian ethics” (p. 13). However the concept of the kingdom of God is drawn from all three synoptics without a specific focus on the Matthean perspective as to how Matthew’s perspective might modify or enlighten the nature of obedience in Matthew’s gospel in which the Sermon on the Mount resides. Thus there continues to be a need for more comprehensive studies on Matthean obedience.

30 See the complete reference for Mohrlang’s work in footnote 24 above.

31 Other works do deal with individual aspects of this theme but are not comprehensive. They too will be consulted, referenced, and reviewed with respect to Matthean obedience or ethics later on as this thesis progresses. The term “ethics” has been defined as “moral philosophy” or “any set of moral principles or values” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “ethics”). The term “obedience,” as noted above, refers to the proper action, outcome, or compliance connected with a proper “ethic.” The two words are not totally synonymous but are interconnected. Ethics points to the proper actions, thoughts, or the obedience expected by some authority, whereas “obedience” is the actual proper action or thought that proceeds from proper ethics. Therefore in studying Mohrlang’s monograph on Matthean “ethics” the direction for proper “obedience” in Matthew can be examined. I make this connection of “ethics” and “obedience” to justify using Mohrlang’s work to review the concept of Matthean “obedience” in literature today. Again, I have not found a single monograph that focuses exclusively and comprehensively on the concept of “obedience” in Matthew.
compare the two, it is only his section on Matthean ethics which I will review here in how it points to proper “obedience.”

**Mohrlang on Matthean Ethics**

Mohrlang approaches the subject of Matthean ethics from a redaction-critical perspective and assumes that there is a “community with which the evangelist identifies, and whose understanding and tradition are mirrored in what he writes.” Hence, he compares Mark with Matthew and assumes that in many places Matthew’s redaction of Mark indicates something about the audience to which he writes. In the process of creating a comprehensive view of Matthean ethic, he discusses five angles: (1) “Law,” (2) “Reward and Punishment,” (3) “Relationship to Christ and the Role of Grace,” (4) “Love,” and (5) “Inner Forces.” I will discuss these in sequence.

**Mohrlang on Matthew and the Law**

Mohrlang begins his analysis of Matthew and the law by correctly placing Matthew’s Gospel in its Jewish background setting and expressing that “ethical living” in the first century

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32 Mohrlang, 3.
33 Mohrlang, vii.
34 That Matthew is a Jewish Gospel exhibiting Jewish background and written to a predominantly Jewish-Christian audience seems to be the consensus of most scholars today. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 17, states, Mark seems to have been written with non-Jews in mind, but all the features in Mark that point to a non-Jewish readership disappear in Matthew’s editing. Matthew promotes mission to all peoples, but he promotes it to Jewish Christians and to a constituency that appears not to have had any significant Gentile membership and seems not to have much natural social interaction with non-Jews. In agreement, Grant R. Osborne, *(Matthew, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 31), states that there is a “major consensus” that “Matthew writes a Jewish gospel”. He continues, Matthew especially had the Jewish-Christian church and the Jewish people in mind. With the preponderance of OT fulfillment quotations (“in order to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet”), the rabbinic style of the reasoning in several passages (e.g., 15:1-20; 10:1-9), the centrality of Jesus’ fulfilling the law in the Sermon on the Mount (5:17-19), and
for Jews was “understood largely in terms of compliance with the law.” He also states that “in any moral system based on legal considerations, authority, obedience and judgment were key concepts in the overall structure, and heavily coloured the Jewish view of life.” Mohrlang then explores Matthew’s seemingly “disparate statements” about whether the law is still valid or not for his audience. After discussing several passages and issues in Matthew, Mohrlang concludes that Matthew “agues strongly that the whole law is valid and authoritative for the Christian community.” In what follows below, I will survey the passages and topics he considers in making this conclusion. These include Mt 5:17-19; 12:1-14; 15:1-20; 19:3-9; 22:34-40; scribes and oral tradition, a look at “antinomianism,” “entering the kingdom,” the antitheses in 5:21-48, Matthew’s “anti-Pharisaic polemic,” Matthew’s “dual concern,” the concept of Matthew’s Jesus being a “new Moses,” and Matthew’s “view of the Christian life.”

Matthew 5:17-19

The most important and “notoriously difficult” passage to interpret, Mohrlang correctly notes, in connection with Matthew’s view of the law is Mt 5:17-19. The discussion of the meaning of this passage centers around the term πληρόω in Mt 5:17 where Jesus says, with respect to the law and the prophets, “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

the way Jesus relates to the Jewish people throughout, it seems clear that Jewish issues are uppermost.

On this, see also R. T. France, (The Gospel of Matthew, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 15), where he states, “Most scholars would now agree that the gospel derives from a largely Jewish-Christian community.” It is debated however as to whether this community is still connected to the synagogue (on this see David L. Turner’s discussion in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew, eds. Robert W Yarbrough and Robert H Stein, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 14-15).

35 Mohrlang, 7.
36 Mohrlang, 7.
37 Mohrlang, 7.
38 Mohrlang, 43.
39 Mohrlang, 8.
40 My translation.
Mohrlang discusses four different proposals of scholars as to what Matthew meant here by Jesus “fulfilling” the law. The proposals he chooses to consider are: “(1) to obey or carry out the demands of the law; (2) to affirm or validate the law; (3) to explicate or live out the deeper meaning and intent of the law; (4) to complete or bring to pass the ultimate goal of the law—an interpretation that is sometimes taken to imply that some or all of the precepts of the law are now set aside as no longer applicable.” Mohrlang notes that the fourth interpretation would allow πληρωμα the same meaning for both concepts of “law” and “prophets” in verse 17 but he rejects this interpretation as “the one least likely to represent the writer’s intention.” He notes that the fourth interpretation sense is found in the use of πληρωμα in Mt 3:15 but he feels the closer context of Mt 5:21-48 and the passages in the rest of Matthew which focus on love as most important tend to uphold the third interpretation. Yet, he notes, the “antithesis” of πληρωμα to καταλυμα in Mt 5:17 “argues for the second” interpretation. Mohrlang concludes, without much discussion, that there is so great a lack of consensus and that “Matthew’s view of the law cannot be based on a clear and agreed exegesis” of πληρωμα here in Mt 5:17.

In spite of this, Mohrlang does come to his own conclusions. He states that he does not believe that the temporal phrase “until everything is accomplished” in Mt 5:18c can be used to support fulfillment of “the law in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus” which would tend to support the third and fourth senses above. Rather he opts for Mt 5:18c to refer to Mt 5:18a (“until heaven and earth disappear”) and mean the “eternal validity of the law . . . or . . . its validity until the Eschaton.” In addition, he does not allow the terms “these commandments” in Mt 5:19 to refer to Jesus’ words, as some interpreters do, but rather to the law itself. To do so, he claims, can

41 Mohrlang, 8.
42 Mohrlang, 8. Mohrlang does not expound on why he believes this is “least likely to represent the writer’s intention.”
43 Mohrlang, 8.
44 Mohrlang, 8. Mohrlang seems to only give a somewhat superficial look at this issue and simply concludes that there can be no agreed consensus.
45 Mohrlang, 9.
only be done by “ignoring the plain meaning of the expression in the more immediate context of 5:17-19.” In discussing the tradition history of this passage, Mohrlang opts to look at the passage as a whole allowing the established text that we now have in its entirety to depict Matthew’s understanding of the law. Mohrlang also concludes that πληρώσω here in Mt 5:17 when seen in the passage as a whole, has no “antinomian implications.”

Having discussed all of the above, Mohrlang concludes the following:

. . . with regard to 5.17-19, no matter what the precise nuance of πληρωσάω or the exact details of the tradition-history lying behind the text, the point of the passage as a whole, as it now stands in the Gospel, can only be that the entire law remains valid and demands strict obedience from the Christian community . . .

. . . It can only be concluded, then, that the passage as a whole is to be understood as an affirmation of the continuing validity of the entire law for Christian disciples—right down to the least jot and tittle.


After commenting on Mt 5:17-19, Mohrlang attempts to buttress his concluded view of Jesus and the law with a Redaction Critical look at Mt 12:1-14; 15:1-20; 19:3-9; and 22:34-40. In these passages Mohrlang isolates what he claims is Matthew’s softening of Mark’s version of Jesus’ abrogation of the law which these passages seem to portray. He claims “Matthew reduces the sharpness of the disagreement or otherwise colours it so as to avoid the implication that the law is no longer authoritative and binding.”

With respect to the two pericopes Mt 12:1-8 and 9-14 concerning the Sabbath, Mohrlang builds his case mainly with a focus on Matthew’s changes and pericope displacement of the

46 Mohrlang, 9.
48 Mohrlang, 8-9.
49 Mohrlang, 9.
50 Mohrlang, 9.
51 Mohrlang, 9.
Markan account. Matthew (1) *omits* Mk 1:23-28 which speaks of Jesus driving out an evil spirit in the Capernaum synagogue on the Sabbath and (2) *shifts* the accounts of harvesting grain on the Sabbath and the healing of the man with the shreveled hand on the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6) to later in the Gospel account thus separating it from the Markan Sabbath healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and the healing of many others (see Mt 8:14-17). Mohrlang notes that, in his view, Matthew deals with Jesus’ violation of the Sabbath law only after having Jesus claim the “abiding authority of the law” in Mt 5:17-19 and showing Jesus’ “radical . . . humanitarian” interpretation of it in Mt 5:20-48. Mark however presents Jesus’ Sabbath law controversies very much earlier beginning in his first chapter. Concerning these shifts by Matthew, Mohrlang states the following: “The shifting of the two major pericopes dealing with Jesus’ Sabbath ‘violations’ back to chapter 12 would seem to be an attempt by the evangelist to remove them from the embarrassing position of prominence they hold in Mark’s Gospel.” Hence, Matthew then is “softening” Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ friction with the Sabbath law. Added to this, Matthew has “prefaced” these two pericopes with Jesus’ words about his yoke being easy and his burden light (Mt 11:28-30) which Mohrlang understands as a contrast with “the burdensome tyranny of Pharisaic legalism” and not an attack on the law.

In addition to making the omission and shifts above, Mohrlang notes that Matthew, in 12:1, *adds* the term “hungry” with reference to the disciples picking grain and eating it on the Sabbath for the possible purpose of pressing the issue of Jesus’ concern for prioritizing human needs. With the addition of verse 5 (where the priests work on the Sabbath day but are not guilty of breaking the Sabbath), Mohrlang indicates that Jesus is arguing in a *qal wahomer*

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52 This stance assumes a Markan priority which I also assume in this thesis.
53 Mohrlang, 10.
54 Mohrlang, 10.
55 Mohrlang, 10.
56 Mohrlang, 10. Mohrlang also states two other possible purposes for the addition of “hungry” by Matthew: (1) as the reason for the disciples harvesting grain on the Sabbath, (2) to help the disciples’ situation to justifiably be compared to the hunger of David’s situation (where he and his companions were hungry and ate the consecrated bread, expounded on in verse 4).
(greater to lesser) manner in which the law gives allowance for one commandment to be greater than another in certain types of situations. Thus the Sabbath law itself would not here be understood as violated by the disciples’ actions. Mohrlang also notes that Matthew leaves out Mark’s phrase “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27), a fairly strong statement, and preserves the seemingly softer statement by Jesus that he is “Lord of the Sabbath.”

All of these changes and shifts in this pericope (Mt 12:1-8) Mohrlang believes gives the following conclusion: “Our overall impression, then, is that while Matthew makes allowances for Jesus’ authoritative interpretation of the law with its emphasis on compassion (12:7), he is careful to avoid leaving the impression that the general law of the Sabbath itself is in any way invalidated.”

For the second pericope (Mt 12:9-14) Mohrlang notes that he believes the Matthean account changes the focus of the Markan version (Mk 3:1-6) from that of healing to “the legality of healing on the Sabbath.” Presumably this is to be supported by Matthew’s addition of the terms “Is it lawful” (vs 9) which is absent from Mark, although Mohrlang does not state this as his reason. Mohrlang here, once again, sees Jesus using the qal wahomer method to justify his intended action to heal on the Sabbath. By adding verse 11, Matthew has Jesus continue his emphasis on the need of showing mercy, by arguing that if one is allowed to lift a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath, even more one should help a human being. Jesus then concludes that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (vs 12). Mohrlang notes that here Matthew has converted Mark’s question “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil . . .?” (Mk 3:4) into a “declaration.” Mohrlang concludes that this pericope shows “Matthew’s legal orientation:

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57 Mohrlang, 10.
58 Mohrlang, 10.
59 Mohrlang, 10.
though the focus is on the expression of compassion, it is viewed within the framework of the law.”

Viewing these two pericopes as a unit, Mohrlang concludes that “it seems likely that Matthew views the Christian community as still under obligation to maintain the general Sabbath law, though not in the same strict and rigid sense as Pharisaic Judaism. In particular, generous allowance is to be made for the expression of care for those in need on the Sabbath.” Hence, Jesus is pro-Sabbath.

The pericope on clean and unclean (Mt 15:1-20) shows several Matthean changes from the Markan account. The most significant change, according to Mohrlang, with respect to Matthew and the law is Matthew’s omission of καθαρίζειν πάντα τὰ βρώματα (“he declared all foods clean” (ESV) found in Mk 7:19). Mohrlang believes this “likely” shows Matthew’s “reluctance to portray Jesus as breaking with the whole system of food laws.” He also notes that Matthew’s change of Mark’s “nothing” (οὐδὲν) in Mk 7:15 to “not what” (οὐ τὸ) in Mt 15:11, with respect to what goes into a man from the outside, may also indicate that he wants to show Jesus as supporting the food laws. Although he does not enumerate them, he also claims that Matthew, in 15:20, omits “those Marcan elements that conflict most sharply with the dietary laws, and shifts the focus instead to the nature of true defilement.” The central point of heart-defilement is what Matthew preserves and expresses as his main focus here. Thus Matthew was pro-Jewish dietary food laws.

With respect to the oral tradition, Mohrlang also does not believe this passage shows Jesus’ displeasure with it in general. He notes that the whole of Matthew is only directed “against those points of the tradition that either conflict with or ignore the more basic demands of the

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60 Mohrlang, 11.
61 Mohrlang, 11. Mohrlang, in passing, cautiously notes in support of this, that Matthew’s addition of ἐὰν δὲ σαβαταριασμὸς in 24:20 “is taken by the vast majority of scholars as confirmation of his sabbatarianism.”
62 Mohrlang, 11.
63 Mohrlang, 11.
law.” He goes on to note that Matthew’s omission of Mk. 7:13b, “and you do many things like that,” is further evidence of this point. It was rather only the abuse of oral tradition authority that Jesus was against. Hence Jesus was, in general, also pro-oral tradition.

In Mt 19:3-9, Mohrlang sees Matthew’s omission of Mark’s statement (Mk 10:12) about a woman divorcing her husband as an indication of Matthew’s pro-Jewish stance. In addition Matthew’s addition to Mark of the phrases “for any and every reason” (Mt 19:3) and “except for marital unfaithfulness” (Mt 19:9) indicate his pro-Shammaitic Jewish posture. The result of these Matthean changes according to Mohrlang is “to improve the flow of the argument and to focus on the priority of the Genesis provision rather than the Mosaic concession.” Understanding Moses’ direction about giving a certificate of divorce (Dt 24:1-4; Mt 19:7) as a “concession” is interpreted by Mohrlang “not as an abrogation of Torah, but as an intensification of its demands.” Thus this passage in his view is pro-Torah.

In Mt 22:24-40 Jesus responds to the question of which is the greatest commandment. In this passage Mohrlang notes that Matthew redacts Mark’s version in a couple of places: Matthew changes Mark’s γράμματες υπό το νομίκος (vs 35) and adds “all the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (vs 40). These two things, Mohrlang claims, shows that the question is “tied much more closely by Matthew to the law” than in Mark. Hence, the command to love is pro-law.

By way of summary, Mohrlang claims that, in these passages, Matthew seems to soften Mark’s version so that Jesus is not depicted as being against the law in any way. In fact, in several instances they seem to build up Jesus’ association with the law. Jesus is seen as pro-Sabbath, he views compassion within the framework of the law, is pro-Jewish dietary food laws,

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64 Mohrlang, 12.
65 Mohrlang, 12.
66 Mohrlang, 12.
67 Mohrlang, 13.
and even pro-oral tradition. All of these passages help bolster the conclusion Mohrlang made earlier concerning Mt 5:17-19 that, in the gospel of Matthew as a whole, “the entire law remains valid” and is to be understood as continuing to be valid for Christian disciples “right down to the least jot and tittle.”

*Scribes and Oral Tradition*

Mohrlang believes that there are two significant places which show that Matthew supports the scribes (the “traditional interpreters of the law”) and “does not wish to deny the validity and authority of the scribal system as a whole.” He points to Mt 23:2-3 where Jesus instructs the crowds and his disciples to obey the scribes and the Pharisees and do everything they say to do because they sit in Moses’ seat and are the authoritative or “acknowledged expounders of the Mosaic law.” He also points to Mt 23:23 where, although the scribes and Pharisees are hypocritical in that they neglected the more important things of the law, yet they are still affirmed for their tithing of “mint, dill and cumin.” That Matthew included these two positive statements (even amid many negative statements about them in the Gospel), Mohrlang judges, is “very likely a hint of his basic respect for the scribal function of interpreting the Mosaic law, an acknowledgement of the need for oral tradition in general; he knows that the law always requires interpretation. On the whole, it is not the function of the scribes that is disputed—nor the oral tradition per se—but the spirit and priorities of their teaching . . . and the hypocrisy of their lives in practice.” Mohrlang adds that, in Jesus’ “implicit recognition of the need for authoritative interpretation and application of the law, he stands at one with the scribes and Pharisees.”

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68 Mohrlang, 9.
69 Mohrlang, 13.
70 Mohrlang, 13.
71 Mohrlang, 14.
72 Mohrlang, 14.
Mohrlang also supports his claim by noting some specific instances of the concept of “scribe” associated with Christianity. The first instance involves two texts that point to Christian scribes: Mt 13:52 and 23:34. The first instance he feels is a Jewish scribe who was converted and the second possibly is a “separate order of Christian scribes.”73 Hence he concludes that there were some men who were scribes who functioned in the Christian setting. Mohrlang says it is not clear however what the relationship between the Christian and Jewish scribes was with respect to their teaching authority in the Christian community. Christian scribes also would be different from the Jewish scribes in that they would never be called “Rabbi” or “Teacher” as that designation was only for Jesus (Mt 23:7-10). The supreme authority to interpret the Torah belonged to Jesus and their authority was “derived from and subordinate to his” and “their interpretation and teaching . . . governed by his.”74 However they were still called “scribes.”

The second instance involves many scriptures and Mohrlang’s hypothesis that Matthew was a converted scribe himself. He asserts this possibility noting that “Matthew’s wide knowledge and frequent use of Old Testament Scripture” is strong evidence for this. In addition, his ability to rework Mark’s depiction of Jesus “as a skilled interpreter of Scripture” and present him as one who obeyed it perfectly speaks toward him being a scribe.75 If these things be the case then Mohrlang seems to be implying that Matthew was pro-scribe and pro-scribal law but in a way that would function differently from the Jewish scribes yet which still would involve the law.

**Antinomianism**

The word ἀνομία (lawlessness), Mohrlang notes, is used both referring to the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 23:28) and the Christian Community (Mt 7:23; 13:4; 24:11-12) but in none of

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73 Mohrlang, 15.
74 Mohrlang, 15.
75 Mohrlang, 16.
these instances does the context necessitate it be understood “literally in relation to the question of law.”

Mohrlang believes that, in Matthew, it carries its “broader moral sense” and in antithesis to δικαιοσύνη. Thus it should not be seen as carrying the meaning of “antinomianism” in a “narrow” sense. His point is that the use of this word does not indicate anything about Matthew’s view of the law.

Mohrlang, however, does entertain the idea that Mt 5:17-19 was written against some type of antinomian situation. In this connection, he mentions three possibilities: (1) a challenge from outside the Christian community directed toward it, (2) a challenge from within the Church (some have placed the false prophets mentioned in Mt 7:15, 22; and 24:11 in this category), and (3) some type of Paulinism which the Matthean Church has experienced. It is not possible though, Mohrlang asserts, to identify with certainty which of these may have been the impetus for Mt 5:17-19. Hence while antinomianism seems certain to have been an issue in Matthew’s gospel, the specific source of it is not identifiable.

The Law and Entering the Kingdom

With respect to the observance of the law in connection with entering the kingdom of heaven, Mohrlang notes that Matthew nowhere explicitly states that one must obey the law to enter it. However he does state that Matthew implies that if one does not obey the law that he will not enter the kingdom. He understands Mt 7:24 as indicating this in the sense of one not being safe from judgment if he does not obey the commandments. He does also see Jesus endorsing the law in Mt 19:16-17 (“if you want to enter life, obey the commandments”) but believes these

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76 Mohrlang, 16.
77 Mohrlang, 16.
78 Mohrlang, 16-17.
79 Mohrlang, 18.
words merely introduce Jesus’ more stringent directions which “give the true conditions for gaining life.”

Why does Jesus not explicitly say that one must follow the law to enter into eternal life? Mohrlang believes that it is probably because this “is such a fundamental tenet of the Matthean community that he simply takes it for granted.” However, he has to admit that Mt 5:19 seems to indicate that even if one “denies the validity of the entire law,” he is said to *not* be excluded from the kingdom. This person would, however, be considered “least” in the kingdom. The answer to the dilemma of the necessity of obedience to the law to enter the kingdom and yet the one who does not obey still being able to enter seems to be found in Matthew’s concept of “grace.” Mohrlang states that in Matthew we find “a strong demand for obedience to the law, set within the context of an underlying structure of grace and the framework of the new covenant of God’s salvation and forgiveness in Jesus (1:21; 26:28).” Hence, it would seem, in Mohrlang’s estimate, that while it would be necessary to obey the law to enter the kingdom of heaven, grace could be supplied for those who do not obey it. They would then enter and be “least” in the kingdom.

In summary up to this point, Mohrlang concludes that “for Matthew, the law in its entirety remains a valid and authoritative expression of the will of God for the Christian community, and all of life is viewed from this perspective.” The “will of God” for Christians thus involves obeying the law in its entirety.

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80 Mohrlang, 18.
81 Mohrlang, 18.
82 Mohrlang, 18.
83 Mohrlang, 17.
84 Mohrlang, 19.
The Law Interpreted: Mt 5:21-48: The Antitheses

With respect to the antitheses, Mohrlang claims that they neither abrogate the law nor are they anti-oral law tradition. With respect to the law, he states that in some cases “the actual effect of an antithesis is to annul a precept of the Torah” but the intention of the antitheses is not to annul but “to call for heightened obedience to its deepest intent.” The law as a whole is not abrogated. With respect to the oral law, Mohrlang claims that the issue is not with the oral law per se but with the nature of how the law was being interpreted by the Pharisees and scribes of the day. Hence, the antitheses (i.e. the interpretations of the law by Jesus) are not anti-law nor are they anti-oral law.

Anti-Pharisaic Polemic

Even though Mohrlang as argued earlier that Matthew has a respect for the scribal system and the oral tradition, it is still the case that he is very critical of the Pharisees. The Pharisees are denounced for their “hypocrisy, their legalistic spirit, their focus on mere externals, and their lack of true compassion.” This is seen especially in Mt 23. Mohrlang states that the greatest rift between Jesus and the Pharisees was “the priority he gives to the love commandment in the interpretation and application of the law.” This priority set by Jesus here, Mohrlang claims, does not set aside specific individual laws but puts a priority on which ones should take precedent over others. All the laws do not have the same position of importance. The commandment to love trumps all of the others. Thus here Mohrlang is making the point that it is not the law or the oral law that is being criticized but rather the specific practice and teaching of the Pharisees.

85 Mohrlang, 19.
86 Mohrlang, 19.
87 Mohrlang, 19.
88 Mohrlang, 20.
89 Mohrlang, 21.
90 Mohrlang, 21.
Matthew’s Dual Concern

In this section of Mohrlang’s monograph, he wrestles with what he calls the “dual concern” of Matthew. That is “how do we reconcile the seemingly contradictory elements in Matthew’s view of the law?” Matthew seems to both uphold the whole law and yet give priority to the love commandment which gives freedom to break one commandment in order to follow another. Matthew also seems to set up the scribes as having bonafide authority yet he has Jesus castigate them and their practice throughout this gospel. Mohrlang entertains several possible solutions which involve tradition, redaction, single author/multiple authors, etc. His own suggested solution is the recognition of what he terms “Matthew’s dual citizenship in two communities.” He states that the divergent statements concerning the law in Matthew,

... may be viewed as the work of a single writer waging battle on two fronts: on the one side, against some unspecific antinomian threat or charge; and on the other, against the misplaced priorities of the Pharisees. With regard to the former, he defends the abiding validity of the entire law; with regard to the latter, he emphasizes the right interpretation of the law – even though this leads him at times to contradict not only parts of the scribal tradition but also individual commandments of Torah itself. As a Jew, he cannot conceive of denying either the validity of the law or the basic authority and need of scribal interpretation; but as a Christian, he recognizes that it is Jesus’ interpretation of the law that is supremely authoritative, and that sits in judgement upon all others. The existing tensions, then, probably reflect both the divergent affinities of Matthew’s Jewish—Christian community and the fact that Matthew has only imperfectly integrated the various elements into one coherent whole.

Thus the tension, in Mohrlang’s mind, is not satisfactorily reconciled and is the result of Matthew’s imperfect integration of different elements.

91 Mohrlang, 21.
92 Mohrlang, 21-22.
93 For these, see Mohrlang, 22.
94 Mohrlang, 22.
95 Mohrlang, 22.
Matthew’s Jesus and the Law

How does Jesus fit into all of this? What is his relationship with the law? Mohrlang discusses this issue in some depth. He argues against some scholars’ suggestion that Jesus is a “new lawgiver” or a “new Moses” (or “second Moses”) where the Sermon on the Mount “functions . . . as a new law.”96 He also argues against Jesus’ teachings as “new law” or “Christian halakoth.”97 Mohrlang notes this is further supported by the fact that nowhere in Matthew’s gospel is Jesus’ teaching identified as νόμος (although it is identified as ἐντολή) and he claims “for Matthew, the ‘law’ is still the law of Moses; it has lost none of its authority.”98 Matthew’s Jesus is depicted as one who gives a “new interpretation of the law” and is thus “the great expounder and interpreter of Torah.”99 Jesus gives an authoritative Messianic interpretation of the old law bringing in “radical obedience to its deepest intent” and making the love command the “key principle of interpretation.”100 Jesus is, however, much more than “the authoritative interpreter of the Torah” and the law is not to be seen as more important than Jesus. He is more than a rabbi (רַבָּן) or a teacher (דִידָן). In Matthew he is Lord (κύριος). Mohrlang gives this caution: “We must be careful, then, not to overestimate the prominence of the law in Matthew’s Gospel; the disciple’s life centres not merely on submission to the law, or even to Jesus’ interpretation of the law — though that is an important part of it, and everything is viewed within that framework — but on obedience to Jesus himself as Lord.”101

Mohrlang seems to be continuing to wrestle with Jesus’ position in Matthew’s gospel. He does seem to be saying that Jesus is greater in authority than the law and is the law’s authoritative

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96 Mohrlang, 23.
97 Mohrlang, 23. Mohrlang, 24, states, “Matthew provides us with no comprehensive, detailed system of rabbinic-like halakoth for the living of the Christian life. Indeed, this in itself may substantiate the conviction that Matthew’s community is content to abide by the Torah and the traditional rabbinic halakoth on most points. In any case, it certainly argues against any full-blown view of Jesus’ teachings as a nova lex, at least in the strict sense.”
98 Mohrlang, 24.
99 Mohrlang, 24.
100 Mohrlang, 25.
101 Mohrlang, 25.
interpreter. He is neither a new law giver nor a new Moses. Yet Jesus, even though the law’s supreme interpreter, seems to be himself tied to the law in that everything “is viewed” from the framework of law in Mohrlang’s estimation.

**Matthew’s View of the Christian Life**

In Mohrlang’s last section on the law he comments on what his view of the law in Matthew’s gospel means to the Christian. The Christian life is to be “lived within the framework of the law, under the authority of both Torah and the scribal tradition” yet “the emphasis . . . is not simply on compliance with the letter of the law, but on heartfelt obedience to the law at the deepest level, radical obedience.” Mohrlang notes that Jesus says his yoke is easy and burden light and that he gives rest to the weary (Mt 11:28-30) but says this is paradoxical in that a Christian is called to not only obey the letter of the law but also must make sure his inner attitudes are in compliance with Jesus’ teachings. Jesus’ yoke, according to Mohrlang, is even more “demanding” and has as its goal “perfection (5:48).” Mohrlang attempts to resolve this issue by saying, “compared with the stern strictness of the Pharisees, Matthew’s Jesus is experienced as ‘gentle and lowly in heart’ (11:29); yet when it comes to accountability in judgment, some may still find him a ‘hard man’ (25:24).”

**Summary of Mohrlang’s view of Matthew and the Law**

Mohrlang believes Matthew presents the whole law as authoritative and remains entirely valid for the Christian “down to the least jot and tittle.” Jesus is to be seen as more prominent than the law yet not one who abrogates it. Jesus is neither a new Moses nor a new lawgiver. He is, rather, the authoritative interpreter of the Mosaic law and his interpretation is supreme. In this

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102 Mohrlang, 25.
103 Mohrlang, 26.
104 Mohrlang, 43.
role, Jesus interprets the law through the hermeneutical lens of love which he places at the top of the hierarchy of the commands of the law. As such, at times, some lesser commands are in effect displaced or abrogated and are to bow to this higher law of love. Jesus, in his teaching, heightens obedience to the law by deepening it to involve the heart level.

In writing his gospel, Matthew seems to soften Mark’s view of Jesus’ antagonism with the law and to build up Jesus’ unity with the law. Jesus is seen as pro-Sabbath (yet makes allowance for the care of those in need on the Sabbath), pro-Jewish dietary food laws, pro-oral tradition, pro-scribe, pro-scribal law, and pro-oral law. In Mohrlang’s estimate, Matthew assumes that it is necessary to obey the law to enter the kingdom of heaven. However, grace is available for those who do not obey it in its entirety and they are able to enter as the “least” in the kingdom.

In spite of all of this, Mohrlang acknowledges that are there seemingly contradictory elements in Matthew with respect to Jesus and the law. To explain this, Mohrlang posits that Matthew has a “dual citizenship” in two communities, one Jewish and one Christian, one which upholds the entire law and one that puts the love command in priority over all the other laws. Once again, in the final analysis, Mohrlang holds that, for Matthew, “the entire law remains authoritative, right down to the least jot and tittle.”

Mohrlang on Reward and Punishment in Matthew

The concepts of reward and especially punishment in Matthew constitute the second perspective from which Mohrlang evaluates Matthean ethics. He notes that Matthew contains a greater amount of material referring to reward and punishment than any of the other of the

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105 Mohrlang, 43.
synoptic writers. He sees these as strong motivational factors for obedience in Matthew’s gospel. He examines these factors from the perspectives of (1) eschatological recompense, (2) reciprocity, and (3) Matthew’s *Sitz im Leben*.

**Eschatological Recompense**

Mohrlang argues that a major motivational factor for Matthew’s ethics is “the hope of gaining entrance to the kingdom of heaven.” Entrance cannot take place unless one attains a greater righteousness (Mt 5:20) through a “radical change of heart and life.” For Matthew, seeking God’s kingdom and his righteousness is to be the first priority (Mt 6:33). It was the goal and impetus behind the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus early in their ministries as they are both presented as preaching repentance as the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Mohrlang argues that Matthew views rewards mainly in future eschatological terms making note that Matthew redacts Mark’s material about the rewards in this life to an “entire focus” on the future life (cf. Mk 10:30 and Mt 19:27-29). In Matthew’s view, the first shall be last and the last first, the humble exalted, and those who suffer hardship for Jesus will be rewarded with the kingdom. Noting Mt 5:3-12, 46; 6:19-21, 24-25, 33; 10:41-42; 18:14; 19: 21, 28-29; 23:12; 25:21, 23, 24, Mohrlang claims that Matthew’s emphasis on rewards is stronger than all the other evangelists. Hence, future reward is a major motivational factor for ethics in Matthew.

106 Mohrlang, in support of this, notes (158, n.2) the following occurrences in the synoptics taken from Gehard Barth (“Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 58-59): χρίσις (Mt: 12; Mk: 0; Lk: 4), ἡμέρα κρίσεως (Mt: 4; Mk: 0; Lk: 0), μισθος (Mt: 10; Mk:1; Lk: 3), εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἔξωτερον (Mt: 3; Mk: 0; Lk: 0), ἐκεί ἐσται ὁ κλαυθμός καὶ ὁ βρυχμός τῶν ὀδόντων (Mt: 6; Mk: 0; Lk: 1), and γέννα (Mt: 7; Mk: 3; Lk: 1).
107 Mohrlang, 158 n. 1, qualifies that he is using the term “eschatological” only in the future sense here.
As strong a motivational force as future reward is, Mohrlang argues that the eschatological threat of judgment in Matthew is even greater. He states that the issue of utmost importance to Matthew is “the danger of failing to attain the kingdom, and the fearful prospect of judgment that implies.” Mohrlang believes this is the impetus for both Jesus’ and John the Baptist’s call for repentance (in Mt 4:17 and 3:2) and the “dominant motivating force for ethics throughout the Gospel.”

Mohrlang notes that this threat of judgment “pervades” the Sermon on the Mount in both explicit warnings (against specific actions such as anger and lust in Mt 5:22-28 and the danger of γέννα (Mt 5:22, 29, 30)) and implicit warnings (for which he points to Mt 5:13, 19, 25-26, 31-32, 34; 6:12, 14-15). At the end of the Sermon there are additional warnings of eschatological judgment. There most people are said to go the way of destruction (Mt 7:13-14) and it is only those who obey Jesus who will escape judgment (Mt 7:24-27). Mohrlang states that in the Sermon, “Matthew’s free and unabashed use of the threat of judgement attests his conviction of its value in inciting the Christian community to live up to the high moral standards of Jesus.”

Mohrlang observes that the concept of judgment is not confined to the Sermon on the Mount but is also found in Matthew’s own material and where he has redacted Mark (e.g., Mt 8:12, 29; 10:15, 26-28; 11:20-24; 12:41-42; 13:42, 50; 18:3, 10; 22:13; 24:51; 25: 30). Matthew also presents the Son of Man as Judge (cf. Mt 3:12; 13:30, 37-42; 16:26; 25:31-46). It is Matthew who “most explicitly” uses the term “fire” to talk about the eschatological judgment (Mt. 3:10-12; 5:22; 7:19; 13:40-42, 50; 18:8-9; 25:41). It is Matthew also who describes γέννα as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). Mohrlang

114 Mohrlang, 49.
115 Mohrlang, 49.
116 Mohrlang, 50.
117 Mohrlang, 50.
asserts that the impression one gets is that “the fear of judgement is a major element in Matthew’s thought, and plays a crucial role in his ethics.”

The coming of the Son of Man in eschatological judgment also plays a role in motivation for Matthean ethics. The “certainty and unexpectedness” of his return prompts warnings to Matthew’s audience. In this connection Matthew points to the flood, two men in a field, and two women grinding (Mt 24:37-39), the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13), and the wicked servant (Mt 24:48-51) all with the warning to “be ready” because judgment will take place. These all show the need for urgency in living one’s life obediently. Mohrlang states, “the appeal to the Parousia functions, like the threat of judgement, as a sanction reinforcing the demand for deeper righteousness.”

For Matthew, the final judgment is seen as “recompense.” Each person will be judged “not only for what one is, but for what one does.” One will be judged by his words (Mt 12:37) and his deeds (Mt 16:27). Mohrlang claims Matthew’s view is the “traditional Jewish view of judgement, based on works, as recompense for how one lives” and thus Matthew emphasizes “doing the will of God” (e.g., Mt 7:21) and producing good fruit, yet also of necessity, from a good inner character.

For Matthew, then, eschatological recompense, involving both reward and especially punishment, is a major motivational factor for obedience in his ethical framework.

*Matthew and Reciprocity*

Related to judgment, Mohrlang believes Matthew’s “sense of reciprocity” colors his “thinking about ethics and one’s relationship to God, in which God’s response to an individual is

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118 Mohrlang, 50. Mohrlang points further to Mt 10:26-28 to buttress his point about “fear.”
119 Mohrlang, 50-51.
120 Mohrlang, 51.
121 Mohrlang, 52.
122 Mohrlang, 52.
seen to be the same kind or degree as that expressed by the individual to others.”

This is seen in both positive and negative actions. For instance, one who shows mercy will be given mercy (Mt 5:7) and the one who does not forgive will not be forgiven (Mt 6:14-15). One who judges will himself be judged by the same standard with which he judges (Mt 7:1-2), those who receive a prophet receive a prophet’s reward (Mt 10:41), and those who deny or acknowledge Jesus will be denied or acknowledged by him (Mt 10:32-33). Mohrlang calls this “a ‘tit for tat’ kind of justitia.”

Even one’s healing is many times given according to one’s faith (e.g., Mt 8:13; 9:29; 15:28). Although this type of relationship between individuals is not allowed in Matthew’s ethics (see Mt 5:38-48), Mohrlang notes, it still seems to be the way Matthew thinks with respect to “the disciple’s relationship with God.”

Mohrlang concludes that Matthew’s gospel is very much ingrained with divine “eschatological recompense” and his ethics can be viewed as “teleological ethics” where “everything is done with a view to its consequences” which are administered in the end by God to each person.

Matthew’s Sitz im Leben

In examining the recipients of the warnings of eschatological judgments in Matthew, Mohrlang believes he can find basically two groups that indicate the possible Sitz im Leben of the gospel. These are the unrepentant Jews (especially the Jewish religious leaders) and the followers of Jesus. With respect to the unrepentant Jews he points to several incidents and passages including the parable of the wicked tenants (Mt 21:33-46), the parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-8), and especially all the indictments against the Pharisees in Mt 23. With respect to the disciples of Jesus he discusses those within the Christian community who are wolves in sheep’s

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123 Mohrlang, 52.
124 Mohrlang, 53.
125 Mohrlang, 53.
126 Mohrlang, 54.
clothing (Mt 7:15) and those who confess Jesus as Lord but are not doing the will of the Father
(Mt 7:21-23). Mohrlang also points to the two parables of the weeds (Mt 13:24-43) and the net
(Mt 13:47-50) as indicating a “mixed audience” and “internal tensions” within Matthew’s church
itself.\(^{127}\) Mohrlang concludes that “the evangelist’s emphasis on judgement is very likely
intended both to fortify and encourage Jesus’ ‘little ones’ in their relations with the non-believing
Jewish community around them (by assuring them of God’s ultimate justice), and to warn the
mixed community itself of the dangers of moral laxity and negligence.”\(^{128}\)

**Summary of Mohrlang on Reward and Punishment in Matthew**

In summary, with respect to reward and punishment, Matthew stresses personal
accountability to God. He believes that each person’s eschatological destiny is related to “one’s
ethical life.”\(^{129}\) While Matthew does encourage a focus on the future reward as a motivation for
obedience, his threat of eschatological judgment is stronger. Eschatological judgment is based on
“the criterion of merit” and on recompense. One will be judged by what one does. The Parousia
also plays a motivational role in the urgency of needed repentance. Matthew’s ‘tit for tat’
reciprocity and focus on the end leads Mohrlang to classify Matthew’s ethics as “teleological.”
Matthew’s strong emphasis on the “threat” of judgment causes Mohrlang to suggest that “the
author believes negative sanctions to be the most effective way to evoke the radical obedience
demanded by Jesus.”\(^{130}\) This could however be “conditioned” by his perception of the needs of
his particular community (Matthew’s *Sitz im Leben*) to whom he wrote.\(^{131}\)

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\(^{127}\) Mohrlang, 55-56.
\(^{128}\) Mohrlang, 57.
\(^{129}\) Mohrlang, 67.
\(^{130}\) Mohrlang, 68.
\(^{131}\) Mohrlang, 69.
Mohrlang on Relationship to Christ and the Role of Grace in Matthew

One’s relationship with Christ and the concept of grace are other motivational factors in Matthew’s ethics according to Mohrlang. To support this Mohrlang examines Matthew’s view of Christ, his view of discipleship, and then his view of grace.

Matthew’s View of Christ

Mohrlang sees Matthew elevating Jesus’ authority (ἐξουσία) as something supremely important for his readers to understand. Both Jesus’ deeds and his words express this. He notes that Matthew has taken over from Mark many of his words and actions of authority (such as Jesus’ authority to forgive, heal, cast out demons, and his teachings). But Matthew does not stop there; he also has his own “references to Jesus’ authority.” These include his giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter along with binding and loosing authority (Mt 16:18-19). In addition, Jesus teaches with authority in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:28-29, cf. also his use of the words ἐγώ δέ λέγω ὑμῖν in the antitheses) and the gospel ends with his statement that “all authority” (ἐξουσία) has been given to him. Further, Mohrlang points out that while Mark uses the title “κύριος” to refer to Jesus only 18 times Matthew uses it 80 times! Mohrlang states that “it is the designation ‘Lord’ (κύριος), with its overtones of power and authority demanding submission and obedience, that brings Matthew’s ethical perspective most sharply into focus.” For Matthew, Mohrlang concludes, “the appropriate relationship between the disciple and Christ is above all one in which Jesus is acknowledged as κύριος.” Thus the disciple must make Jesus Lord and submit to his supreme authority.

132 Mohrlang, 72.
133 Mohrlang, 73.
134 Mohrlang, 74.
135 Mohrlang, 74.
In studying the concept of discipleship in Matthew, Mohrlang concludes that “what it means to be a μαθητής of Jesus” is a primary concern for Matthew. Matthew indicates that being a disciple of Jesus is more than just seeing him as a teacher or rabbi or simply being a learner. It involves “above all one who submits in obedience to him.” Mohrlang goes on to say that Jesus’ teachings also implicitly assume that being a disciple of Jesus “means radical submission to the will of God.” One has to follow Jesus with an “unconditional commitment and a single-minded loyalty” (Mt 10:37-39). One must sacrifice all and follow with “absolute singleness of inner intention.” This involves complete obedience to his teachings and commands (Mt 7:24-27, cf. 28:19-20). The disciple is also implicitly called to imitate Jesus’ life. This is seen, for example, in Jesus’ call for his disciples to take his yoke upon them and learn from him (Mt 11:29). Mohrlang summarizes: “In Matthew’s Gospel, then, discipleship implies both obedience to Jesus’ teachings and imitation of his life and character; both take on normative value, for it is in his own life, above all, that his teachings are lived out.” This obedience, however, in Matthew, is “grounded not so much in the imitation of God, as in the fact that he stands confronted with the demand of God.” Hence a disciple of Jesus is one who unconditionally, wholeheartedly, single-mindedly, and willingly submits to Jesus’ yoke to radically obey him and his teachings in every detail. Complete obedience to Jesus as Lord is foundational to Matthean ethics.

Mohrlang, 74.
Mohrlang, 75.
Mohrlang, 75.
Mohrlang, 75.
Mohrlang, 76.
Mohrlang, 76.
Mohrlang, 78.
The Role of Grace in Matthew

Grace is implicit in Matthew. It exists as an underlying structure in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{142} Mohrlang points out that it is hinted at in the depiction of “God’s mercy and forgiveness” in the Lord’s prayer in Mt 6:12-14 and is found, for instance, in the parable of the wedding banquet where the king invites those who are both good and bad to his feast (Mt 22:1-14). Grace is implied in Jesus birth as the one who will “save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). Grace also lies under Jesus’ statement that he is bringing a yoke that is easy and not burdensome like that of the Pharisees (implied in Mt 11:28-30). It is present in the disciple’s everyday life (Mt 18:20; 29:20). Other passages also imply God’s grace such as Jesus’ response to people who cry out for help (cf., Mt 8:25 and 14:30). While grace is implicit, Mohrlang notes that Matthew

\... draws the most winsome picture of God as the kind and caring heavenly Father, concerned to meet the everyday needs of his children (6:6-13 ...); indeed it is to him that disciples are implicitly invited to look for all their needs (cf. 24:20 ...). By implication ... the help of God may be invoked even for the attitude of heart required in order to fulfill Jesus’ demands for a life of deeper righteousness and ‘perfection’ (5:20 ...); in other words, for \textit{all that is required in order to attain the kingdom of heaven}.\textsuperscript{143}

Thus grace implicitly permeates the entire gospel and is the way one can meet Jesus’ demands of obedience. Reflecting on this, Mohrlang observes that although both grace and Jesus’ demand for obedience are found in the Matthew, “it is the sense of demand that predominates and characterizes Matthean ethics.”\textsuperscript{144}

Summary of Mohrlang on Relationship to Christ and the Role of Grace in Matthew

Matthean ethics begins with a discipleship that unconditionally embraces Jesus and his supreme authority as Lord. Mohrlang posits Jesus’ supreme Lordship and authority as a major

\textsuperscript{142} Mohrlang, 80.
\textsuperscript{143} Mohrlang, 80.
\textsuperscript{144} Mohrlang, 81.
motivational factor in Matthean ethics. He states, “Matthew seeks to arouse a sense of ethical obligation based primarily on the concepts of authority and demand (of God, of Jesus, of the law).”\textsuperscript{145} Jesus’ demands require complete perfect obedience (Mt 5:48)\textsuperscript{146} to which one willingly surrenders. This is not a hopeless state for the imperfect disciple as grace is always implicitly there offered by a kind and caring heavenly Father who provides help for the disciple to fulfill these demands for the greater righteousness required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

**Mohrlang on Love in Matthew**

In determining Matthew’s view of the role of love in his ethics, Mohrlang discusses (1) several Matthean passages in which “love” occurs, (2) mercy and compassion and their contribution, and (3) the nature and role of love in Matthew.

**Love Passages in Matthew**

Mohrlang briefly comments on four passages in Matthew that speak specifically about “love” (Mt 5:43-48; 19:16-22; 22:34-40; and 24:12). In Mt 5:43-48, Mohrlang states that the phrase “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Mt 5:45) shows that the command here to love and pray for one’s enemies is “grounded in the fundamental nature of the heavenly Father.”\textsuperscript{147} He also notes that he believes that the term “perfect” (τέλειος) in verse 48 coming at the end of the antitheses is to be associated with the Mt 5:20 and is the “final example of the ‘deeper righteousness’” which Mt 5:20 demands. Mohrlang concludes: “this command instructs the Matthean community to adopt a posture of determined non-retaliation and doing of good to those at whose hands they suffer.”\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{145} Mohrlang, 92.
\textsuperscript{146} Mohrlang, 78.
\textsuperscript{147} Mohrlang, 94.
\textsuperscript{148} Mohrlang, 94.
With respect to Mt 19:16-22 concerning the rich young man and his question of entering eternal life, Mohrlang notes that Matthew redacts Mark’s version by adding “and you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 19:19b) and associates it with Decalogue commandments. As such, he concludes that because of this positioning “in the evangelist’s view the love commandment serves as the epitome of the moral demands of the law, and of the Decalogue in particular.”\(^{149}\) In addition, he notes that Matthew adds the phrase “If you want to be perfect” (19:21a) to Mark’s account here and states that this “reinforces and accentuates the love commandment.”\(^{150}\)

Commenting on Mt 22:34-40, where two greatest commandments are placed together, Mohrlang points to their “legal orientation.” He notes that Jesus states that the law of “love” is associated with the OT law as it is “the greatest commandment in the law” (Mt 22:36) and “all the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Mt 22:40). Mohrlang concludes: “The law is maintained, but the dual love commandment is viewed as the most important of the law’s demands and the key to its meaning—i.e., as the primary hermeneutical principle for interpreting and applying the law (a principle exemplified especially in Jesus’ activity on the Sabbath); it is a compassion-focused view of the law.”\(^{151}\) He follows this by stating that the second commandment (to love one’s neighbor as himself) is not to be treated as equal to the first commandment (to love God). The first commandment is supreme over the second, but their “pairing” here shows only that one cannot obey the first command without obeying the second.

Lastly, Mohrlang examines Mt 24:12 where Jesus says “because of the increase of wickedness (ἀνομία) the love of most will grow cold.” Here he notes that he believes that the term ἀνομία should be taken in its broad moral sense and not in the sense of “lawlessness” limited to the law. Love, here, is to be seen as part of Matthew’s δικαιοσύνη. As such, he asserts,

\(^{149}\) Mohrlang, 95.
\(^{150}\) Mohrlang, 95.
\(^{151}\) Mohrlang, 95.
“the immediately following context makes it clear that remaining obedient to the love commandment is an essential part of that ‘endurance to the end’ by which one is ultimately saved.”152

**Mercy and Compassion in Matthew**

Mercy and compassion are expressions of love. There are many verses and instances of compassion and mercy in Matthew. Mohrlang notes that Jesus is “the exemplar *par excellence*” of compassion. To support this he points to the many times Jesus uses the word σπλαγκνίζομαι ("to have compassion," Mt 9:36; 11:4; 15:32; 20:34) and the term ἔλεος ("to have mercy," Mt 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 21:30-31) when responding to cries for help. He also adds to Mark’s account in several places highlighting Jesus “healing care” (Mt 4:23-24; 9:35; 14:14; 15:30-31; 21:14). In addition he notes Matthew’s quoting of Hos 6:6 concerning God’s desire of mercy not sacrifice (Mt 9:13; 12:7). With respect to the law, Mohrlang notes that in Mt 23:23 Jesus strongly criticizes the Pharisees for neglecting the “more important matters of the law-justice, mercy, and faith.” He states “it is this emphasis on the expression of mercy in the interpretation of the law . . . that provides the sharpest point of contrast between Jesus’ teachings and the attitudes and practices of Pharisaic Judaism in this Gospel.”153 Mercy is the “compassionate administration of the law.”154 Mohrlang also observes that the forgiveness theme is very pronounced in Matthew but hardly found in Mark which also displays the importance of “mercy” in Matthew. The parable of the sheep and goats (Mt 25:31-46) also augments the importance of “mercy” in Matthew. Mohrlang remarks that with respect to this parable, “it is clear that the criterion upon

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152 Mohrlang, 96.
153 Mohrlang, 97.
154 Mohrlang, 97.
which the judgement is based is the expression of compassion to those in need . . . In this pericope at least, the δίκαιοι . . . are defined by their acts of compassion.”

The Nature and Role of Love in Matthew

Matthew’s view of the nature of love shows it involves much self-denial. Mohrlang points to many passages including Mt 5:43-48 (where disciples are called upon to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them), Mt 19:21 (where one is told to sell all his possessions and give to the poor), Mt 6:1-4 (in which one is to shun self-glory), and Mt 24:12-13 (where one must stand firm until the end even in the midst of hard times).

Mohrlang maintains that “love is expressed in the form of a commandment and viewed within the framework of the law.” As such from an ethical perspective, it is the central part “of the moral obligation imposed on the disciple by the demands of the law; i.e. it is a ‘must.’” The love commands are then binding and obligatory. This love, which Mohrlang seems to define as “altruism or affection” however is not what is at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount. Rather, he asserts, it is “deeper righteousness,” (i.e. δικαιοσύνη) which he defines as “submission and radical obedience to the will of God (as expressed in the law and the teachings of Jesus).” Mohrlang reasons,

. . . a careful reading of the text reveals that in each case the motivating consideration is not so much an altruistic concern for the welfare of others as the demand for radical compliance with the will of God—reinforced by the threat of consequences for non-compliance (cf. 7:13f); the fundamental focus is on one’s relationship to God, not others.

155 Mohrlang, 97.
156 Mohrlang, 98.
157 Mohrlang, 98.
158 Mohrlang, 99.
159 Mohrlang, 98-99.
160 Mohrlang, 99.
For Mohrlang then it seems that radical obedience (or righteousness) is more fundamental than love. Love is seen as embedded in law and is motivated “by a sense of living under the demand of God.”\(^{161}\) Hence, he holds that love is rooted in law, not vice versa (i.e., \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\) is rooted in \(\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\omicron\upsilon\eta\) not \(\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\omicron\upsilon\eta\) in \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\)). This leads Mohrlang to see a “contradiction” and an “inconsistency” in Matthew. He sees this when he compares Mt 5:43-48 where Jesus says to love one’s enemies with Jesus attitude toward the Pharisees in Mt 23. He feels Jesus himself might be guilty of not practicing what he preached and “to the extent that such invective betrays the attitude of Matthew himself, he fails to measure up to his own convictions of Jesus’ ideals.”\(^{162}\)

**Summary of Mohrlang on the Nature of Love in Matthew**

In summary, Matthew sees love “within the framework of the law.” The love command is the most important of all the commands of the law and is the hermeneutical key to be used when there are issues with applying the law. Love is basically an “obligation,” i.e., an obedience issue. It has to be understood in “the light of the more basic demand for righteousness.”\(^{163}\) It is an expression of the self-denial way of life of a disciple who wants to “be truly good” and perfect (\(\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma\), Mt 5:48). It is more concerned with obeying God than helping others. As such, it is not a “simple altruism.”\(^{164}\) Mercy (\(\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma\)) and compassion (\(\sigma\pi\lambda\alpha\gamma\chi\nu\iota\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\)) are *expressions* of love and are also to be seen within the framework of the law. Jesus states that mercy is one of the “more important matters of the law” in Mt 23:23, and is thus classed by Mohrlang as the “compassionate administration of the law.”\(^{165}\)

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\(^{161}\) Mohrlang, 99.
\(^{162}\) Mohrlang, 100.
\(^{163}\) Mohrlang, 100.
\(^{164}\) Mohrlang, 100.
\(^{165}\) Mohrlang, 97.
Mohrlang on Inner Forces or the Heart in Matthew

The final perspective from which Mohrlang views Matthew’s ethics is what he calls “inner forces.” Mohrlang begins by noting that Matthew does not reference any “developed doctrine of the Spirit as a moral force in the life of the disciple.”\footnote{Mohrlang, 111.} Matthew does reference the Spirit but not in the context of empowerment of the follower of Christ.\footnote{The closest Matthew comes to anything like this is in Mt 3:11 and 28:19 which Mohrlang excludes saying they are “problematic” and 10:19-20 which he excludes saying it “reflects exceptional circumstances” (111).} He does reference God’s presence with his people as a whole but not with specific individuals (e.g., Mt 1:23; 18:20; 28:20).

He states that these latter references indicate the promise of divine “general aid (in the form of deliverance, authoritative support and encouragement)” and not “a source of personal moral strength and ethical stimulus.”\footnote{Mohrlang, 111.} The inner forces thus that empower one to obey the commands in Matthew seem to come from the individual himself or herself and not from divine presence within that individual. Mohrlang then looks at two aspects of that inner nature of man that Matthew presents as one’s “ethical stimulus”:\footnote{Mohrlang, 112.} Man’s heart and inner goodness.

The Nature of the Heart

Matthew presents man’s heart as the source of good and evil. One does what he does because of what is inside (Mt 12:35). Mohrlang points to Matthew’s use of the figure of the tree and the fruit it bears to support this (Mt 3:8, 10; 7:16-20; 12:33-35). One is to be judged by his fruit (Mt 3:10; 7:19; 12:31-32, 36). One’s real inner nature is made known by his actions. Mohrlang states: “The state of one’s inner being (or inner “eye”: 6:22f) is . . . a matter of crucial importance, for from it flow the issues of life—and indeed, all of ethics; this is what
fundamentally determines a person’s outlook and behavior.”

This is highlighted in Jesus’ castigation of the Pharisees who focus on the outward actions but do not deal with the inner aspects of righteousness and compassion. Jesus attempts to teach them that it is not what goes into a man’s mouth that makes him unclean but what comes out of his heart (Mt 15:11, 18). As a result they miss the real demands that the law makes (Mt 7:12; 9:13; 12:7; 23:23). The nature or disposition of the heart is therefore at the core of all of Matthean ethics.

**Inner Goodness**

Matthew focuses on a person being “inwardly correct” as opposed to the Pharisees desire of being “outwardly correct.” This inward correctness “underlies the whole of chapters 5-7” being expressed specifically in the beatitudes, the antitheses, and also in the manner one is to give to the needy, pray and store up treasure. Mohrlang notes that Matthew is more concerned with one’s heart or inner attitude than his behavior. This is the type of δικαιοσύνη that is commanded and demanded, one which is righteous both inwardly and outwardly. Thus the beatitude which states “blessed are the pure in heart” is “the key beatitude” and is “crucial to Mt’s understanding of the Christian ethic.”

Foundational to this seems to be Matthew’s view of humanity in which Mohrlang says seems to be “the traditional Jewish dichotomy between good and evil.” Matthew presents the state of mankind in these terms (e.g., the sun rises on both in Mt 5:45; the righteous and those who do evil are separated at the end of the age in Mt 13:41–43). The scribes and Pharisees are those who are evil (Mt 12:34; 23:25-28) while those who are the “sons of the kingdom” are

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170 Mohrlang, 112.
171 Mohrlang, 113.
172 Mohrlang, 113.
174 Mohrlang, 113.
“good soil (13:8, 23), good seed (13:24, 27, 37f) and good servants (25:21, 23), and are called to a life of good works (5:16).”\textsuperscript{175} Mohrlang notes that it is on the basis of this “good” and “evil” that the righteous are separated from the evil (Mt 25:14-46). This inner goodness, which Mohrlang equates with Matthew’s term $\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$, is “consistently used by the evangelist in an ethical, and not a forensic-eschatological sense.”\textsuperscript{176} $\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$ is not just an action one performs but also includes “the element of inward goodness.”\textsuperscript{177} It involves both actions and one’s inner nature which prompts the actions.

How does one achieve $\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$? Mohrlang states that it is by “submission to the will of God and radical obedience to the law and Jesus’ teachings (Mt 5:20-48; cf. 19:21).”\textsuperscript{178} He believes this can actually come to fruition in one’s life on the basis of two assumptions: (1) the Jewish assumption that whatever God commands, man has the power to do it (i.e. man is totally responsible and able to do what God says completely), and (2) since Jesus is always with the disciple, that disciple is not alone and can ask for help in completing the tasks God requires, something for which God is always able and ready to do. Mohrlang summarizes:

Thus, even though Matthew’s emphasis on demand and obedience results in a Gospel almost totally devoid of explicit reference to God’s aid in the moral—ethical realm, there are statements throughout that by extension clearly imply that such help is available for those who truly “hunger and thirst” for $\delta\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\eta$. Behind the focus on demand and obedience, then, lie implicit elements of grace that, though rarely emphasized or drawn out, must not be overlooked.\textsuperscript{179}

\textit{Summary of Mohrlang’s view of Man’s Heart}

Mohrlang believes that the disposition of one’s inner being or heart is of utmost importance. It is from that disposition that good and bad come. It is the “core of all ethical

\textsuperscript{175} Mohrlang, 113.
\textsuperscript{176} Mohrlang, 114.
\textsuperscript{177} Mohrlang, 114.
\textsuperscript{178} Mohrlang, 114.
\textsuperscript{179} Mohrlang, 114.
behaviour.”

Good fruit comes from a good heart. Bad fruit comes from a bad heart. However, man is in need of help from God if he is to achieve the δικαιοσύνη demanded by Jesus. This help seems to be supplied through God’s grace and upon the person’s request. One’s requesting of help from God would seem to be a part of δικαιοσύνη and proceed from one’s inner disposition itself. The bottom line for Matthew’s gospel seems to be the “attitude of submission and obedience—submission to the will of God and obedience to the law and the teaching of Jesus; but it must be radical submission and obedience.”

Summary of Mohrlang’s View of Matthean Ethics

In conclusion, with respect to Mohrlang’s five perspectives on Matthean Ethics, he sees proper obedience as involving the OT law as authoritative in its entirety “down to the least jot and tittle.” He comes to this view it seems largely by understanding πληρώω in Mt 5:17 in a non-eschatological sense. Jesus is not to be seen as a new Moses nor a new lawgiver but rather is the authoritative interpreter of the Mosaic law in which his interpretation is supreme. In this role, Jesus interprets the law through the hermeneutical lens of love which he raises up to the most important commandment. Mohrlang sees Matthew’s redaction of Mark as indicating a unity of Jesus with the law. Jesus is seen as pro-Sabbath, pro-Jewish dietary food laws, pro-oral tradition, pro-scribe, pro-scribal law, and pro-oral law. In Mohrlang’s estimate, it is necessary to obey the law to enter the kingdom of heaven, but grace is available for those who do not obey it in its entirety and are able to enter as the “least” in the kingdom.

With respect to reward and punishment, Mohrlang sees Matthew stressing personal accountability to God. One is motivated to obey more by the threat of eschatological judgment than future reward. Thus negative sanctions are presented as the best method of achieving radical

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180 Mohrlang, 123.
181 However, Mohrlang does not seem to explicate this at all.
182 Mohrlang, 124.
obedience in Jesus’ followers. One’s coming judgment will be based on merit and on recompense. Thus each person will be judged by what he does or fails to do. Mohrlang also sees the coming Parousia as playing a motivational role in the urgency for repentance in Matthew and thus one is strongly urged to be ready. Philosophically, Mohrlang sees Matthew as holding a ‘tit for tat’ reciprocity and classifies Matthew’s ethics as “teleological.” Do the commands of the law and of Jesus and you will in the end be rewarded by God. If you fail to obey them, you will be punished by God.

In discussing relationship to Christ and the role of grace in Matthew, Mohrlang sees the ethics of a disciple of Jesus in Matthew motivated by embracing Jesus as supreme Lord. Jesus demands unconditional perfect obedience to which a true disciple surrenders. Grace is available from the caring heavenly Father to every disciple, however, for the achievement of the greater righteousness required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Love, since it is a command, is seen by Mohrlang from “within the framework of the law.” It is the most important of all the commands of the law and is the hermeneutical key to be used when there are conflicting issues with applying the law. Love is not an altruism but obligation, i.e., an obedience issue. It is a self-denial way of life for one to be good and perfect. Mercy and compassion are also to be seen within the law structure and are the way of Jesus to administer the law in a benevolent or kind-hearted manner.

With respect to the inner forces or heart, Mohrlang sees Matthew as indicating that the heart is of supreme importance and the essential center for ethical conduct. A good heart or inner disposition will have an attitude of submission and obedience, and will produce good fruit with the help of God’s grace. An evil heart will not be submissive or obedient and will produce bad fruit.
Thus, in *obedience* terms, the disciple of Jesus is to obey the entire law as Jesus interprets it. Jesus is the ultimate authority for that obedience and it is he to whom one is to be unconditionally surrendered. It is important to understand that Jesus’ commands do not abrogate the law. The command of love is the highest law and overrules all other commands when laws conflict. However, this command to love does not do away with the law because it is to be seen as set *within* the framework of the law. The command for showing mercy provides for the compassionate administration of the law and is one of the more important commands of the law to be obeyed. The *motivation* for obedience comes mainly from the threat of punishment at Judgment Day when one will be judged by his or her actions, actions for which the expectation is perfection. This perfection is not impossible to achieve as God provides grace for those who ask for help in the achievement of the greater righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven. Having a good heart or inner disposition is an essential element in the righteousness (*δικαιοσύνη*) to which God calls his disciples. One must be inwardly righteous and outwardly righteous. It is man’s inner goodness (inner righteousness) which will be the *ethical impetus* for obedience (outward righteousness) to God which Jesus demands. This is the nature of the obedience to which one is called in Matthew.

**Literature Specific to Matthew 7:21-23**

In all of literature surveyed in connection with this study, no published book or major monograph was found which deals exclusively and extensively with Matthew 7:21-23. One BD thesis and one doctoral dissertation, however, were found which do so to some extent. These are Eva M. Godfrey, “A Critical Investigation of Matthew 7: 21-23” and Jong-Ki Park,  

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“Obedience and Prophecy in Matthew: Rhetorical Function of Mt. 7: 15-23 in Matthew’s Narrative.” In this section of this chapter, I will therefore review these two works in-depth with respect to the present passage under consideration and their contribution to the theme of Matthean obedience in general.

Eva M. Godfrey on Matthew 7:21-23 and Matthean Obedience in General

In her thesis, Godfrey examines Mt 7:21-23 with the major question of whether the works of prophecy, casting out demons, and doing miracles in Jesus name, referred to in verse 22, were “actually performed by the power of God as claimed.” The impetus for her study was to determine if it might be possible “for God to use those who advocate false doctrines?” In investigating this major question, Godfrey examines one major problem and five minor issues. These minor issues include the meanings of “prophecy,” “wonderful works,” “I never knew you,” “ye who work iniquity” and “in His name.” Godfrey first briefly mentions the major problem, then deals with the minor problems, and finally brings her minor problem conclusions to bear on the major problem to come to her final conclusion. I will review her discussion and findings.

The Major Problem and its Options

Godfrey examines four possible interpretations of the major problem of whether or not God was actually behind the miracles, casting out of demons, and prophecy with which those in

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184 PhD diss, Graduate Theological Union, 2001. With respect to scholarly study of this passage (Mt. 7:15-23 which includes 7:21-23), Park, 19, states, Matthew 7:15-23 is among those passages which have received relatively little scholarly scrutiny. As far as I know, no major monograph has ever been devoted to it . . . although there are many essays and articles which mention Matthew 7:15-23, in most cases these deal with the passage only briefly, and merely as a part of a discussion of other Matthean issues. We find only a very small number of essays and articles which have the passage as their primary focus.

185 Godfrey, 12.

186 Godfrey, iii.

187 Godfrey, 12.
Mt 7:21-23 claimed they had been involved. She lists first the “pretention interpretation” which holds that “the performance of those works in the name of Christ” were a “mere pretention to the possession of His power.”\textsuperscript{188} The performers here were “hypocritical imposters”\textsuperscript{189} and what they claimed was not true. The second interpretation Godfrey lists is the “deception interpretation.” This position asserts that both those who performed the miracles and others were deceived “with the idea that the deeds they performed were special manifestations of God’s power.”\textsuperscript{190} These performers, it is suggested, were never true Christians and their actions were not done with God’s power. The third option is the “empowered by Satan interpretation.”\textsuperscript{191} This view simply asserts that these miracles were done by Satan’s power though attributed by the performers to God. These works, she notes, have been dubbed by one interpreter as “lying wonders” from Satan.\textsuperscript{192} The fourth understanding is what Godfrey calls the “empowered by God interpretation.”\textsuperscript{193} This view holds that God worked through these individuals regardless of their relationship with God. In other words, this understanding claims that God worked true miracles through individuals even though they were not Christians.

**Minor Problem Issues**

In order to help resolve the aforementioned major question, Godfrey first discusses the five minor issues mentioned above. I will briefly survey her discussion and conclusion of each of these.

\textsuperscript{188} Godfrey, 14.  
\textsuperscript{189} Godfrey, 14.  
\textsuperscript{190} Godfrey, 15.  
\textsuperscript{191} Godfrey, 16.  
\textsuperscript{192} Godfrey, 16.  
\textsuperscript{193} Godfrey, 17.
The Meaning of “Prophecy”

In discussing the meaning of the word “prophecy,” Godfrey lists five possible views. First is the “future events view.” This view holds that prophesying (προφητεύω) here is to be limited to the “idea of foretelling (sic) future events.” The second view is the “divine inspiration view” which holds that the prophesying mentioned here did not have to be limited to future events but could refer to what God is revealing for the present. Thirdly, there is the “edifying discourse view.” This holds that “to prophesy is to break forth under a sudden impulse into a lofty discourse or praise and may include prompting, teaching, admonishing, reproving and comforting.” Fourthly, is the “prophetic office view” which holds that these were people who held the “prophet” office and were simply “discharging” the duties of their teaching office. The last view is the “universal view” which understands the idea of prophesying as “including all the former views listed above.” According to this view, any, or even a number, of these things could be what was involved here.

After examining these views, Godfrey opts for the “universal view” because she does not see any textual indication of any of the above specific views. Hence she concludes that “all the various types of prophesy were represented in their plea.”

The Meaning of “Wonderful Works” or “Miracles”

In discussing the concept of the working of miracles (δυνατός) in this passage, Godfrey lists three views. First is the “lying wonders view” in which the miracles were done by “evil powers” imitating the miracles done by God with the purpose of the possible deception of God’s
people. Second is the “effected by divine power view” which are miracles that are done only “by the permission and power of God.” This view does not hold that the performers of the miracles be sent from God but only that they have done these miracles with his help. Third, Godfrey lists the “any supernatural power view” which argues that these miracles could have been done by “any supernatural power whether good or evil.”

Godfrey reviews how the concept of “wonderful works” or miracles is used in the Bible and notes that God can work through “false prophets and pagan unbelievers” (she points to the biblical examples of Balaam in Nm 22 as well as Saul, Judas and Pharoah). God “is not hindered in using His creations however He wills,” she asserts. Since the context concerns false prophets, she determines that these people were indeed false prophets but that this in itself would not prohibit God from working miracles through them. She concludes from the absence of any indication in the text that these works were supernatural but that the source of this power cannot be determined at this juncture. She therefore opts for the view of “any supernatural power view” being involved here. Either power from God or from Satan is possible as the source of these miracles at this point in her argument.

**The Significance of “I Never Knew You”**

In discussing the phrase “I never knew you,” Godfrey lists two relational views. First is the “lack of full acceptance view” in which those who did the miracles were “to some degree influenced by Christ, but not fully approved by Him.” Hence these people could have been

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199 Godfrey, 24.  
200 Godfrey, 24.  
201 Godfrey, 25.  
202 Godfrey, 32.  
203 Godfrey, 32-33.  
204 Godfrey, 26.
religious but were not disciples of Jesus, not ones who were in a saving relationship with him.\textsuperscript{205} The \textit{second} view is the “lack of experiential knowledge view.” This understanding claims that “there was never any acquaintance between Christ and these individuals which involved an intimate fellowship.”\textsuperscript{206} This view seems to say that while Jesus did know these people intellectually, he did not experience them relationally in a “true faith” manner.\textsuperscript{207}

Godfrey states that many commentators believe that this phrase indicates the lack of relationship with Christ here and as such their works could not be from God. She questions this and states that this phrase only defines “their final relationship” and does not speak to their entire relationship.\textsuperscript{208} She rejects the first view saying it would be contrary to Scripture as it would base entrance into the kingdom on “the perfection of their works.” She thus opts for the second view saying that these people never had a saving relationship with Christ and “never submitted themselves to the will of the Father to enter into such an experiential knowledge of Christ.” This, she says, is indicated by the term \textit{oujdeπoτε} (“never”). Since God can work through unbelievers, however, this phrase cannot be used to signify that the works performed by these individuals \textit{must} not be of God.\textsuperscript{209}

\textbf{The Meaning of “Ye That Work Iniquity”}

In discussing the phrase “Ye that work iniquity,” Godfrey notes that while commentators do not agree on “the method” of working miracles, they do seem to agree on the idea that “their deeds were evil.” In discussing this she mentions \textit{two} interpretations. \textit{First} is the “perversion view” which understands those performing these words as “perverting or misusing the Lord’s name and the Lord’s work through hypocrisy.” The evil deeds (\textit{ἀνομία}) done here not only affect

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Godfrey, 26.
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\item Godfrey, 34.
\item Godfrey, 35.
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those immediately concerned but pervert the rest of the Lord’s work.\textsuperscript{210} Secondly, there is the “lawlessness of unsubmission view.” This perspective simply states that the evil done here (i.e. lawlessness) is “manifested by unsubmitteness to the Lord and the perfect law of God.”\textsuperscript{211} The understanding of “law” here seems to be in the sense of its “final meaning”\textsuperscript{212} which would tend to point to its interpretation through Jesus, although she does not explicitly state this.

Godfrey argues that one \textit{cannot} determine from the text that these works were evil in themselves so she rejects the “perversion view.” With respect to the second view (“lawlessness of unsubmission”), Godfrey notes that the passage indicates that those who do not enter the kingdom of heaven do not do so because they are not submissive to the Father’s will. She notes that “although their works may be wonderful, it is not ‘sacrifice’ but ‘obedience’ that gain an entrance for one into the kingdom.” As such she concludes, it “is not that the work itself is necessarily wrong, but rather the motive behind it.”\textsuperscript{213} Thus she opts for the second interpretation as correct.

\textbf{The Meaning of “In His Name”}

In discussing this phrase, Godfrey examines two views. The \textit{first} is the “authority by profession view” which holds that the claimants here did not have Jesus’ authority but actually simply used his name to do these acts on their own and ascribed them to Jesus. They only “professed” to do these things with Jesus’ authority and power.\textsuperscript{214} The \textit{second} view is the “instrumental view.” This holds that these actions were “actually performed by His power and

\textsuperscript{210} Godfrey, 27.  
\textsuperscript{211} Godfrey, 27.  
\textsuperscript{212} Godfrey, 27, uses this phrase in a quote from A. Lukyn Williams in \textit{The Pulpit Commentary}.  
\textsuperscript{213} Godfrey, 36.  
\textsuperscript{214} Godfrey, 19.
authority according to His command and direction.” So, even though these people were not true Christians, they were doing his will and acting under his command.

In discussing these views, Godfrey rejects the first view since God does not always choose to work through men on the basis of their “moral attitude.” Their deeds could indeed be done with Jesus’ authority. She also says that “the indication is that the claims of power in the text were based on successful results as it is doubtful that they would be offering non-existent works as a condition for their acceptance into the kingdom.” She therefore favors the “instrumental view” noting that it has grammatical support in the text in the use of the “instrumental dative” here and that these petitioners would probably not have pointed to non-existent works to help their cause.

Major Question Discussion and Conclusion

Godfrey deals with the four approaches outlined earlier in her quest for the answer to the question “Are these supernatural works actually performed by the power of God as claimed?” She groups the first three interpretations to this question (the “pretention interpretation”, the “deception interpretation” and “empowered by Satan interpretation”) into the same camp noting that they are similar and that the first two are variations of the third. She then analyzes the material as two approaches (i.e. (1) the works are from God’s power and (2) the works are from Satan’s power) from three angles: (1) an exegetical argument, (2) a contextual argument, and (3) a scriptural argument.

Exegetically Godfrey notes that this “argument seems to favor the negative answer” to the question. She states that the terms οὐδὲποτε and ἀνομία show that these people did evil and never had a relationship with God and thus their moral nature would “preclude” them being used

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216 Godfrey, 38.
217 Godfrey, 38.
of God.\textsuperscript{218} However she counters this by saying that while the terms προφητεύω and δύναμις do not exclude either answer to the question, “the overwhelming usage is in favor of the affirmative answer.”\textsuperscript{219} She then adds the assertion that “the plausibility of the usage of the instrumental dative when referring to these claims is the strongest exegetical argument for the power of God theory.”\textsuperscript{220}

Contextually, Godfrey reasons that the immediate context seems to argue for a negative answer to the question under consideration. This is because these individuals are denied entrance into the kingdom and they seem to be unwilling to submit to God. They are false prophets. In addition the context states that good fruit cannot come from bad trees and the implication is that these works would be from Satan. On the opposite side of the argument is Mt 12:22-30 in which Jesus states that Satan does not cast out Satan. So here it would seem that these people would have to be operating under the power of God not Satan. Godfrey adds to this by claiming that the concept of “miracles” would also help the positive side of the question. Doing miracles would then need to be seen as from God as it would be hard to see the casting out of demons as being from God and miracles from Satan in the same sentence. To do this, one would have to hold to “varying degrees of the miraculous.”\textsuperscript{221}

Looking at the passage from a “general teachings of scripture” perspective, Godfrey argues that the term δύναμις is “overwhelmingly used of those works which are good” many times speaking of the miracles Jesus himself has performed. This tends to support a positive answer to the question under consideration. Godfrey then looks at “God’s use of wicked individuals for his purposes.” She finds that, in general, God does use those who would be

\textsuperscript{218} Godfrey, 39.
\textsuperscript{219} Godfrey, 39.
\textsuperscript{220} Godfrey, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{221} Godfrey, 43.
considered “righteous” to accomplish his purposes but this is not always the case as shown in the examples of Balaam, Saul, and Judas.  

Godfrey concludes her thesis with the following:

Thus it can be concluded that although it could be possible that these works are performed by the power of Satan and that these men are either great pretenders or themselves greatly deceived, it is more probable that this is an example of God working through unbelievers to accomplish His purposes. The works are real miracles in the sense that they are performed by a power greater than that of man. No doubt these people have been judged by men as being of high Christian character for they dare to appear boldly before the Judge of the universe with their claims. However, Christ is not mocked and he delivers the just decree, “I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity.” Recognizing that this is not by any means a final and conclusive answer to the problem, these conclusions can be verified: That God can and does work out His good purposes through unbelievers; that God alone can be the final judge as to the value of men’s works.

Jong-Ki Park on Matthew 7:15-23 and Matthean Obedience in General

Using narrative criticism as his method, Jong-Kai Park evaluates the function of Mt 7:15-23 in the development of the Matthean themes of obedience and prophecy. In addition, he determines to pay “full attention” to the “first century context” as well as attend to “insights of classical rhetorical criticism.” He states the thesis of his dissertation as the following:

“Matthew’s emphasis on obedience is first of all a message for the life of Christian insiders, and his warning against false prophets in the narrative world is prompted by the presence of false charismatics in the evangelist’s real world who fail to offer whole-hearted obedience to God.”

Park believes that Mt 7:15-23 is a key passage in the narrative of Matthew, a narrative which he

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222 Godfrey, 45.
223 Godfrey, 47.
224 Park, 4.
225 Park, 11.
226 Park, 11. Park, 13, further refines and defines his method as “an analysis of Matthew’s narrative rhetoric with a focus on rhetoric as persuasion” (emphasis, mine) and, 14 n. 41, as “reader-response criticism.”
227 Park, 3, italics his.
says is meant to “persuade the implied reader, the post-Easter follower of Jesus, to respond properly to God with wholehearted obedience deeply rooted in love.”

Park develops his thesis in several stages. In chapter I he discusses his narrative methodology and the outline he uses for the development of his thesis. Chapter II is devoted to looking at current scholarly discussions about the unity of Mt 7:15-23 and the identity of the false prophets (i.e., whether they are “outsiders” such as the Pharisees or “Christian insiders” such as antinomians, Pauline, those associated with Paul, “enthusiasts,” or “legalistic Christians”). Chapter III is devoted to a look at the new role of the Holy Spirit in the church, the extensive charismatic presence in the early church, the nature of Christian prophets and their role in the church, the “problem of false prophets” in the early church, the “criteria” that was used for differentiating true from false prophets and the waning of prophecy as a result of the problem of false prophets in the church. Chapter IV looks specifically at Mt 7:15-23 itself as well as its contextual position in the Sermon on the Mount. Attention is also paid to the “rhetorical effect” of this passage as a “shocking warning to Christians.” Chapter V examines Matthew 1-4 in how its “first impressions” lead up to and affect the reading of the Sermon on the Mount and Mt 7:15-23. Here Park discusses Matthew’s depiction of who Jesus is, the need for people to be obedient, and Matthew’s perspective on prophecy and charismatic actions. In Chapter VI, Park looks at Matthew 8 through the end of the book and how it affects the reading of Mt 7:15-23. In this chapter Park discusses the obedience of Jesus to God, disciples to Jesus, and the disobedience of the religious leaders. He also examines Jesus’ call to obedience and his warnings against “lawlessness,” Matthew’s judgment motif, and the effect of the closing few verses (Mt 28:16-20) upon the obedience theme of Matthew as a whole. Chapter VII concludes the dissertation with a look at “Matthew’s

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228 Park, i.
narrative world” and how it persuades the implied reader, Matthew’s message for Christians, as well as the effect it has on the reader in today’s world.

In this portion of this chapter, I will review Park’s conclusions with respect to Mt 7:15-23 but more specifically what he says about Mt 7:21-23 in keeping in line with the delimitation of this thesis stated in Chapter I. I also will examine Park’s general discussions concerning obedience in Matthew as a whole.

Park on Mt 7:21-23

Park discusses Mt 7:21-23 as part of Mt 7:15-23 but also notes that Mt 7:21-23 has a special place and role in the Sermon on the Mount. I will highlight what Park says concerning the content of these verses as well as its position and function in the Sermon.

Park on the Unity of Mt 7:15-23

Even though Park notes that there is no consensus among scholars, he holds that Mt 7:15-23 is a unit and that verses 21-23 should not be separated from it.229 His reasoning is based on his estimation of the “close relation of the contents of the two parts.”230 He points to the verbal links of (1) πολέω (in verses 17, 18, 19, and 21), (2) the concepts of ψευδοπροφητών (vs 15) and ἐπροφητεύσαμεν (vs 22), (3) ἔρχονται (vs 15) and έίσελεύσεται (vs 21), (4) εἰπιγνώσεσθε (vss 16, 20) and εἰςγνων (vs 23), (5) πᾶν (vss 17, 19) and πᾶς (vs 21), and (6) βάλλεται (vs 19) and ἐξεβάλλομεν (vs 22).231 He also notes that the two parts have similar themes including the following: prophets/prophecy, doing God’s will, judgment, and “the gap between appearance and reality.”232 He also asserts that he believes that Mt 7:21-23 “completes the idea which is begun in

229 Park, 108-112. See pages 21-26 for his discussion of the various views on the unity of this passage.
230 Park, 111.
231 Park, 111, n. 99.
232 Park, 111.
7:15” and deals with the “same problem” which is found in Mt 7:15-20.\textsuperscript{233} He does note that Matthew, in vs 21, makes a shift in Jesus’ address from “second person to third person language” and concludes that this is a Matthean rhetorical technique which tends to “include the crowds, the potential followers of Jesus, in Jesus’ audience.”\textsuperscript{234} This, along with the use of the general term πᾶσος . . . in vs 21, influences Park to believe that Mt 7:21-23 is meant to be applied to all, including the crowds (cf. Mt 5:2 and 7:28-29), as well as the implied reader, and not simply to Jesus’ disciples to whom Mt 7:15-20 would seem to have been addressed.

\textit{Mt 7:21-23 and the Sermon on the Mount}

Park discusses the composition of the Sermon on the Mount and shows that there is no consensus among scholars as to its “precise structure.”\textsuperscript{235} He does however see scholars generally agreeing on a broad structure which includes an introduction (Mt 5:3-16), the main section (Mt 5:17-7:12), and a conclusion (Mt 7:13-27). The thesis of the Sermon is determined to be Mt 5:17-20 with Mt 5:21-7:12 functioning as “argumentation and exhortation or supporting evidence.”\textsuperscript{236} Mt 7:13-27 is to be considered the conclusion, Park believes, because (1) Mt 5:17 and 7:12 seem to form an \textit{inclusio} using the phrase “the law or (and) the prophets” and thus 7:12 ends the main section, (2) there are many “correspondences” between the introductory verses Mt 5:1-2 and Mt 7:28-8:1 (including the situation/reaction, the repeating of the term “crowd” as well as the idea of “teaching,” and the statement of “going up” and then “down” the mountain), correspondences between the introductory verses Mt 5:3-16 and verses Mt 7:13-27 (including the change from third to second person and then from second to third, the repeating of the phrase “kingdom of heaven”), and correspondences between Mt 5:17-20 and Mt 7:12 (i.e., the law and the prophets).

\textsuperscript{233} Park, 111.
\textsuperscript{234} Park, 122.
\textsuperscript{235} Park, 90.
\textsuperscript{236} Park, 92.
(3) Park feels that Mt 7:12 is a “good summary” of the whole sermon’s main section emphasizing what Park calls “whole-hearted love,” and (4) Mt 7:13-27 exudes a “pervasive tone of strong eschatological warning” with Mt 7:13-23 displaying a “final judgment motif” that is “designed to arouse pathos in the audience, one of the basic functions of a speech.” 237 Within this conclusion section Park sees three units ((1) Mt 7:13-14, the narrow and wide roads; (2) Mt 7:15-23, the false prophets; and (3) Mt 7:24-27, the foolish and wise builders) where Mt 7:13-14 and 7:24-27 are “initial and final eschatological warnings in antithetical form” with Mt 7:15-23 being a “longer warning against false prophets.” 238

With respect to the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount, Park believes this is found in Mt 5:20 and recapitulated in the conclusion of the Sermon. That theme, he determines, is “greater righteousness.” 239 The essence of this “greater righteousness,” Park asserts, is “whole-hearted obedience to the will of God.” 240 The main issue, for which the Sermon was written, Park concludes, is the “qualification of the people of the kingdom of heaven.” It is this greater righteousness (which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees) which qualifies people for entry into the kingdom of heaven. 241 Park believes that this main theme is recapitulated in Mt 7:21. This verse restates Jesus’ declaration of “obedience to the will of God” for entrance into the kingdom, which Park believes is “equivalent to the ‘greater righteousness.’” 242 Park feels this restatement may be seen also in the concept of entering by the narrow gate (Mt 7:13-14) and in the production of good fruit (Mt 7:16-20) but that it is “no place more explicit than in this verse” (i.e., vs 21). 243

237 See Park, 93-94, for the ideas and quotes here in the text concerning his reasoning for supporting Mt 7:13-27 as the conclusion of the Sermon.
239 Park. 96.
240 Park, 97.
241 Park, 98.
242 Park, 123.
243 Park, 123.
Mt 7:21 also makes a clear statement “directed to Christian community members.” This, Park believes, is shown in the use of the Christian confessional terms “Jesus is Lord” in the phrase, “Lord, Lord.” Park believes that the use of “Lord, Lord,” “implies that the audience, or at least part of it, assumes that confessing Jesus to be ‘Lord’ is essential to entering the kingdom of heaven” and as such Mt 7:21-23 becomes a “strong warning to Christians.”

Mt 7:22-23 functions as an illustration of what Jesus says in verse 21. Park believes this is indicated by the repetition of the phrase “Lord, Lord” addressed to Jesus in verse 22. Verses 22-23, then, “elaborate” the strong warning of judgment addressed to Christians. Many who thought they would be entering the kingdom of heaven will be “shocked to discover they are refused entrance.” Here they “appeal” to the works they did “in his name.” Park believes that this shows “they were genuine followers of Jesus.” These individuals however are disowned by Jesus “because they lack true obedience” (something more important than miraculous works) and are condemned as those who do works of lawlessness.

This set of verses also functions to reveal to the reader for the first time that Jesus himself is the judge at the final judgment. Park states, “He is the representative of God, his father . . . who is the ultimate judge” sitting in the judgment seat of his Father. Prior to this in Matthew, Jesus was revealed as the Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David, the King of the Jews, and the Son of God. But now he is announced to be the Eschatological Judge at the end of the age.

244 Park, 124.
245 Park, 124-25, believes that the use of “Lord” here is not to be understood in the sense of “sir” or “teacher” but is to be understood in the “Christian confessional” sense. He notes in support that in all of Matthew the term “Lord” is used of disciples addressing Jesus and not used by outsiders except when they are desiring to follow Jesus or they are seeking help from him.
246 Park, 124.
247 Park, 125.
248 Park, 125.
249 Park, 126.
250 Park, 126.
251 Park, 132-34. Although Jesus as the Judge is hinted at in Mt 3:11-12, Park feels it is clearly stated here.
252 Park, 133.
This revelation “climaxes Matthew’s story about Jesus up to this point.” Park believes that from the beginning “Matthew has stressed Jesus’ eschatological significance as the one who will inaugurate a new era (chs. 1-2)” and now his final role in that era is made known. Jesus has authority as the final judge.

From a narrative critical view, Park stresses that this passage is “one of the most shocking, revealing, and emotionally disturbing passages in Matthew’s story of Jesus.” This is because it shows those who did great works as condemned, it provokes “strong pathos of the audience,” and causes the reader to ask vital questions such as who are these people who are condemned and why they are condemned?

Park believes that contextually these last two vital questions can be answered. He believes that the people condemned include (1) the false prophets of the preceding verses and (2) Christians in general. Park believes that the “generalization in verse 21” stating “not everyone . . .” shows that those depicted in verses 22-23 are to be understood as only “one example” of those spoken of in verse 21. Park states, “. . . the tragic final fate of the false prophets or charismatics is only an example for what many Christians will face at the final judgment . . . The potentiality for such a tragedy is open not only to prophets or charismatics but to all Christians.”

Park believes that the reason these individuals were condemned is not because of their works but because, in doing these works, they did not do the will of God because they did not perform them with “internal wholeness.” He expounds on this stating that contextually these people were “ravenous wolves” in “sheep’s clothing” and thus had “impure motivation, without

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253 Park, 134.
254 Park, 134.
255 Park, 126.
256 Park, 127.
257 Park, 128.
258 Park, 128-29.
259 Park, 129-30.
love.” In addition, the context also hints that they did not produce good fruit from a pure heart. As such, they were condemned because they lacked “internal wholeness” in their practice of prophecy, casting out of demons, and miracles. As mentioned above, Park believes that verse 21 “recapitulates” the “core” message of the Sermon on the Mount found in Mt 5:17-20. There the “essential qualification” for entering into the kingdom is expressed as radical whole-hearted obedience to God. Since these people lacked this, they were thus not permitted entrance into the kingdom by Jesus. Their lack of radical whole-hearted obedience constituted their ἄνομία and this disqualified them from entering.

**Park on Matthean Obedience in Mt 1-4**

Park next reviews Mt 1-4 noting, from a narrative critical perspective, Matthew’s presentation of “first impressions” which he says “will not be overturned” but rather strengthened over and over throughout the rest of the book. One of these first impressions is the identity of Jesus. Park argues for a unity between chapters 1-2 and 3-4, and, as such, sees Mt 4:17 as the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry focusing on what Jesus does whereas all the foregoing verses focus on who Jesus is.

Jesus’ identity begins to be revealed at the very beginning of the book (Mt 1) with the superscription of Jesus Christ as the son of David and the son of Abraham (Mt 1:1). This identifies Jesus as a “royal messianic” figure. His genealogy (Mt 1:1-17) identifies David alone as “king” and, as such, gives the strong first impression that Jesus is also a king. Park believes that the identification of Jesus as the son of Abraham (“the founder of God’s chosen people”)

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260 Park, 130.
261 Park, 149.
262 Park, 153.
263 Park, 153.
264 Park, 156.
indicates that now Jesus is a “new founder of the people of God.”\textsuperscript{265} The inclusion of four Gentile or Gentile-related women (“Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah”) in this genealogy could be an indication or first impression, Park believes, that this people of God may include the Gentiles to which God’s choosing of Abraham in Gn 12:1-3 seems to point.\textsuperscript{266} Jesus’ genealogy is divided up into three fourteen-unit sections each of which mark “an end of a period” and function as “turning points toward new periods.” Park believes that Jesus, who is mentioned at the end of the third fourteen-unit section, represents “the beginning of a new age.”\textsuperscript{267} Thus the genealogy in chapter 1 “gives the impression that Jesus, as a king, will open a new age for God’s chosen people, according to divine plan.”\textsuperscript{268}

Park sees Jesus’ birth (Mt 1:18-25) as showing Jesus’ “divine origin” and indicating that Jesus is greater than David. Jesus is conceived of the Holy Spirit, one who will save God’s people from their sins, one who is given the title “Emmanuel” (God with us), all of which give the impression that Jesus is the instrument of God to minister to his people, Israel.\textsuperscript{269} Jesus’ use of the love commandment as the interpretive key for understanding the law, seen later in the gospel, and Park’s equation of the idea of “righteous” with “whole-hearted obedience to the will of God” seem to have its first impression here with the introduction of Joseph. Joseph is presented “righteous” in not wanting to expose Mary to public disgrace and divorce her in response to her out-of-wedlock pregnancy (Mt 1:19). Park believes this is an example of Joseph practicing compassion as a result of him interpreting the “law in the sense of the love commandment.”\textsuperscript{270} Joseph’s subsequent exact obedience to God’s commands given through the angel along with his

\textsuperscript{265} Park, 158.  
\textsuperscript{266} Park, 159.  
\textsuperscript{267} Park, 160.  
\textsuperscript{268} Park, 161.  
\textsuperscript{269} Park, 163-64.  
\textsuperscript{270} Park, 164.
application of the love commandment shows a “righteous” person practicing “perfect obedience to God.” This then seems to give the first impression of what it means to be “righteous.”

In Mt 2:1-23, Jesus is depicted as not just a king, but “king of the Jews.” This, along with the phrase “shepherd my people Israel” confirms that his ministry is to Israel. The inclusion of the magi (Gentiles) with their worship of Jesus in contrast to Herod’s desire to kill him, seems to hint at the possibility of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God. Here, Jesus is shown to have come as king of the Jews but he is not accepted by his own people, the Jews. Rather, he is accepted by Gentiles. Park feels this irony anticipates “the shifting fortune of Jews as God’s exclusive people and the subsequent inclusion of Gentiles in God’s people.”

Park also sees some “Jesus-Moses typology” here in chapter 2. Here the reader encounters a comparison of Jesus/Moses and Herod/Pharoah with respect to the infant Jesus being sought out to be killed. In addition, Jesus lives in Egypt and then flees toward the land of Israel. Both of these were involved in the wilderness and both were involved with fasting “forty days and forty nights” (Ex 34:28; Mt 4:2). In this typology Park does not, however, see Jesus as a new law giver but as a “founder of a new people of God.” This typology thus gives the reader another first impression that Jesus is like Moses in some way.

Park sees the prophecies (fulfillment passages) and dreams in chapter 2 as “vehicles for the revelation or fulfillment of the will of God” and as a foreshadowing of “Jesus’ whole life in obedience to the will of God.” Park notes that God uses dreams here to “achieve his own plans through obedient people (e.g., Magi, Joseph), while protecting Jesus from Satanic plans of

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271 Park, 165.
272 Park, 167-69.
273 Park, 169.
274 Park, 170.
275 Park, 171.
disobedient people (e.g., Herod).” 276 Hence the obedience concept in Matthew is advanced by use of prophecies and dreams.

In Mt 3:1-12, John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner of Jesus preaching the kingdom of heaven (first mentioned here in Matthew) and repentance. Here, Park believes, Matthew reveals his perspective that “repentance” is an essential element found in the nature of the true people of God. 277 It is not physical ancestry but the production of the fruit of repentance to obey the will of God that makes true children of God. Here, John speaks to those who do not repent, of judgment by Jesus. Jesus is thus revealed now not simply as the king, but the “eschatological ‘king’ . . . who will judge the world.” 278 Park believes that in this passage Matthew attempts to show that the “essential qualification” for being in God’s kingdom will be the possession of a nature characterized by repentance to obey the will of God. 279 Without this nature, judgment ensues.

Jesus’ baptism (Mt 3:12-17) reveals Jesus’ first words in Matthew. Here he responds to John’s hesitancy to baptize him by saying that it must be done to “fulfill all righteousness.” Park states that although the exact nature of the concept of “righteousness” is not stated in the text, the reader will “sense some connotation of doing (being obedient to) the will of God.” 280 The voice from heaven, stating that Jesus is God’s beloved Son in whom he is pleased, is a response of God to Jesus’ commitment to “filial obedience in 3:15.” 281 This voice from heaven also is a declaration by God of the divine Sonship of Jesus, something that is repeated again in Mt 17:5. Park believes that the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus is an allusion to David’s anointing. As such, God’s statement of Jesus as his Son here at his baptism is not only a “confirmation of

276 Park, 171.
277 Park, 173-74.
278 Park, 176.
279 Park, 176.
280 Park, 177.
281 Park, 178.
Jesus as a Davidic king” but that “he is the king who has a unique relationship with God.”

Park claims that Jesus’ kingship is different from any other king of Israel who came before him. The former kings all came to establish God’s kingship among God’s people. Jesus on the other hand came as the “divine Son” who “himself is the king of God’s kingdom.” Park argues that the “establishment of Jesus’ kingship” is the “establishment of the kingdom of God.”

Park asserts that the temptation story (Mt 4:1-11) is closely connected with the baptism story with the use of common words and common setting (both take place in the wilderness, both refer to the Holy Spirit, both have the sonship of Jesus as a theme, and both use the terms “kingdom” and “stone”). Both these stories, Park says, reveal the true meaning of Jesus’ divine sonship. Satan’s temptations of Jesus here are focused on what Park calls false interpretations of “Jesus’ sonship.” In each temptation Jesus emphasizes hearing and doing the will of God through citing scripture and trusting in God. Park asserts that the point of the temptation story is to “demonstrate Jesus’ obedience to God as the ‘Son of God.’” Park states that Jesus’ submission to God and his resistance to Satan are examples of the “fruit” God wants (cf. Mt 3:8) and the “righteousness” Jesus fulfills (cf. 3:15). The temptation story has parallels with Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness and her being tested with being hungry, resisting God, and idolatry. Park notes however that contrary to what Israel, “God’s rebellious son,” did, Jesus is victorious as God’s obedient Son. Hence, the temptation story “reveals the essence of Jesus’ sonship, that is, a total obedience to God, and warns against any other, and erroneous, interpretations of Jesus’ sonship.”

282 Park, 180.
283 Park, 181.
284 Park, 182.
285 Park, 183.
286 Park, 183.
287 Park, 183-84.
288 Park, 185.
Mt 4:12-16 reveals the setting for the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Here Jesus is represented to be a light to the Gentiles and he lives in “Galilee of the Gentiles.” As such there may be here another hint of the Gentiles being part of the people of God.\textsuperscript{289}

Mt 4:17-22 reports Jesus as starting his ministry by proclaiming the kingdom and calling for obedience through repentance of the people. Jesus’ message is word for word the same as John the Baptist’s. However, Park claims that Jesus’ message has more authority because (1) it is given by the one whom John said was more powerful than he and the one who will be the eschatological judge, (2) it is “given by the Son of God,” (3) it is given by one who “modeled the way of total obedience to the rule of God,” and (4) Jesus overcame the temptations of Satan and will lead “the people of the world to be obedient not to the will of Satan, but to the will of God.”\textsuperscript{290}

In this same passage Jesus calls his first disciples who leave everything and follow him immediately. Their radical obedience, Park suggests, displays in a positive light to the reader the correct radical obedience and discipleship that “constitutes the essence of the new people of the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{291}

Park summarizes the first impressions given to the reader of Mt 1-4. He states that these first four chapters constitute the two major themes of “Jesus’ identity and the nature of his people,” of which Jesus’ identity is the most developed and accentuated. Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham, “the founder of a new people, the true Israel,” the Son of God, and one who is completely obedient to the will of God. Jesus himself is presented as the perfect model of obedience that the reader should follow if he wants to be doing the will of the Father. With respect to his people, “obedience to the will of God” is their “essential characteristic.” The kingdom of heaven is “the main subject of Jesus’ whole public ministry” and, with him as king,

\textsuperscript{289} Park, 186-84.
\textsuperscript{290} Park, 188.
\textsuperscript{291} Park, 190.
he calls for repentance. This human obedience of repentance and response of discipleship to Jesus is necessary for people to be part of God’s kingdom. Their obedience is set in contrast to the general disobedience and negative response of the Jewish people (e.g., Herod and the religious leaders).

**Park on Matthean Obedience in Mt 8-28**

Park then embarks on a general overview of Matthean obedience in chapters 8 through 28 of Matthew. He divides his discussion into 4 parts: (1) Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as God’s obedient Son, the disciples call to obedience, and the Jewish religious leaders’ disobedience, (2) Matthew’s view of “prophecy and charismatic activities in relation to obedience,” (3) Matthew’s judgment motif which echoes Mt 7:21-23, and (4) Jesus’ last speech (Mt 28:16-20) and its emphasis on obedience.

**Obedience: Jesus, the Disciples, and the Religious Leaders**

Matthew characterizes Jesus as “obedient to the will of God” not only in the first four chapters and the Sermon on the Mount, but also in the rest of this Gospel. This is done by Matthew showing Jesus doing God’s will “through his own words and deeds.” Matthew continues, in chapters 8-28, to stress Jesus as the “reveal[er] of God’s will” and the Son of God (e.g., Mt 8:29; 14:33; 16:16). Jesus also continues to call God “my Father” throughout these chapters and this relationship with the Father authenticates his message and his being the “reveal[er] of God’s will.” God’s voice in Mt 17:5 that Jesus is his Son and one must listen to him

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292 Park, 195-97.
293 Park only considers “select passages” that he feels are “most illuminating,” (201).
294 Park, 201.
295 Park, 203.
296 Park, 204.
buttresses Jesus’ identity and his actions as proper obedience. Park notes that, “the distinction between God’s will and Jesus’ word is so thin as to disappear.”

Park believes that the theme of the Sermon on the Mount of “greater righteousness” and “the kingdom” as Jesus’ main subject continue throughout chapters 8-28. This greater righteousness and entrance into the kingdom involves one obeying with his whole heart. Many of the parables and Jesus’ statements warn the reader that if they are to be true people of God’s kingdom they must live according to God’s will (e.g., see Mt 18:3; 19:14 where Jesus states one must become like little children, the parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30), the net (Mt 13:47-50), and others). With respect to God’s will, Park notes that in Jesus’ interpretation of the law, one must of necessity exercise “whole-hearted obedience” (e.g., he notes Mt 9:1-8, 9-13; 12:1-8; 15:1-20; and many other places) and use the love commandments (Mt 22:37-40) as the “hermeneutical key” to interpret the law. Park equates the practice of the love commandments with “‘whole-hearted’ obedience” as that which God expects for “the fulfillment of the ‘law and the prophets.’” For Park, this seems to be what is at the root of Jesus’ emphasis on the “heart” and “mercy” throughout the book. The condition of one’s heart determines whether one is clean or not (Mt 15:10-20) and showing mercy is more important than stringent observance of the law (Mt 23:23).

Jesus not only is depicted by Matthew as one who reveals God’s will and calls his followers to “whole-hearted obedience,” but also as one who himself completely obeys God’s will. Park remarks that Jesus is always shown to be “consistent in his words and deeds.” In addition, the fulfillment quotations show Jesus’ “whole life as the fulfillment of God’s will and

297 Park, 205.
299 Park, 208.
300 Park, 208.
301 Park, 208-10.
plan” (e.g., Mt 12:17-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10; etc.). In quoting many passages from Isaiah, Park points out that Jesus is identified with the “suffering servant of God” of Isaiah. His character is to be a servant which Park says “summarizes his entire existence.”303 Even in death his character is revealed. Jesus predicts his death at the hands of the Jewish leaders (Mt 16:21; 26:2) and also is depicted as submissive to it as God’s will in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46), his trials, and on the cross as is shown both by his words and in his non-resistance to the authorities.304 Jesus is thus the perfect obedient servant of God both in life and in death. Jesus therefore becomes the model of obedience his followers are to follow.

Park then turns to look at the disciples’ call to obedience. The Twelve are called “to be obedient to God,”305 and their following of Jesus, Park states, is “obeying the will of God.” The call they receive is to both live according to his words as well as his actions. It is a call to be obedient to “the point of death” (Mt 10:38; 16:24).306 The disciples are not perfect but are “characterized positively in many respects.” When Jesus calls, they immediately drop everything and follow him, they receive his teaching, are given power over unclean spirits, told to preach, heal, and raise the dead (Mt 10:1-8), and do exactly what Jesus tells them (e.g., Mt 21:2-7; 26:18-19). Park points out, however, that they do have faults. They are portrayed as being dull (Mt 15:15-16), fearful (Mt 8:26), having little faith (Mt 14:31), seeking to be the greatest (Mt 18:1-11), and even deny and desert him at Gethsemane and his trial (Mt 26:51-56; 26:69-75). However, the “final image of the disciples” is a positive triumph as they are commissioned to make disciples of all nations. Here by the grace of God they are “reinstated” and given a “new beginning” to serve God with all their hearts.307

303 Park, 211.
304 Park, 212-15.
305 Park, 220.
306 Park, 220.
307 Park, 219-25.
In contrast to Jesus’ and the disciples’ call to obedience, Park next discusses the Jewish religious leaders’ disobedience. The chief priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, elders, and scribes are depicted by Matthew as “evil.” They are disobedient to God and not his true people. They do not use the hermeneutical key of love to interpret the scriptures but “attempt to impose on the people their interpretation of the law and traditions.” They are blind spiritually and are evil inside. They do not understand or practice “internal wholeness” but are hypocrites who maintain a “discrepancy between their inward nature and outward appearance.” They think they are doing God’s will but in reality are self-deceived. The height of their disobedience is seen in their slaying of Jesus, the king of the Jews sent to them by God. They are “totally disobedient to God’s will” and are excluded from his kingdom. These leaders, Park asserts, are examples of disobedience and serve as a “foil” to Jesus, the one who displays whole-hearted obedience. This “negative portrait” of these leaders functions as a “strong warning to the reader” that one who disobeys will be under the severe judgment of God. Hence, this is the connection with the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5:20 where one must have righteousness greater than the scribes and Pharisees to enter the kingdom.

Obedience: Prophecy and Charismatic Activity

Park next considers obedience in connection with prophecy and charismatic activity. Working from his previously established definition of obedience as “love and mercy,” Park first considers the miracles of Jesus and then the works of false prophets toward resolving the question

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308 Park, 228.
309 Park, 229.
310 Park, 230.
311 Park, 232-33.
312 Park, 233.
as to whether “Matthew considers any charismatic activity to be proof of the legitimacy of the 
performer.”  

Park outlines Jesus’ healing activities as “actions of love.” Jesus shows compassion in 
his healing by touching people when he did not have to, even when he would be ritually defiled 
(Mt 8:2-17). Matthew also shows “compassion” and “mercy” as main motives for Jesus to do his 
miracles and helping people (see Mt 9:27, 36; 14:14; 15:22, 32; 17:15, and 20:30, 31, 34). Park 
comments that Jesus’ example of compassion and mercy “should be the primary motivation for 
charismatic activities” and states that the lack of it is why the “false prophets and charismatics 
were condemned by Jesus in chapter 7.”

In chapter 24 of Matthew, Park notes that Jesus gives illustrations of charismatic activities 
in the form of false prophets and false christs which are not done according to the will of God. 
These are predicted to perform signs and wonders in Christ’s name yet to “mislead people 
concerning God’s will.” Park notes that in this chapter Jesus says that there will be an increase 
of “lawlessness” and “the love of many will grow cold.” Park believes that people will be 
misled by these false prophets and false christs by the miracles they perform because those who 
see them “regard the miracles as proofs of the legitimacy of their performers.” Hence, these 
false workers gain authority in the eyes of their beholders and their beholders are deceived. Jesus 
brings love, compassion, and mercy with his miracles; these false miracle workers bring miracles 
without love. Instead they perform miracles for the selfish purpose of gaining more followers of 
their own.

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313 Park, 237.
314 Park, 237-38.
315 Park, 240-41.
316 Park, 243.
317 Park, 245. Here Park notes the similarity with 7:21-23.
318 Park, 246.
319 Park, 246.
After considering the Matthean passages about the performance of miracles, Park concludes that indeed “miracles are true signs of the *gospel*, the gospel of the kingdom of God” but are not necessarily indicators of “the legitimacy of the performer.” The miracles of Jesus were “signs of God’s mercy and love” which were part of the end of the age through the ministry of Jesus, but they were not to be seen as establishing the validity of his identity. They can be “suggestive” of that but not confirmatory. Signs and wonders of others are also not to be seen as confirming the validity of their identity. This, Park claims, was the problem encountered in Mt 7:21-23. These claimants performed miracles and expected those miracles to be validators of their relationship with God. They failed “to recognize that love and mercy and obedience are the very things that God seeks.”

**Obedience and Matthean Judgment Motif Echoing Mt 7:21-23**

Eschatologically, Park notes that Matthew depicts the kingdom of God as coming with Jesus. Jesus is the inaugurator of a “new era.” However, Park cautions that Matthew also understands that the “consummation of the age still lies in the future.” This motif is especially prevalent in Matthew as he devotes more passages to the rewards and punishments of the final judgment than Mark or Luke. Of these two, there are more “punishment texts” than reward texts. In his “narrative sections,” the punishment texts are addressed to the people of Israel and her leaders while rewards are promised to the disciples as well as to Gentiles. The “discourse sections” do not have punishment aimed at Israel or the Jewish leaders but “toward the general

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320 Park, 249-50.
321 Park, 250.
322 Park, 251.
323 Park, 252-53.
324 Park, 253.
On the whole, Matthew has judgment directed toward everyone who falls short of his will.

Park further delineates judgment within the church in Matthew. He notes that Matthew is clear that not all who are in the church will escape the final judgment for they will be a “mixed body.” To support this, Park examines several parables including the parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43), the parable of the net (Mt 13:47-50), the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35), the parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14), and the parables in Jesus’ discourse concerning the end of the age (Mt 24:45-51; 25:1-13, 14-30, 31-45). All of these, Park suggests, indicate that “warning toward Christian insiders is one of the central messages of Matthew’s story.” True Christians must be obedient to the will of God. Those who are to be punished, Park states, are those who do not “practice the commandment of love toward God and love toward neighbors.”

Park believes that judgment motif arouses the reader’s emotion and is intended to “persuade them to do the will of God.” He claims this is achieved through “radical Christian rhetoric” which consists of “vivid presentation of the blessings of eternal life in the kingdom, and the tragedy of eternal destruction in eternal fire” experienced over and over again by the reader of Matthew. Through this reading experience, the “primary function of the judgment motif in Matthew” is to be achieved, i.e., the reader is moved to “live according to the will of God.” The reader will seek to obey God with inner purity and produce righteous fruit.

Park makes an interesting note that Matthew only focuses on the judgment of the Church and Israel and not on outsiders. He concludes that, for Matthew, the primary focus of the

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325 Park, 256.
326 Park, 257.
327 Park, 264.
328 Park, 265.
329 Park, 251.
330 Park, 267.
331 Park, 268.
judgment texts “is not on the separation between Christians and non-Christians but on the separation between Christians doing the will of God and Christians not doing the will of God.”

This is why, he believes, Matthew writes such a “vivid and pathetic judgment scene of Christian insiders in the concluding section of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:13-27, esp. 7:15-23).”

Obedience and Jesus Final Speech: Mt 28:16-20

In this passage Jesus states that he has all authority and then commands his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and promises that he will always be with them. Park notes that scholars have regarded this passage as “one of the most important passages” in understanding Matthew’s story but they have not agreed on “the central function of this passage for the overall meaning of Matthew’s story.” Here Park argues that “the primary role of this passage is the final reaffirmation of the centrality of obedience to the will of God (Jesus), which Matthew has stressed throughout the whole Gospel.” To support this, Park argues that the purpose of the command to make disciples is to “make people obedient to the will of God.” Part of accomplishing this is to baptize these people (which, Park claims after reflecting on Jesus’ baptism, is “related to obedience to the will of God”) and teach them to obey “all” of Jesus’ teachings (which reveal the will of God). Here people are to begin a new life “characterized by obedience to God’s will which can be summarized as love of God and neighbors.” The use of the phrase “to obey” (Mt 28:20), Park claims, accents this conclusion. The “core of the mission

332 Park, 270.
333 Park, 270.
334 Park, 271-72.
335 Park, 272.
336 Park, 272.
337 Park, 274-75.
338 Park, 275.
command (19-20)” Park states, “is to engender a new life characterized by obedience to God’s will.”

Park then expounds on the “rationale” for the mission given here in these verses. He claims it is Jesus’ kingship and authority. Jesus authority is what Park calls “ruling authority” since the very concept of a “kingship” necessitates obedience from people. Jesus for the first time in the Gospel is stated to have all or “universal authority” over heaven and earth. Jesus’ kingship is to be established over all the earth and to include all nations, something that seems to be hinted at in Mt 1:1 where Jesus is called the son of Abraham. This highlights the need for “whole-hearted obedience.” This is key to carrying out the commission. Jesus promises to forever be with those who obey in this way and help them with this task. He will be Emmanuel as described in the first chapter of Matthew.

Summary of Park on Mt 7:21-23 and Matthean Obedience

Park has argued that Matthew writes his gospel to persuade Christian believers to practice whole-hearted obedience to the will of God. This persuasion finds its impetus in the many eschatological judgment passages Matthew presents in his gospel. Mt 7:15-23 itself has a “powerful rhetorical effect on the reader, issuing a clear warning to those who call Jesus ‘Lord,’ among whom the reader is located.” Without this obedience all will be condemned at the final judgment.

Park argues that Mt 7:15-23 is to be seen as a unit focusing on false prophets but also maintains that vss 21-23 have a broader application to all followers of Jesus as is indicated by the switch in this passage from second person to third person and the use of the term πᾶσας. He has also argued that this passage is the middle part of a three-fold closing unit of the Sermon on the

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339 Park, 275.
340 Park, 276-79.
341 Park, 283.
Mount (Mt 7:13-27). This concluding unit consists of a strong eschatological warning of final judgment that is intended to persuade the reader to live a life of obedience to God. Park believes that Mt 5:20 is the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount which he calls “greater righteousness,” which he also identifies as “whole-hearted obedience to the will of God.” The main reason the Sermon was written was to expound on the “qualification of the people of the kingdom of heaven.” As such Park believes Mt 7:21 is a recapitulation of the main theme of the sermon as it restates Jesus’ declaration of “obedience to the will of God” as necessary for entrance into the kingdom. Vss 22-23 function as an illustration of what Jesus says in vs 21 with a strong warning of judgment addressed to Christians. It is here in vs 23 that Jesus is clearly revealed to the reader for the first time that he himself is the judge at the final judgment. The charismatics and prophets in these verses are condemned by Jesus because of their lack of “internal wholeness” and lack of radical whole-hearted obedience to God which is their ἀνομία, their lawlessness.

With respect to Matthean obedience in general, Park sees Mt 1-4 expounding on Jesus’ identity as son of Abraham, son of David the king, Son of God, king of the Jews, the shepherd of God’s people Israel, the founder of a new people, and the model of perfect obedience to God. Joseph is held up as the first example in Matthew of a man practicing the love commandment and exhibiting what the term “righteous” entails. Hints of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God are noted with the worship of Jesus by the Magi and Jesus’ living and doing ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles.

Mt 8-28 continues the theme of Jesus as the “revealor of God’s will” and the Son of God. It also continues the themes of “greater righteousness” and “the kingdom” found in the Sermon on the Mount. These are Jesus’ main themes throughout the rest of Matthew. Greater righteousness connected with qualification for entrance into the kingdom continues to be
maintained as consisting in one’s obedience to God with his whole heart. This obedience, or greater righteousness, involves the use of the hermeneutical key of love whenever applying the details of the law. Jesus becomes the perfect model of obedience not only in life but also, and especially, in his death. He exhibited mercy toward people in need and obeyed God’s will even to the point of death. The disciples on the other hand are depicted as having both positive and negative obedient traits. Even though they fail miserably during Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, they prevail in the end when Jesus gives them the command to make disciples of all nations under his authority as Son of God and son of Abraham. The evil religious leaders on the other hand fail wretchedly and finally. They become models of disobedience who do not practice the love commandment. They are promised the punishment depicted in the many vivid and shocking eschatological judgment passages of Matthew’s gospel as will also all followers of Jesus who do not obey God with all their heart according to Jesus’ teaching. Matthew ends his Gospel with Jesus having “universal authority” and what Park calls a “reaffirmation of the centrality of obedience to the will of God.”

Park thus sees whole-hearted obedience as a central and key theme throughout the entire Gospel of Matthew.

**Evaluation of Previous Literature**

Mohrlang, Godfrey, and Park have laid some good foundations for future study of Mt 7:21-23 and its contribution to Matthean theology of obedience. I will here attempt to suggest ways in which each of these could go further in their analysis to more fully contribute to the understanding of this passage and Matthean obedience in general.

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342 Park, 272.
Godfrey’s thesis approaches the text from a theological perspective dealing mainly with the theological issue of the source of the miraculous works depicted in Mt 7:22. She does conclude that God can and does do miraculous works through people who are not right with him. Specifically, here in vs 22, these people who address Jesus as “Lord” seem to have great Christian character and did do bonafide miracles but were still rejected by him. In making many of her conclusions and statements, however, she seems to do so rather superficially without evidence of much in-depth word study analysis. She does list many various interpretations in coming to her conclusions but could go further in providing better contextual analyses, deeper investigation of the concepts of obedience and the law, provide an analysis of what “doing the will of the Father” entails, do a more in-depth study of the phrase “I never knew you,” and study out more thoroughly what the nature of authority is here in this passage and in Matthew as a whole.

Mohrlang has written a fine overview of Matthean moral principles from the perspective of the main content of his ethics. He is the first and only one I have found that has attempted to do this comprehensively. In doing so, he has studied it under the five aspects of law, reward and punishment, relationship to Christ and the role of grace, love, and inner forces. One of the major points which he might have expanded upon is the notion which Mohrlang holds of the love commandment being seen only within the framework of the law. This seems to suggest a static view of the law in the sense that it cannot point to something greater than itself in an eschatological fulfillment sense. Mohrlang also holds that love is the hermeneutical key for applying the law in places where application of laws seem to conflict. One could ask, however, if this is really what is going on when Jesus and his disciples seemingly break the law in several places in Matthew. Mohrlang might have also explored more in-depth the concept of the law itself being prophetic and what its fulfillment in Jesus means (Mt 5:17). He seems to dismiss all
views except his in a couple of short paragraphs. Given that there have been further discussions on this topic since Mohrlang wrote his book, it would be good to look at this issue again. In doing so, one may discover implications with respect to whether and in what way the entire law has continuing validity to Christian disciples “right down to the least jot and tittle,” as Mohrlang claims. Another aspect of Matthean obedience and ethics which was not explored is the idea of what it would take for Jesus to know someone in the sense seen in Mt 7:23. The meaning of the concept of “doing the will of the Father,” which Mohrlang seems to imply means keeping and obeying the law, might have also been further examined. With respect to the concept of ἀνομία (“lawlessness”) in Mt 7:23, Mohrlang asserts that this term used here should not be understood literally with respect to the OT law. Since this word seems to be understood by Sim and others to indeed refer to the OT law and used as evidence that Matthew was “pro-law,” a reexamination of this term would now seem to be in order.

Park in his dissertation has contributed substantially to the understanding of Mt 7:21-23 and Matthean obedience theology viewing this passage and Matthew as a whole from a narrative critical perspective. He has argued that Mt 7:21 is a recapitulation of the main theme of the Sermon (seen in Mt 5:20 as “greater righteousness). It restates Jesus’ declaration of “obedience to the will of God” as necessary for entrance into the kingdom. Park equates “greater righteousness,” “whole-hearted obedience to the will of God,” and “doing the will of the Father.” The terms “obedience,” “doing the will of the Father,” and “righteousness” do not seem to have been defined extensively by Park but rather seem to be basically assumed to be synonymous under the umbrella of obedience. Obedience in Matthew, as Park sees it, involves more than just following the law. It demands first of all following Jesus as the king and founder of a new people. With respect to the law, Park embraces its eternal validity and sees Jesus fulfilling the law in

343 See my first chapter, “Chapter I: Research Concern.”
344 Park, 78 and 103.
the sense of his being the revealer of its true meaning. He does not dwell on this, however, in any depth or detail. Park does embrace love as the hermeneutical key for the application of the law in the practice of whole-hearted obedience and Jesus as the perfect model of obedience. He is to be imitated and his interpretation of the law given supremacy. In my estimation, however, Park could have gone further in defining more explicitly what the term “obedience” and his assumed synonyms of “doing the will of the Father,” and “righteousness” mean in Matthew. To be fair, this lack of extensive definitions may be somewhat to be expected in a narrative critical literary analysis which focuses on the text itself without necessarily focusing much on grammatical-historical backgrounds. Park could also have further investigated the meaning of πληρόω in Mt 5:17 and discussed further in what manner he feels the law remains eternally valid. Park, although mentioning it briefly, also does not look deeply into the background and meaning of the phrases “I never knew you” and “away from me” in Mt 7:23. Rather, he uncritically accepts H. D. Betz view that this involves “formulas of renunciation (v. 23b) and repudiation (v. 23c).”

In consideration of the above review, there are several points which stand out as areas of opportunity to advance scholarly knowledge in the understanding of Mt 7:21-23 and its contribution to Matthean obedience theology. These include (1) deeper grammatico-historical study of the passage including the context, meanings, content, and use of the concepts of “doing the will of the Father,” “I never knew you,” and “obedience,” (2) a revisitation of what Jesus’ fulfillment of the law, its validity, and love as the law’s hermeneutical key may entail, and (3) a re-examination of the meaning of “lawlessness (ἀνομία)” here in this passage. I will attempt to address all of these and more from a grammatico-historical perspective which to date does not seem to have been done in a major monograph.

345 Park basically deals with this concept of fulfillment in one footnote: 99 n. 77.
346 He briefly mentions this on pages 126 and 131.
347 Park, 126.
CHAPTER III: OBEDIENCE IN MATTHEW 7:21-23

In this chapter, I will investigate the meaning and function of Mt 7:21-23 in relation to the Sermon on the Mount and with respect to the notion of obedience in Matthew. In doing so, I will first look at the context of this passage in the Sermon on the Mount in an attempt to determine themes and concepts that may affect the meaning of this passage. Secondly, I will examine several words and phrases and their meanings within this passage itself. Finally I will draw some conclusions as to the contribution of this passage to the nature of obedience in Matthew’s Gospel.

The Greek Text of Matthew 7:21-23

21. Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι, Κύριε κύριε, εἰσελέυσται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἀλλ’ ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

22. πολλοὶ ἐροῦσιν μοι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, Κύριε κύριε, ὦ τῷ σῷ ὄνοματι ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὄνοματι διαμόνα ἐξεβάλομεν, καὶ τῷ σῷ ὄνοματι δυνάμεις πολλάς ἐποίησαμεν;

23. καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω ἀντοῖς ὅτι Οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς· ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ ὁι ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἁνομίαν. 348

Matthew 7:21-23 in Matthew

With respect to Matthew as a whole, a clear structural outline of this gospel has eluded scholars. 349 Some major proposals include 350 (1) B. W. Bacon’s view that Matthew organized his

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349 On this, see Ulrich Luz, Matthew 1-7, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 34-37. Luz, Matthew 1-7, 36-37, lists the following reasons that contribute to the difficulties scholars face when attempting to come to an agreement as to the structure of Matthew: (1) “The Matthean language is highly formulaic,” (2) “Beginning with ch. 12, the Gospel of Matthew follows closely the structure of Mark,” and (3) “Matthew does not seem to value delimitations . . . Thus only rarely can major parts be clearly delimited.”
350 It is beyond the scope of this thesis to thoroughly investigate in detail the abundance of proposed outlines for Matthew. Instead I will mention only a few that seem to have been major or recent ones of note. For a more in-depth
material into 5 books, each including narrative and discourse sections, such that he created a “new Pentateuch,” (2) C. H. Lohr suggested a chiastic outline around the narrative/discourse elements with the center of the chiasm being Mt 13 on kingdom parables, (3) a geographical approach (Jesus in Galilee, from Galilee to Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem), (4) the simple alternating narrative/discourse pattern approach, (5) those who maintain that there is no outline that should be imposed on Matthew, (6) a three-fold division structured around the phrase ἀπὸ τὸτε ἰρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς found in 4:17 and 16:21, and most recently (7) an attempt to see ten citations of Isaiah in Matthew as organizational units for the construction of Matthew using pesher exegesis to show that Jesus fulfilled the writings of the OT prophets.

There being no consensus among scholars, this present study will resist forcing an outline on Matthew but, while paying attention to the narrative/discourse units, will attempt, as Hagner, to allow this gospel to be for the most part “a seamless succession of pericopes, alternating presentation of deeds and words of Jesus that have usually been collected and arranged topically


353 See, for example, France, 2-5.

354 For examples of this approach, see D. A. Carson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary In Twelve Volumes: Volume 8: Matthew, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1984), 50-57, Grant Osborne, Matthew (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 41-47, and Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 58-72.

355 This view is held, for instance by Robert Horton Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 10-11, where he states that “Matthew is structurally mixed” and that “it is doubtful that the first evangelist thought in terms of one.” On this, cf. also Davies and Allison (Matthew 1-7, 72) who state, “Leaving aside chronology, Matthew’s arrangement has for its explanation no one structural principle,” and Donald A. Hagner (Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33A: Matthew 1-13, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), liii), who does not offer any “overall structural outline” but defaults to the alternation of narrative and discourse outline naturally found in Matthew.


357 On this new proposal, see James E. Patrick, “Matthew’s Pesher Gospel Structured around Ten Messianic Citations of Isaiah,” Journal of Theological Studies 61 (2010):43-81. Patrick contends that Matthew used the Jewish exegetical method of pesher to construct ‘his pesher of the good news of Jesus the Messiah . . . as it is written in Isaiah the prophet’ . . . His gospel is composed of ten pesharim drawn from the book of Isaiah, that together fully demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth ‘fulfilled the Scriptures of the prophets’ (Matt. 26:56)” (Patrick, 62). Much more work on this proposal seems to be needed, however, such as justifying why Patrick sees this gospel structured only around citations of Isaiah when Matthew quotes abundantly from other OT books such as Exodus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Ezekiel (See Robert Horton Gundry’s list in The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 248-50).
. . . for the sake of impact on the reader.”

Hence, from this perspective, Mt 7:21-23, positioned in the latter part of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), will be examined in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the first of five discourse sections in Matthew. Thematic and topical considerations which are found to be similar in the whole of Matthew will also be studied to help determine the meaning of words and ideas in the verses and context under consideration in this study.

Matthew 7:21-23 in the Sermon on the Mount

The exact structure of the Sermon on the Mount also elicits no consensus among scholars and Hagner is correct in stating, “The structure of Matthew’s sermon is not easy to discern.” He notes however that “5:3-16 constitute a kind of introduction; 5:17-7:12 the body of the sermon, with the reference to ‘the law and the prophets’ in 7:12 serving as an inclusion corresponding to 5:17; and 7:13-27 the admonitory conclusion of the sermon.” Park argues along these same lines. He observes that in 5:3-12 there is a shift from third person to second person in the last beatitude which ties the beatitudes to the salt and light passages (5:13-16) which are also in second person. In addition, all the verses in 5:3-16 are positive declarations while the tone changes beginning with 5:17 where the discourse “becomes more

358 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, liii.
359 The Sermon on the Mount is the first discourse in Matthew. The other four discourse sections are, with some variations, 10:5-11:1, 13:1-53, 18:1-19:2, and 24:1-25:46 (scholars sometimes include chapter 23 in this last discourse section, e.g. Scot McKnight, in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, eds. Joel B. Green, and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), s.v. “Matthew, Gospel of,” and Craig S. Keener, A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 37, who says that the “theme of judgment on the religious establishment binds them together”).
360 Park, 90, also agrees with this assessment. See my chart in “Appendix A: A Comparison of Recent Outlines of the Sermon on the Mount” where I have attempted to select relatively recent commentary outlines on the Sermon on the Mount for comparison.
361 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 83.
362 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 84.
363 Park, 90-95.
argumentative.” Hence, Mt 5:17 is thus the start of a new section in the Sermon. The whole of Mt 5:17-20 seems to set out the main themes of the Sermon dealing with (1) Jesus’ purpose and authority in relation to the law and the prophets with respect to their fulfillment in him (5:17-19) and (2) the necessity of a greater righteousness essential for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (5:20). The terms τὸν νόμον ἡ τοῦς προφήτας in 5:17 and ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφήται in 7:12 form an inclusion and become demarcations for this new section commonly called the “body” of the Sermon. As such 5:17-20 is seen as the introduction of the body of the Sermon and 7:12 the conclusion of the body of the Sermon. Mt 7:13-27 then forms the

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365 Park, 91.

366 Park, 92, also sees these two elements as the major themes of these verses. He argues from a narrative critical perspective, that 5:17-20 is “the topic (thesis) statement of the sermon” (see Park’s further more in-depth discussion of these verses as the thesis statement of the Sermon, 96-99) and its emphasis on law and greater righteousness “for the people of the ‘kingdom of Heaven’ in 5:17-20” is “consonant with the contents of the Sermon as a whole.” He further refines this and asserts though that the “principle (sic) theme of the main section is ‘greater righteousness’ which is essential for the people of the ‘kingdom of God’” (96). The main issue addressed is “the qualification of the people of the kingdom of heaven” (98). Luz, Matthew 1-7, 217, argues along the same lines summarizing the main focus of the Sermon on the Mount in this manner: “... the Sermon on the Mount is the pure uncorrupted expression of the will of God as it agrees with the law and the prophets, i.e., as it always was. In this sense, it defines the conditions of entry into the kingdom of God.” Osborne notes, 184, when commenting on verse 20, “As many have said, the present verse and v. 17 (sic) provide the basic theme for the whole Sermon.”


368 Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 481-82, see 5:17-20 as a prokatalepsis, that is, “an anticipation of objections” and as an “introduction or preamble to 5:21-48... to prevent the readers of the First Gospel” from misunderstanding Jesus’ relation to the law and what many understood in that day concerning the scribes and Pharisees with respect to “the requirements of the Torah.” Davies and Allison, however, do not seem to limit 5:17-20 exclusively to the introduction to 5:21-48 as they see 5:17 and 7:12 as an inclusion marking the beginning and end of the main part of the Sermon (on this see especially their chart in Matthew 1-7, p. 63). Keener, 175 n. 43, sees 5:17-20 also as a “thesis statement” for 5:21-48 but does not seem to limit it to this either as he states that he would “apply it especially to 5:21-48” (emphasis mine). Park, 92, notes that the structure of “standard speech in classical rhetoric, which is composed of exordium, narration, confirmation, and conclusio” fits well with the sermon seeing 5:17-20 as the narratio (i.e. thesis or proposition) and 5:21-7:12 as the confirmation (i.e., “argumentation and exhortation or supporting evidence”).

369 G. N. Stanton (Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Sermon on the Mount/Plain”), states, “... there is little doubt that Matthew does intend 5:17-20 to introduce the central section of the Sermon, and 7:12 to conclude it.” The body or central section of the Sermon after its introduction can be generally seen as consisting of three parts: the
conclusion of Jesus’ words of the Sermon on the Mount with 7:28-29 constituting Matthew’s conclusion for the Sermon on the Mount. However, with respect to Jesus’ conclusion, there is also another inclusio in these passages which can be considered as a structural element in the Sermon, an inclusio which scholars do not seem to have noticed or at least have not labeled it as such. This inclusio is marked by the repetition of the terms expressing the idea of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” in 5:20 and 7:21 (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν and εἰσελθεῖσαι εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, respectively). The occurrences of these two inclusio phrases (“the law and the prophets” and “entering into the kingdom of heaven”) are found in the Sermon on the Mount only at Mt 5:17-20 and Mt 7:12-23. Their exclusive occurrences in these places would seem to justify seeing them both as potential markers for the structure of the Sermon. If this is accepted, it would seem that there are overlapping inclusios here tying the introduction of the Sermon to the conclusion, which not only sets “off discrete units” but also gives “expression” to key themes within those units. Taking a cue from this, I

antitheses climaxing in loving one’s neighbor and enemy (5:21-48), inward righteousness and piety expressed to the Father in secret (6:1-18), and a loosely connected somewhat miscellaneous section, which Osborne (42) calls “social ethics” dealing with treasure in heaven, worry, judging others, and asking, seeking and knocking for the Father for good gifts climaxing in the golden rule which sums up the Law and the Prophets (6:19-7:12).

There are some scholars who see 7:21 as the beginning of the conclusion of the Sermon. Their reasoning involves such things as the change from second to third person in 7:21 and an analysis of “sound” for the passage (see Park’s discussion of these and his references on pages 94-95). However, because of the common theme of eschatological warning that seems to permeate and bind together 7:13-27 (see my discussion in the main text, pages 87-88) their arguments do not seem persuasive.

I have not read any scholar yet who makes this structural observation. For example, Nolland, 340, calls this phrase in 7:21 an echo of the language of 5:20, and Luz, Matthew 1-7, 445 who states that the phrase here “recalls 5:20 where the community was confronted with the demand for higher righteousness,” but neither author notes it as a structural element. Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, also do not do this. Nor do they make note of this inclusio in their list of Matthean inclusios (93). Park, 123, believes that Mt 7:21 is a recapitulation of the main theme of the Sermon through seeing “doing the will of the Father” as equivalent to “greater righteousness” in 5:20 but does not mention the “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” inclusio as a structural element bringing these two verses together.

Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 93, believe that περισσεύσης in 5:20 and περισσόν in 5:47 form another inclusio in the Sermon. If this were the case then this inclusio would seem to tie the antitheses to the introduction of the Sermon and perhaps expound on the “greater” righteousness spoken of in 5:20. I am not convinced, however, that one similar or repeated word can necessarily constitute an inclusion (see Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s examples of inclusios, 240-41, which all include more than one word constituting phrases or links with more than one word (Ps. 8:1 and 9; I Sam 3:1 and 21; Ruth 1:6 and 22; Mt 4:23-25 and 9:35)). In addition the word περισσόν also occurs in Mt 5:37. This suggests to me that instead of seeing the word περισσεύσης and its cognate as an inclusio, it should be seen as a pointer to what “greater” righteousness entails.

Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 93, use these terms in quotes to describe the purpose and function of inclusios.
suggest that Matthew addresses Jesus’ relationship with the law and the prophets as well as the righteousness needed for entrance into the kingdom of heaven from the introduction to the Sermon (5:17-20) through 7:12. The second theme of the righteousness needed for “entrance into the kingdom of heaven,” however, not only is addressed from the introduction (5:20) through 7:12 but continues in 7:13 through 7:27. I include 7:22-23 and 7:24-27 as part of this “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” inclusio found in 7:21 because 7:22-23 seems to be an explanatory illustration of 7:21,\(^{374}\) and 7:24-27 is tied to 7:21-23 with the word ὄντως.\(^{375}\) This scenario makes righteousness needed for “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” stated in 5:20 the main theme and concluding aspect of this section (7:13-27).\(^{376}\) This would not mean that the first theme of the introduction (i.e., Jesus’ relationship with the law and the prophets in 5:17-19) is not involved in 7:13-27 but only that this theme is not prominent in that its meaning developed up to 7:13 is assumed in 7:13-27. In other words, Jesus’ relationship with the law and the prophets, having already been established in 5:17-7:12, would not be excluded from, for example, the concept of doing “the will of my Father in heaven” in 7:21, but would be understood in light of its meaning which was determined in 5:17-7:12.

Seeing Mt 7:13-27 as the concluding section of Jesus’ words concerning “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” seems supported by the unifying theme encountered in each of the units in this last section of the Sermon: Mt 7:13-14 is an exhortation to choose the narrow road and small gate to enter into life, 7:15-20 is an exhortation of recognizing false prophets who will be “cut down and thrown into the fire” because of their bad fruit, 7:21-23 is an explicit statement that only those who do the will of Jesus’ Father will enter into the kingdom of heaven while

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374 So also Park, 125.
376 This conclusion, based on structural considerations (which is something Park does not argue), bolsters Parks argument that 7:21 can be seen as a “recapitulation” of the main theme addressed in 5:20 (see Park, 123). I see the theme of 5:20, however, being addressed in all of 7:13-27 with 7:21 being the clear statement of this in 7:13-27.
others will be commanded to go away, and 7:23-27, a parable of two builders, makes the statement that only those who hear and put Jesus’ words into practice will escape destruction. All four of these units seem to speak about eschatological issues of judgment and/or life. Park notes that a “pervasive tone of strong eschatological warning” is “found from 7:13 to the end of the Sermon.” Carson also seems to indicate this as he divides this last section into “four warnings, each offering paired contrasts: two ways (vv. 13-14), two trees (vv. 15-20), two claims (vv. 21-23), and two builders (vv. 24-27).” As such, I see Jesus addressing the common theme of judgment or warning with respect to entrance into the kingdom of heaven in this closing section of Jesus’ words here in the Sermon on the Mount. Mt 7:13-27 then becomes the concluding section for the second major element in the introduction to the Sermon (5:17-20) found in 5:20, i.e. the righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Mt 7:21-23 then constitutes part of the concluding section (Mt 7:13-27) of Jesus’ Sermon addressing the concept of the righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. I will therefore approach my investigation of the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 from this perspective.

**Matthew 7:21-23 in Mt 7:13-27**

There is much debate and difference of opinion on whether Mt 7:21-23 belongs with Mt 7:15-20 as a single unit. Park argues extensively for the unity of 7:13-27. Allison and Davies, Turner, Keener, Osborne, Luz, and Gundry also treat this section as a

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377 I will discuss the unity of 7:15-20 and 7:21-23 in the next section.
378 Park, 94.
380 Park, 21-26, 108-112. See especially his summary of the various views on page 108.
381 Allison and Davies, *Matthew 1-7*, 701-719.
383 Keener, 251-254.
384 Osborne, 269.
single unit. However, Hagner, Nolland, Nolland, France, Carson, and Betz treat these sections as separate units. Park is very concerned that determining the unity of the passage is important because he claims it “affects the understanding of the passage as a whole, particularly identification of the false prophets.” Identifying 7:15-23 as a unit is helpful for him in determining one of his main concerns in his dissertation: the identification of the false prophets which are introduced in 7:15 and are a part of 7:16-20. Mt 7:21-23 seems to be of great help to Park in this endeavor for which he identifies these false prophets as “Christian insiders” who do not “offer whole-hearted obedience to God.” I do not disagree that the unity of a passage is important in understanding the passage as a whole; however, I am not convinced that the determination of the unity of 7:21-23 with 7:15-20 is as important to understanding of 7:21-23 as it would be to helping understand 7:15-20 and false prophets noted there. I say this because 7:21-23 is a more general teaching following a more specific teaching (7:15-20) concerning things which 7:21-23 could be seen to include. That is, 7:21-23, if seen in unity with 7:15-20, would seem to help one determine the meaning of 7:15-20 more than 7:15-20 would help one determine the meaning of 7:21-23. Mt 7:15-20, discussing false prophets (ψευδοπροφητεία, vs 16), is bound together by the inclusio “you will know them by their fruit” (vss 16 and 20) and is addressed to the audience in second person. But 7:21-23 addresses a broader group as it is in third person and seems to possibly include, but is not limited to, those who might be considered false prophets, i.e., those who “prophesy” (ἐπροφητεύσαμεν, vs 22) in Jesus’ name, yet are

386 Gundry, Matthew, 128-33.
387 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 180-89.
388 Nolland, 334-42.
389 France, 289-95.
390 Carson, Matthew, 190-93.
391 Betz, Sermon, 527-56.
392 Park, 108.
393 Park, 108.
394 Park, 3.
395 There is some doubt here as to whether the false prophets in 7:15 are included with those who prophecy in vs 22. David Hill (“False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7:15-23,” Biblica 57 (1976):
rejected. Mt 7:21-23 is broad and sweeping including anyone (πᾶς) and the many (πολλοὶ) who address Jesus with the phrase “Lord, Lord” (vss 21 and 22) and yet do not do the will of the Father in heaven even though they may claim to have done things such as prophesying, casting out demons, and doing miracles all in his name (vs 22). Hence the general nature of 7:21-23 does not seem to make determining the unity of this passage, for the purpose of this study on Matthean obedience, a critical or even necessary issue. Mt 7:15-20 is part of the context of 7:21-23 and will be given contextual consideration as such in the determination of the meaning of 7:21-23 but the unity of these two sections in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount for the purpose of this paper will remain undetermined.396

Central Themes in Mt 5:1-7:20 Potentially Affecting the Meaning of Mt 7:21-23

As noted above, it seems cogent to accept Mt 5:17-20 as the introduction to the body of the Sermon on the Mount expressing the main themes of the Sermon. As such, examining these themes may reflect on the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 since these verses, positioned in the concluding section of the Sermon, would logically seem to address, either in part or in whole, those main themes. In this section of this study I will therefore briefly investigate the two themes in Mt.

348), argues that the false prophets of 7:15 (whom he identifies as Pharisees) are not the same and those in 7:22 and vss 22-23 should not be used to identify the false prophets in vs 15. If this is so, it would aid my argument here concerning vss 15-20 as not greatly influencing the meaning of vss 21-23.

396 I am not convinced that an agreed upon conclusion concerning this unity or disunity is possible at this time nor, as stated above, am I convinced that it is necessary for the determination of the meaning of Mt 7:21-23. However, I do lean toward seeing two separate units in this passage instead of one (i.e., 7:15-20 and 7:21-23). This is based on the structure that I have outlined in which the whole of 7:12-27 continues to address the righteousness that is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Seeing four units here instead of three, leaves a neat repetition of the ideas of what might be called righteous/non-righteous choices and their consequences in the following manner: 7:13-14 speaks of choosing the wide or narrow roads with the consequences of destruction or life, respectively; 7:15-20 speaks of being a good or bad tree producing good or bad fruit, for which the latter will be “cut down and thrown into the fire;” 7:21-23 distinguishes between those who do God’s will and those who do not, of which the latter will be banned from his presence; and 7:24-27 depicts two types of foundations determined by one’s response to the words of Jesus designated by rock and sand, the former of which does not fall while the latter falls “with a great crash.”
Jesus and the Law in Mt 5:17-19

In Matthew, the crux for interpretation of Jesus relationship with the law and its application to his followers surrounds the term πληρώω in Mt 5:17. This term in different contexts has the meaning of “make full,” “fill up,” “bring something to completion, finish,” “complete, finish, bring to an end,” “fulfill.”398 Bauer,399 states that the meaning here in this passage depends “on how one prefers to interpret the context, πληρώω is understood here either as fulfill = do, carry out, or as bring to full expression = show it forth in its true meaning, or as fill up = complete.” The term is used sixteen times in Matthew,400 where all but three401 refer to the fulfillment of what the law or the prophets state or fulfillment of the Scriptures in general.

5:17-20 of Jesus relationship to (i.e., his fulfillment of) the law and the greater righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.397

397 It is beyond the scope of this thesis to do an exhaustive study of Mt 5:17-20 and these two themes in this passage. However, since these verses are some of the “most difficult ones of the Gospel” (Luz, Matthew 1-7, 259) and involve the very important points of Jesus’ relationship with the law and the concept of “righteousness,” both of which would seem to reflect on the nature of the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel, I will attempt to do an extensive excursus on the salient points of these two themes in this passage. Since these verses do not seem to focus on the fulfillment of the prophets, I will only at this point look at Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the righteousness required for entry into the kingdom of heaven. In addition, noting that the structural inclusios mark off overlapping themes of Jesus’ relationship with the law and the “greater righteousness” in this section, I have chosen here to focus first on Jesus’ fulfillment of the law primarily in its use in 5:17-19 and then “greater righteousness” in Jesus’ exposition of it in 5:20-7:27. How one understands the law being fulfilled in Jesus in 5:17-19 sets the course for how the remainder of the Sermon is understood with respect to Jesus and the law. In 5:21-7:12, both themes seem to be intertwined with each other (i.e., “greater righteousness” includes the acceptance of Jesus as the fulfiller of the law and Jesus as the fulfiller of the law expounds on and determines the content and meaning of “greater righteousness”). I will therefore not attempt to separate the two in this section, but will focus on “greater righteousness” (the theme of the inclusio for which 7:21-23 is enveloped and thus will remain more in keeping with the focus of this thesis) and comment on the law and Jesus’ fulfillment of it as it arises in 5:21-7:12. Jesus’ relationship with the law in the whole of Matthew will be further examined in Chapter IV. For good bibliographies of studies done on this section of Scripture (Mt 5:17-20), see Luz, Matthew 1-7, 255-56, Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 102-103, Nolland, 216, and Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 502-503.

398 Bauer, Lexicon, 676-78. Bauer, Lexicon, p. 677, indicates that the meaning here in this verse (5:17) is to be understood in the “Abs., in the broadest sense and in contrast to καταλῦω” (which, he says, means “do away with, abolish, annul, make invalid . . . repeal,” p. 415).

399 Bauer, Lexicon, 677.


401 Only 3:15 (Jesus’ baptism to fulfill all righteousness); 13:48 (fishermen’s net full of fish); and 23:32 (Pharisees to fill up the measure of the sin of their forefathers) are not directly connected in the text in some way expressing the idea of fulfilling the prophets or the Scriptures.
There have been “innumerable interpretations” of the meaning of this word in this passage.\textsuperscript{402} In attempting to handle the “gamut of possible interpretations,”\textsuperscript{403} scholars seem to have chosen certain views that they felt were the most viable from the abundance of already proposed meanings. For instance Davies and Allison\textsuperscript{404} choose to discuss the following nine views: (1) the concept of “add to” in the sense that Jesus did not come to add to the law, (2) \(\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\omega\) in the sense of “establish, make valid, bring into effect” and even “to do” or “to execute”, (3) \(\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\omega\) in the sense of “obey,” (4) “Jesus ‘fulfills’ the law by observing it perfectly and completely in his own person and ministry,” (5) “Jesus ‘fulfills’ (sic) or ‘completes’ the law by bringing a new law which transcends the old,” (6) “the Torah is ‘fulfilled’ when Jesus, explaining God’s original intention, brings out its perfect or inner meaning or expands and extends its demands,” (7) “Jesus ‘fulfills’ (sic) the law because, through his coming, he enables others to meet the Torah’s demands,” (8) “When Jesus ‘fulfills’ (sic) the law or the prophets, he does it by bringing the new righteousness which is the new spirit of love: love is the fulfilling of the law,” and (9) “The ‘fulfillment’ is eschatological: the telos which the Torah anticipated, namely, the Messiah, has come and revealed the law’s definitive meaning. Prophecy has been realized.” For Allison and Davies the best interpretation for \(\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\omega\) here in Mt 5:17 is a combination of view 5 and 9 (i.e., it refers to the eschatological completing of the law by Jesus).


\textsuperscript{404} Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew 1-7}, 485-86.
They summarize stating that “when Jesus declares, ‘I came . . . to fulfill’ (sic), he means that his new teaching brings to realization that which the Torah anticipated or prophesied: its ‘fulfiller’ has come” (p. 487). They conclude that as the fulfiller of the law and the prophets, Jesus “displaces them in so far as he must become the centre of attention” and also “if the law is fulfilled, it cannot on that account be set aside. Fulfillment can only confirm the Torah’s truth, not cast doubt on it.”

Another example of a scholar listing and evaluating several points on the fulfillment of the law in Mt 5:17 is Douglas Moo. He notes the following five categories: (1) “Jesus fulfills the Law by confirming its validity,” (2) “Jesus fulfills the Law by adding to it,” (3) “Jesus fulfills the Law by bringing out its full, originally intended meaning,” (4) “Jesus fulfills the Law by extending its demands,” and (5) “Jesus fulfills the Law by teaching the eschatological will of God which the Law anticipated.” Moo prefers the fifth view, “the eschatological will of God” as the best interpretation of Mt 5:17 and maintains that Jesus’ teaching “stands in continuity with the OT Law” and that he does not “abolish the law, but brings it to its intended eschatological climax.” That is, Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the prophets, i.e., all of OT Scripture, is the way of “bringing in eschatological righteousness.” Jesus thus fulfilled both the law and the prophets in their prophetic nature (see Mt 11:13). Moo sees that in Matthew with Jesus’ death and resurrection, there is a “significant shift in salvation history” which conditions Jesus’ endorsement of the law with respect to its continuing validity. He argues also that Jesus transcended the law and a new era has dawned in which “Jesus’ own teaching will be the central authority for the people of God, and the Law will play a role only as caught up in, and re-applied

405 Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 487.
407 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.”
408 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.”
409 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.”
by, Jesus.”410 Through Matthew’s “salvation-historical, promise-fulfillment scheme,” Moo believes “Matthew integrates his stress on the continuity of the law—for the law looks ahead to, and is incorporated into, the teaching of Jesus—and on its discontinuity—for Jesus, not the law, is now the locus of God’s word to his people.”411

A third example is Mohrlang,412 who selects four views and evaluates them. These are “(1) to obey or carry out the demands of the law; (2) to affirm or validate the law; (3) to explicate or live out the deeper meaning and intent of the law; (4) to complete or bring to pass the ultimate goal of the law—an interpretation that is sometimes taken to imply that some or all of the precepts of the law are now set aside as no longer applicable.”413 After discussing the various views,414 he states that there is “such a lack of consensus, it is certain that our understanding of Matthew’s view of the law cannot be based on a clear and agreed exegesis of πληρώσαί in 5:17”415 and yet concludes the following:

. . . the point of the passage as a whole, as it now stands in the Gospel, can only be that the entire law remains valid and demands strict obedience from the Christian community . . .

It can only be concluded, then, that the passage as a whole is to be understood as an affirmation of the continuing validity of the entire law for Christian disciples—right down to the least jot and tittle.416

A fourth example is Park, who, in commenting on how Jesus fulfilled the law, lists the following three views: “(1) Jesus reveals the true meaning of the law through his interpretation, (2) Jesus fulfills the requirements of the law through his obedience to the law, (3) the promises or goal of the law and the prophets are fulfilled in Jesus’ ministry, including his death and

410 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.”
411 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.”
412 Mohrlang, 8-9.
413 Mohrlang, 8.
414 See his discussion on pages 8-9, and my summary in Chapter II above.
415 Mohrlang, 8.
416 Mohrlang, 9.
resurrection.”\textsuperscript{417} In only giving cursory attention to the meaning of $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega$ in his dissertation, he states:

There is no scholarly consensus of the exact meaning of Mt 5:17 . . . However, given the beginning of this verse with the warning not to think that Jesus has come to abolish the law or the prophets, it is quite probable that Matthew is presenting Jesus primarily as the revealer of the true meaning of the law not only through his interpretation but also through his behavior. This fits the contents of the Sermon on the Mount, which underscores Jesus’ revelation of the true meaning of the law.\textsuperscript{418}

Park says, “The law and the prophets, as the revelation of the will of God, should be completely obeyed. However, they should be obeyed not in the way the scribes and Pharisees teach and practice, but with internal wholeness motivated by love. This is the hallmark of the new life to be lived by the true people of the kingdom of heaven.”\textsuperscript{419} Park thus emphasizes that the law should be obeyed, not in a sense of continuity/discontinuity realized through Christ, but from the aspect of a pure heart or inner wholeness. He states, “In the six antitheses (5:21-48), Jesus reveals the true meaning, or the original intent, of the law which requires a wholeness of the inner nature for its fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{420} For Park, then, it would seem that Jesus fulfilled the law only in the sense of teaching and showing the correct heart one must have as he or she obeys the entire law. He calls this the “whole-hearted obedience,” or “greater righteousness” of Mt 5:20. Hence, Jesus is not portrayed by Park as the consummation of the purpose of the law and the prophets.

Both Allison and Davies, and Moo are examples of scholars who tend toward a dynamic “eschatological” view of the law in Jesus’ fulfillment of it. For them the law is not abrogated, annulled, or revoked. Rather, in its prophetic nature, \textit{through Jesus it continues to be valid}. This view seems to allow there to be both continuity and discontinuity (Allison and Davies use the term “displacement”) with respect to the law in Jesus’ appearance but not nullification.

\textsuperscript{417} Park, 99, n. 77.  
\textsuperscript{418} Park, 99, n. 77.  
\textsuperscript{419} Park, 103-104.  
\textsuperscript{420} Park, 100.
Both Mohrlang’s and Park’s views, on the other hand, seem to treat Jesus’ fulfillment of the law as somewhat static. That is, there is no eschatological change in how the law is to be seen with Jesus’ coming. For Morhlang, Jesus is the “authoritative interpreter of the law” who sets up the love commandment as having first priority when other laws come into conflict with each other.\(^{421}\) Everything is, however, still seen within the framework of the law and although Jesus is greater than the law, he seems to still also be in some way obligated to obey the law. For the disciple of Jesus, Mohrlang believes that, for Matthew, the Christian life is to be “lived within the framework of the law, under the authority of both Torah and the scribal tradition” yet “the emphasis . . . is not simply on compliance with the letter of the law, but on heartfelt obedience to the law at the deepest level, radical obedience,”\(^{422}\) again, to the extent of “the least jot and tittle.” For Park, Jesus is mainly the revealer of the true meaning of the law, which involves attaining the correct heart attitude while obeying the law. Park also does not embrace the meaning of \(\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\omega\) in its prophetic-eschatological sense mentioned above and thus his statement that the law and the prophets must be “completely obeyed” must be seen from the perspective of how they have been revealed in the OT. This necessitates a radical obedience to the law and the prophets guided by love.

Matthew’s view of the law here in Mt 5:17-19 which Mohrlang and Park have espoused has been called by R. T. France, one “which was once the dominant interpretation.”\(^{423}\) France goes on to state that there is another view of Jesus’ fulfillment of the law that “has gained a considerable degree of assent in recent decades.”\(^{424}\) This view of \(\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\omega\) (as illustrated above in

\(^{421}\) Mohrlang, 21.

\(^{422}\) Mohrlang, 25.

\(^{423}\) France, 179, n. 7.

\(^{424}\) France, 183. France points to several authors (184, n. 17) who support his point here in general including Banks (Jesus and the Law, 203-35), Meier, (41-124, 160-61), R. A. Guelich (The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding (Waco: Word, 1982), 134-74), Douglas Moo (“Jesus and the Authority,” 3-49; see also, Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law”), Y. –E. Yang (Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew’s Gospel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 106-20, 128-129), Carson (Matthew, 141-147), Davies and Allison (Matthew 1-7, 485-87, with variations), and Hagner (Matthew 1-13, 104-109). France seems correct in his assertion. To his list one can add even
Allison and Davies, and Moo’s view) defines Jesus’ role as being the one to whom the law and the prophets pointed forward and the one who would show their correct expression. France states with respect to Mt 5:17-20,

. . . the authority of the law and the prophets is not abolished. They remain the authoritative word of God. But their role will no longer be the same, now that what they pointed forward to has come, and it will be for Jesus’ followers to discern in the light of his teaching and practice what is now the right way to apply those texts in the new situation which his coming has created. From now on it will be the authoritative teaching of Jesus which must govern his disciples’ understanding and practical application of the law. Verses 21-48 will go on to show how this interpretation can no longer be merely at the level of the literal observation of regulations, but must operate at the deeper more challenging level of discerning the will of God which underlies the legal rulings of the Torah. If in the process it may appear that certain elements of the law are for all practical purposes ‘abolished,’ this will be attributable not to the loss of their status as the word of God but to their changed role in the era of fulfillment, in which it is Jesus, the fulfiller, rather than the law which pointed forward to him, who is the ultimate authority. 425

The tipping point that has drawn others in the last few decades to side with the general conclusion of France above has been the fact that πληρώ (in addition to its hapax cognate αναπληρώ in 13:14) is used thirteen426 of its sixteen times in Matthew to designate “the coming into being of that to which Scripture pointed forward (whether by direct prediction or understood typologically).”427 This, connected with the concept in 11:13 of the law (in addition to the prophets) prophesying, suggests very strongly that the prophetic use of πληρώ in Matthew is how this word should be understood here in 5:17,428 i.e., in the sense of “the eschatological will of God”429 where what Jesus taught was that to which the law pointed.

more authors, some who have written commentaries even more recently than France, who also support this view at least in the general sense. These include Nolland (218-31), Osborne (180-82), Turner (Matthew, 162-64), and Keener (177-82).
425 France, 183.
426 Eleven of these are in the so called “formula quotations.”
427 France, 182.
428 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.” Note how the term is used here in 5:17 with reference to both the law and the prophets.
429 Moo, Dictionary, s.v. “Law.” Moo states here that Jesus fulfills both what the prophets prophesied and what the law prophesied: “Jesus . . . fulfills Israel’s law in his teaching. The entire OT, in all its parts, is viewed as the promise component in a promise-fulfillment scheme of salvation history, and the law cannot be excluded from his scheme.”
In connection with this, the meaning of the two εως clauses in 5:18a and 5:18c (introducing the phrases “until heaven and earth disappear” and “until everything is accomplished,” respectively) would probably need to be seen as referring to the same thing, i.e., the eternal validity of the law. It is pretty well accepted that the first phrase refers to the end of this present age and signifies the eternal validity of the law.\(^{430}\) The meaning of the second phrase, “until everything is accomplished” in verse 18c, however, is not generally agreed upon. This phrase could refer to the “eternal validity of the law”\(^{431}\) (its validity until “the Eschaton”)\(^{432}\) or it could refer to the completion of all the things that were prophesied to happen through the ministry of Jesus.\(^{433}\) It seems best to me to see both phrases meaning the same thing or they would seem to be opposing phrases in the same sentence.\(^{434}\) If both the phrases “until heaven and earth disappear” (18a) and “until everything is accomplished” do mean the same thing (i.e., the eternal validity of the law), the meaning of how the law is eternally valid would be dependent on the nuance of meaning of πληρόω in verse 17. In that case, if the above argument for the eschatological/prophetic meaning of πληρόω is accepted, the law would seem to need to be understood, as France and others have indicated, in the “context of the fulfillment of God’s purposes announced by Jesus.”\(^{435}\) That is, the eternal validity of the law would need to be understood from the perspective of Jesus as its goal and not simply as him being its supreme interpreter or the revealer of its true meaning. The same would be true of 5:19. Here Jesus states that one’s status\(^{436}\) (using the terms “least” and “great”)\(^{437}\) in the kingdom of heaven\(^{438}\) will be

\(^{431}\) Mohrlang, 9.
\(^{432}\) Mohrlang, 9. See Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 108, on this also.
\(^{433}\) So Allison and Davies, *Matthew 1-7*, 486-87. On the several possible understandings of this second εως clause, see Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 107-08.
\(^{434}\) So also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 107-108.
\(^{436}\) There does seem to be a “gradation within kingdom ranks” (Carson, 146) in Jesus’ teaching, cf. Mt 11:11; 18:4. With respect to Matthew’s theology of obedience, this seems to contribute to the idea of “reward” and perhaps “punishment” in some manner as a result of one’s obedience or lack thereof.

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determined by how well he practices and teaches the commands of the law. When taken with the meaning of \( \pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega \) above, the “least of these commandments” would “refer to the final and full meaning of the law” as interpreted by Jesus.\(^{439}\) The law then in both verses 18 and 19 would be eternally valid but only as revealed through the person, work, and teaching of Jesus to whom it pointed. This is different from what Mohrlang and Park seem to hold.

Thus, in accord with the recent trend of scholars, what Jesus seems to be doing is indeed not abolishing the law but upholding it in its intended predicted eschatological purpose and ultimate goal.\(^{440}\) Robert Banks, in his study on Mt 5:17, concluded the following with respect to the cogency of understanding \( \pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega \) in its prophetic sense in the context here of the law (and the prophets):

> . . . precisely the same meaning should be given to the term \textit{pleroun} when it is used of the Law as that which it has when it is used of the Prophets. The

\(^{437}\) The idea of being “least” in the kingdom probably does not mean “exclusion” from it (see Meier, 92-95, Carson, 146, Nolland, 222, France, 188, contra Gottlob Schrenk, \textit{Theological Dictionary of the New Testament}, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “\textit{ejntolhv}” who claims the one who is least in the kingdom is not “in the kingdom at all.”

\(^{438}\) This term must refer to Jesus’ true disciples otherwise they would not be considered “\textit{ej\iota\tau\eta\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota},” cf. Mt 5:20; 8:11; 11:11; 18:1, 4; 26:29.

\(^{439}\) Hagner, \textit{Matthew 1-13}, 108.

\(^{440}\) The reference in this verse to “these commandments” has been interpreted by some to mean “Jesus’ commands” that follow in the Sermon on the Mount (so, for example, Banks (“Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 239-40), Betz, (\textit{Sermon,} 186-187), Dan Otto Via, Jr. (\textit{Self-Deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew} (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 83-84) who admits that this position “is probably not explicit in the text,” and Roland Deines, (“Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate,” in \textit{Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew}, eds. Daniel Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 77-80), who argues that “these commandments” refer forward to Jesus’ words beginning in 5:21 because vss 17-18 speak of Jesus’ eschatological purpose with respect to the law while vss 19-20 together speak of the “consequences for the disciples” thus marking a “change in the perspective from Jesus’ task to the obligation of the disciples,” hence Jesus’ “\textit{ej\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu}” in vs 19 are his instructions to the disciples expressing the will of God. \textit{However}, the fact that the term “these” (\( \omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \), plural) is \textit{never} used in Matthew to refer to something coming after it would seem to refute this position (see the use of this plural in Mt 3:9; 4:3; 6:29, 32,33; 7:24, 26, 28; 10:2, 5, 42; 11:25; 13:34, 51, 53, 54, 56; 15:20; 18:6, 10, 14; 19:1, 14, 20; 20:12, 21, 23; 21:16, 23, 24, 27; 22:40; 24:2, 8, 33, 34; 25:40, 45; 26:1, 62, and Carson, 146). None of these authors seem to address this grammatical point. In addition, the term “\textit{ej\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu}” is never used in Matthew of Jesus’ teaching (although the verb form \textit{ejntevllomai} is used of Jesus’ words in 17:9 and 20:28), and the immediate context of the law tends to argue against the concept of “these commandments” being seen here in 5:19 as Jesus’ words. Yet there is a \textit{transition} to Jesus’ words having binding authority by the end of the Sermon (7:24-27) and by the end of the gospel (20:28). This would be in keeping with the interpretation of Jesus’ fulfilling of the law as noted above. I will discuss the concept of “authority transition” in Matthew further in Chapter IV.

\(^{441}\) Moo (\textit{Dictionary}, s.v. “Law”) states, “In response about his law-negating stance, Jesus assures his listeners that his teaching stands in continuity with the OT Law. His teaching does not abolish the Law, but brings it to its intended eschatological climax.”
prophetic teachings point forward (principally) to the actions of Christ and have been realized in them in an incomparably greater way. The Mosaic laws point forward (principally) to the teachings of Christ and have also been realized in them in a more profound manner. The word “fulfill” in 5:17, then, includes not only an element of discontinuity (that which is more than the Law has now been realized) but an element of continuity as well (that which transcends the Law is nevertheless something to which the Law itself pointed forward).  

The prophetic teachings and the law thus point forward to and are fulfilled in Jesus and his teachings. He is the consummation of their purpose. All of these points thus seem to argue against Mohrlang’s conclusion that Jesus is here demanding strict obedience to the whole law (in a Jewish non-eschatological sense) for the Christian community and Park’s view that Jesus simply brings out the true meaning of the law and that one needs to obey it in its entirety in a whole-hearted manner.

With respect to the notion of obedience and the law here in the Sermon on the Mount’s introductory verses 5:17-19, Jesus’ declaration of his coming to fulfill the law causes an “obedience shift” away from the common Jewish view of obedience to the law in Jesus’ day (upheld by the scribes and Pharisees) to obedience and submission to Jesus himself and his teachings in his eschatological fulfillment of that law. This shift seems to be indicated by the meaning of πληρωμα as discussed above. While the law indeed has eternal validity, the manner of its validity and how it is to be obeyed is determined and revealed ultimately through Jesus and his

442 Banks, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 231. In agreement is Osborne, 182. Turner (Matthew, 162-63) also agrees and states that Jesus “does not contradict or abrogate the law and the prophets, but neither does he merely reaffirm them. He fulfills them or brings them to their divinely intended goal, because they point to him.”

443 Godfrey does not deal with the issue of the meaning of πληρωμα.

444 The relationship of the scribes to the Pharisees is excellently evaluated in Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 233-267. Jeremias states that the Pharisaic scribes (it must be noted that not all scribes were members of the Pharisees, i.e., Sadducee scribes existed as well) were “the leaders and influential members of Pharisaic communities” (254), their power was a result of their “knowledge alone”, and their influence over the people was “not that the scribes were the guardians of tradition in the domain of religious legislation, and because of this, could occupy key positions in society, but rather the fact, far too little recognized, that they were the guardians of a secret knowledge, of an esoteric tradition” (237). As keepers of these secrets, which could only be given to those “authorized” (i.e. their selected immediate disciples), they were “venerated, like the prophets of old, with unbounded respect and reverential awe . . ., their words had sovereign authority. The Pharisaic communities especially gave their scribes unconditional obedience” (243). On the background of the Pharisees, see Josephus Antiq. 13.5.9; 13.10.5-6; 17.2.4; 18.1.2; and War 1.5.2-4.
teachings. In this sense Jesus actually goes beyond the law in requiring obedience to him and his teachings.

**Summary of Jesus’ Relationship to the Law in Mt 5:17-19**

Mt 5:17-19 shows that Jesus did not come to abolish but to fulfill the law. Although the concept of “fulfill” was understood by scholars in the past to indicate that Jesus came to reveal the true meaning of the law for the attaining of a radical heartfelt compliance (obedience) with the law down to the “least jot and tittle,” there is an emerging consensus among scholars that Jesus was not just the authoritative interpreter of the law but in his person and teaching was upholding it in its intended predicted *eschatological purpose* and ultimate goal. In this latter understanding, πληρέω in 5:17 is embraced with respect to its *prophetic* use in Matthew, i.e., in the sense of “the eschatological will of God” where what Jesus taught was that to which the law pointed. In this scenario, the law remains eternally valid but only as revealed through the person, work, and teaching of Jesus. Because of the cogent arguments noted above, it is this latter understanding which has been adopted in this study. As such, it can also then be said that Jesus operates beyond the law (not “within the framework of the law,” as Mohrlang contends), now requiring discipleship to him and obedience his teachings.

This understanding of Jesus’ relationship with the law as one of the central themes of Mt 5:17-20 could imply some, perhaps, radical differences in understanding the meaning of “doing the will of my Father” in Mt 7:21 and its contribution to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel than have been understood by some scholars in the past. As such, the adoption here of Jesus’ fulfillment of the law in its eschatological perspective would seem to be extremely important to this study.

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446 E.g., see Mohrlang, 11.
Righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount

The notion of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) needed for entrance into the kingdom of heaven in 5:20, as outlined above, is one of the two main themes (along with Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the prophets) of the Sermon on the Mount. This can be structurally understood through the positioning of overlapping inclusios designated by the concepts of “the law and the prophets” and “entrance into the kingdom of heaven.” The concept of “greater righteousness” needed to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20) structurally marks off a greater part of the Sermon on the Mount than does the theme of fulfillment of the law and the prophets. The former theme extends from 5:20 through 7:27 while the later theme extends from 5:17 through 7:12. From a structural perspective, it would be reasonable then to understand the concept of righteousness for entry into the kingdom of heaven as the more prominent theme of the Sermon on the Mount.  

In addition, the term δικαιοσύνη in Matthew is concentrated in the Sermon on the Mount. It occurs there five of its seven times (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33) which could also seem to suggest that it is a prominent theme in the Sermon on the Mount. Acceptance of Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law and his teachings must also be seen as involved in that “greater righteousness theme” as Jesus himself is the one through whom this teaching and fulfillment comes. Of what else does this “righteousness” consist and what is the meaning of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven?” These two concepts I will now investigate.

447 Park, 96-104, agrees with this theme as the main theme of the entire Sermon. Scot McKnight, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Justice, Righteousness,” sees righteousness as “the thrust of the sermon.” He here further states, “For Matthew, Jesus’ pre-eminent demand of his disciples is to do God’s will—to exhibit righteousness (cf. Mt 5:20, 48; 7:13-27). Accordingly, entrance into the kingdom is conditioned on moral righteousness.”  

448 The other two occurrences are in 3:15 and 21:32.
Benno Przybylski, in his extensive study of the concept of “righteousness” in Matthew,\(^449\) concludes that “in all seven passages righteousness is seen as God’s demand upon man. Righteousness refers to proper conduct before God.”\(^450\) With respect to this righteousness in Matthew, Przybylski further holds that the disciples are not “to live according to a different law but that they are to live according to a different interpretation of the law, namely, an extremely meticulous and strict interpretation which appears to be based on a principle related to making a fence around the Torah. The goal of this type of conduct is perfection.”\(^451\) Przybylski’s view of men’s “proper conduct before God” seems to emphasize a literal obedience to the law in its rules and minutiae, albeit according to Jesus’ interpretation. This would seem to involve an obedience much like that which might have been required with respect to the oral law and practice of the Pharisees.\(^452\) But is this what is intended by the term “righteousness” in the Sermon on the Mount? If so, how would this be different from the ways of the scribes and Pharisees other than it being a “different interpretation of the law?” France notes that if this was Jesus’ emphasis, he would seem to be encouraging the disciples to beat “the scribes and Pharisees at their own game” as they also seemed to emphasize a literal obedience to the law in its rules and minutiae.\(^453\)

\(^{449}\) Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and his World of Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1980).
\(^{450}\) Przybylski, 99.
\(^{451}\) Przybylski, 87.
\(^{452}\) See for example Mt 23:16-24. Cf. also Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), assuming Pharisaic rules and regulations can be claimed to have been preserved in this work.
\(^{453}\) France, 189. It should be noted, however, that here Jesus seems to be beginning to address something more than simply the obedience to the law in its rules and minutiae with respect to how the practices of the scribes and Pharisees fell short of the “greater righteousness.” Their failure as leaders seems to have involved many other things as the remainder of Matthew, especially chapter 23, indicates. Anthony J. Saldarini, (“Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23”, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992): 672) notes, “Chap. 23 summarizes the previous conflict between Jesus and his opponents and prepares for the arrest and death of Jesus which follow in the narrative. This final public teaching of Jesus is wholly devoted to a rejection of the leadership of the Jewish community . . .” This chapter (23) functions as the climax of the polemic against the Jewish leadership, which is to be followed with judgment. The unrighteous practices of the scribes and Pharisees as summarized there include, but are not exhausted in, the following: (1) Their failure to practice what they preach (23:1-3), (2) their harboring of an unwilling heart to practice mercy (23:4), (3) their love of self-exaltation and self-honor rather than the exaltation and honor of God (23:5-12), (4) their practice of shutting people out of the kingdom by refusing to enter themselves and dissuading
Mohrlang holds that δικαιοσύνη is not to be understood in an “ethical” sense where δικαιοσύνη is simply “a way of life that is . . . commanded.”454 It not only involves correct behavior but also includes correct inner disposition. One must have the correct inner attitude as well as correct outer behavior to achieve this greater righteousness.455 For Matthew, a life of righteousness is “basically a matter of submission and obedience: submission to the will of God and radical obedience to the law and Jesus’ teachings.”456 Hence, Mohrlang’s view seems to be similar to Przybylski’s where there is an emphasis on a literal obedience to the law in all its rules and minutiae as well as complete obedience to all of Jesus’ teachings.

There is however a “growing consensus among scholars”457 that δικαιοσύνη should be understood in an eschatological fulfillment sense. The context of 5:20, speaking of Jesus’ fulfillment of the law as discussed above, would seem to point to this. The term γάρ (vs 20) connects the concept of “righteousness” with what has been stated in vss 17-19 and as such must

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454 Mohrlang, 114.
455 Mohrlang, 113-14.
456 Mohrlang, 114.
457 These words are McKnight’s, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. “Justice, Righteousness.” McKnight also here states, “. . . the righteousness Jesus demands is superior . . . because Jesus demands behavior that conforms to God’s standard as revealed by himself. The point-counterpoints of Matthew 5:21-48 explicate the nature of the surpassing righteousness that Jesus reveals. This righteousness is messianic (Mt 5:17), deeper (Mt 5:27-30, and innovative (Mt 5:38-42) . . . Those who are marked by the righteousness of Jesus will be approved by God and will enter the kingdom.” For examples of this emerging consensus, see France, 190, who states that the disciples must move to “a new consciousness of what it means to please God, one which penetrates beneath the surface level of rules to be obeyed to a more radical openness to knowing and doing the underlying will of ‘your Father in heaven,’” Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 499, who state, “‘Righteousness’ is . . . Christian character and conduct in accordance with the demands of Jesus,” Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 109, who states, “. . . the righteousness that Jesus speaks of does not come through a greater preoccupation with the minutiae of the law that outdoes even the Pharisees! . . . Instead, Jesus expects, as the antitheses to follow show, a new and higher kind of righteousness that rests upon the presence of the eschatological kingdom he brings and that finds its definition and content in his definitive and authoritative exposition of the law,” and Nolland, 225-26, who states, “vs 20 does give some sort of quantitative test for entry into the kingdom of heaven, though the chosen language—that of abundance—is not designed to encourage specific calculation or measurement. It is rather more likely that the desire is to encourage an exuberant engagement with the demands of the will of God made known through the law as unveiled by Jesus.”
be related to the theme expressed in those verses. This would indicate that the righteousness Jesus is speaking of here in verse 20 would involve embracing Jesus in his fulfillment teachings and not simply a reiteration of obedience to the law. This greater righteousness would be a righteousness based on Jesus’ fulfillment of the law (and the prophets). It would indeed involve Przybylski’s idea of “proper conduct before God” but this conduct would be seen in an eschatological sense of obedience to Jesus. This is the righteousness that would be greater than that of scribes and Pharisees. They possessed a righteousness of sorts but one which did not involve Jesus or his teaching. As such, their righteousness was inadequate for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus expounds on the nature and character of this “greater righteousness” in 5:21-7:27. In the 6 antitheses (5:21-48), Jesus emphasizes his own teaching through the use of the words ἐ γὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν. In using this phrase, Jesus also asserts his own authority. With respect

458 The term “greater,” translated in the NIV as “surpasses,” is probably emphatic here with the addition of πλεῖον to περισσεύσῃ, see F. Blass and A. Debrunner A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 129. However Nolland, 223, believes it is possible to see πλεῖον as an “elliptically expressed aside” and the phrase translated as “(there needs to be something) more than (the righteousness of) the scribes and Pharisees” so that the “central focus moves away from comparison with the scribes and Pharisees and onto a concern, in the first instance, for an abundant righteousness.” However, this is questionable since Nolland gives no grammatical examples of this usage in other places in Greek literature.

It is debated as to whether “greater” here is to be seen as quantitatively or qualitatively (see Betz, Sermon, 191, and his brief discussion there of the debate among scholars). For instance, Luz, Matthew 1-7, 269-270, holds to a quantitative view while Hagner, Matthew 1-13, holds to a qualitative view. Przybylski, 78-99, concluded that it is not necessary to exclude one aspect or the other but both aspects are to be seen. In his view the qualitative sense involves “a very meticulous observance of the law” (85) from the perspective of a different interpretation than that of the scribes and Pharisees “of the same general law,” i.e. Jesus’ interpretation verses that of the scribes and Pharisees (85). He believes, 85-86, the quantitative sense involves the disciples being “perfect” (τέλειος) as described in 5:48 (which he feels refers to all 5:21-47 not just the 5:43-47) by “doing more than others” (85-86, cf. 5:47). For Przybylski, this perfection indicates “the attainment of the highest rank according to a specific standard” (86).

459 The term ἐ γὼ is emphatic here, see Bauer, Lexicon, 216.

460 Jesus’ teaching is authoritative and different from the Rabbis’ in form and in emphasis (see David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 56-60). Daube, 58, explains, “. . . in Matthew, we have not a scholarly working out by some Rabbis of a progressive interpretation as against a conceivable narrow one, but a laying down by Jesus, supreme authority, . . . the proper demand: this accounts for ‘But I say unto you’ . . . The setting in life of the Rabbinc form is dialectic exposition of the law; that of the Matthean is proclamation of the true law.” Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 111, states that “Jesus’ remarkable use of the ‘but I say to you’ formula is to be explained by his identity as the messianic bringer of the kingdom.” Carson, Matthew, 148, agrees stating, “The Sermon on the Mount is not set in a context of scholarly dispute over halakic details but in a context of messianic and eschatological fulfillment.” See also Mt 7:29 which states that Jesus’ teaching was with authority and not like that of the scribes.
to the first five antitheses he seems to contrast his teaching with what was then understood or misunderstood surrounding specific laws (i.e., murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, and retaliation). In the last antithesis, he specifically refers to the law of loving one’s neighbor (Lev 19:18) but then references the concept of “hating one’s enemies” which is not found in the OT. This seems to show that Jesus was not just addressing the law itself but what was taught to or heard about by the people in reference to the law. In each of the antitheses, however, Jesus himself and by his authority is depicted as taking charge of explicating the true fulfillment of the law in himself and his teaching.

The character or nature of Jesus’ “greater righteousness” in dialog with the law as taught in the antitheses can be understood eschatologically in the following manner: (1) The law to not murder (Ex 20:13; Dt 5:17) points to its fulfillment (and displacement) in Jesus’ command to not be angry (5:21-26). (2) The law to not commit adultery (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18) points to and is fulfilled (and made unnecessary) in Jesus’ command to not lust (5:27-30). (3) The law allowing divorce for indecency or something displeasing, requiring the giving of a certificate of divorce (Dt 24:1-4) points to a need for a change of heart (cf. Mt 19:4-9) and is fulfilled and displaced by Jesus’ command to not divorce except for πορνεία. (4) The OT command to not break but keep one’s oaths (consisting of a combination of teaching from passages such as Lv

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461 On the misunderstanding of these laws, see France, 196. Carson, Matthew, 148, states, “... in every case Jesus contrasts the people’s misunderstanding of the law with the true direction in which the law points, according to his own authority as the law’s ‘fulfiller.’” In addition, G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds. (Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 21, state “Most interpreters think that Jesus is contrasting traditional, unwritten interpretations of the laws in question (hence ‘you have heard’) with his own interpretations.” See also my note on the last antithesis in the text above.

462 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 134. This concept was however prevalent in Qumran where the members of the community were to love those within the community yet hate those outside, e.g., IQS 1:3-4, 10; 2:4-9. See further on this in Carson, Matthew, 157, and Betz, Sermon, 304-309.

463 This is also supported by the introduction to each of the antitheses using the word ἠρωκαίη, “you have heard.” The implication is that if one did not allow anger in his heart, there would be no murder.

464 Without lust, there would be no adultery.

465 This teaching by Jesus is further explained in Mt 19:4-9. Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 125, notes that here Jesus is basically stating that “marriage was to be a permanent relationship between a man and a woman, and divorce should therefore not be considered an option for the disciples of the kingdom.” Jesus’ teaching here in effect makes the law in Dt 24:1-4 “obsolete,” so France, 212. For further discussion of this antithesis and the possibility of Jesus holding the Shammaite rabbinic position on divorce, see France, 206-13.
19:12; Nm 30:2; Dt 23:21-23) is fulfilled in Jesus by his supersession of it in the interest of honesty in his command to limit one’s words to a simple “yes” or “no.”

(5) The OT law of retaliation (Ex 21:24; Lv 24:20; Dt 19:21) expressed as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” points to and is fulfilled in, yet made “irrelevant” by Jesus command to not resist an evil person (5:38-42).

(6) The concluding antithesis referring to the OT law concerning loving one’s neighbor (Lev 19:18) is fulfilled in and points to Jesus in his command to love one’s enemies and to pray for those who persecute. In making this command, Jesus goes far beyond what the OT text taught yet does not contradict it. This command shows that Jesus’ disciples can become sons of their Father in heaven by loving as he does indiscriminately and universally. He loves the righteous and the unrighteous, the evil and the good. Thus, in this last antithesis, those who would have greater righteousness will be those who reflect and imitate the “character of their heavenly Father” in how he loves all people.

This last antithesis ends with vs 48 stating that one is to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. This verse summarizes (note the use of οὐν here) not only the last antithesis but also

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467 Carson, Matthew, 153, states that the thrust here is to “encourage truthfulness.” He further states there that “the direction in which the OT points is the fundamental importance of thorough and consistent truthfulness. Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 128-29, states that Jesus is teaching that a person’s word should be able to be “relied upon without qualification and without need of further guarantee an oath might afford. Oaths are thereby rendered superfluous.”

468 France, 218. Here he limits this to “personal ethics.” France explains the fulfillment aspect stating, “The ‘fulfillment’ of the law (v. 17) here consists in leaving it behind in favor of something of a different order altogether, the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven.”

469 The manner in which this lex talionis might point to exercising non-resistance toward an evil person can be understood through Hagner’s observation that in the OT passages where this is found, “the lex talionis is presented more as a way of limiting the degree of personal vengeance that one may take upon another than as a positive teaching about what a person must or should do” (Matthew 1-13, 130). Carson, Matthew, 155, agrees with this stating that this law was not given to foster vengeance; the law explicitly forbade that (Lev 19:18). Rather, it was given, as the OT context shows, to provide the nation’s judicial system with a ready formula of punishment, not least because it would decisively terminate vendettas.” Hence the limitation points to the fullness of the law which blooms into Jesus’ command of non-resistance.

470 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 134. Evidently this imitation of God excludes in the present his character of judgment and punishment that occurs at the end of the age.

471 There are discussions concerning whether the concept of “perfect” (τελεῖος) means perfect in the ethical uprightness sense (which seems to be the dominant view), or in the sense of wholeness, or completeness (see, for example, Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 135-36, Keener, 205, and Michael Raiter, “Doers of the Greater Righteousness: The ‘Righteous’ in the Sermon on the Mount” The Reformed Theological Review 49 (1990):8-10. In either persuasion, the concept should be understood as, at the very least, an essential aspect of the “greater righteousness” taught by Jesus in his Sermon.
seems to be a summary of the nature of the greater righteousness to which all of the antitheses point.\textsuperscript{472} By way of this verse, Jesus goes further than the illustration of the examples in the six antitheses and implies that one needs to practice perfection (or be perfect, literally “be perfect ones,” εσθε ελεοι) in ways which permeate all areas of life.\textsuperscript{473} This perfection would seem to be the epitome of the greater righteousness introduced in 5:20.

Of what does that perfection or greater righteousness thus far consist? It would seem that it involves more than simply a “proper conduct before God,” but also a proper \textit{inner attitude} or a \textit{heart} of love toward others.\textsuperscript{474} To practice each of these antitheses, a heart that is selfless and oriented toward the good of others is a necessity. In the antithesis on not murdering, Jesus requires a heart that does not get angry with others. In the antithesis on not committing adultery, Jesus requires a heart that refuses to lust in its relationship with the opposite sex. In the antithesis on divorce, Jesus requires a heart that is committed to the preservation of the relationship with one’s spouse. The antithesis on not taking oaths involves a heart of pure honesty toward others. The antithesis on retaliation requires a heart of forgiveness, mercy, and non-retribution toward others. The last antithesis, to love one’s enemy, requires a heart that is selfless and which looks out for the good of the other person no matter what they have done. It is a heart of universal love and commitment to care for even those who are evil and unrighteous. Heart attitude and orientation is thus central to Jesus’ teaching on the “greater righteousness” which fulfills the law.\textsuperscript{475}

In reflecting on the antitheses it seems obvious that this “greater righteousness” of Jesus reveals an obedience that is \textit{selfless} in nature and \textit{relationally} focused; not simply legal-statute

\textsuperscript{472} That this verse also summarizes all the antitheses is well accepted, see France, 228, Carson, \textit{Matthew}, 160-61, Hagner, \textit{Matthew 1-13}, 134-35, Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 177-78, Nolland, 270, Osborne, 214, and Allison and Davies, \textit{Matthew 1-7}, 560, and Betz, \textit{Sermon}, 320.

\textsuperscript{473} Keener, 205.

\textsuperscript{474} Luz, \textit{Matthew 1-7}, 346, states, “Two elements belong to perfection: as a subjective element the idea that the heart must not be divided and that obedience must be entire.”

\textsuperscript{475} The law pointed to Jesus its fulfiller, and Jesus as the fulfiller points to the heart it takes to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.

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oriented. This “greater righteousness” does indeed involve a “proper conduct before God,” one which consists of a *selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship*. It is *selfless* in that it includes a heart focused on and working for the good and best for the other individual no matter who they are (i.e. universal love) as well as a goal of pleasing God. It is *relational* in that it does not simply involve laws or rules concerning oneself or simply in relation to the law, but living beings interacting and experiencing good toward one another. Thus, Jesus, as the fulfiller of the law, is teaching and commanding things that go further than the law in ways that involve the inner heart of man *in relationship* with others. This seems to be part of the eschatological newness that Jesus brings in his teaching to which the law ultimately pointed.

With respect to the law itself and its eternal validity, *the antitheses seem to make the law obsolete*. It is displaced by Jesus’ teaching concerning its fulfillment in him in the following ways: (1) Without anger there is no murder, (2) without lust there is no adultery, (3) with heart commitment to relationship preservation, there is no divorce, (4) in the presence of wholly honest hearts, oaths are not needed, (5) with a heart of forgiveness, mercy, and non-retribution, the law on retaliation is unnecessary, and (6) with the embracement of universal nondiscriminatory love, one becomes like the Father in heaven and there is no need for regulations as to whom one should or should not love. Indeed it would seem that there is no need for these OT laws as “greater righteousness” is achieved in embracing the perfection of the Father in heaven consisting of *selfless, good-for-others oriented relationships*. The law does remain eternally valid in this scenario but it becomes *superfluous* in many ways through the revelation of Jesus’ teachings to which it eschatologically pointed.476 The law’s teachings did not produce the righteousness needed for entry into God’s kingdom but Jesus’ fulfillment appearance and his authoritative

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476 Deines, 64, also uses the term “superfluous” when describing how Jesus’ teachings affect the Torah. He states, “They do not abrogate the Torah of Moses, but they make it in a way superfluous. Whenever Jesus’ followers live according to what is demanded of them, the regulations of the Torah are no longer needed.”
fulfillment teachings on the heart and the law do produce the greater righteousness qualifying one to enter the kingdom.  

**Righteousness in Mt 6:1-34**

Jesus continues to expound on the nature and character of this “greater righteousness” in Mt 6:1-34. Here, instead of focusing on one’s relationship with others, Jesus focuses on the importance of one’s relationship with the Father. Again, the focus is on the heart and actions necessary for proper δικαιοσύνη.

In 6:1, Jesus teaches that one should not practice righteousness “before men to be seen by them” as this leads to no reward from the Father in heaven. This verse is a general statement which introduces his teaching on the proper manner to practice three different acts of righteousness: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (6:2-18). In each of these cases the proper δικαιοσύνη is contrasted with the improper δικαιοσύνη. Those who practice the improper δικαιοσύνη are called hypocrites (ὑποκριταί, in 6:2, 5, and 16). The use of this term (hypocrite) in Matthew has a strong emphasis on the inner heart (related to God) versus the outward acts (related to man). In other words a good definition of hypocrisy as used in

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477 Jesus’ teachings in Mt 15:17-20 on uncleanness seem to echo the obsolescence of the law paralleling what is being taught here in the Sermon on the Mount. There, Jesus notes that at least four laws from the Decalogue (murder, adultery, theft, and false testimony) are a result of heart issues, not simply the actions themselves. The implication is that if one changes one’s heart to have the correct inner attitude (which is a major focus of Jesus’ teaching in 5:21-48), the law will not be broken and one will not be unclean. Hence an important key in fulfilling the law is the orientation of one’s heart or inner attitude.


479 These things involve behavior and not simply heart orientation as the term ποιεῖν indicates.


481 Note Matthew’s use of the term here in 6:2, and 16 (where he emphasizes that hypocrites do something to be seen by men and to show others something about themselves rather than doing something to be seen by God), and its use in 7:5 (where the sin in their own life (i.e. one’s own inner relationship with God) needs to be removed before they can see clearly to help others), 15:7-8 (where they serve outwardly their tradition but do not have hearts close to God), 22:18 (where the Pharisees and Herodians in their hearts lay plans to trap Jesus (which would be an affront to God) deceitfully disguised in an outward question (something that would persuade people)), 24:51 (where those who
Matthew would seem to not be the more popular idea of “a discrepancy between word and deed but rather as a discrepancy between the inward nature observed by God and the outward appearance observed by others.”\textsuperscript{482} The inward nature of hypocrisy is not to glorify or follow God as much as it is to glorify or follow self or men (in some way). This is exactly what is seen in Jesus’ discussion of practicing righteousness here in 6:2-18. One is to give alms not with pomp and circumstance (vs 2) but “in secret” to be seen only by the Father in heaven (vs 4). One is to pray not “to be seen by men” (vs 5) but behind a closed door to be seen only by the Father.\textsuperscript{483} One is to fast not “to show men” he is fasting (vs 16) but in a way to be seen only by the Father in heaven (vss 17-18). Here we see Jesus’ emphasis on the heart of non-self-glory which is to be presented to God instead of a heart of self-glory presented to men. Hence, the practice of righteousness in these verses involves actions of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting which proceed from a humble heart and are intentionally presented to the Father in secret for God’s glory, not presented to men publically to receive their glory.\textsuperscript{484}


\textsuperscript{483}Jesus’ extended teaching on prayer in vss 7-15 continues to emphasize the heart. One is not to pray by babbling many words but to understand that God already knows what they need. This emphasizes a heart of trust toward God. The whole of the “Lord’s prayer” emphasizes a heart position of praising God, asking for his kingdom to come, showing dependence on him for one’s daily food and deliverance from the evil one, and a special emphasis on gaining a heart of forgiveness.

\textsuperscript{484}Many commentators agree with the concept of self-glory/human glory vs. God’s glory (e.g., Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 182, Carson, \textit{Matthew}, 162-63, Nolland, 271-76, Hagner, \textit{Matthew 1-13}, 138-41, France, 233-34) but few indicate the intentionality of one presenting his righteous acts in secret via a humble heart to God for God’s glory alone. Keener, 206 is an exception where he notes that this passage is about “showing only God one’s righteousness” and the disciples “impressing God alone”. The notion of intentional presentation of one’s heart and acts to God seems to be indicated here in that these three acts of righteousness each depict both a presentation before men that is public (“to be seen by them,” προς τὸ ἀποθέμαι αὐτοῖς) contrasted with a presentation before God to see (ὁ βλέπων) in secret (ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ/κρυφαίῳ). It is a choice to be made in either case. Nolland, 276, seems to feel that ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι refers to God rewarding in secret rather than his seeing in secret. This would, however, seem to be an “unnatural” way to understand this phrase, so Alan Hugh McNeile, \textit{The Gospel According to}
In 6:19-25, where storing up treasure in heaven is emphasized, Jesus is again concerned with the disposition of the heart. This is shown in his statement “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (vs 21). In this passage the focus is to have a heart set not on earthly wealth but on heavenly wealth. The passage seems to be saying that “the place of investment reveals the commitment of the heart.” This is exemplified further in vss 22-24 where Jesus exhorts the disciples to have good eyes, be full of light, and serve God not money. The whole passage seems to be a focus on “absolute and unqualified discipleship.” Here, Jesus demands “uncompromising commitment to God’s will and purposes.” This seems to be of a piece with Mt 19:21 where Jesus tells the rich young man that if he wanted to be perfect he needed to get rid of what he served (i.e. his wealth) by selling his possessions and giving to the poor. Then he would have treasure in heaven. After giving everything up he was to then come and follow Jesus. The righteousness Jesus seems to be referring to here in 6:19-25, therefore, is having a heart that is totally committed to doing God’s will, which, here in the context of Jesus being the eschatological fulfillment of the law and the prophets, would mean following Jesus and his teachings. One’s treasure and thus heart orientation would then be in serving God. This would constitute the meaning of storing up treasure in heaven and would be another aspect of the “greater righteousness” taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

In 6:25-34, Jesus again speaks about one’s relationship with God. Here he speaks about “worry” over the basic needs of life, including what one will eat, drink, or wear. Vss 25 and 33 summarize the principle taught here: One should not worry but seek God’s “kingdom and his righteousness (δικαιοσύνη)” and all the necessities of life will be taken care of. Here Jesus is

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St. Matthew: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 75. The presentation of acts and heart to God, here, is not necessarily to be done (contra Betz, Sermon, 360, and contra Osborne, 220) to protect or secure one’s reward but rather simply for the glory of God. That is, the intentional presentation before God is not for self-benefit but for the benefit of God’s glory and the benefit of others.  
485 Nolland, 299.  
486 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 160.  
487 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 160.
commanding his followers to “pursue righteousness of life in full submission to the will of God” which entails following Jesus and his teachings. Worry involves a heart with fear of the future. Worry is a state of being self-focused instead of God-focused. It is a heart orientation of non-dependence on God. It is a lack of “putting the things of God first.”

Seeking God’s righteousness entails the opposite, i.e., having a heart of total dependence on God, one which is God-focused and God-trusting, and one which surrenders in full submission to his will. Hence, “greater righteousness” would entail the surrender of worry and embracing total dependence on God.

Here in Mt 6:1-34 once again the concept of “greater righteousness” involving selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship is encountered. Only here, the selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship is with the heavenly Father himself. Disciples who exhibit “greater righteousness” will exhibit this type of heart and the actions that proceed from it will be directed toward the Father in heaven.

Righteousness in Mt 7:1-5

In 7:1-5, Jesus returns to teaching about righteousness concerning relationships with others but also retains his emphasis on the relationship with God. Here he emphasizes the heart refraining from judging others in a condemning fashion. Condemnation is not the right of his disciples, it belongs to God alone. To allow this command

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488 Carson, Matthew, 182.
489 Keener, 238.
490 Osborne, 253.
491 On this determination of the meaning of μὴ κρίνετε here, as “judge negatively/condemn,” see Nolland, 318. Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 669, also agree with this definition giving it the meaning of “condemn.”
492 This injunction would seem to also reverse the lex talionis law which Jesus has already done in 5:38-42.
493 That this passage seems to involve an injunction not to take on God’s prerogative is based on seeing the first κρίνον, taking on the same nuance as the second κρίνον, of which the second is understood as that which is done in the final judgment. Keener, 240, states, “The final judgment belongs to God alone, and those who seek to judge others now usurp God’s position.” Carson, Matthew, 183, agrees and states that the ἵνα μὴ clause (in the phrase “in order that you not be judged”) should have its “full telic force” and the verse be understood in the following manner: “Do
to take effect in one’s life requires not only a heart of forgiveness and mercy upon another person, but a heart of respect and submission to God as well. In vs 5, Jesus adds to this injunction by exhorting the disciples to have an introspective heart by first taking “the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (vs 5). Here one is not commanded to cease distinguishing things in people’s lives altogether, rather one is to practice introspection so one does not judge others for faults which he himself has. One is to look within himself and take out the plank in one’s own eye with the goal of seeing clearly to help another take out the speck in his eye. This takes a heart of extreme humility but also one which looks out for the good of another.

In this passage, one is not to condemn but respect God’s position as Judge. Once again Jesus demands hearts and actions depicting “greater righteousness” which involve selfless, good-for-others oriented relationships, here in this passage, with both God and others.

**Righteousness in Mt 7:6-12**

Very few, if any, commentators connect Mt 7:6 with Mt 7:7-12. It is normally either connected with 7:1-5 or set apart as an “independent logion” and commented on as a somewhat autonomous saying. Indeed, how vs 6 fits into the immediate context is admittedly difficult. I want, however, to propose that the metaphor of vs 6 should be connected with 7:7-
12 through the concept of “value.” The picture of what is “sacred” and that which is described as “pearls” in verse 6 are things that are normally considered precious. These things are not to be thrown to the dogs and pigs, animals which were “ despised” and considered “abominable” (respectively) in the ancient world. In the present context of the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount, it would seem “greater righteousness” involving selfless, good-for-others oriented relationships is what is to be considered as “precious.” Indeed, it is what is necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven! From a “relational” perspective this verse would then be saying that this righteousness, this relationship with God and others that Jesus has described thus far in the Sermon, needs to be protected and not be despised or considered “abominable.” On the contrary it needs to be cultivated and nurtured. “Greater righteousness” would be the referent for the idea of “pearls” and what is to be considered “sacred.”

Understanding this verse from this relational perspective would lead directly into 7:7-11. Here, one is commanded to ask, seek, and knock in his relationship with the Father (see vs 11) and the need will be satisfied, what is sought will be found, and the door will be opened. This is the Father’s will. He wants his children to depend on him. He wants to be constantly valued in this manner. In thus submitting to these commands, the relationship between the disciple of Jesus and the Father in heaven becomes selfless, good-for-others oriented as it cherishes that relationship. Furthermore, this “greater righteousness” will involve a relationship with the Father image for the challenge to make God our exclusive priority.” He links the imagery in 6:19-20 concerning the storing up of treasure with this verse and sees the verse here speaking of the “dispersing of our resources.” He concludes, 324, that “when it comes to where we should expend our resources, compared to God everything and everyone else is a dog or a pig (neither fitting recipients of our dispersal nor able to appreciate what we can give). The imagery is harsh and clearly not to be taken outside the very specific frame within which it is designed to function. Jesus is once again commending a radically theocentric vision of life.” Carson, Matthew, 185, opts for this verse being an “aphorism” which “forbids proclaiming the gospel to certain persons designated as dogs and pigs.” Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 676, also list Carson’s view as a possible interpretation saying it is an “admonition about the necessity to limit the time and energy directed towards the hard-hearted.” Turner, Matthew, 206-07, however, interprets this as a “warning against Naïveté.”

499 Luz, Matthew 1-7, 418-419. Nolland, 323, supports this stating that “… dogs and pigs are certainly negative images …”

500 The present tenses of the Greek words here (αἰτεῖτε, ζητεῖτε, κρούετε, ὁ αἰτῶν, ὁ ζητῶν, τῷ κρούοντι) would seem to indicate that asking, seeking, and knocking is to be the lifestyle of the disciples, i.e. one always being dependent upon God in all one does and for every need.
in which one trusts in the Father’s goodness to provide good gifts his children (vss 9-11). The emphasis here is on the disciples’ embracement of the good nature of the Father. Jesus teaches that if the disciples who are evil (πονηροί) give good gifts to their children, how much more will the Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? To express “greater righteousness,” one’s relationship with God as a good provider must be greatly valued and engaged. To not do so, would be treating one’s relationship with the Father like giving dogs what is sacred and throwing one’s pearls before pigs.

“Greater righteousness” here in 7:6-11 thus encompasses not only dependence upon God but also the correct heart acceptance of his good nature. This necessary dependent relationship with the Father in heaven has already been explicated earlier in the Sermon on the Mount: In 6:1-18, one is to practice his righteousness in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting with a humble heart, intentionally presenting his actions and heart to the Father in secret for God’s glory instead of man’s glory. In 6:19-24, one is to store up treasure in heaven by being totally devoted to God’s will. In 6:25-34, one is not to worry but seek first the Father’s righteousness and his kingdom. In 7:1-5, one is not to usurp God’s authority by being the judge who condemns others. Hence, there is a common flow from 6:1 through 7:11 focusing on “greater righteousness” as involving one’s selfless, good-for-others oriented dependent relationship with the Father in heaven.

Mt 7:12 follows summarizing not only this section (7:6-12) but also the main body of the Sermon on the Mount (5:17-7:11) as well. In a positive form of the Golden Rule, Jesus

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501 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 174, seems to agree with this saying, “The passage does not emphasize the ‘good things’ themselves but the faithfulness of God as the provider of his people’s needs.” Carson also notes (Matthew, 187), “What is fundamentally at stake is man’s picture of God.”

502 The Father is far better than mankind. As such, one can expect that he will respond much better with good gifts than human parents. Here in vss 9-11, Jesus uses the arguing technique of qal wahomer (lesser to greater or light to heavy, see Richard Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1975), 68).

503 As noted previously, the words “law and the prophets” complete the inclusio with 5:17 focusing on Jesus’ fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Nolland, 328-30, agrees that this verse is a summary not only of the Sermon but also of the law and the prophets. In support of this, see also France, 282, who states that this verse is a “far-reaching and memorable summary of the ethics of discipleship (the ‘greater righteousness’ of 5:20), which thus serves to conclude the main body of the discourse.” Davies and Allison, Matthew 1-7, 685, argue that this verse
states, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up (ἐστίν) the law and the prophets.” This rule seems to be Jesus’ exegesis of the command in Lev. 19:18 to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” One is to positively treat others (i.e., love them) in a way that one would want to be treated by them. This lifestyle fulfills the goal of the law and the prophets. The words “so in everything (πᾶντα οὖν),” indicate that this summary expands what Jesus taught to include not only what is stated up to this point in the Sermon, but the entire purview of one’s life. Hence, the Golden Rule expresses an others-focused lifestyle that involves every facet of one’s existence. It is a lifestyle expressing a positive goal of achieving a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship. Nolland encapsulates the thrust of this verse stating:

How does the Golden Rule summarize the Sermon? Presumably it can do so because it is to be read in light of the call to be radically geared to the well-being of the neighbor, including the enemy, which has emerged so powerfully in 5:21-48. Used as a conclusion in this way, the Golden Rule makes clear that the radical behavior called for is not to be undertaken as focused on the self (e.g., as some kind of ascetic discipline), but as focused on the other person . . . The formulation of the Golden Rule also allows for the ethos formed from the specific demands of the Sermon to be generalized and adapted into new situations with their fresh challenges.

Righteousness in Mt 7:13-27

Mt 7:13-27 continues to expound the second theme of Mt 5:17-20, the “greater righteousness” needed for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In 7:13-14 there is an emphasis on choosing the “narrow gate” and “narrow road” to enter life and avoid destruction. In 7:15-20

concludes not only the section of 6:19-7:11 but it brings “to a climax the entire central core of the sermon on the mount, 5:17-7:11.” Betz, Sermon, 518, agrees stating “The Rule serves to summarize the ethical discussion of 5:17-7:11.”

The Golden Rule is seen universally in the ancient world in both positive and negative forms (see, Nolland, 328-31; Keener, 248-49, as well as Betz, Sermon, 509-16, for an overview of the history and universality of this Rule).

Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 176. Jesus later on, 22:37-40, states that Lev. 19:18 is the second greatest commandment next to loving the Lord your God, both upon which the entire law and prophets hang.

Carson, Matthew, 188, notes that ἐστίν here can mean “fulfill” as it does in Acts 2:16.

Betz, Sermon, 518, agrees stating that the Sermon addresses “only some examples from a potentially endless number of issues.”

Nolland, 330.
there is an emphasis on recognizing and being a good tree which bears good fruit to avoid being “cut down and thrown into the fire.” In the present passage under consideration, 7:21-23, there seems to be an emphasis on doing the will of the Father and on Jesus’ “knowing you” in order to avoid being cast out and condemned as “evil doers.” In 7:24-27 there is a warning to hear and heed Jesus’ words to keep from falling and crashing.

All these would seem to indicate that in addition to the righteousness taught about in the previous verses of the Sermon, Jesus includes (1) “positive lifestyle choices” that involve a narrow gate and a narrow road, (2) being a good tree which bears good fruit, (3) a positive relationship with the Father in doing his will and (4) hearing and obeying Jesus’ words. Hence these must be added to the rest of the Sermon as aspects of that “greater righteousness” spoken of in 5:20. These would all seem to include an attitude and action in obedience to Jesus involving a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship toward God.

**Righteousness in the Beatitudes**

Although not contained within the “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” inclusio of 5:17 and 7:21, the beatitudes are not without substance with respect to “greater righteousness,” and the kingdom of heaven. In fact, the term δικαιοσύνη is used twice in the beatitudes at 5:6, 10, within another inclusio framed by the words “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (ὅτι οὕτωι ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν). This frame of relationship with the kingdom of heaven seems to indicate that the beatitudes constitute qualifiers or “prerequisites for the kingdom.”

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509 I will discuss this more later in this chapter.
510 Carson, *Matthew*, 188-94, divides this section into four warnings “each offering pared contrasts: two ways (vv. 13-14), two trees (vv. 15-20), two claims (vv.21-23), and two builders (vv. 24-27).”
511 This inclusio would encompass not only vss 3-10 but also vs 11. The ninth beatitude (found in vs 11) seems to be a repetition of the thought of the eighth beatitude and should thus be included with the eighth (see Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 90).
512 Keener, 167. In this sense the beatitudes are considered mainly “implicit” imperatives (D. E. Garland, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. “Blessing and Woe”), contra Allison and Davies (*Matthew 1-7*, 439-40) who, although not excluding the beatitudes as being implicit imperatives, believe that they are primarily eschatological blessings.
addition, the term “blessed” (μακάριοι) seems to have a vertical dimension to it showing God’s favor or approval which would seem to imply that the actions for which the blessedness is pronounced were “proper conduct before God” and thus expressions of the “greater righteousness” theme of the Sermon. This blessedness invoked upon the disciples by Jesus, although it has future eschatological rewards, is depicted in the beatitudes as present participation in the kingdom of heaven as shown by the present tense εὐστία in the inclusio verses 3 and 10. Hence, while there is a future eschatological aspect to the beatitudes there also seems to be a present aspect of participation in the kingdom of heaven. From this perspective, the beatitudes can be seen as hortatory with respect to present participation in the kingdom of heaven, encouraging the disciples to express certain life dispositions. Those who express the character of the beatitudes are illustrative of a “proper conduct before God” or the “greater righteousness” Jesus speaks about in 5:20, a righteousness which surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees and in some way qualifies them for present participation in the kingdom of heaven.

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513 The term μακάριος is many times translated “happy.” However, it seems that those who are happy are thus because of God’s approval. On the concept of the term μακάριος meaning “approved” see Carson’s discussion of this (Matthew, 131) where he concludes that it most likely here means God’s favor. He notes that this word usually “describes a man who is singularly favored by God and therefore in some sense ‘happy.’” Turner, Matthew, 149, agrees, saying, “To be blessed (μακάριος . . .) is to receive God’s approval, favor, endorsement, congratulations.” He continues, “To be ‘blessed’ is to be so much more than ‘happy,’ since the word ‘happiness’ conveys only a subjective, shallow notion of serendipity, not the conviction of being a recipient of God’s grace.” Caleb T. Huang (“Jesus’ Teaching on Entering the Kingdom of Heaven in the Gospel of Matthew (Interpretation of Selected Matthean Texts and Parables),” ThD diss, Concordia Seminary, 1986, 127) also agrees with μακάριος meaning “approved by God.”

514 Note the future tense verbs in vss 4-9: “παρακαλεθήσονται, will be comforted,” “κληρονομήσουσιν, will inherit,” “χορτασθήσονται, will be filled,” “ἐλεηθήσονται, will be shown mercy,” “ὀφειλέσται, will see God,” and “κληθήσονται, will be called.”

515 Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 446, note that “the present tense, ‘is’ . . . stands in contrast to the future tenses in the second members of all the other beatitudes” and is understood by them to probably be “a futuristic or proleptic present.” However, they also leave allowance for this present tense being a hint “at the fact that the kingdom is already in some sense present . . . and therefore a blessing enjoyed even now.” Huang, 134-35, sees this present concept here in Mt 5:3, 10 also as a bonafide possibility.

516 France, 164, agrees stating, “The kingdom of heaven has already arrived (4:17 . . .), and so these are people who are already under God’s beneficent rule. The advantages of being God’s people can then be expected to accrue already in this life, even though the full consummation of their blessedness remains for the future. The tension between ‘now’ and ‘not yet,’ so familiar from much of the rest of the NT, may appropriately be seen as running also through the promises of Matt 5:3-10.” Carson, Matthew, 132, also agrees with this present and future understanding of the beatitudes.
This “greater righteousness” in the beatitudes includes being humble or poor in spirit, being one who mourns, one who is meek, one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, one who is merciful, one who has a pure heart, one who is a peacemaker, and one who is persecuted because of righteousness and because of Jesus. These are all included in the concept of “your good deeds” in Mt 5:16 which when expressed in life constitute salt and light into the world (Mt 5:13-16) and brings praise to the Father in heaven. Once again, the concept of selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship mindset and lifestyle with respect to the Father (and others) is depicted here.

**Summary of Righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount**

The “greater righteousness” Jesus teaches about depicted in the Sermon on the Mount can be summarized in the notion of embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a heart and life exhibiting a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others. It embraces many components including (1) obedience and submission to Jesus himself and his teachings in his eschatological fulfillment of the law, (2) being perfect in ridding oneself of anger, lust, desire for divorce, oaths, and retribution, replacing these with unconditional love even for one’s enemies, (3) giving alms, praying, and fasting from a humble heart intentionally presenting oneself to the Father in secret for God’s glory instead of doing them to receive glory from men, (4) storing up treasure in heaven by having a heart totally committed to doing God’s will, (5) ridding oneself of worry by putting one’s trust completely in God and

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517 The concept of “poor in spirit” here seems to imply great humility. Turner, *Matthew*, 149, notes that “the first beatitude concerns authentic spirituality. God’s approval does not come to those who boast of their spiritual riches. Rather, God’s endorsement is for those who admit their spiritual poverty . . . To be ‘poor in spirit’ is to acknowledge one’s total dependence on God for everything, for righteousness . . . as well as sustenance.” Osborne, 166, notes that the phrase denotes a “humility that leads God’s people to depend wholly on him.” Carson, *Matthew*, 132, also agrees as does Huang, 132-34. Cf. also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 91-92. This concept may become important in understanding 7:22 where certain people who address Jesus as “Lord, Lord” attempt to justify their right to enter the kingdom by listing things they did in Jesus’ name. For in-depth study of the meaning of the remainder of the beatitudes, see Carson, *Matthew*, 130-38, Nolland, 193-207, Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 87-96, and Keener, 163-72.

518 France, 177, agrees and states, “The phrase ‘good deeds’ conveys the qualities set out in the Beatitudes.”
seeking him first, (6) refusing to usurp God’s authority to condemn but instead practicing introspection and healing of self so one, in humility, can help others with their struggles, (7) cherishing one’s relationship with the Father in a way that embraces his goodness and depends on him for good gifts, (8) positively loving and treating others in a way that one would want to be treated by them, (9) choosing to follow God through the narrow gate and on the narrow road, (10) being a good tree which bears good fruit, (11) cultivating a positive relationship with the Father to do his will and with Jesus in a manner in which he “knows you,” (12) hearing and obeying Jesus’ words, and (13) being a person who is humble or poor in spirit, who mourns, who is meek, one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, one who is merciful, who is pure heart, who is a peacemaker, and one who is persecuted because of righteousness.

All of these qualities and actions may reflect on the meaning of Mt 7:21. Since Mt 5:20 and 7:21 form an inclusio on entrance into the kingdom of God and “greater righteousness” is a necessary component for entrance, its definition and content as uncovered in the remainder of the Sermon above would seem undoubtedly affect the meaning of Mt 7:21-23. This initially would seem especially true of the concept that only the one “doing the will of the Father” will enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven**

A study of the concept of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” found in the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount in 5:20 may also have bearings on the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 since this concept also occurs in 7:21. The notion of “entrance” into the kingdom is found in six places in Matthew: 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-34; 21:31; and 23:13-14. In its use in Matthew, it has both present and future components. In 5:20 and 18:3 (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε aorist subjunctive) it
involves an emphatic denial or strong prohibition\textsuperscript{519} against entering the kingdom of heaven. Here the contexts seem to indicate that the life-course on which a person is on will not lead to some future entrance into the kingdom of heaven. In 5:20 entrance is barred to those who do not express a righteousness that is greater than the scribes and Pharisees. In 18:3, entrance is barred to those who do not humble themselves and become like little children. In both of these cases there is an indication of not entering the kingdom in the future but the time aspect of the future is not determined, i.e. there is no indication as to whether this entrance into the kingdom of heaven is possible or not in this age or if it is limited to speaking only of entrance into a future eschatological kingdom. One can conclude, however, that failure to meet those requirements at the present time bars one from the entering the kingdom at some unspecified future date unless the failure is rectified. In 7:21 a future entrance (εἰσέλθεσθε) seems to be barred to those who are not doing (ὁ ποιῶν, present tense) the will of the Father.\textsuperscript{520} In 21:31 the term for “entering” the kingdom of heaven is προάγουσιν (present tense).\textsuperscript{521} Here Jesus, speaking to the elders and chief priests, states that the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering (present tense) the kingdom of God ahead of them.\textsuperscript{522} This would indicate that entrance into the kingdom is possible already in this present age. In 19:23-24 the disciples are told that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven in the future (εἰσέλθης, future tense). This statement is followed by Jesus saying that it is “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter (εἰσέλθῃς) the kingdom of God.” While this is speaking of a future entrance, it, again,


\textsuperscript{520} This will be developed further later in this study.

\textsuperscript{521} Literally, “are going before you into the kingdom of God.”

\textsuperscript{522} This does not mean that the elders and chief priests will enter the kingdom though (note vs 32), see Carson, \textit{Matthew}, 450. However, the potential for their entrance seems to be left open here. Nolland, 862, states, “The use of προάγειν (‘go ahead of’) is striking in that it highlights the possibility of following those who go ahead.” Cf. also France, 805. Donald Hagner, \textit{Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 33B: Matthew 14-28}, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 614, recognizes the present tense here in his comment, “It is thus they rather than the Jewish authorities who were entering the kingdom.” Bauer, \textit{Lexicon}, 709, without explanation, translates the idea here as “The tax-collectors will get into the kingdom of God before you.” But the tense here is present not future. As such I see no need to force a future tense on the phrase here.
does not designate what aspect of the future is referenced. In 23:13-14 the phrase occurs in a present tense. Jesus says of the scribes and Pharisees concerning the kingdom, “You yourselves do not enter (εἰσερχόμενοι, present tense, “are not entering”) nor will you let enter those who are trying to (εἰσερχόμενοι, present tense).” Here seems to be evidence of the possibility of present entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

These passages thus seem to indicate that there is a potential for present entrance into the kingdom of heaven as well as a potential future entrance or a future barring of entrance without a delineation of the nature of that futurity. Based on the concept of “entrance” into the kingdom of heaven and its use here in Matthew, it thus would seem reasonable to understand that “entrance” into the kingdom of heaven is not necessarily just something that exists in the distant future but also has present potential. A study of the nature of the kingdom of heaven may help shed more light on this issue. This I will now briefly investigate.

The Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven

The explicit terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” are not found in the OT but only in Jewish writings which are mainly post-OT. The term “kingdom” (βασιλεία) Matthew predominantly uses the term “kingdom of heaven” (which occurs over 30 times) instead of the term “kingdom of God” (which is only occurs at 6:33, 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). He also uses the term “kingdom” alone (e.g., 13:19), “his kingdom” (13:41), “kingdom of their father” (13:43), and other phrases referring to God’s kingdom. I am treating all of these which refer to the God’s or Jesus’ kingdom as synonymous. There have been some who have attempted to make a distinction between the “kingdom of God” and the “kingdom of heaven” by assigning the meaning of “present kingdom” to the phrase “kingdom of God” and the idea of “an imminent but entirely future reality” to the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” so, Margaret Pamment (“The Kingdom of Heaven According to the First Gospel” New Testament Studies 27 (1980-81): 211-32). This is, however, “without exegetical basis” (C. C. Cargounis, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven.” On their synonymy, see also Huang, 15-16.). For further discussion on this, see Turner, Matthew, 38-39, and my critique of Pamment’s view in my ThM thesis (Glenn W. Giles, “The Meaning of Matthew 21:43 and its Role in the Development of the Rejection Theme of Matthew’s Gospel,” ThM Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1986), 15-26. For a more developed discussion concerning the use of the terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew, see Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 4-30.

does occur throughout this time period, however, and has the meaning of “kingship”, or “rule.” Its central meaning embraces “the dynamic idea of reign, rule, or dominion rather than the concrete idea of realm.” Hence, it connotes active reign more than realm.

Among the Jewish groups of Jesus’ day there were at least two general views of the nature of God’s Kingdom. These included (1) a future “apocalyptic kingdom” which God would set up “not only be king de facto over Israel but also over the entire world,” and (2) a present active rule of God “through Israel and the law” in which God was considered “de jure king of the universe,” but “de facto king only over those who acknowledged his rule and accept his lordship.” This de facto present rule occurred (at least in Rabbinic theology) when one individually recited the Shema and took on God’s rule in his life. For example, Berakoth 2:5 states:

A bridegroom is exempt from reciting the Shema on the first night, or until the close of the (next) Sabbath if he has not consummated the marriage. Once when Rabban Gamaliel married he recited the Shema on the first night. His disciples said to him, “master, didst thou not teach us that a bridegroom is exempt from reciting the Shema on the first night? He said to them, “I will not hearken to you to cast off from myself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven even for a moment.”

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526 George Eldon Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 130. See also Turner, Matthew, 43, who says that the use of βασιλεία in the NT and the use of מֶלֶךְ in the OT “connotes dynamic rule more than concrete realm, although the two concepts should not be separated,” and Bauer, Lexicon, 134-35, where he classifies the bulk of his listings of NT occurrences under the definition of “the royal reign” or “kingdom of God.” The concept of “realm” is not to be omitted from the definition of this term but is not to be seen as dominant (see Ladd, “The Kingdom of God—Reign or Realm?” Journal of Biblical Literature 81 (1962): 230-38).


528 Quotes in this sentence are from Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 11. Examples of this present view of the kingdom include The Testament of Benjamin 9:1; Siphre Deuteronomy 313; Ps 47:1-9; 103:19; Dn 4:17, 34; 5:17-29; 1 Enoch 9:4-5; 84:2; and Psalms of Solomon 17:4; 5:21; Berakoth 2:2-5. See Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 4-15, also for extensive notes and support for these two views. On the future and present view of the kingdom of heaven in Jesus’ day, see also Huang, 34-43.

529 Danby, 3-4. Although Rabban Gamaliel is dated only back to 110 A.D. (Dalman, 97), it would not seem to me awry to assume that this concept of taking on the rule of God by quoting the Shema could go back to the time of Matthew and Jesus. This referencing of the teachings of the Mishna back to 30 A. D has been argued by D. A.
Thus not only did there exist a future view of God’s kingdom in the Jewish mind, but also one that was present. The future one was one which God would physically impose on the world in the time ahead. The present one was one which was dependent on man’s volition to submit to God’s present active rule through obedience to God by taking on the yoke of the kingdom of God through recitation of the Shema and obedience to the law. In this way one could take on, or allow, God to presently rule in his life.

This present/future meaning for the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven is also found in the NT. Scholars today generally accept that Jesus’ teaching shows an already/not yet or both a present and future aspect of the kingdom of heaven.\textsuperscript{530} The future aspect of the kingdom is illustrated in Matthew in passages such as Mt 13:41, 43 and 25:34 which speak of the kingdom at the end of the age and 8:11, 22:2, and 26:29 which refer to the messianic banquet at the end of the age. The present feature of the kingdom is implicated in Mt 12:28 where Jesus indicates that his present driving out of demons shows “the kingdom of God has come upon you.”\textsuperscript{531} Thus there

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\textsuperscript{531} That this verse indicates the kingdom as present seems to be generally accepted by scholars today, see Hagner, \textit{Matthew 1-13}, 343, Carson, \textit{Matthew}, 289, Osborne, 475, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., \textit{Vol.2: Matthew 8-18 in The Gospel According to Matthew}, (London: T & T Clark, Ltd., 1998), 339-41, Nolland, 500-01, etc. See also my discussion of this, Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 24-25, n. 53. Caragounis, s.v. “Kingdom of God/Heaven,” is one who dissents claiming that the kingdom of heaven is only “potentially present.” He states that while the term ἕφθασεν (“has come”) “implies that the coming of the kingdom of God is so imminent that the kingdom of God may be considered as being virtually here” the phrase ἐπὶ ὑμῶν (“upon you”) should be seen as a warning and as such the understanding here would be that “the kingdom of God has not yet arrived.” That this phrase (ἐπὶ ὑμῶν) can carry the meaning of “warning” seems obvious from 23:35-36 and 27:25. However it is also used in Matthew in a manner that does not express warning, see 11:29 (where Jesus invites people to take his yoke upon them) and its use in the singular in 3:16 (where the Spirit of God descends upon him as a dove). Caragounis’ making ἐπὶ ὑμῶν here carry the concept of “warning” or “judgment” of \textit{only something to come in the future} does not seem warranted in my judgment. There seems to be no good reason why it should not carry with it the concept of the kingdom as being
seems to be an overlap in the concept of the kingdom with respect to its presence. It seems that the kingdom of heaven can be both present now in some way and yet also said to be in the future in what might be understood as a more complete or final eschatological manner.\textsuperscript{532} There is what might be called an overlapping of the ages in which this present age has been invaded by the age to come and in the end will totally supplant this present age.\textsuperscript{533}

For my discussion at this point it is important to note that the “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God” can refer to either the present reign (or rule) of God or the future reign (or rule) of God. With Jesus came the in-breaking of the presence of the kingdom, a presence of the future.\textsuperscript{534} The rule of God is now and yet in the future. Jewish views, also, as noted above, entertained both a present and future rule of God. Matthew seems no different. However, for Matthew, the qualifier for entrance into this kingdom of heaven (whether present or future) is one having a “greater righteousness,” a righteousness defined by embracing Jesus (to whom the law and the prophets pointed as their fulfiller) and his teachings, not one of reciting the \textit{Shema} and following the law. Hence, the \textit{present} rule of God in Matthew comes through obedience to Jesus in his eschatological role not simply obedience to the law. This present rule of God is dynamic and active through Jesus and different from the practice not only of the Rabbis but also the scribes and Pharisees (who were rejecting Jesus and his teachings). Ladd summarizes the two aspects thusly:

\dots before the eschatological appearance of God’s Kingdom at the end of the age, God’s Kingdom has become dynamically active among men in Jesus’ person and his mission. The Kingdom in this age is not merely the abstract concept of God’s universal rule to which men must submit; it is rather a dynamic power at work among men. This is not the only element which sets our Lord’s teaching most distinctively apart from Judaism; it is the heart of his proclamation and the key to his entire mission. Before the apocalyptic

\textsuperscript{532} George Eldon Ladd states “If a majority of scholars have approached a consensus, it is that the Kingdom is in some real sense both present and future” (\textit{A Theology of the New Testament}, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 59).

\textsuperscript{533} On this, see Ladd, \textit{Theology}, 57-69, and his in-depth discussion of this NT theological concept.

\textsuperscript{534} Hence the title of Ladd’s book, \textit{Presence of the Future}. 
coming of God’s Kingdom and the final manifestation of his rule to bring the new age, God has manifested his rule, his Kingdom, to bring men in advance of the eschatological era the blessings of his redemptive reign . . . The rabbis had such a twofold concept . . . God’s reign could be accepted in this age, and it would appear dynamically at the end of the age. Jesus followed this basic pattern but went beyond the rabbis by teaching that God’s kingly reign was manifesting itself dynamically in this age in his own person and mission before its eschatological appearing.\(^{535}\)

This present active rule of heaven is appropriated by submitting oneself to Jesus and his teachings. Not doing so constitutes a refusal to allow God to rule in one’s life. Doing so allows Jesus and his teachings to rule one’s heart and life, and thus allows heaven or God to rule in one’s life. God’s active present rule on earth, as seen for instance through the purview of the first and eighth beatitudes, is manifested through the life of his disciples by their exercising a humble heart (i.e., being “poor in spirit”) in embracing Jesus as well as enduring persecution on account of Jesus and his righteousness (so 5:3 and 5:10-11). Being humble in heart, or being “spiritually poor,” is expressed in outward action consistent with total dependence upon God.\(^{536}\) Enduring persecution because of righteousness would seem to mean that righteousness has been embraced. In this way one allows God’s rule or power to be presently and actively manifested in this present age. This would seem to me to be equivalent to a present entering into the kingdom of heaven. That is, in the appropriation of Jesus and his teachings into one’s life in this present age (i.e., expressing “greater righteousness” in one’s heart and life as depicted in the Sermon on the Mount), one actively and presently allows God’s rule to reign and hence one enters into the realm of God’s present reign or rule (i.e., the kingdom of heaven).

With respect to entering the future reign of God or kingdom of heaven, this is dependent upon whether one in this present age embraces Jesus and his teaching on “greater righteousness.”

\(^{535}\) Ladd, “Presence,” 139, emphases his.

\(^{536}\) France, 165, expounds on the first beatitude in the following manner: “‘Poverty in spirit’ is not speaking of weakness of character . . . but rather of a person’s relationship with God. It is a positive spiritual orientation, the converse of arrogant self-confidence which not only rides roughshod over the interests of other people but more importantly causes a person to treat God as irrelevant. To say that it is to such people that the kingdom belongs means (not, of course, that they themselves hold royal authority but) that they are the ones who gladly accept God’s rule . . .”
Without this, one will be barred from entrance into any future kingdom of God. As such, it would seem that one would of necessity have to enter the kingdom of God in the present in order to enter in the future: The absence of the “greater righteousness” in this age precludes entrance into the kingdom of heaven in the future age.

**The Sermon on the Mount as Tests of Righteousness for Entrance into the Kingdom**

Understanding the Sermon on the Mount as an exposition of Jesus’ “greater righteousness” (the main theme of the Sermon, 5:20) which is necessary for entrance into God’s rule (the kingdom of heaven) allows one to see his Sermon in its entirety as a declaration of tests or conditions for entry (present or future) into that rule of God (or, as in the beatitudes, conditions for the expression of that rule in one’s life). These tests would include all actions and heart orientations indicated above in the “Summary of Righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount” section of this chapter. These actions can be extended to include any action that embraces Jesus and expresses a heart and life of selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others.

**Summary of the Notion of “Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven”**

The study of the notion of the concept of “entry into the kingdom of heaven” at this point reveals that the grammatical use of the terms “enter” and “kingdom of heaven” both embody present and future linguistic parameters in Matthew. The term “kingdom” itself expresses the notion of active “rule.” From a present perspective, entry into the kingdom would seem to imply an entering into or taking on the rule of God in one’s life. That is, entry into the kingdom would mean placing oneself under the rule of God, which, in the Sermon on the Mount, entails

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537 Nolland, 225, in a similar thought with reference to 5:20, understands 5:20 to indicate “some sort of quantitative test for entry into the kingdom of heaven” (emphasis mine).
embracing and being submissive to Jesus and his teachings. From a future eschatological perspective, entrance into the rule of God would take place at the end of the age but would nevertheless be dependent upon what one did with Jesus and his teachings while alive in this present age.

The notion of entrance into the kingdom of heaven in Mt 5:20 could conceivably therefore entail both or either possibility. That is, entrance into the kingdom of heaven in this verse seems only limited by the lack of the “greater righteousness” which Jesus describes in the remainder of the Sermon. If one were to embrace that “greater righteousness” prior to the end of the age, it would seem that one would not be barred from entry into the kingdom of heaven either in the present or in the future aspect of it. The possibility of having the rule of God present in one’s life before the end of the age has already been indicated in the Sermon in the first and eighth beatitude (Mt 5:3, 10-11). There, it is explicitly stated that one presently possesses or expresses (αὐτῶν ἐβίστιν) the kingdom of heaven when he is poor or humble in spirit and/or persecuted because of righteousness on account of Jesus. This would seem to imply that submission to Jesus and his will is key to possessing or expressing the kingdom or rule of God. As such the idea of or “possessing” or “expressing” the kingdom would seem to entail one allowing Jesus to rule in his life.

The question which remains in my discussion is whether a present “entrance” into the kingdom of heaven (as expressed in 5:20) can be equated with present “possession” or “expression” of the kingdom of heaven (as stated in 5:3, 10). It seems to me that the answer to this question is “yes.” The appropriation of Jesus and his teachings into one’s life in this present age (i.e., expressing “greater righteousness” in one’s heart and life) allows God’s rule to reign in

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538 Huang, 143-44, when commenting on 5:20, seems to indicate that this verse allows for the possibility of one entering into the kingdom in the present. He states, 143, “Since the future Kingdom is only the consummation of the present Kingdom, all those who are accepted into the present Kingdom will also be received in to the future Kingdom.”
one’s life in an active and present manner and, as such, one enters into the realm of God ruling one’s life in the present.

Thus, at this point in this study 5:20 would seem to indicate either a present or future aspect of entrance into the kingdom of heaven or perhaps both in the sense of the future being now present. In any case, however, this entails submission to Jesus and his teachings as the rule of one’s life. Since the concept of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” as the inclusio of the main theme of the Sermon occurs also in 7:21, this present or future aspect of its meaning could potentially affect the meaning of that verse and its contribution to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel.

**Summary of Central Themes in Mt 5:1-7:20 Potentially Affecting the Meaning of Mt 7:21-23**

At this point, I have examined what seem to be the two major themes in Mt. 5:17-20 which potentially could affect the meaning of Mt 7:21-23. These include (1) Jesus relationship with the law and (2) the righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Both of these themes have great potential in helping determine the meaning of Mt 7:21-23 since they are major themes in the Sermon on the Mount as a whole of which Mt 7:21-23 forms part of its conclusion.

Jesus’ relationship with the law in the eschatological fulfillment sense of him being its intended predicted eschatological purpose and ultimate goal *instead* of him being the authoritative interpreter of the law in order to secure radical obedience to it down to the least jot and tittle, would seem to potentially greatly affect the meaning of “doing the will of my Father” in 7:21. Likewise understanding the content and nature of Jesus’ idea of the “greater righteousness” necessary for entrance “into the kingdom of heaven,” may make a great
contribution to that same concept of “doing the will of my Father” in 7:21. If so, “doing the will of my Father” would involve not only submission to Jesus and his teachings as the law’s fulfiller, but also a heart and life that exhibit a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others. Furthermore, the meaning of the phrase “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” and the present and future nuances involved, may have an impact on the meaning of Jesus’ statement that not everyone “will enter the kingdom of heaven” in 7:21.

Having examined the above central themes of the Sermon on the Mount, I now will examine Mt 7:21-23 itself in light of these central themes, and any other new themes that may be uncovered in these verses. The goal is to determine the contribution of these verses to Matthew’s obedience theme.

**Obedience in Matthew 7:21-23**

As noted above in this chapter, I have determined that Mt 7:21-23 constitutes part of the concluding section of Jesus’ Sermon, a section which involves Mt 7:13-27 in its entirety. In addition, I have argued that 5:20 and 7:21 constitute a structural inclusio in the Sermon through the phrases οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν and εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν, respectively, indicating that the focus of 5:20-7:27 is on the main theme of the Sermon: “Greater righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.” This being the case, the association of 7:21-23 to this major theme and its resultant contribution to the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel will be the major focus of this section of this chapter. The other main theme of the Sermon on the Mount (i.e., Jesus as the fulfiller of the law, which was developed within its own inclusio of 5:17 and 7:12 surrounding the terms τὸν νόμον ἦ τοὺς προφήτας and ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφήται, respectively) will not be excluded from my
purview here but rather will be assumed here in these verses since its inclusio concluded at 7:12.\textsuperscript{539}

\textit{Obedience Theology in Matthew 7:21}

Mt 7:21-23 touches on several aspects of Matthean obedience theology. I will consider first the contribution of 7:21 and then look at the contribution of 7:22-23.

\textbf{Reward and Punishment and the Test of Doing the Will of the Father}

In almost every section of the Sermon on the Mount beginning with 5:20 one sees the exposition of the concept of “greater righteousness” followed by a reward or punishment for the test\textsuperscript{540} that is laid out by Jesus. In 5:20 Jesus states that one’s righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, implying that they and all who are like them will not enter into the kingdom. In 5:21-26 Jesus expounds on the need to rid oneself of anger to escape judgment, the Sanhedrin, and the “fire of hell.” In 5:27-30 Jesus applies the test of “lust.” One who does not rid his or her heart of it will be “thrown into hell.” In 5:31-32 Jesus applies the test of commitment to marriage without which the consequence is causing others and oneself to commit adultery. In 5:33-36 Jesus calls for absolute honesty in truth telling, negating the need for oaths, with the revelation that anything different involves “the evil one.” In 5:38-42 Jesus applies the test of non-retaliation. Anyone who retaliates does not express “greater righteousness.” In 5:43-48 Jesus calls for unconditional love for everyone, in the absence of which one will not be like the Father in heaven. In 6:1-18, Jesus calls for his followers to give alms, pray, and fast “in secret” for the glory of God not man or they will not receive the reward of the Father. In 6:19-24, Jesus applies

\textsuperscript{539} See my argument on this earlier in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{540} See above for a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount as tests of righteousness that qualify or disqualify a person for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
the test of putting God first to receive treasure in heaven. In 6:25-34, Jesus applies the test of “worry” to determine if one is completely trusting God as do the birds of the air and lilies of the field. If one worries, he is not seeking first the Father’s kingdom and his righteousness. In 7:1-5, Jesus applies the test of judging to see if one will respect God’s authority and not usurp it by acting as the judge. If one does usurp God’s authority, the measure that one judges another will be used to judge him. In 7:6-11, Jesus applies the test of asking, seeking, and knocking to determine one’s dependence on God and respect for God’s goodness. Not to do so is despising God and giving what is holy to dogs and pearls to swine. In 7:12, Jesus sets up the positive form of the golden rule to do to others what one would have done to himself. Without doing this, one does not measure up to that which the law and prophets pointed. In 7:13-14, one is encouraged to choose the narrow gate and narrow road to get to life and escape destruction. In 7:15-20, one is encouraged to watch out for bad trees and be a good tree so that one will not be thrown into the fire. In 7:24-27, escaping a great life crash is only possible by passing the test of hearing and practicing Jesus words, which, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, are Jesus’ teachings in his role as the fulfiller of the law. All of these passages teach and expand on the main theme of the Sermon, i.e. “greater righteousness” necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. As a result they all contribute to Matthew’s obedience theology in the area of reward and punishment. Jesus, in his role as the law fulfiller, and his teachings here in the Sermon on the Mount must be embraced to enter the kingdom of heaven. When one obeys, one is rewarded with entrance. When one disobeys, one is denied entrance. Mt 7:21 is no different than the rest of the Sermon. It states, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Hence, one can only enter the kingdom of heaven by passing the test of doing the will of Jesus’ Father in heaven. Lacking this,

541 See Mohrlang’s discussion of Matthean reward and punishment, 48-57.
one fails to enter. This verse therefore, as do many others in the Sermon on the Mount, contributes to Matthew’s obedience theology in the area of reward and punishment in introducing the test of “doing the will of the Father.”

The Divine Lordship of Jesus

In using the terms οὐ πᾶς ("not everyone") in 7:21, Matthew indicates a shift from the previous verses from second to third person. Jesus here now expands his teaching from a narrow inclusion of his disciples and the crowd around him (cf. 5:1) to a broad involvement of any and all who would address him as “Lord, Lord” (vocative κύριε κύριε) as his potential or true followers. The term κύριος ("Lord") is first used as an address to Jesus here in 7:21 in Matthew. It can mean “Lord” or “lord” or “master.” As such, it can designate “divinity” (i.e., “Lord”) but can also simply be an address to one who is “superior” in a secular sense (i.e., “lord” or “master”). The context here of Mt 7:21-23 where Jesus is seen as the Judge at the end of the age, via the terms ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμερᾷ (“in that day,”) in vs 22, would tend to indicate that it is the “divine” sense of κύριος that is in view here by those who address him. However,

542 Park, 122. This double vocative (κύριε κύριε) only occurs in Matthew here (and in vs 22) and in 25:11. Indeed it is very rare in the entire NT as it only occurs in one other place, Lk 6:46, where Jesus says “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (see Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 186-187, as well as W. F Moulton and A. S. Geden, A Concordance to the Greek Testament, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 565-74).

543 Bauer, Lexicon, 459-61.

544 The term “κύριος” is used in the vast majority of the time to translate πᾶς in the LXX, see Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and the other Greek Versions of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), vol. 2, 800-39. As such, it was used in Jesus’ day with a divine connotation.


546 See Keener, 253, and my discussion of this later in this chapter. The phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, “in that day,” is used in many parts of the Scriptures referring to the final eschatological day of judgment (e.g., Mt 10:15; 24:36; Lk 2:11, 17, 20; 11:10-11; Jl 1:15; 3:18; Am 8:9; 9:11; Zep 1:10, 14; 2 Thess 1:10; etc.). That this term indeed is indicative of the last day of judgment here in this context, see Betz, Sermon, 549, Hill, Matthew, 152, Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 714-15, France, 294, Gundry, Matthew, 131, Osborne, 273, Nolland, 340, Turner, Matthew, 219, Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 187, Carson, Matthew, 193, and also Gehard Delling (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “ἡμέρα”) who states that this phrase in Mt 7:22 “denotes the all-embracing day of Judgment.”

547 So also Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 186-87, and Gundry, Matthew, 131. Jesus’ “divine” Lordship is gradually developed in Matthew. It is implied in Mt 3:3 where John the Baptist quotes Isaiah 40:3 that he had come to “prepare the way for the Lord,” (πᾶς in the MT and κύριος in the LXX). In Mt. 22:44-45, Jesus quotes Ps 110:1 in
since the concept may not have yet been developed this extensively in Matthew, it may not have been completely understood by his followers in this manner at this point in this gospel.\textsuperscript{548} It would seem, nevertheless, as Matthew’s gospel progresses, that they viewed him as potentially having some type of special authority\textsuperscript{549} over their lives. This is seen through Matthew’s extensive use of the vocative κύριε when Jesus is addressed by his disciples and others for the following situations: (1) when asking him to use his special power and authority to help them (8:1, 6, 8, 25; 9:28; 14:28, 30; 15:22, 25, 27; 17:15; 20:31, 33) and (2) with respect to their submission to him in discipleship (8:21; 16:22; 17:4; 18:21; 26:22). These situations show that evidently his followers and would-be followers attributed some type of extraordinary power and authority to him. From Jesus’ perspective, however, vss 21-22 do indeed seem to indicate that Jesus himself viewed his “Lordship” as divine\textsuperscript{550} as he here for the first time claims that he is the Judge at the end of the age,\textsuperscript{551} a position which in the OT was only the prerogative of God.\textsuperscript{552} questioning the Pharisees about David calling his son, the Messiah, “my Lord” while sitting at God’s right hand. This seems to indicate that Jesus is greater than David and seems to imply his divinity (so Gundry, Matthew, 452. On this see also B. Witherington III, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Lord,” Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 651, Osborne, 829). Following this Jesus describes himself as “your lord” in the context of the day of the coming of the Son of Man in judgment in 24:42. This would also seem to imply his deity status (Witherington, s.v. “Lord”). These verses all work together to support Jesus divinity status.

\textsuperscript{548}See previous footnote on the development of the “divine” Lordship concept in Matthew as well as Nolland, 339, and Carson, Matthew, 192-93.

\textsuperscript{549}For further study of κύριος indicating authority of some type, see Matthew Palachuvattil, “The One Who Does the Will of the Father”: Distinguishing Character of Disciples According to Matthew: An Exegetical Theological Study, (Rome: EPUG, 2007), 73-74. Nolland, 339, asserts that addressing Jesus as “‘Lord, Lord’ implies a serious level of engagement with him, as illustrated by the episodes in chap. 8 . . .”

\textsuperscript{550}Gundry, Matthew, 131, comments, with respect to vs 21 in comparison to its parallel in Luke, “since this address to Jesus is spoken at the last judgment here and in the next verse, κύριε carries a stronger implication of deity than in Luke, where the term may be taken as a respectful address (like ‘sir’) to a teacher.”

\textsuperscript{551}Betz, Sermon, 542-56, sees Jesus’ role here as an “advocate” instead of the Judge. He feels that the address to Jesus here is an “appeal.” Betz expounds on his position stating, 542-43, It is . . . assumed that the proceedings have already advanced, so that two events have already taken place. The accusation against the group must already have been pronounced, and the appeal, which had been presented for a first time, must already have been rejected. For what the group submits in vs 22a is a second appeal in protest against Jesus’ refusal to represent the group. It is remarkable that the group does not turn to the judge, that is, to God himself, with a plea for mercy, but to Jesus as the one they regard as their advocate and as responsible for their case (vs 22). But Jesus refuses to represent and speak for this group (vs 23). There is no indication in the text, however, of these three events taking place. As such Betz’ assertion of this must remain in the realm of speculation. See also Park, 131-34, in his discussion of Betz’ view and his conclusion that one has here a “portrait of Jesus” which is “closer to that of judge rather than advocate.” There does not seem to be a good reason to not see Jesus as a judge here even if vs 22 is seen as an appeal, and even if he might be considered
Hence, a fresh new element is hinted at and assumed (by Jesus) in this verse with respect to Matthean obedience: *The divine Lordship of Jesus*. It is Jesus, functioning in his divine role as Lord who is addressed here whether or not those addressing him understood him as such.

**The Insufficiency of Words of Address**

Another component found in 7:21 contributing to Matthean obedience theology is what I identify as the potential disjunction⁵⁵³ between one addressing Jesus as “Lord” and one “doing” the will of the Father. The people of whom Jesus speaks here do address Jesus with the terms “Lord, Lord” but, with whatever meaning they attach to these terms, the address, in itself, is insufficient for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The key for entrance is not the words of address, but the actions of doing the will of the Father. Since Jesus has already spoken about himself being the fuller of the law and has taught the necessity of doing what he says to embrace “greater righteousness” it would seem that if Jesus truly was their “Lord” they would have indeed been doing the will of the Father. Hence, the terms “Lord, Lord” have a hollow ring to them and do not pass the test of “greater righteousness” described in the Sermon on the Mount.

⁵⁵² See my discussion above under the topic “Righteousness in Mt 7:1-5.” W. Schneider (*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), s.v. “Judgment”) states, “... in the OT all judgment is ascribed to God...” This incredible claim by Jesus, must have shocked those who heard it for the first time through the Sermon on the Mount. I will discuss this further in the discussion of vss 22-23.

⁵⁵³ I use the term “potential disjunction” here as Jesus did not say that all who address him with the words “Lord, Lord” will fail to enter the kingdom of heaven *but only* those who do not do the Father’s will. This seems indicated by the adversive particle ἀλλά following the negative particle οὐ with πᾶσιν. The idea here seems to be consistent with the translation of “but only” or “except,” a semantic range which ἀλλά does support (cf. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955), 240, and James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976), 22). Cf. the same construction in Mt 19:11. There is thus a disjunction in the words of these addressers and their lifestyle. In some way they have failed to do the will of Jesus’ Father. Betz, *Sermon*, 546, suggests that “some have become persuaded that simple flattery suffices, that loyalty to Jesus involves nothing more than gestures of devotion and the use of excessive titles.”
The obedience here involves more than words, it involves action. The disjunction noted above, therefore, is only “potential” in that those who address Jesus as “Lord, Lord” and do the will of his Father do indeed enter the kingdom. For these there is no disjunction. Here then is another contribution to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel: Words of address to Jesus are insufficient for entry into the kingdom of heaven. What is required is doing the will of his Father.

The Timeless Principle for Entrance into the Kingdom

Mt 7:21 also seems to allow for a present/future element of entrance into the kingdom of heaven (i.e. allowing God/Jesus to rule in one’s life) which I discussed earlier. This is to be noted in the tension that appears to be extant between the present and the future verb tenses used here with respect to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Here, Jesus uses the present tense participle ὁ λέγων (“one saying”) preceding the future tense verb εἰσελθέσται (“will enter”) followed by the present tense participle ὁ ποιῶν (“one who does”) in speaking about the concept of entering the kingdom. In performing a grammatical study of present participles in Matthew that occur before and after a future indicative verb, I discovered that when the present participle precedes the future tense verb it generally indicates action prior to the time represented by the future verb. When the present participle follows the future indicative verb, the present participle tends to indicate a time that is generally concurrent with the time of the future tense verb. This

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554 Cf. Osborne, 273.
555 GRAMCORD software was used as an aid in this grammatical study.
556 Examples of this are found in following verses: 5:4 (ὁ πειθόμενος with παρακληθήσονται), 5:6 (ὁ πειθόμενος καὶ διψάμενος with χορτασθήσονται), 5:22 (ὁ ὄργκλομενος followed by ἔσται), 6:4, 6, 18 (ὁ βλέπων followed by ἀποδόσῃ), 7:26 (ὁ ἀκούων . . . μὴ ποιῶν with ὁμολογήσεται), 11:28 (οἱ κοπλώπτες with αἰναπαύσω), 13:14 ? (βλέπουσα followed by βλέψετε), 21:22 (πιστεύσατε followed by λήμψεσθε), and 25:29 (τῷ γὰρ ἐχουσί τως τις καὶ περισσεύσεται καὶ τού δὲ μὴ ἔχουσι τις ἀρχήσεται). 557 Note the examples found in the following verses: 2:6 (ἐξελθέσται followed by ἣγομένος), 4:4 (οὐκ . . . ἐξεπερευμένῳ), 7:11? (δώσει followed by τοῦ αἰτοῦν), 19:28 (καθήσεται followed by κρίνουσα), 21:43 (δωσάται followed by ποιῶντι), 24:5 (ἐλεύσονται followed by λέγουσαν), 24:30 (οἰωσάται followed by ἐφοβομένῳ), 24:46 (εὐφήσει followed by ποιῶνται), 25:37 (ἀποκριθήσονται followed by λέγουσαν), 25:44 (ἀποκριθήσεται followed by λέγουσαν), 25:45 (ἀποκριθήσεται followed by λέγων), and 26:64 (ὁφεσθε followed by καθήμενου and ἐφοβομένῳ)
would imply that the action of those stating (ὁ λέγων) “Lord, Lord” to Jesus would occur before and not at the same time as the possible future entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It would also mean that the action of those doing (ὁ ποιῶν) the will of the father would be occurring at the same time as the action of entrance into the kingdom of heaven, i.e. those who would enter would be presently at that time doing the will of the Father. Contextually, Jesus was actively addressing his disciples and the crowds during the Sermon and would seem then to be offering them a chance to enter the kingdom by their actively embracing doing the will of the Father. Thus the action of addressing Jesus with the words “Lord, Lord” in 7:21 would seem to at least include the time present when Jesus made this statement. When seen in conjunction with the present/future semantic overlapping range of entering into the kingdom of heaven discussed earlier, this verse can be seen as addressing the present as well as the future. In other words, this verse can indicate that Jesus is addressing any one then present listening to him that they will not enter the kingdom of heaven in the future (non-specified future time) even if they are now addressing him as “Lord” if they are not at that future time doing the will of the Father. Hence, this verse would then be a general statement that entrance into the kingdom of heaven would be possible whenever in the future one does the will of the Father. One must simply begin at some point to do the Father’s will for entrance to be possible. Thus verse 21 does not have to be seen only addressing the final day that is encountered in verse 22. Rather verse 21 is a general

558 With respect to the time sequence of ὁ λέγων and ὁ ποιῶν in this sentence in 7:21, generally “the main verb determines the time of action as a whole” (C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99). However Moule seems to suggest that it possible to “distinguish, within that whole, a relative sequence of actions,” which is what I am suggesting here. See also Moule, 101, where he gives several exceptions to the present participle usually alluding “to an action with which the action of the main verb coincides.”
559 Not unlike Mt 5:20.
560 Antonio Ornella, “Les Chrétiens Seront jugés,” (Assemblees du Seigneur 40 (1972): 17), also notes that verse 21 is set in the present while vss 22-23 are in the future judgment day when he states, “Aux vv. 22-23, on passe de la vie terrestre actuelle (v. 21), au jour du jugement.”
timeless principle statement concerning potential entrance into the kingdom of heaven.\textsuperscript{561} If this understanding is accepted, this verse would then be consistent with my earlier discussion of the present/future semantic overlapping range of entering into the kingdom of heaven and would express that same general teaching on the time element associated with entrance into the kingdom in Matthew’s obedience theology. This would imply that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is possible whenever in this age\textsuperscript{562} one begins to do the will of the Father.

Doing the Will of the Father as “Greater Righteousness”

What is meant by “doing the will of my Father” here in vs 21? What is necessary? The Father’s will (\(\theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha\)) in 7:21, seems, through the inclusio structure I have outlined above, to be parallel to the “greater righteousness” (\(\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\eta\ \imath\mu\omega\ \eta\ \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\upsilon\gamma\eta\ \pi\lambda\epsilon\iota\nu\)) in 5:20. It would, therefore, seem to be a restatement of the “main theme of the Sermon” found in 5:20.\textsuperscript{563} The concept of “greater righteousness” in 5:20 then would be equivalent to the “will of my

\textsuperscript{561} Palachuvattil, 70-71, classifies vs 21 as an “affirmation of a general principle.” Luz, Matthew 1-7, 440, dubs this verse “The Matthean thematic statement.” Betz, Sermon, 541, calls vs 21 a “sentence of ‘sacred law’ defining the condition for admission to the kingdom of the heavens.” With this I would agree suggesting that this verse is “timeless” in the sense that it can apply to all time up to the final judgment day. I would, however, also propose that this entrance into the kingdom of heaven indicated by this “sacred law” is not of necessity limited only to the future day at the end of the age but that entrance can be secured (or inaugurated) in this present age before that last day. Being a thematic statement, a sacred law, or even a general principle, would seem to allow it to have its own intrinsic time element even if vss 22-23 indicate their time element is in the future at the last day. This is contra Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 186-87. This is also contra Palachuvattil, 79, who asserts that, since the only other uses the singular \(\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu\eta\) in the exact phrase “ἐν ἐκείνη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ,” found in 22:23 and in a similar form in 22:46, refer to the same time of the previous verse, it must be the case here. This would limit 7:21 to the time of the future judgment alone. I am not convinced of Palachuvattil’s argument because (1) I do not think this small number of usages can establish this rule and (2) I am understanding the use of the phrase here in its technical sense of the eschatological judgment, something 22:23, 46 do not seem to be addressing at all. In addition, vss 22-23 seem to be an “illustrative explanation” or illustration of the general principle (so Palachuvattil, 70-71, and Park, 125) placed in the time of the last day, the Day of Judgment. Hence, the time element of vss 22-23 would not seem to necessitate vs 21 be limited to that same time element any more than principles of entering through the narrow gate or narrow road (7:13-14) or practicing Jesus’ words (7:24-25) would necessitate these principles’ time element be limited to the time of destruction and a great life crash, respectively. General principles do not seem to be restricted to a time element. Betz, Sermon, 549, supports this difference in time element in 7:21-23 stating, “While vs 21 describes the conduct of people in the present, vs 22 shows the same people in the future.”

\textsuperscript{562} Verses 22-23 seem to indicate that waiting until the judgment day to enter the kingdom is too late. The ones there addressing Jesus as “Lord, Lord” at that time had no recourse. Thus entrance would seem to be indicated during this age up to the very time of the eschatological judgment.

\textsuperscript{563} Park, 123. Betz, Sermon, 540, states that these verses (7:21-23) “provide the climax of the eschatological section of the SM, and indeed of the body of the SM as a whole.”
“Father” here in 7:21. From this perspective, the elements delineated as “greater righteousness” up to this point in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount would be included in (but not necessarily exhaustive of) “doing the will of my Father.” The concept of “doing the will of the Father” occurs first in Matthew at 6:10 in the phrase “your will be done” in the Lord’s Prayer. However, it is here in Mt 7:21 that one first encounters the idea of “doing the will of my Father” as including the entire content of Jesus’ teaching on “greater righteousness” tied together through the inclusio of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven.”

The “greater righteousness” taught in the Sermon on the Mount, however, is not to be seen as exhaustive in what is entailed in that concept since Jesus’ teachings are but examples and illustrations of the heart and life Jesus requires. As such, while embracing all the examples and exhortations of Jesus in the Sermon, “greater righteousness” would include much more. As such the same would be true of the content of “doing the will of the Father” in 7:21. My general summarizing statement of what is entailed in Jesus’ teaching concerning that “greater righteousness” up to this point may be helpful. I determined that this concept involves embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a heart and life exhibiting a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others. This, in essence, would seem to summarize what is involved in “doing the will of my Father in heaven” at least here in the Sermon on the Mount.

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564 So also, Palachuvattil, 10, and Park, 123. Park there states, “The question of who will enter the kingdom of heaven, that is, what is necessary to qualify the people for the kingdom, has been the main issue of the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus has repeatedly stressed ‘greater righteousness’ as the essential qualification throughout the Sermon. Now in verse 21 Jesus restates this main theme of the Sermon: ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.’ In this way Jesus declares obedience to the will of God, which is equivalent to the ‘greater righteousness,’ to be the essential element for qualifying the people of the kingdom.” Nolland, 340, agrees saying, “‘Enter the kingdom of heaven’ echoes the language of 5:20 and thus guides the reader to equate the abundant righteousness of 5:20 with ‘the will of my Father’ here. Osborne, 273, also agrees commenting on 7:21, “A life of obedience . . . to his will is, in fact, the definition of the ‘greater righteousness’ of 5:20.” Luz, Matthew 1-7, 445, also equates the two.

565 See my previous discussion of the content of this above.

566 This was shown earlier in such verses as 7:12, which use the terms πάντα ὁδὸν ὀδὸν (“so in everything”) indicating all of life.
The Will of the Father and the Will of Jesus in Matthew

More specifics can be gleaned from Matthew outside of the Sermon on the Mount concerning this “will of God” by examining the two other passages in which this phrase in similar forms occurs (12:50 and 21:31) as well as Matthew’s use of the individual terms θέλημα and θέλω/βουλομαι. In Mt 12:50, while Jesus is speaking to a crowd, his mother and brothers come to speak to him. When this is reported to him, Jesus asks the question about who is really his mother and brothers. He answers by pointing to his disciples (μαθητὲς ἀυτοῦ) and stating that it is his disciples who are his mother and brothers. He further states “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Here Jesus equates several things: discipleship to Jesus = doing the will of his Father in heaven = being part of Jesus’ family. All three of these things are involved with each other and intertwined. To do the will of the Father is to follow Jesus (i.e., be his disciple) which implies embracing him as the one to whom the law pointed and obeying him. Doing the will of the Father also places one in Jesus’ family and, by extension, into God’s family. Jesus refers to the Father in heaven as “my Father” (πατρός μου) here and throughout Matthew (e.g., Mt 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:27; 15:13; 18:10, 19; 20:23; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53) indicating his special personal relationship with the Father in heaven. Once one becomes related to Jesus and is in his family, he too is in God’s family. This familial relationship in 12:50 is clarified to include all (ὑπὸ τοῦ) who do the Father’s will, i.e., all who are following him and his teachings. This personal relationship of his disciples with the Father has been hinted at over and over in the Sermon on the Mount in Jesus’ teachings in his use of the term “your” Father (using the terms σου and ὑμῶν referencing the “Father,” e.g., 5:45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 9,

567 It is beyond the scope of this study to perform a comprehensive study of the entire theology of the will of God in Matthew. Instead here in this section I will restrict my focus to strictly the contribution of phrases such as “doing the will of my Father” or “the Father’s will,” and use of the individual terms of θέλημα and θέλω/βουλομαι in Matthew.
568 Palachuvattil, 162, notes that, with Mt 12:50, one finds “a deeper understanding of discipleship itself. The disciples are not merely those who follow Jesus like the crowds; they are part of his family.”
569 Cf. Osborne, 494. Carson, Matthew, 300, states that the doing of the Father’s will “turns on obedience to Jesus and his teachings . . . for it was Jesus who preeminently revealed the will of the Father (cf. 11:27).”
570 By inference, this would also exclude all those who were not following him.
Jesus, in essence, is creating a family of God through calling people to be his loyal disciples and follow his teachings. Hence, with respect to Matthean obedience theology in Mt 12:50, “doing the will of my Father” involves being a loyal disciple to Jesus and his teachings which in turn also involves an intimate familial relationship with Jesus and the Father in heaven, something that is also hinted at in Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. To follow Jesus is to have a close relationship with Jesus and the Father in heaven.

In Mt 21:31, Jesus speaks of the will of the Father in telling the Parable of the Two Sons where a father gives instructions to his two sons to work in his vineyard. One son tells his father he will not follow his instructions but changes his mind and does go work in the vineyard. The other son tells his father he will work in the vineyard but does not do so. Jesus then asks which of the sons did the father’s will. Here the father in the parable is representative of the Father in heaven. Since this parable is the first of a trilogy of parables (the other two are the Parable of the Tenants (21:33-46) and the Parable of the Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)) dealing with the “unfaithfulness of the Jewish leaders,” the implication is that the Jewish leaders were like the second son. Doing God’s will would be like the first son who later changed his mind and decided to do what his father instructed him to do. In vss 31-32 Jesus compares these Jewish leaders with the tax collectors and prostitutes. While the Jewish leaders were like the first son who did not repent (οὐδὲ μετέμειλήθητε, vs 32), the tax collectors and prostitutes were like the second son who repented (μεταμελήθησθείς, vs 29) and finally did do the father’s will. It was these who repented who were entering the kingdom of heaven instead of the Jewish leaders. Here one finds

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571 Turner, Matthew, 330. Osborne, 494, calls this new family “the messianic community.”
573 Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 612, Carson, Matthew, 449, and Palachuvattil, 211.
the element of repentance included in the meaning of “doing the will of the Father.” As such this also involves grace from God. Hence, with respect to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel, one here sees the elements of repentance on the part of the one who follows Jesus, followed by grace extended to and received by those who are repentant as elements involved in the process of “doing the will of the Father.”

With respect to the terms θελήμα and θελω/βουλομαι, several new aspects of “doing the will of the Father” can be added. All six of the occurrences of θελήμα in Matthew have to do with God’s will (Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:32; and 26:42). Three of these (7:21, 12:50, and 21:32) I have already reviewed above. Mt 6:10 as part of the Lord’s Prayer in the context of his kingdom (or dynamic rule) coming, indicates that God’s will is to be done on earth. In Mt. 18:14, Jesus, speaking of his disciples, teaches that the “Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.” In 26:42, Jesus states, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Here the implication is that it was God’s will for Jesus to go to the cross and suffer to give his life as a ransom for many (cf. Mt 20:28).

In summary, the use of θελήμα in Matthew always denotes the will of God and here, in these last three verses, indicates that God’s will is to be done on earth, that none of his disciples be lost, and that Jesus must go to the cross and suffer giving his life as a ransom for men. With respect to mankind’s response in connection with “doing the will of the Father,” it would seem here to indicate that one should attempt to allow God’s will to be done here on earth as it is in

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574 Palachuvattil, 211, in a statement connecting righteousness, repentance, and doing the will of God, notes, “what makes one righteous is the readiness to make amends for what is wrong and the desire to do the will of the Father with an integrate heart.”
575 This concept of repentance and grace is also found in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:9-15) where Jesus teaches his disciples to pray asking for the Father’s forgiveness (grace) conditioned by the necessity of their extending forgiveness toward others who had sinned against them.
576 So Carson, Matthew, 398-401.
heaven and to do all that one can to prevent Jesus’ disciples from being lost by embracing Jesus’ place and function in the will of God as the redeemer of men.

With respect to the term θέλω/θελε ("I desire" or "wish"),\textsuperscript{577} the term θέλω is used forty-two times in Matthew and the term θελε twice. Of the occurrences of θέλω, only two (9:13 and 12:7) are found from the lips of God. Both of these speak of God desiring mercy not sacrifice, indicating that the practice of religious ritual must give way to the practicing of mercy when people are in need.\textsuperscript{578} The focus here is on the “centrality of ‘mercy,’”\textsuperscript{579} Of the remaining verses, only five are found on the lips of Jesus indicating his own wish or will (8:2; 15:32; 23:37; 26:39; and 27:34). Since Jesus came as the fulfiller of the law and the prophets and “greater righteousness” as well as “doing the will of the Father” involves following him, it would seem consonant with understanding God’s will to see it displayed in Jesus’ will indicated by the use of specific terms such as θέλω (and θελε).\textsuperscript{580} In looking at the five uses of θέλω on Jesus’ lips one finds (1) Jesus’ desire to make lepers clean (8:3), (2) his desire to not send people away hungry lest they “collapse on the way” at the feeding of the 4,000 (15:32), (3) his longing to show a mother’s love to his people by gathering them together under his wings to love and protect them (23:37),\textsuperscript{581} and his desire to do God’s will by going to the cross and suffering and not drinking wine mixed with gall that may have been “intended to dull the pain” (26:39; 27:34).\textsuperscript{582}

\textsuperscript{577} Bauer, Lexicon, 335 and 145, respectively.
\textsuperscript{578} France, 354.
\textsuperscript{579} Nolland, 387.
\textsuperscript{580} Here I am limiting my investigation of the will of God to a few texts which portray the will of Jesus specifically through the terms θέλω and θελε. It must be noted that the will of God as well as the will of Jesus can be understood through Jesus’ whole life and not merely in the use of these terms. The investigation of how all of Jesus’ life and actions contribute to the will of God, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{581} Osborne, 862.
\textsuperscript{582} So France, 1067, who thinks that the wine mixed with gall was “intended to dull the pain.” Nolland, to the contrary, 1191, believes that this wine was spoiled wine and was given to Jesus by the soldiers to continue their “pattern of earlier mockery.”
With respect to \( \beta\nu\upsilon\lambda\omicron\omicron\alpha\iota \), it is used only once on the lips of Jesus. This is found in 11:27 where Jesus states that “all things have been committed” to him by his Father and that “no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses (\( \beta\nu\upsilon\lambda\eta\tau\alpha\iota \)) to reveal him.” This seems to indicate that a relationship (knowing)\(^{583}\) with the Father is limited by the desire of Jesus. It would seem that while it would be Jesus’ desire for people to know the Father, his desire (wish) must be secured for that to happen. Jesus then is the *door keeper*, so to speak, with respect to a relationship with the Father.

In summary, with the examination of 12:50 and 21:31 as well as the use of \( \theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha \) and \( \theta\epsilon\lambda\omega/\beta\nu\upsilon\lambda\omicron\alpha\iota \) in Matthew, several more points have been gleaned with respect to the content of what is involved in “doing the will of my Father.” This would seem to include the following: (1) being a loyal disciple to Jesus and his teachings which involves an *intimate familial relationship* with the Father and Jesus, (2) repentance on the part of the one who follows Jesus, followed by grace extended to and received by those who are repentant, (3) allowing God’s will to be done here on earth and to do all that one can to prevent Jesus’ disciples from being lost, (4) the utmost importance of practicing mercy toward those in need, (5) the healing of the diseased and giving food to the hungry, (6) the desire to love and protect God’s people, (7) the acceptance of the necessity of Jesus’ suffering and dying on the cross for the ransom of men, and (8) securing an intimate relationship with the Father through Jesus’ will. All of these particulars can be added to give a fuller Matthean meaning to the concept of doing “the will of my Father in Heaven.” These would also all seem to be subsumed under the rubric, established earlier, of *embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a heart and life exhibiting a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others*. This would seem to summarize

\(^{583}\) On this understanding of “know” (here \( \epsilon\pi\gamma\upsilon\lambda\omicron\omega\gamma\iota\epsilon\lambda\iota \)) as relational, see France, 446, and my discussion of this idea with respect to Mt 7:23 later in this chapter.
the heart and life that is required to do the will of Jesus’ Father and secure entrance into the kingdom of heaven referred to in Mt 7:21.

**Summary of Matthean Obedience Theology in Mt 7:21**

Mt 7:21 contributes several elements to Matthew’s obedience theology. These include (1) establishing “doing the will of the Father” as a further obedience “test” for entrance into the kingdom of heaven for any and all potential disciples, (2) hinting at the divine Lordship of Jesus, (3) revealing the potential disjunction of one addressing Jesus as “Lord” yet not entering the kingdom, and thus giving further teaching on the theme of reward and punishment, (4) providing a general timeless principle concerning potential entrance into the kingdom of heaven (i.e., allowing God/Jesus to rule in one’s life) available to all at any time in this age who “do the will of the Father,” (5) infusing “doing the will of the Father” with the content of “greater righteousness” in 5:20, and all that is involved in this concept in the Sermon on the Mount, including embracing Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law and his teachings, and (6) adopting the term “doing the will of my Father” and thus embracing its fuller meaning as revealed in the rest of Matthew, including the following: (a) sharing an intimate familial relationship with the Father and Jesus, (b) repentance and reception of God’s grace, (c) loving and protecting God’s people, as well as helping to keep them faithful to Jesus, (d) practicing mercy, (e) healing the sick and feeding the hungry, (f) accepting the necessity of Jesus’ suffering for the ransom of men, and (g) coming to an intimate relationship with the Father through Jesus. All of the above can be synopsized into the general concept of embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a heart and life exhibiting a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others.
Obedience Theology in Matthew 7:22-23

Mt 7:22-23 seems to constitute an “illustrative explanation” or a specific example or application of the general principle stated in 7:21. These verses state, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you, Away from me, you evil-doers!’” Several matters touching on Matthean obedience are revealed here.

Jesus in His Divine Lordship Position of Eschatological Judge

First, it is important to note that Jesus, here, depicts himself as the one to whom accountability is required by those who would seek entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This verse is set in the period of the final Day of Judgment by the use of the words, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἡμῶν. It is to Jesus that the πολλοί (many) are here appealing their case for entrance into the eschatological kingdom. They appeal to him as “Lord, Lord” but that appeal is insufficient and Jesus denies their entrance in vs 23. In doing this, Jesus indirectly announces that he himself is the Judge at the last day. This is a radical new revelation in Matthew. Nowhere previously in Matthew has this been found on Jesus’ lips. John the Baptist does seem to possibly hint at this in Mt 3:12 in the use of the term “unquenchable fire” but it is here that Jesus himself for the first

584 Palachuvattil, 70-71, classifies vss 22-23 as an “illustrative explanation” of vs 21. Park, 125, notes, “These two verses are an illustration of Jesus’ statement in verse 21. The beginning of verse 22 makes clear the illustrative character of verses 22-23 by the repetition of the words in the beginning of verse 21.” Betz, Sermon, 541, noting that vss 22-23 are a “preview of the eschatological judgment,” comments that “vs 21 sums up what one is to learn from the narrative in vss 22-23.”

585 That it is entrance into the kingdom of heaven that is sought here by those addressing Jesus is assumed by the parallelism of the terms “κύριε, κύριε,” in verses 21 and 22 as well as the use of the parallel phrases ὁ λέγων μοι in vs 21 and πολλοὶ ἐρώσθην μοι in vs 22. This is enhanced by the fact that, contextually, vs 21 as well as all of 5:20 through 7:27 are addressing the greater righteousness required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven as depicted through the structural inclusio discussed above. Hence, vss 22-23 would seem to thus be addressing the same issue.

586 See my previous argument for this above, especially n. 546.

587 See Park, 131-34, and my note 551 above, on understanding Jesus here as the Eschatological Judge.

588 See Carson, Matthew, 105, and Nolland, 148-49.
time in Matthew verbally assumes this position. In doing so, he takes on the *divine Lordship position of Eschatological Judge*; a position up until now has only been the privilege of God himself.⁵⁸⁹ Here one then has a confirmation of the divine Lordship of Jesus in his supreme position of allowing or refusing entrance into the eschatological kingdom of heaven.

**Humility Needed for Kingdom Entry**

Secondly, both addressing Jesus as “Lord, Lord” as well as the performance of supernatural acts are insufficient to qualify one for entrance into the eschatological kingdom of heaven. The πολλοὶ (“many”) in verse 22 are denied entrance as Jesus refuses to acknowledge them and sends them away pronouncing them “evil doers” (vs 23). Something was missing. What went wrong? These people appeal to Jesus seemingly as a result of either their impending refusal of entry or as a result of a verdict just pronounced against their entry.⁵⁹⁰ They plea, “did we not in your name prophesy, in your name drive out demons, and in your name do miracles?” Their appeal seems very earnest as they repeat the phrase “in your name” (τῷ σῷ ὄνομα) three times, indicating that they seem to honestly feel that they were doing these things by Jesus’ authority and power,⁵⁹¹ thus legitimating themselves⁵⁹² as true disciples of Jesus.⁵⁹³ They claim that they did supernatural works, including prophecy, casting out demons, and doing miracles. There seems to be no reason to doubt that they could have legitimately done these things or that these

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⁵⁸⁹ See my previous discussions of this above.
⁵⁹⁰ See Betz, *Sermon*, 549, who calls their appeal a “protestation of innocence.” Nolland, 340, states that the words here addressed to Jesus are probably a “protest against refusal of entry.”
⁵⁹² So Osborne, 274.
⁵⁹³ That these individuals claimed to cast out demons, do miracles, and prophecy in his name (see vs 22) would seem to me to indicate that they most probably claimed to be his disciples, so also B. Witherington III, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. “Lord.” The issue here that Jesus is addressing is not that these deeds were done, “but that they do not prove that those who performed them were true disciples,” (Hill, *Matthew*, 152).
things could have even been done by the power of God. The source of these mighty works does not seem to be the issue as Jesus does not counter or challenge their claims in any way. Rather, the issue seems to be with the claimants themselves. They seem to be self-deceived.

This is shown in the use of phrase “did we not,” a translation of the Greek particle ou, which here indicates that a positive answer was expected from Jesus by the addressees. To their surprise, Jesus answers in the negative! Assuming that at the Judgment Seat no one would try to deceive the divine Jesus, their statement here must indicate that they were themselves deceived.

These claimants held up what they were able to supernaturally perform in life as conscious (in their minds) bonafide support to their claim as qualification for the kingdom or rule of heaven. The very fact that they brought up these supernatural works at the Judgment would seem to indicate that in their minds and hearts these things “counted” and should be tabulated, so-to-speak, as qualifiers deserving of the reward of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed they had done the same deeds as Jesus and the twelve! Surely they were qualified! Surely God’s rule had been manifested in them. What went wrong? How were they mistaken? Somehow they had missed the “greater righteousness” and failed to do “will of the Father in heaven”! How could this be?

The answer may be found in reflecting again on three passages in Matthew which are associated with the kingdom of heaven and its entrance, all having to do with the personal quality of humility. Mt 5:3 teaches that one must be “poor in spirit” to have or possess the kingdom.

594 Godfrey, 47, has already concluded that this is possible and even probable here stating, that it is “more probable that this is an example of God working through unbelievers to accomplish His purposes.”

595 Betz, Sermon, 539-40, believes that the theme of “delusion unites the three sections of vss 13-23 and even vss 24-27.” Those in vss 13-14 are deceived by the wide gate and broad road. Those in vss 15-20 must be on guard not to be deluded by the false prophets. Those here in vss 21-23 are those who are self-deluded.

596 Turner, Syntax, 232-83.

597 Or in keeping with the now/not yet, present/future possibility of entrance into the kingdom, perhaps they felt they had already entered the kingdom based on the supernatural works God was doing through them. Their rejection would then be a severe shock and incomprehensible.

598 Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 187, correctly states, “The deeds cited are recognizably the same as those performed by Jesus and the twelve.”
This concept has the connotation of possessing “great humility” and “spiritual poverty,” even “spiritual bankruptcy” which expresses itself in total dependence on God.\textsuperscript{599} As such, any dependence on one’s self would be an expression of pride toward God. This is part of the “greater righteousness” necessary for kingdom entrance or the possession of God’s rule in one’s lives. Those in 7:22 would seem to be lacking this as they put forth their mighty works in Jesus’ name as justification of their right to enter the eschatological kingdom. They were thus depending on themselves and their actions instead of embracing spiritual bankruptcy before God. They were therefore not “doing the will of the Father” and were not, and evidently never had been, allowed to participate in the kingdom or rule of heaven.

Mt. 18:3-4 again expresses the concept of humility as necessary for entrance into the kingdom. Here Jesus, in addressing the disciple’s question about who is the greatest in the kingdom, notes that the greatest is one who humbles himself. He teaches that unless the disciples repent (στραφῆτε)\textsuperscript{600} and humble themselves like a little child, they would never enter (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε) the kingdom of heaven. Here Jesus seems to teach that a “child’s humility is its lack of status, not its actions or feelings of humbleness.”\textsuperscript{601} Therefore one who is humble will not be pointing to his status or actions as qualification for entrance into the kingdom. He will abandon those things and embrace total dependence upon God. Those in 7:22 do not do this and show they are not qualified for the kingdom or rule of God.

Mt 7:1-5 may also speak to the situation of those mentioned in 7:22. There Jesus cautions his disciples not to be the Judge. To do so is to usurp God’s role. Here in 7:22 the claimants seem to be desirous of acting in God’s role, not with respect to others as in 7:1-5, but with respect to themselves. They judge themselves worthy of the kingdom! This also is not a position of


\textsuperscript{600} Bauer, \textit{Lexicon}, 779, classifies the meaning of this word and its use here as “turn, change inwardly.”

\textsuperscript{601} Hagner, \textit{Matthew 14-28}, 518.
humility. They are not surrendered to a total dependence upon God. As such, they do not express “greater righteousness” nor are they “doing the will of the Father.”

All three of these passages would seem to indict the petitioners in 7:22 of lack of humility. They were attempting to enter the kingdom (or thought God’s rule had already been present in them) by depending on their own judgment and pride in their mighty works. While they possibly thought God was ruling in their life (i.e. they thought that they had entered the kingdom of heaven as evidenced by his works through them), he in fact was not doing so, at least not in the manner needed. They lacked total self-less dependence upon God. By their very words addressed to Jesus, the Judge, they stood condemned. They were self-deceived in not seeing their pride before God which became their downfall and barred their entrance into the kingdom (i.e., kept God from ruling in their life).

Jesus Must Know You

Mt 7:23 presents Jesus’ pronouncement of judgment and banishment on the petitioners of verse 22. He states “Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (ESV). In the context of final Eschatological Judgment here the term “I will declare” (ὁμολογεῖσον) seems to be a formal legal public declaration in which these claimants

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602 Sigurd Grindheim, (“Ignorance is Bliss: Attitudinal Aspects of the Judgment According to Works in Matthew 25:31-46,” Novum Testamentum 50 (2008):322-23), seems to agree with this assessment. He states, with respect to the claimants here in 7:22-23, “Those condemned are not beggars before God and the final judgment. They come with a claim and question the basis for the charges brought against them.” They “manifest . . . a self-asserting attitude” and “the works they cherish are works of power and authority.” Hence, their lack of humility before God.

603 The word “then (τότε)” indicates that the following statement of the declaration took place at the same time of the actions of vs 22, i.e. the final Judgment; see also Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 188.

604 Bauer, Lexicon, 571, translates it here as “I will say to them plainly.” See Matthew’s other uses of this term in 10:32 and 14:7, where it seems to indicate a binding statement. Otto Michel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittle, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. ὡμολογεῖσον, states that it is used here judicially ‘to make a statement,’ in the legal sense ‘to bear witness.’” He further states, “. . . it denotes an act of proclamation in which the concrete relation of man to Jesus is expressed in binding and valid form.” Referring specifically to Mt 7:23, Michel further states, “In this word of testimony Jesus breaks off all fellowship with the disciple.” On this as legal language, see also Luz, Matthew 1-7, 445-46. Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 717, and Osborne, 274, agree with this and also note that this term indicates
are denied entry into the eschatological kingdom. The formal declaration is composed of the words, “I never knew you (Οὐδὲποτε ἐγνών ὑμᾶς).” The word, “never” (οὐδὲποτε) has the meaning of “not ever, not at any time, never,” indicating that there was not any time in the past or present that Jesus “knew” them. While some have considered this phrase as indicating “a mildest form of ban pronounced by the rabbis,” this interpretation does not seem to fit the context. Rather, it indicates something much stronger. Here, Jesus, the end times Judge, is pronouncing the final verdict upon these claimants concerning entry into the eschatological kingdom. As such, it would seem to be a severe punitive ultimate rejection.

What is the meaning of “I never knew you” here? Of what does it consist? As noted above, verses 22-23 seem to be an “illustrative explanation” of verse 21. This would make the phrase “I never knew you” parallel with “doing the will of the Father” as well as with the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount, “greater righteousness.” As a negative “explanation” then of “doing the will of the Father” and “greater righteousness,” this would seem to indicate that, with respect to these two latter concepts, Jesus’ knowing the individual is imperative for any entrance into the kingdom of heaven (or rule of God) whether in the present age or the future one. Without Jesus’ knowing the individual, there can be no “greater righteousness” nor would the will of

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“irreversibility.” See Moulton and Milligan, 449, for further examples of this word being used as a “public” and “legal” declaration.


606 The term οὐδὲποτε, “never,” seems to indicate that Jesus potentially could have known these claimants in the past, (i.e. in the present age), but that never happened. The implication is that if he would have known them they would have entered into the rule of God in the present age at that point and then would have also been allowed to enter into the eschatological kingdom at the time of the Judgment. This is in contrast to the somewhat parallel passage on the Parable of the Ten Virgins where the bridegroom, using the present tense, tells the virgins who were not ready when he came, “I don’t know you (οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς).” Here, there is no reference to the past but only the present.

607 So, Hill, Matthew, 152, following Strack-Billerbeck.

608 Luz, Matthew 1-7, 446, states, “It is not a rabbinical formula of banishment that stands behind οὐδὲποτε ἐγνών; rather, the judge of the world denies fellowship with these charismatics.” Luz, Matthew 1-7, 446 n. 44, also notes that the only example Strack-Billerbeck use to support their claim is from the 3rd century A.D. and as such, this “does not prove the existence of such a formula.” Keener, 254, also notes correctly that the phrase “I never knew you” here “is a formal repudiation of the person” and “is far more serious here” that being a mild rabbinic ban. France, 295, calls the phrase here a “formula of repudiation.” See also the concept at Mt 25:12 and similar phrases at 10:33 and 26:70-74.
Jesus’ Father be done. From this perspective, all three of these concepts seem to be epexegetical of one another.

**The OT Concept of “Knowing”**

The concept “to know” (γνωσκω as well as ὁδεῖα) has deep roots in the OT. Both γνωσκω and ὁδεῖα are used overwhelmingly to translate the Hebrew term יד (“know”) throughout the OT. יד occurs around 947 times in the Hebrew OT⁶⁰⁹ and has the basic meanings of “to perceive, know.”⁶¹⁰ Its semantic range, however, is broad and embraces definitions such as “find out,” “know by experience,” “recognize,” “acknowledge,” “know a person, be acquainted with,” “be skillful,” “teach,” “make known,”⁶¹¹ as well as “to notice,” “learn,” “to know sexually, have intercourse with, copulate,” “to have experience,” and “to take care of someone.”⁶¹²

The action of knowing or perceiving embraced by this Hebrew word includes more than mere objective knowledge which the Greeks tended to conceive of in their term γνωσκω.⁶¹³ Although γνωσκω translates יד 490 times in the LXX,⁶¹⁴ יד does not designate predominately an intellectual concept.⁶¹⁵ Its major emphases include subjective dimensions of knowing not just the objective.⁶¹⁶ Thomas Groome states,

... in Greek philosophy ginoskein has a predominant meaning of ‘intellectual looking at’ an object of scrutiny and strongly connotes objectivity ... For the Hebrews yada’ is more

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⁶¹⁵ Groome, 141.
⁶¹⁶ Groome, 141.
by the heart than by the mind, and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience . . . the Hebrews had no word that corresponds exactly to our words mind or intellect. 617

זֶרֶה, thus, for the most part, involves knowledge gained through experience618 and the senses.619

E. Schütz also sustains this definition by noting the difference between the Greek concept of knowledge and the Hebrew in the following statement:

While the Gks. were concerned with detached knowledge and a speculative interest in the metaphysical nature of things, the OT regards knowledge as something which continually arises from personal encounter.620

This OT Hebrew concept of “knowing” is dissimilar to much of our modern day understanding of knowledge and its acquisition, an understanding which largely involves pure thought by one’s own contemplation or mere verbal transmission of information from one person to another. That is not to say that the semantic range of זֶרֶה does not include this type of knowledge621 but that it has as its major dimension experientially gained as opposed to ethereal knowledge. In studying the 947 occurrences of זֶרֶה in the OT, I have found, in the vast majority of its occurrences, it stands for knowledge that is gained through the experience of life whether relationally acquired by interaction with other persons or interaction with one’s environment.622

617 Groome, 141. W. Schottroff (TLOT, vol. 2, 514) concurs stating: . . . the meaning of יד in Hebr. would be insufficiently stated if one were to limit it strictly to the cognitive aspect . . . without simultaneously taking into account the contractual aspect of the meaning, e.g., the fact that יד does not merely indicate a theoretical relation, a pure act of thought, but that knowledge, as יד intends it, is realized through practical involvement with the obj. of knowledge. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, 410, also concurs stating, “The fundamentally relational character of knowing (over against a narrow intellectual sense) can be discerned, not the least in that both God and human beings can be subject and object of the vb.”

618 Lawrence O. Richards, Christian Education: Seeking to Become Like Jesus Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 33.


621 Indeed it does. Examples of the use of זֶרֶה as purely intellectual knowledge are found in (but are not exhausted in) Jo 8:14; I Sm 21:11; Jb 21:27; Ps 74:9; Ecc 9:1; Jer 29:11; Ez 11:5, 37:3; Dn 10:20; Jl 2:14; Na 3:17; and Zec 4:5, 13

622 Examples of this word indicating experiential/relationical knowledge include (but are far from exhausted in) Gn 3:22; 4:1, 17, 25; 9:24; 22:12; 45:1; Ex 2:25; 4:14; 6:3, 7; 14:4; 16:12; Ru 3:18; Est 4:5; Jb 21:19; Ps 56:9; Prv 31:23; Is 41:20; 47:8; 53:3; 60:16; Jer 6:18; Ez 2:5, 6:13; 11:10; 12:16, 20; 23:49; 30:25; Mi 6:5; Mal 2:4; etc.
This Hebrew *relational experiential knowledge* aspect of יד spilled over into the NT through the LXX in its use of the terms γνωστη and οίδα. For instance, note the use of γνωστη in Mt 1:25 where Joseph did not “know” Mary (i.e., have intimate relations with her) until after Jesus was born and 12:33 where Jesus, alluding to false prophets, says a tree will be “known” by its fruit. οίδα also carries this connotation in Matthew as is seen especially in the use of this term with Peter’s denial at Mt 26:70, 72, 74 and its use at Mt 25:12 where the bridegroom tells the unprepared virgins, “I don’t know you.” This *relational experiential knowledge* seems also to be what is involved here in Mt 7:23 when Jesus says, “I never knew you” as Jesus, in his divine omniscience, most certainly “knows” these petitioners intellectually. He is, thus, not saying that he has never known these petitioners intellectually or even in some relational way. Rather, he has not *relationally* experienced them *in a way that involves doing the will of his Father in heaven, i.e., inferentially, a way that exhibits the “greater righteousness”* depicted in the Sermon on the Mount. Some interpreters have given εγνων the meaning of “election,” here, which does seem to be plausible. However, if so, the election spoken of here would seem necessarily to involve a *personal experiential relationship* as defined

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623 See, Schütz, s.v. “Knowledge.” Schütz notes that, with respect to the NT concept of knowledge, “Where it expresses a personal relationship between one who knows and the one known, the NT concept of knowledge is clearly taken from the OT.”

624 That the concept of “know” here refers to “relationship,” see France, 295, Turner, Matthew, 220, and Nolland, 341.

625 Nolland, 341, agrees and states that Jesus’ phrase here is “a denial of relationship: no link of any significance exists . . . To lack a relationship with Jesus is not to be seen as different from failure to do the will of the Father. Nor does it identify an underlying reason for the failure. One’s relationship with Jesus is seen as established in the readiness to do the will of his Father, as articulated in his (Jesus’) teaching.”

626 So Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 188, in the sense used in Amos 3:2 and Jeremiah 1:5. Hagner, notes, with respect to Mt 7:23, “Behind the free and responsible deeds of human beings lies always the sovereign will of God . . . These have shown by their conduct that they have not been chosen by Jesus.” Bauer, Lexicon, 160 also gives “elect” as a possible translation of this term. Related to this, it is possible to understand יד (“knowing”) in the sense of “covenantal relationship,” see Herbert B. Huffman, “The Treaty Background of Hebrew Yada” (Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 181 (1966): 34-35). In a similar vein, see Brian S. Rosner, “‘Known by God,’ The Meaning and Value of a Neglected Biblical Concept” (Tyndale Bulletin 59 (2008):207-230) who argues that being known by God “is roughly equivalent to three related notions: belonging to God, being loved or chosen by God, and being a child or son of God.”
above, not simply something coming from a mere perspective of “omniscience.” This would mean that in order for Jesus to “know” someone he would have to experience them in some positive relational manner with respect to their “doing the will of his Father.”

How Jesus Comes to Know Someone

The concept of “knowing” in both the OT and NT exhibits both objective and subjective facets with respect to God, i.e., one knowing God and one being known by God. What Matthew presents here in Mt 7:23 is the subjective aspect of the relationship in which Jesus is the one who knows or does not know someone. Since it is Jesus in his divine Lordship who is speaking (see above), I will here investigate the subjective use of God in knowing individuals to help determine further the meaning of the idea of Jesus’ knowing someone.

God/Jesus being the subject of knowing someone is found at least thirty-nine times in the NT. Many of these passages seem to speak of circumstances similar to the one encountered here in Mt. 7:21-23. Some of these verses deal with God knowing the state of the hearts or thoughts of men (Mt 9:4; 22:18; Lk. 9:47; 16:15; Jn. 2:24; Acts 1:24; 15:8; I Cor 3:20) rendering them acceptable or not acceptable to him. For instance, when speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles, Peter states, “God, who knows the heart (καρδιαν εγνώστη), showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us” (Acts 15:8). Another example is in Luke 16:15 where Jesus states to the Pharisees, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the

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627 Turner, Matthew, 220.
628 Cf. Paul’s distinguishing of this in Gal. 4:9, and Terence E. Fretheim’s discussion of these aspects in the OT in NIDOTTE, vol. 2, 411-14.
629 These instances are Mt 6:8, 32; 7:23; 25:12 (Jesus implied); Lk 7:39; 13:25, 27; 16:5; Jn 2:24; 5:42; 7:29; 8:55; 10:14 (2x), 15 (2x), 27; 13:18; 17:25; Acts 1:24; 15:8; I Cor 3:20; 8:3; II Cor 11:11; 12:2, 3; Gal 4:9; II Tm 2:19; II Pt 2:19; I Jn 3:20; Rv 2:2 (2x), 9 (2x), 19; 3:1, 8 (2x), 15.
630 The Greek term καρδια encompasses a semantic range more than simply the physical organ of the heart. It is “the seat of physical, spiritual and mental life” (Bauer, Lexicon, 404) including one’s thoughts, will, emotions, desires, and moral decisions (Bauer, Lexicon, 404-05). The concept of “heart,” which I am using here in this chapter, is not limited to the use of the word καρδια but is expressed in many ways through many words, including words of passions, feelings, volition, and inclinations.

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eyes of men, but God knows (γνωσκεῖτι) your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” This rejection of these Pharisees because of the state of their hearts is similar to what I have found in Mt 7:22 where the heart attitude of pride rendered the claimants unacceptable to God. Other NT passages seem to indicate that God’s experiential knowledge of men is the basis of his election or rejection of them. For instance, II Tim 2:19 states that “The Lord knows (εἰσπραχθῇ) those who are his and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness (ἀδικίας).” Here one sees, not unlike Mt 7:21-23, that confession of Jesus as Lord is insufficient to be acceptable to God. One must also turn away from wickedness (ἀδικίας or unrighteousness). Another passage that depicts this is I Cor 8:3 which states, “the man who loves God is known (εἰσπραχθῇ) by him,” indicating that God must experience love from a man to be known by him. A further passage in Matthew along these lines is Mt 25:12. Here, the bridegroom, signifying the Son of Man or Jesus,631 fails to experience the foolish virgins’ readiness for his coming on the last day. As a result, when they ask to be let into the wedding banquet, they are denied with the words, “I don’t know (οἴδα) you.” Note how, in the NT cases above, God’s experiential knowledge of the state of men’s hearts and/or their actions determines their relationship with him. Each of the above NT cases seems to function in the sense of “experiential knowledge tests” by which God/Jesus comes to know a person or by which that person is rejected. Specifically considering these NT verses, these experiential knowledge tests would seem to include (1) having a correct heart attitude experienced by God, (2) not attempting to justifying oneself in the eyes of men, (3) turning away from wickedness, (4) loving God and (5) one’s preparedness at Jesus’ coming at the last day.

While the above NT passages show the existence of this subjective aspect of experiential knowledge concept for acceptance by God in the NT, it is found in even greater abundance in the

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631 See Nolland, 1010.
OT from which this concept seems to have originated. The *subjective* use of God with מַעֲשֶׂה is found in the OT about 123 times.\textsuperscript{632} Of those 123 occurrences, there are several passages that seem to be comparable to what one finds contextually here in Mt 7:21-23. As will be seen below, these OT passages exhibit *tests* implemented by God (or יהוה/Yahweh/LORD), many dealing with the heart of man. One’s personal heart and action responses to these tests seem to permit God to know ("experience") a person relationally,\textsuperscript{633} not unlike the tests for "greater righteousness" found the Sermon on the Mount. Note the following:

1. “Remember how the LORD (יהוה) your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test (LXX = ἐκπείρας) you in order to know (LXX = διαγνωσθῇ, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) what was in your heart (LXX = καρδία), whether or not you would keep his commands” (Dt 8:2).

2. “The LORD (יהוה) your God is testing (LXX = πείραζει) you to find out (LXX = εἰςδευναί, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) whether you love him with all your heart (LXX = καρδίας) and with all your soul” (Dt. 13:3 (4)).

3. “They were left to test (LXX = πείρασαν) the Israelites to see (LXX = εἰδευναί, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) whether they would obey the LORD's (יהוה) commands” (Jgs 3:4).

4. “But when the envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test (LXX = πείρασαν) him and to know (LXX = εἰςδευναί, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) everything that was in his heart (LXX = καρδίας)” (2 Chr 32:31).

5. “But he knows (LXX = οἴδειν, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) the way that I take; when he has tested (LXX = διὰκρινεῖν) me, I will come forth as gold” (Jb 23:10).

6. “Search me, O God, and know (LXX = γνῶθι, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) my heart (LXX = καρδίαν); test (LXX = ἐκτασθῶν) me and know (LXX = γνῶθι, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) my anxious thoughts” (Ps 139 (138):23).

7. “Well do I know (LXX = ἐγνωσόμενον, MT = מַעֲשֶׂה) how treacherous you are; you were called a rebel from birth. For my own name’s sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you though not as silver; I have tested (LXX = ἐξηλεύμην) you in the furnace of affliction”

\textsuperscript{632} So Terence E. Fretheim, *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, 411.

\textsuperscript{633} See Terence E. Fretheim, *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, 412, concerning the use of מַעֲשֶׂה where he indicates that “God tests in order to know, both Israel (Deut 8:2; 13:3(4); Judg 3:4) and individuals (Abraham, Gen 22:1, 12; Hezekiah, 2 Chron 32:31; Jeremiah, Jer 12:3, . . .). God needs no teacher . . . but such texts suggest that God’s knowledge of future human actions is not absolute . . .”
8. “Yet you know (LXX = γινώσκει, MT = בָּיו) me, O LORD (πατέρα); you see me and test (LXX = δεδοκινμακα) my thoughts (LXX = καρδία) about you” (Jer 12:3).

Many of the above tests which God/Yahweh performed to gain experiential knowledge of individuals explicitly involved the “heart” or “thoughts” of individuals (five of the eight). It would seem from at least these examples that God puts a premium on knowing or experiencing the inner person when he tests him. God’s interest in knowing the heart is found in many other passages of the OT as well. For example, note the following:

1. “I know (LXX = εγνώμην, MT = בָּיו) you did this with a clear conscience (LXX = καρδία) and so I have kept you from sinning against me” (Gn 20:6).

2. “Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since you know (LXX = γνωστός, MT = בָּיו) his heart (LXX = καρδία) (for you know (LXX = γινώνθει, MT = בָּיו) the hearts (LXX = καρδία) of all men)” (1 Kgs 8:39).

3. “The LORD (πατέρα) knows (LXX = γινώσκει, MT = בָּיו) the thoughts (LXX = διάλογος) of man; he knows that they are futile” (Ps. 94 (93):11).

4. “Though the LORD (πατέρα) is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud (LXX = ύψηλά) he knows ( LXX = γνώσει, MT = בָּיו) from afar” (Ps138 (137):6).

Further passages in the OT which exhibit God’s knowing the heart of man include 1 Chr 29:17; 2 Chr 32:31; Neh 9:10; Ps 31:7; 44:20-21; 69:5; 139:1-4; 139:23; Prv 24:12; Is 37:38; 48:4; Jer 12:2-3; 29:11; 48:30; Hos 5:3; and Na 1:7. Not only does God test in order to know but he seems to have a special interest in experiencing the heart or inner desires.

This same interest in the heart or inner desires of man saturates Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. In the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12), one finds the heart-inclinations and attitudes of God’s desire in the notions of “humility” or being “poor in spirit,” “mourning,” “meek,” “hungering and thirsting for righteousness,” “merciful,” “pure in heart,” “peacemakers,”

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634 Matthew as a whole (outside of the Sermon on the Mount) also has a great interest in the concept of the heart, including the need for compassion and mercy. On this see Mt 9:4, 23, 36; 11:29; 12:7, 34; 13:15, 19; 14:14; 15:32; 18:33, 35; 20:34; 22:37; 23:23; 24:48.
and the willingness to be “persecuted” for Jesus’ sake. In 5:13-16, Jesus encourages the desire to be salty and to let one’s light shine for the glory of God. In 5:17-20 Jesus encourages right thinking about who he is as the fulfiller of the law and the prophets and willingness to embrace his “greater righteousness.” In Mt 5:21-48, Jesus speaks to the heart issues of “anger,” “lust,” “desire to not divorce,” “desire for taking oaths and honesty,” “desire to practice non-resistance rather than revenge,” “the desire to love and not hate enemies,” and “the desire to be perfect like the Father in heaven.” In Mt 6:1-18, Jesus speaks about the heart of giving alms, praying and fasting “in secret” thus presenting oneself before God instead of before men. In Mt 6:19-24 Jesus encourages having a heart that is focused on treasure in heaven. In Mt 6:25-34, Jesus addresses the heart of worry and anxiety. In Mt 7:1-5, Jesus commands a non-judgmental heart, one which looks first at its own failings before attempting to help others. In Mt 7:5-12, Jesus encourages a heart of trust in God to give good gifts and a heart to only do to others what you would want done to you. In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (7:13-27), Jesus likewise encourages his disciples to have a heart or inclination to enter through the narrow gate, to watch out for false prophets who inwardly are ferocious wolves, to bear good fruit, and to have a heart to put Jesus’ words into practice. Although Jesus only uses the term καρδία three times in the Sermon, the Sermon is replete with the idea and what is involved in it. Without recognizing this, the Sermon can become merely a set of rules and regulations. On the contrary, the tests in the Sermon on the Mount I have outlined earlier in this chapter all include issues of the heart.

With respect to the notion of God/Yahweh or Jesus “knowing” someone, both the OT and NT passages show that it is and has been God’s desire and practice to test men’s hearts in order to “know” or “experience a positive relationship” with them. Relationship with God was in the past evaluated through this lens. It seems to be no different here in Mt 7:22-23. Here, Jesus states that he does not have a positive relationship with the claimants who address him as “Lord, Lord.” He
has not experienced their heart or actions in a way which created that positive relationship. As noted above, vs 22, in the context of the Sermon, seems to indicate that these would-be disciples had a heart issue of pride in attempting to question the decision of Jesus the Judge and in judging themselves worthy of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. They failed the heart and action test of humility and thus were denied entry. Although this particular verse speaks of entrance into the eschatological kingdom, the term “never” would seem to indicate that at no time in the past had Jesus actually ruled in their lives, i.e., they had not experienced entrance in the past age (i.e. the age preceding the judgment) by allowing God to rule in their lives. This had been blocked by their pride.

Jesus’ knowing someone, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, however would include more than merely what is illustrated in 7:22 concerning pride. The fact that “know” in 7:23 parallels “doing the will of the Father” and “greater righteousness” which depict the main theme of the Sermon, would indicate that all the tests of “greater righteousness” in the Sermon would be avenues for someone to be known (in a positive relationally experiential manner) by Jesus. In general then this would mean that for Jesus to know someone, that person would need to embrace Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a humble heart exhibiting a life of “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others as defined by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

This testing of hearts and actions by God for him “to know” (i.e. experience) a positive relationship with man, as noted above, is nothing new. It existed throughout the OT and is now brought into the NT. This concept embellishes and supplements the other two defining parallel terms (“doing the will of the Father” and “greater righteousness”) which Jesus uses to indicate the way into the kingdom of heaven. It does this by making plain the need for an intimate personal heart/life relationship with Jesus. In the past, this relationship was with Yahweh the God of the
OT. Now in this new and fresh statement in 7:23, it must be with Jesus. His statement “I never knew (ἐγνώκα) you” instead of “God/Yahweh never knew you” is revolutionary. Not only is Jesus the one whose teachings and life fulfill the law and the prophets, not only is his teachings and life the way of “greater righteousness,” and not only is he the Eschatological Judge, now he assumes the position of one by whom a person must be known to qualify for doing the will of the Father in heaven, which in turn permits one’s entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus’ position is exalted indeed! He has become the one to whom the law and the prophets pointed. He has made his teachings and his life the door through which one must go to enter the kingdom of heaven. He has donned the position of the Eschatological Judge at the last day in 7:22. Now in 7:23, he becomes the one who assumes the OT position of God (YHWH) as the “Ultimate Knower” of people’s hearts and lives, the one by whom those who would enter the kingdom must be known. It is now Jesus’ relational test, on a par with that of YHWH of the OT, which one must pass in order to be acceptable for the kingdom of heaven. Ultimate accountability for all people is now with Jesus.

In summary, Jesus comes to know someone, by relationally experiencing the person’s heart and life in a positive acceptable manner. This relationship is not simply one of following Jesus’ rules but involves a greater righteousness, involving a heart-oriented intended good-will attitude, as defined by Jesus, toward himself, the Father, and others. This involves submission to Jesus as (1) the definer of “greater righteousness,” (2) the definer of the will of the Father, (3) the Eschatological Judge, (4) the door into the kingdom, and (5) the definitive and absolute personal accountability.

Jesus as the “Ultimate Knower” is again entertained in Mt 11:27. There, Jesus’ intimate relationship with the Father is highlighted in the fact it is he who knows the Father and the Father knows him. Here, however, the flipside of the relationship between God and man (i.e., man knowing God instead of God knowing man) is entertained. Jesus states, “no one knows (ἐπιγνώσκει) the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses (βοιληταὶ) to reveal him.” Hence, Jesus not only stipulates what it takes to be known by God but also is in control of the potential of man knowing God. Both are conditioned by Jesus and must come through him. Thus Jesus has ultimate authority in both sides of any intimate relationship with God. Without Jesus’ sanction, there is no relationship. Cf. also France, 446, on this intimate relationship spoken of here. There he notes, “. . . just as the revelation of truth has been attributed to the Father’s ‘good pleasure’ in vv. 25-26, so now the knowledge of the Father depends on the ‘will’ of the Son. It is freely given, not achieved by human cleverness.”
relational experiencer and relational-test evaluator (i.e. the “Ultimate Knower”) for one’s life in line with the OT concept of “being known” by Yahweh.

Away From Me, You Evildoers!

Having just publically proclaimed “I never knew you” to the claimants, Jesus now banishes them from his presence with the words, “Away from me, you evildoers!” The entire phrase, ἀποχωρέτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν, is a loose quotation from or allusion to Ps 6:9 for which the LXX has ἀπόστητε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ πάντες οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν. In this section I will examine this phrase by sections and look at its contribution to Matthean obedience.

Away from me! (ἀποχωρέω ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ)

The word ἀποχωρέω (“away”) is substituted for the LXX ἀπόστητε (“withdraw”) and only occurs 3 or 4 times in the NT. It has the meaning of “go away” or “depart.” When followed by ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ (“from me”) in the imperative form, ἀποχωρέτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, in the context of final judgment here in Mt 7:23, this statement would seem to be one of “repudiation or

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637 Interestingly, Luke, in his quotation of this OT passage (Lk 13:27), retains the LXX ἀπόστητε. The reason for Matthew’s substitution of ἀποχωρέτε for ἀπόστητε here in Mt 7:23 is unclear, see Allison and Davies, Matthew 1-7, 718. This is especially puzzling since the word does not seem to necessarily be a favorite one of his as it is used only here in his gospel. Could it possibly be that since the word ἀφίστηται is used in the OT in the sense of religious apostasy (e.g., Dt 32:15; Jo 22:18, 23; Dn 9:9) and in the NT it increasingly acquired “the emphatic sense of religious apostasy” (so Heinrich Schlier, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittle, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “ἀφίστηται”) referring to those who once were indeed truly part of a religious group and then turned away, that Matthew felt another word would be more apropos here in light of the fact that Jesus, in 7:23, states that he never (οὐδεποτε) knew them? That is, could this word have been used here to be consistent with the idea that even though these claimants may have thought they were known by Jesus and were part of his fold, they at no time in the past actually were and thus were not true apostates who had fallen away, but claimants of a special relationship that never ever existed with Jesus at all?
expulsion” and final banishment from Jesus’ presence. The implication is that there is no recourse or remedy. Rather this is a permanent and final dismissal from his presence without any chance to remedy the situation with a relationship with Jesus by which he would “know” them.

**You Evil Doers! (οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἁνομίαν)**

The term ἁνομία in the phrase οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἁνομίαν (“you evil doers” (NIV) or “workers of lawlessness” (ESV)) has a variety of possible meanings including “without a (the) law” or “against the (a) law,” or the idea of “wrongdoing.” It’s reference here has been the subject of debate among scholars as to whether it signifies Matthew was writing his gospel against “antinomian” Christians who were anti-OT-law (e.g., Barth and Sim), or indicates the more prominent view that it refers not to a group which embraces a position of being anti-OT-law but is a general statement referring to those who commit “sin or wickedness.”

James Davison seems to have effectively challenged the idea that the use of ἁνομία in Matthew supports an antinomian position. His research on the wide spectrum of its use in both the LXX and other Jewish literature, shows that ἁνομία can have the following connotations: (1) as a “designation for the Gentiles” with a sense of “lacking law,” (2) the majority of the time

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640 So Betz, *Sermon*, 552. Betz’ conclusion seems to be supportable as similar phrasing and “comparable forms” are found in many other passages in both the OT and NT which he notes. For example see Nm 16:26; Jb 21:14; 22:17; Ps 6:9; 139:19; Mt. 4:10; 16:23; 25:41; Mk 8:33; Acts 8:20. Nolland, 341, notes that “By itself ‘depart from me’ is not more ominous than ‘stop bothering me,’ but the context . . . suggests that much more is at stake.”


642 See the first chapter above: “Research Concern.”

643 Sim, “Matthew 7:21-23,” 326. Examples of those supporting this latter view are Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 718-19, who say that “the strictly legal background of ἁνομία should not be pressed,” Mohrlang, 16, who states that it should not be understood “literally in relation to the question of law,” but in antithesis to δικαιοσύνη, Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 188, who says that “much Matthean scholarship has overemphasized this word in the argument that the evangelist mainly opposes a Christian (Paulinizing) antinomianism,” and France, 295 who states, “The focus here is on . . . ethical failure rather than their attitude to the law as such.”


645 This word appears in the law, the OT historical books, the Psalms, and many prophetic books. In all, it occurs over 200 times in the LXX, see Hatch and Redpath, 106-07, and Davison, 619.
it indicates “conduct that is opposed to the law of God and meets with his condemnation,” (3) the term functions in “apocalyptic contexts as a broad description of the actions of the unrighteous that will meet with condemnation at the final judgment,” and (4) “in all cases, anomia carries a connotation of action that violates the law of God.” Davison notes that ἀνομία is regularly found “in conjunction with” general terms such as “adikia and hamartia,” which suggests that it entertains “no grounds for . . . the additional connotation of antinomianism.” That is, there is no indication of any connection between “anomia and antinomianism” in the sense of an “antinomian group” which rejects “the law in principle.”

Davison’s conclusions seem to hold up under scrutiny especially when one considers the use of the phrase ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν and its various forms expressed in the coupling of the terms ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία. This phrase ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν only occurs here at Mt 7:23 in the entire NT. However it does occur at least eighteen times in the LXX, exclusively in the Psalms, the book from which Jesus quotes in Mt 7:23. These occurrences are at Ps 5:6; 6:9; 13:4; 35:13; 52:5; 57:3; 58:3, 5; 63:3; 91:8, 10; 93:4, 16; 100:8; 118:3; 124:5; and 140:4, 9. These passages contextually show an extremely wide range of meaning for the ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία combination. In all of these verses there are words used in parallel with this phrase which help define the phrase. For instance, note the following context with my emphases in bold from Ps 13:1-4.

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646 Davison, 626.
647 Davison, 626.
648 See Moulton and Geden, 78. While a similar and perhaps equivalent phrase, ποιέω + ἀνομία does occur twice in the NT (Mt 13:41 and 1 Jn 3:4), and twenty-three times in the LXX (Davison, 621), I will limit my study here to the ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία forms in line with what is found in Mt 7:23. See Davison, 621-622 for an analysis of the meaning and usages of ποιέω + ἀνομία in the LXX which seem to have the same connotation as ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία (i.e., the general idea of “one who does what is counter to God’s will”) and which also do not support an “antinomian” connotation.
649 The occurrences and Scripture references are from Hatch and Redpath and according to the enumeration of Alfred Rahlfs, Septuaginta, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935).
650 Except for its occurrence also in Wisdom 15:17 and Codex Sinaiticus at Sirach 27:10.
651 Again, this is Rahlfs’ enumeration.
1 The **fool** has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They have **corrupted themselves**, and become **abominable in their devices**; there is **none that does goodness**, there is not even so much as one. 2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understood, or sought after God. 3 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is **none that does good**, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their **tongues they have used deceit**; the **poison** of asps is under their **lips**; whose mouth is full of **cursing** and **bitterness**; their feet are swift to **shed blood**; **destruction and misery are in their ways**; and the way of **peace** they have **not known**: there is **no fear of God** before their eyes. 4 Will not all the **workers of iniquity** (**ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν**) know, who **eat up my people** as they would eat bread? They have **not called upon the Lord**.

Here in this example, one can see many instances of **actions** identified with people who are called the ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν. They include those who are fools who say in their heart that there is no God, those who have corrupted themselves, those who have become abominable in their ways, those who do not do good, those whose tongues use deceit, those whose lips are poison, those who curse and are bitter, those who shed blood, those whose ways are full of destruction and misery, those who lack peace, those who have no fear of God, those who destroy God’s people, and those who have not called upon the Lord. This seems to indicate that those who are ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν are not simply those who are from one group who might be dubbed “anti-OT-law in principle,” but a variety of people who practice an abundance of evil actions.

The other seventeen occurrences uncover similar findings. In Ps. 5:6 the ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν are paralleled with those who speak falsehood, and are men of blood. In 6:9 they are enemies of David (τοῖς εχθροῖς μου). In 35:13 they are compared to those who are prideful (ὑπερηφανιαστα) and sinners (ἀμαρτωλῶν). In 52:5, very similar to Ps 13:4 above, they are those who say in their heart that there is no God, those who have corrupted themselves and become abominable (**ἐβδολυνθησαν**) in their iniquities (note the plural ἀνομίαις, 52: 2, indicating that

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the term ἀνομία is capable of referring to many different things, not simply one idea such as “anti-law”), those who do not do good, those who devour God’s people, and those who have not called upon God. In 57:3 these people are those who do ἀνομίατος (again plural) in their heart, have hands that do what is unrighteous (ἀδικιάν), and are sinners (οἱ ἁμαρτολοί). In 58:3 and 5 one finds it used in parallel with men of blood, violent men, likened to hungry dogs, their lips are like swords, they are heathen (ἔθνη), enemies, etc. In 63:3, they are those who do evil things (πονηρευομένων), have tongues that are swords, they shoot at the blameless, and have no fear (οὐ φοβηθήσονται). In 91:8 and 10, they are paralleled with sinners, God’s enemies, and contrasted with the righteous (δίκαιοι). In 93:4 and 16, they are compared to the proud (ὑπερηφάνοι), sinners, those who have afflicted God’s people, those who have slain the widow and fatherless and murdered the stranger. They are fools and doers of evil things (πονηρευομένους). In 100:8 they are compared to those who speak against one’s neighbor, have prideful eyes (ὑπερηφάνῳ ὁθεαλμῷ), and are unjust speakers (λαλῶν ἀδικα). In 118:3 they are contrasted with those who walk in the law of the Lord, those who search out his testimonies, and those who diligently seek him with their whole heart. In 124:5, they are those who turn aside to crooked ways and contrasted with those who are good and upright in heart. In 140:4 and 9, they are those who lay snares and create stumbling blocks.

These examples of the use of ἔργαζομαι + ἀνομία seem to show quite explicitly that this phrase in the LXX refers to individuals whose actions are evil or unrighteous.653 These evil actions are broad and diverse and frequently are contrasted with those who have actions that are good and upright. Although, with Davison, “in all cases, anomia carries a connotation of action

that violates the law of God,“654 there does not seem to be a connotation of “antinomianism” (i.e.,
the situation where one has rejected the OT law in its entirety) nor is it ever used of a special

group that is “anti-law.” It always stands, however, for anyone who executes any type of action
that is contrary to God’s will.

Neither does one find support for the connotation of an “antinomian group” or an
“antinomian attitude” in looking at the use of ἀνομία by itself in its three uses in Matthew
outside of 7:23 (13:41; 23:28; 24:12). In the parable of the tares, Mt 13:41 states, “The Son of
Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin
(σκάνδαλα) and all who do evil (ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν).” Here again the term is used in a
“very general, nonspecific sense for those who act contrary to God’s will.”655 It is paralleled with
the term “sons of the evil one, (οἱ οἱ οἱ πονηροὶ)” (13:38) and contrasted with “the righteous (οἱ
dίκαιοι)” (13:43), which are both general nonspecific terms. As such there seems to be no
evidence of an implied antinomian group here.

In Mt 23:28 which states, “on the outside you appear to people as righteous (δίκαιοι) but
on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (ἀνομίας),” the contrast is “not between
different persons” who are evil and righteous, but between the same person’s inner and outer
sides.656 Even more specifically, the ones Jesus here indicates as being full of ἀνομία are the
Pharisees and teachers of the law who paradoxically are the ones who claim to be the upholders
of the law.657 There does not seem to be any possible way here that the term can point to or be an
indication of a group which is anti-OT-law as the context is not about groups but about inner and
outer aspects of individual persons, even if here the group referred to happens to consist of the
Pharisees and teachers of the law. In addition, these people themselves claim to be pro-OT-law

654 Davison, 626.
655 Davison, 630.
656 Davison, 633.
657 Davison, 633.
not anti-OT-law! Note also that the term is paralleled with “hypocrisy,” a very general term, which would seem to direct ἄνομίας to be understood in a general manner also. Hence, there does not seem to be support in this verse for ἄνομία being an indicator of a group that is anti-OT-law or even as an indicator of any specific sin, but as a pointer to the general state of the heart.

For Mt 24:12 which states, “Because of the increase of wickedness (ἄνομίαν), the love of most will grow cold,” the contrast is not with the law but with actions and conduct which do not depict love. There does not seem to be any specific sins or group designated here. Rather the OT use of the term indicating a general “kind of conduct that is in direct opposition to the commandments and will of God” seems to fit the context better.

What about Mt 7:23? Is there evidence of an antinomian group here? I am convinced that the answer to this is negative. First of all it would seem to me very odd that Jesus would quote a passage in the Psalms and give it a connotation that is not found in the Psalms or the theology of the Psalms with respect to the phrase ἐργάζομαι + ἄνομία. To do so would give the meaning in Psalm 6 something that was foreign to it and the Psalms as a whole. Never is this phrase explicitly used in the LXX with reference to a specific group that is antinomian or to convey the idea of someone who has rejected the law in its entirety (i.e., one who is anti-OT law).

Secondly, in light of the fact that οἱ ἐργάζομαι τὴν ἄνομίαν embraces a variety of people who practice an abundance of different evil actions, it would seem best here to translate this phrase with terms like “evil doers” rather than “workers of lawlessness.” The phrase “evil doers” is less specific than “workers of lawlessness.” While “evil doers” does not exclude issues of the law, it consists of more general terminology in harmony with the general and broad semantic range of the phrase.

658 Davison, 632.
Thirdly, this phrase in Mt 7:23 seems to be a negative concept that is an epexegetic idea of whether Jesus knows someone or not. In its juxtaposition, it seems to be parallel with οὐδέποτε ἐγνών ύμᾶς. This in turn is parallel with “doing the will of the Father” in 7:21 which is also parallel with the “greater righteousness” of 5:20. Hence, I now see four terms which are all epexegetic of each other: “greater righteousness,” “doing the will of Jesus’ Father,” “Jesus’ not knowing someone,” and “evil doers.” Two give a positive and two a negative perspective on their exegesis of each other. None of these seem limited specifically to the law. Thus, those whom Jesus does not know are more workers of iniquity or evil doers than workers of lawlessness where “lawlessness” would refer specifically to the rejection of the entire OT law. Those who do not do the Father’s will are those who do not have “greater righteousness” and thus are also named workers of iniquity or evil doers. Their iniquity (ἀνομία) here in the context of Mt 7:21-23 and the Sermon on the Mount involves their failure to allow Jesus to relationally experience their heart and life in an acceptable manner. This includes refusing to embrace him and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller and fulfillment of the law with a humble heart and life that exhibits “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others as defined by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

In Mt 7:23, as seen from this perspective, there seems to be no indication of an “antinomian attitude” or evidence of such in the claimants’ appeal in 7:22. Rather, these claimants “are charismatics who are guilty of adopting a lax attitude to doing the will of the Father” not those who are necessarily anti-OT-law. Hence, based on my study here and Davison’s study, there seems to be no lexical basis for claiming ἀνομία indicates an antinomian

659 Davison, 628, 630.
group such as an antinomian Christian group here in this verse. I am in agreement with Davison’s conclusion in his study concerning the use of \( \text{ἀνομία} \) in Matthew:

Although this does not constitute an *a priori* proof that Matthew does not use the term in reference to an antinomian group, it does mean that the burden of proof rests with those who claim such an intention on Matthew’s part. Given the harmonious use of *anomia* in such a great mass and wide range of material, there must be strong evidence to take the use of the term in Matthew in a way counter to its general usage.

Sim, one of the representatives who contends for an antinomian view here in 7:23, does not seem to provide any strong linguistic support for his position. He puts forward correctly that the term \( \text{ἀνομία} \) seems to include the concept of “failure to obey the law,” but then goes further than the text warrants by stating that “it must apply just as much to Paul and his followers as to any group which took Paul’s message even further” (emphasis mine). Sim seems to have illegitimately tied Paul and his followers to this verse. His argument, like that of Barth’s, implicitly assumes “that the term *anomia* is used by Matthew with special reference to antinomian opponents.” For Sim, \( \text{ἀνομία} \) designates Paul and his group, a conclusion, again, which is lexically untenable and goes beyond the evidence. In essence, he seems to have forced an unwarranted view upon the text. Rather, here in Mt 7:23, as with all the other usages considered above of the phrase \( \text{ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία} \), one should understand it as indicating any

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660 J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 99, also concludes that no specific group is indicated here. He states “‘Lawless’ then does not refer to a specific group within the Matthean community which is creating tension; it is the preferred Matthean term for anyone who does not accurately understand God’s law and will or corrupts it.”

661 Davison, 626.

662 See Sim’s argument with respect to \( \text{ἀνομία} \) in *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 204-206, and his statements in “Matthew 7:21-23,” 326-27.

663 Sim, *Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 204, albeit he does not see the term “law” here in an eschatological fulfillment sense through Jesus.


665 See my first chapter above: Chapter I: Research Concern.

666 Davison, 618.

667 Sim seems to fail to see his misreading of the text here. He readily admits that the understanding of \( \text{ἀνομία} \) is a vital part of his argument as he states (“Matthew 7:21-23,” 327), “... my argument that the ones condemned at the final judgment in 7:21-23 are Pauline Christians rested largely on the use of the word \( \text{ἀνομία} \).” However, he does not seem to see that this word cannot substantiate such a connotation. Neither does he bring much linguistic support to his position. As a result, it would seem that Sim’s argument fails for lack of linguistic evidence.
conduct of many wide ranging actions which are in opposition to the law and God’s will, not a group which has rejected the law.

*Even if one would wish to demand that the term “lawlessness” specifically refer to the OT law in Mt 7:21-23, it must be insisted that the concept of law has here, in Matthew, already been modified.* As established by Jesus, it no longer would refer merely to the OT Torah but the Torah as fulfilled in Jesus and his teaching. So here, ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἄνομίαν would include, as noted above, one’s rejection of Jesus and his teachings. The claimants in vs 22 thus seem to have been banished from his presence here not specifically for disobeying the minutiae of the OT law but because they did not embrace Jesus and his teachings as the fulfiller of the law. Here again one encounters an indication of an “obedience shift” away from the parameter of the OT law to the broader framework of Jesus and his teachings. The claimants in 7:22 were seemingly guilty not of breaking the OT law but of the ἄνομία of pride in their lack of humility in depending on their own judgment and mighty works as deserving of entrance into the kingdom. They lacked the humility of total self-less dependence upon Jesus. Because of this pride, Jesus did not know them. 668 As a result, they did not do the Father’s will and did not possess the “greater righteousness” necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

**Summary of Matthean Obedience Theology in Mt 7:22-23**

Matthew 7:22-23 contributes a variety of elements to Matthew’s theology of obedience. First, it is here that Jesus himself for the first time verbally assumes the *divine Lordship position of Eschatological Judge*; something that had been restricted to the privilege of God himself. Only upon his approval is one able to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus must be submitted to as both Lord and Judge for one to be rewarded with entrance into the eschatological kingdom of heaven.

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668 This seems to be in unison with Ps 138:6, “Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from far.”
Secondly, it shows that both addressing Jesus as “Lord, Lord” as well as the performance of supernatural acts are insufficient to qualify one for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, whether in this age or the age to come. These things are not the avenue for entrance into the kingdom. In the case of vs 22, lack of humility seems to have barred entrance. The disposition of one’s heart before Jesus has consequences no matter what one expresses verbally or does supernaturally. It takes more than a simple statement of address or doing certain things to be doing the will of Jesus’ Father.

Thirdly, Jesus applies the necessary criteria of his relationally “knowing” or experiencing a person’s heart and life in an intimate positive acceptable manner for entrance into the kingdom or rule of heaven. This relationship involves a “greater righteousness” that involves a heart-oriented intended good-will attitude, as defined by Jesus, toward himself, the Father, and others. With respect to Jesus and his position it involves submission to him as the definitive and absolute personal-relational-experincer and relational-test evaluator for one’s life (i.e., the “Ultimate Knower”) in line with the OT concept of “being known” by Yahweh. To become known by Jesus, one must present oneself relationally to Jesus in this present age in a completely humble and submissive manner that allows Jesus to experience one’s heart and life of good will toward God and others. The obedience needed here is relationship with Jesus on his terms, something that involves complete humility and dependence upon him. Anything less, marks one an “evil doer.”

Fourthly, the passage seems to teach a final banishment from Jesus’ presence. The implication is that at the final Judgment, there is no recourse or remedy for those who are “evil doers.” Rather it involves a permanent and final dismissal from him without any chance to remedy the situation with a positive relationship by which Jesus would “know” a person. Hence,
there is a limit on the time allowed for securing this relationship with Jesus. Obedience is possible only up to the point of the Eschatological Judgment.

Fifthly, the framework of obedience has shifted with these verses with respect to the law. No longer does obedience to God and doing the will of the Father refer mainly to the Torah but the Torah as fulfilled through a \textit{relationship} with Jesus and the embracing of his teachings. A positive relationship with Jesus, not simply following the law of the OT, is now necessary for entrance into his kingdom according to Matthew’s theology of obedience in the Sermon on the Mount.

\textbf{The Contribution of Matthew 7:21-23 to the Obedience Theme of Matthew’s Gospel}

Matthew 7:21-23 contributes to Matthew’s obedience theme in many ways. First, structurally (through an inclusio) and in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, it presents three ideas which are epexegetic of each other, all of which are also epexegetic of the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount, i.e., “greater righteousness.” These three elements are (1) doing the will of Jesus’ father, (2) Jesus not knowing or experiencing someone, and (3) the concept of being evil doers. All three of these “exegete” or help explain the others and all three exegete and are exegeted by the concept of “greater righteousness” as revealed in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. “Greater righteousness” is “doing the will of the Father” both of which involve Jesus knowing and experiencing a person in a positive manner, all three of which involve one not being an evil doer.

In combination, these four elements ((1) the concept of “greater righteousness” (2) doing the will of Jesus’ father, (3) Jesus not knowing someone, and (4) the concept of being evil doers) present a plethora of illustrations of what is involved in the concept of obedience in Matthew’s
Sermon on the Mount. From the perspective of “greater righteousness,” these include (1) obedience and submission to Jesus himself and his teachings in his eschatological fulfillment of the law, (2) being perfect in ridding oneself of anger, lust, desire for divorce, oaths, and retribution, replacing these with unconditional love even for one’s enemies, (3) giving alms, praying, and fasting from a humble heart intentionally presenting oneself to the Father in secret for God’s glory instead of doing them to receive glory from men, (4) storing up treasure in heaven by having a heart totally committed to doing God’s will, (5) ridding oneself of worry by putting one’s trust completely in God and seeking him first, (6) refusing to usurp God’s authority to condemn but instead practicing introspection and healing of one’s self so one, in humility, can help others with their struggles, (7) cherishing one’s relationship with the Father in a way that embraces his goodness and depends on him for good gifts, (8) positively loving and treating others in a way that one would want to be treated by them, (9) choosing to follow God through the narrow gate and on the narrow road, (10) being a good tree which bears good fruit, (11) hearing and obeying Jesus’ words and (12) being a person who is humble or poor in spirit, who mourns, who is meek, one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, one who is merciful, who has a pure heart, who is a peacemaker, and one who is persecuted because of righteousness. These are all assumed in Mt 7:21-23 through the inclusio and concept of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” paralleling “greater righteousness” with “doing the will of my Father in heaven.” Hence all of the above are involved in the concept of “doing the will of the Father.”

In addition, from the perspective of “doing the will of the Father” in Mt 7:21, the adoption of this concept by Jesus here allows one to import the following inferential contributions to Matthean obedience theology determined from the use of this notion in other places in Matthew: (1) sharing an intimate familial relationship with the Father and Jesus, (2) repentance and reception of God’s grace, (3) loving and protecting God’s people, as well as helping to keep them
faithful to Jesus, (4) practicing mercy, (5) healing the sick and feeding the hungry, (6) accepting the necessity of Jesus’ suffering for the redemption of mankind, and (7) coming to an intimate relationship with the Father through Jesus.

From the perspective of Jesus’ “knowing” a person, the following are involved in Matthean obedience here in Mt 7:21-23: (1) realizing the insufficiency of addressing Jesus as “Lord, Lord,” as well as the insufficiency of performing mighty works in the name of Jesus, (2) presenting oneself relationally to Jesus in a completely humble and submissive manner that allows Jesus to experience one’s heart and life of good will toward God and others in an intimate positive acceptable manner, (3) realizing there is a time limit for securing this intimate relationship with Jesus (i.e., entrance into the kingdom of heaven is possible only up to the point of the Eschatological Judgment; after that, there is no recourse), (4) embracing Jesus as the divine Lord and Eschatological Judge (it is ultimately he whom one must please; one is completely accountable to him), and (5) submitting to Jesus as the “Ultimate Knower,” i.e., the definitive and absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator for one’s life in line with the OT concept of “being known” by Yahweh.

From the perspective of the not being an “evil doer,” (1) one should avoid any conduct or action which is opposed to the law and God’s will, and (2) understand these concepts in a new light in which the framework of obedience has shifted with respect to the law, i.e. Jesus in his capacity as the fulfiller of the law is the new framework. No longer does obedience to God and doing the will of the Father refer mainly to the Torah but the Torah as fulfilled through a relationship with Jesus and embracing his teachings. The implication now is that avoiding being an “evil doer” means one must embrace Jesus, the fulfiller of the law.

In Matthew’s theology of obedience, all four of these elements (i.e., possessing “greater righteousness,” “doing the will of Jesus’ father,” Jesus not “knowing” or experiencing someone,
and not being “evil doers”) are explicated and determined by Jesus alone in what they involve. One cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (present or future) without going through Jesus’ sieve. Only the one who passes Jesus’ obedience tests presented here in the Sermon on the Mount qualifies for entrance.

Matthew 7:21-23, as part of the concluding section of the Sermon, accordingly pulls in and contributes all the above elements (either by subsuming or explicating them) and thus abundantly contributes to the obedience theology of Matthew’s Gospel. In addition, it should be noted that six elements of Matthean obedience are found for the first time in Matthew here in Mt 7:21-23. These are as follows: (1) “doing the will of the Father” is here first given the content of “greater righteousness” through its inclusio association with 5:20, (2) Jesus’ divine Lordship is assumed first here by his own words, (3) Jesus as the Eschatological Judge is also presented in his own words first here, (4) the necessity of Jesus’ positive experiential knowledge (i.e., Jesus’ exercising his position as absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator, or “Ultimate Knower”) of someone as the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven whether present or future is first explicated here, (5) the insufficiency of words of address and bonafide charismatic works in the name of Jesus in lieu of total humility before Jesus as qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven is first found here, and (6) the implied new connotation of what it means to avoid being an “evil doer” with respect to obedience to the law as now involving embracing Jesus as its fulfiller, is found first here in Matthew.

All of the above can be incorporated under the following summarizing rubric: Obedience in Mt 7:21-23 involves “doing the will of the Father” through embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, and as divine Lord and Eschatological Judge, as the absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator on the order of Yahweh of the OT (i.e., the “Ultimate Knower”), with a totally humble-before-Jesus heart and life that
exhibits “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented positive experiential relationship with the Father, Jesus, and others, as defined solely by Jesus. This is the relationship necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven during the present or future age.

**The Nature of Obedience in Mt 7:21-23**

As can be seen from the above, perhaps the most prominent contribution of Mt 7:21-23 with respect to the general nature of obedience is twofold: (1) Jesus is now presented as the ultimate authority to be obeyed and (2) compliance must be with him and his words for entrance into the kingdom of heaven to be granted. No longer is it simply the God (Yahweh) of the OT who is in authority, now it is Jesus who assumes God’s position of divine Lord, the Eschatological Judge, and the relational “knower” of people and their hearts. No longer must one be in compliance simply with the OT law; now it involves humble total submission to Jesus and his teachings on “greater righteousness” as the law’s eschatological fulfiller. Submitting to Jesus’ teachings produces the “greater righteousness” and accomplishes the “will of the Father” and this makes the law, in many ways, unnecessary. Neither should the idea of ἀνομία be held as referring simply to disobedience to the law and God’s will in the OT sense. Now it embraces rejection of Jesus and his teachings in his role as the eschatological fulfiller of the law.

All of the discoveries in this chapter together strongly point to a conclusion that obedience in Mt 7:21-23 is Jesus-based instead of OT-law-based. This does not mean that the law is not involved but simply that complete obedience to Jesus brings the law to fruition.

To authenticate these discoveries with respect to the nature of obedience here in Mt 7:21-23, it would seem necessary to verify their general harmony with the rest of Matthew. This verification is the subject of Chapter IV.
CHAPTER IV: THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE IN MATTHEW
AND JESUS’ RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

This chapter consists of a survey of the general nature of obedience and Jesus’ relationship with the law in Matthew outside of Mt 7:21-23 with the goal of determining their general uniformity with what was uncovered in Chapter III concerning Mt 7:21:23. In the process, only the most prominent features of the general nature of obedience discovered in Mt 7:21-23 (i.e., Jesus in his ultimate authority and compliance to him) and only passages which deal specifically with Jesus and the OT law will be considered. I will first consider the authority of Jesus in Matthew. Then I will survey Jesus’ relationship and effect upon the law. After this, I will evaluate the crux of this present study introduced in the first chapter of this thesis (Research Concern) determining how and if Matthew as a whole and in conjunction with Mt 7:21-23 presents an OT-law-based obedience for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Finally I will briefly assess Sim’s claim that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline.

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669 In developing any bonafide theology, general uniformity of themes in the biblical material must consistently fit together into a “coherent whole,” cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 20. Scot McKnight, in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, s.v. “Matthew, Gospel of” states: By discussing Matthew’s theology we do not imply that the evidence is sufficient for us to infer an entire systematic theology. Rather, what we find in the Gospel of Matthew is a record of the life of Jesus which has been shaped by Matthew in such a way that we can detect emphases and patterns of thought that are the author’s. It is these patterns and themes that we describe when we outline Matthew’s theology. Matthew’s theology of obedience is one such theme or pattern. As such, elements to be included in this theology must necessarily be shown to be consistent with the whole of Matthew. It is thus the task of this chapter to investigate whether the general obedience themes discovered in Mt 7:21-23 can indeed be seen as consonant with Matthew as a whole.

670 A comprehensive study of every aspect of Matthean obedience in the whole of Matthew is beyond the scope of this thesis. As a consequence, only the passages which seem to be most pertinent to Jesus’ authority and his relationship with the law, and their specific contribution to this theme, will be studied.

671 See my discussion of the concept of obedience as “compliance” at the beginning of Chapter II.
The Authority of Jesus in Matthew

Jesus’ authority in Matthew is emphasized in many ways from the first chapter to the last. It is highlighted through titles given to him and in the use of the term ἐξουσία (“authority”)\(^{672}\) in reference to him. These two perspectives will be examined in this chapter as avenues to explore Jesus’ authority in Matthew outside of Mt 7:21-23.

**Jesus’ Titles of Authority**

Several titles are given to Jesus which communicate his authority in Matthew. The first title is the designation of “the Christ,” i.e., “the Messiah (Χριστός),” or the “King” who was promised and anticipated to come to Israel with ultimate power to set up his rule.\(^{673}\) This royal title is directly given to Jesus many times in Matthew (e.g., Mt 1:1, 16, 17, 18; 16:16, 20). The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day understood the place of the Messiah as “ruler” and “shepherd” of God’s people, Israel (Mt 2:6). Herod, then King of Judea, understood the threat of the Messiah to his rule and schemed to kill Jesus (Mt 2:1-12). Thus, Χριστός was a title of great power and importance. It designated one who was to have serious authority as ruler of Israel.

A second title, that of the “Son of David,” is also associated with Jesus in his messianic or kingly role\(^{674}\) and seems to develop even more deeply the concept of Χριστός in Matthew. In Mt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; and 20:30-31 the phrase is found upon the lips of common people crying...

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\(^{672}\) Bauer, *Lexicon*, 277-78.

\(^{673}\) See Mt 2:4-6 where the chief priests and teachers of the law indicate that the Christ will be a ruler and shepherd of God’s people. See also my article, Glenn W. Giles, “Messianic Movements of the First Century,” at http://www.denverchurchofchrist.org/articles-and-biblical-studies.html?start=25, 1-16 (accessed 6/18/2013), for a discussion of the characteristics and actions expected of the Messiah by the Jews in the first century.

\(^{674}\) France, 35. See also France, 28-33, for the possibility of Matthew’s genealogies in Mt 1 being a “dynastic document” potentially indicating “the restoration of the monarchy.”
out to Jesus for mercy and power to heal infirmities in the Messiah’s expected role as healer. In Mt 21:9 and 15 it appears in the context of great jubilation of the people acclaiming Jesus as the “Son of David” as he enters Jerusalem on a donkey, an action Matthew says fulfills the prophecy which hails Jesus as Zion’s king (Mt 21:5). In Mt 22:41-45, Jesus questions the Pharisees as to the relationship of the Christ to David. He asks, “Whose son is the Christ?” They answer that he is the son of David. Jesus then quotes the Messianic Psalm 110:1 to them in which David calls the Christ “Lord” who sits at God’s right hand. Jesus asks how Christ could be his son if he calls him “Lord.” This dialog implies that Jesus is greater than King David and more than David’s son. Indeed, Jesus, here, makes incredible claims about himself. He is greater than King David, he is “Lord,” and he sits at the right hand of God (something that he repeats in Mt 26:64)! What kind of King or Messiah is this Jesus? How great is he? This seems to be a hint of him as a supernatural King/Messiah with divine Lordship.

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675 Nolland, 400. See also D. R. Bauer, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Son of David,” who states that these verses demonstrate that “Jesus fulfills the messianic expectation that the Son of David would bring wholeness to the oppressed, and that those who have faith to confess that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah will experience the blessings of the eschatological age.”

676 This Psalm was considered “Messianic” by many Jews in Jesus’ day, see Carson, Matthew, 467-68, and Osborne, 829.

677 See Nolland, 916.

678 Osborne, 829.

679 France, 852, correctly notes that in the context here, the issue is “about Jesus’ own messianic role” and not simply “a purely academic argument.”

680 Carson, Matthew, 468, argues that what Jesus does here is to “synthesize the concept of a human Messiah in David’s line with the concept of a divine Messiah who transcends human limitations.” Osborne, 829, states, “The use of “to my Lord” . . . in the text implies ‘Yahweh,’ speaking to the one seated next to him on the throne, suggesting Jesus’ deity.” Allison and Davies, Matthew 19-28, 253-56, argue that this passage teaches that Jesus is not only the Son of David and the Christ, but also the “Son of God.” Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 651, notes “The point of the question addressed to the Pharisees is apparently to elevate the concept of Messiah from that of a special human being to one who uniquely manifests the presence of God—and thus one whom David has also to address as his lord.” He also notes that these verses here suggest that Jesus was on the same level as the OT Yahweh. Another passage that uses the term “Lord” which seems to also indicate Jesus’ divinity is in John the Baptist’s statement concerning Jesus. He announces that he has come to “prepare the way for the Lord” (3:3). Here “Lord” (κυρίος) is in a quotation from Isaiah 40:3 for which the MT has נג♪. Hence, this seems to support the deity of Jesus, so also Turner, Matthew, 109.
Two other titles also add to the authority of Jesus. These are the mainly others-designation of Jesus as “Son of God”\textsuperscript{681} and Jesus’ self-designation as the “Son of Man.”\textsuperscript{682} The term “Son of God,” as used in Matthew for Jesus, communicates several aspects of his authority. This term was understood by some Jews in Jesus’ day as messianic, thus possibly hinting at Jesus’ Kingship.\textsuperscript{683} In Mt 3:17 (Jesus’ baptism) and 17:5 (the transfiguration) Jesus is pronounced by the Father in heaven\textsuperscript{684} as his Son in whom the he is well pleased. These passages indicate a special unique relationship and special place of Jesus with the Father in heaven.\textsuperscript{685} In the second passage, Mt 17:5, the disciples at this point are told concerning Jesus, “Listen to him (\textgreek{akoûte aujtou})” thus giving authority from heaven for obedience to Jesus and his words. The concept of Jesus as the “Son of God” also implies supernatural power. This is seen in chapter 4 when the devil tempts Jesus in the desert to perform miracles such as telling stones to become bread as a result of him being the Son of God. The demons realize Jesus’ supernatural power in Mt 8:29 asking him “What do you want with us, Son of God?” and imploring him not to “torture them before the appointed time.” This not only assumes Jesus power over the supernatural realm but also his position as Eschatological Judge of demons in the last day.\textsuperscript{686} In Mt 14:33 Peter joins Jesus walking on the water (a supernatural act) after which Peter and the others in the boat “worshipped (\textgreek{proseukû̂n̂ĥsas}n) him, saying ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’” This indicates not only Jesus’ supernatural power over nature but that the disciples recognized Jesus as worthy of

\textsuperscript{681} Never in Matthew does Jesus designate himself as “the Son of God” except at Mt 26:64 and Mt 28:19. Otherwise it only occurs on the lips of people, the devil, demons, and God’s voice from heaven. See this phrase and its equivalent at Mt 2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54; and 28:19. See also D. R. Bauer, Dictionary, s.v. “Son of God,” for the use of this concept in Matthew as well as in the other gospels.

\textsuperscript{682} The term “Son of Man” is never used by others to address Jesus. It is always found on his lips speaking of himself (see its occurrences at Mt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24(2x), 45, 64). See also I. H. Marshall, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, s.v. “Son of Man,” on this and other uses of this phrase in Matthew as well as the other gospels.

\textsuperscript{683} See Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 59, He notes that the “title ‘Son of God’ had clear messianic significance in Judaism prior to the NT period” and cites for example 4QFlor 10-14 and 4QpsDan A as support. In support of this also but more cautious is Bauer, Dictionary, s.v. “Son of God,” who states that these passages (as well as IQSa 2:11-12) only “suggest that the Messiah as Son of God was not totally foreign to Palestinian Judaism.”

\textsuperscript{684} The idea of “a voice from heaven” seems to indicate the voice of the Father in heaven (so Turner, Matthew, 120).

\textsuperscript{685} See France, 123, and Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 59, in support of the uniqueness of Jesus as the Son of God here.

\textsuperscript{686} Cf. Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 227 and France, 341.
their worship both tied to the concept of the “Son of God.” In Mt 27:43 the soldiers who mock Jesus exhort him to come down from the cross and save himself if he is the “Son of God.” This seems to assume that they understood that Jesus would have some supernatural power if he were indeed the “Son of God” even if their statements are part of their mocking of who he was. Hence again one encounters the tying of the idea of supernatural power to this phrase. In Mt 28:19 Jesus acknowledges himself as the “Son of God” after receiving “all authority in heaven and on earth.” Here he commands his disciples to make new disciples baptizing them “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (emphasis mine). This verse links Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit and presumes his deity. France notes, concerning the “profoundly important theological step” that is indicated here, 687

It is one thing for Jesus to speak about his relationship with God as Son with the Father (notably 11:27; 24:36; 26:63-64) and to draw attention to the close links between himself and the Holy Spirit (12:28, 31-32), but for “the Son” to take his place as the middle member, between the Father and the Holy Spirit, in a threefold depiction of the object of the disciple’s allegiance is extraordinary. The human leader of the disciple group has become the rightful object of their worship. And the fact that the three divine persons are spoken of as having a single “name” is a significant pointer toward the trinitarian doctrine of three persons in one God.

Jesus’ self-designation as the “Son of Man” also points to his authority. The term is used with reference to Jesus having authority to forgive sins on earth (Mt 9:6), his Lordship over the Sabbath (Mt 12:8), and his authority in his role as one sent to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:25). However its most prominent indication of Jesus’ authority is in the realm of his position as Eschatological Judge (Mt 10:23; 13:41; 16:27-28; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31: 26:64). In that Day, he will be seen “sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mt 26:64). He will come with his angels and send them out to weed out of his kingdom “everything that causes sin and those who do evil” and these will be

687 France, 1118.
688 Although these references in Mt 24 may refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, they still indicate Jesus’ role as divine Judge. See Nolland’s discussion of the issue of whether chapter 24 addresses the destruction of Jerusalem or the final Judgment Day or both, 889-967.
cast into “the fiery furnace” while the “righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt 13:41-43). As Eschatological Judge, he will “reward each person according to what he has done” (Mt 16:27). Not only will he “sit on his glorious throne” but those who have followed him “will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28). It will be Jesus as the Son of Man who comes and separates the sheep from the goats in the last day as the Eschatological Judge assigning the wicked to “eternal punishment” and the righteous to “eternal life” (Mt 25:31-46).

In addition, one other title is implied for Jesus in two passages outside of Mt 7:23 which speaks to his authority. This is the concept of the “Ultimate Knower.” This is entertained in Mt 11:27 and 25:12. In Mt 11:27, Jesus’ intimate relationship with the Father is highlighted in the fact it is he who knows the Father and the Father knows him. In fact, it is here stated that it is only the Son who knows the Father and he is in control of giving that personal relationship to others. Ultimately, then, Jesus is in control of “knowing the Father.” In Mt 25:12, as was noted in Chapter III, the bridegroom representing Jesus in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, does not experience (“know”) the foolish virgins’ readiness for his coming on the last day. As a result, they are denied entrance when they ask to be let into the wedding banquet with the words, “I don’t know (οἶδα) you.” These texts indicate that it is a relationship with Jesus as the “Ultimate Knower” that determines one’s final fate. Hence, Jesus, as the “Ultimate Knower,” has final and exclusive authority as the door through whom one must pass in order to “know” the Father.

Summary of Jesus’ Authority as Indicated by His Titles.

In summary, Jesus’ titles indicate several facets of his authority. The term Χριστός indicates Jesus’ Messianic authority as King and ruler over God’s people, Israel. The term “Son of David points to Jesus’ authority as Messianic healer, as King, as one greater than King David,
as one who sits at the right hand of Yahweh, and one who possesses divine Lordship. The term “Son of God” as used in Matthew points to Jesus’ supernatural power over nature and demons. It also points to him as Messianic King, his having heaven-given authority to command men’s obedience, his authoritative role as Eschatological Judge, and his place with the Father and Holy Spirit as deity; as one who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. In his role as “Son of Man” Jesus’ authority involves the power to forgive sins on earth, to serve and give his life as a ransom for many, his Lordship over the Sabbath, and especially his divine role as Eschatological Judge. In Jesus’ implied role as “Ultimate Knower,” it is he who is decisively in control of others attaining a relationship with the Father and who determines one’s ultimate destiny.

*Jesus’ Authority as Seen through the Term’Εξουσία in Matthew*

Jesus’ authority is also seen through the term ἐξουσία (“authority”) which occurs ten times in Matthew, each time in reference to Jesus. The first occurrence is at the end of the Sermon on the Mount at 7:29 where Matthew states that the crowds were amazed at Jesus’ teaching “because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” The substance of this authority has already been noted in the last chapter. There it was determined that Jesus depicts himself as the eschatological fulfiller of the law and the prophets, the divine Lord, Eschatological Judge, and the knower and tester of men and their hearts on a par with Yahweh of the OT. In asserting these positions and applying them to himself, he taught as if he had “inherent authority” while the teachers of the law only taught that which was based on earlier teachings of other rabbis. These assumed positions of inherent authority by Jesus in his teaching were

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689 Moulton and Geden, 347. These are Mt 7:29; 8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23 (2x), 24, 27; 28:18.
690 France, 299.
shocking and stunning to the first century audience. There should not be any wonder why the
crowds were amazed.\footnote{691}{Keener, 256, states concerning the crowd’s amazement, “what astonished them was his claim to authority.”}

The second occurrence is in Mt 8:9 where a centurion asks for the healing of his servant
who was paralyzed and experiencing terrible suffering. Here the centurion makes reference to
Jesus’ authority being like his in that he can simply give a verbal command and it is obeyed. As
such he implies it is not necessary for Jesus to go to his house to do the healing. Jesus’ word
alone is enough (\(\mu\delta\nu\nu\ \epsilon\iota\pi\varepsilon\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\), Mt 8:8). Jesus marvels at this man’s faith and uses his
authority to heal the centurion’s servant from afar. Here Jesus shows his authority not only to
heal but to do it simply by his word. Jesus thus exhibited supernatural authority over physical
issues and suffering through his spoken word.\footnote{692}{This concept of the power and authority of
Jesus’ word is reflected in other places in Matthew. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:24-
27), indicates that obeying his words (\(\acute{\alpha}k\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\ \mu\ou\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\omicron\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\upsilon\omicron\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\)) is the way of a wise
man who avoids a great crash in his life. Jesus’ words are thus essential to being wise. But more
than this, in Mt 24:35, he declares the eternal nature of his words: “Heaven and earth will pass

\footnote{691}{Keener, 256, states concerning the crowd’s amazement, “what astonished them was his claim to authority.”}
\footnote{692}{France, 315, correctly notes that the issue in this passage “is not about defining Jesus’ christological status, but
about the recognition of his unquestioned authority.” Osborne, 291, notes that “the word of Jesus, stemming from a
far greater authority, could accomplish anything.”}
away, but my words (οἱ ἐλπίδες μου) will never pass away.” Hence, Jesus’ words are “equivalent to the word of God.”

The third and fourth occurrences are at Mt 9:6-8 where Jesus claims authority to “forgive sins” on earth by not only pronouncing forgiveness upon a paralytic but healing him as well. The fact that the teachers of the law in vs 3 felt he was blaspheming indicates their belief that forgiveness of sins was a sole privilege of God. Here Jesus is understood as assuming God’s role! Thus, in these verses, not only does Jesus claim authority to do what is reserved for God on earth but he also proves his right by healing the paralyzed man. This is in essence a radical deity claim by Jesus.

The fifth occurrence involves the transference of his supernatural divine authority to his twelve disciples in Mt 10:1. Here Jesus gives them the authority he had himself already exhibited to “drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” Not only does Jesus exercise supernatural authority himself, he passes it on to his disciples! This “implies a divine authority,” not only possessed by Jesus but now also by his disciples. Hence, Jesus both possesses supernatural authority and has the power to pass it on to his disciples.

The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth occurrences are found in Mt 21:23-27. Here Jesus is questioned by the chief priests and elders of the people as to the source and nature of his authority. Jesus refuses to answer their question directly but rather points to John’s baptism and asks them if it was from heaven or from men. The chief priests and elders, not wanting to admit John the Baptist as being a messenger from heaven and also not wanting to rile up the people

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693 Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 715, and Osborne, 900. Although these words may only refer to the future, i.e. the things Jesus has just predicted in Mt 24 (so Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 715-16), Nolland, 989, suggests that “something altogether more comprehensive is intended.” He states that the parallel in Mt 5:17 “between the Mosaic Law in every detail and Jesus’ words suggests” this. Osborne, 900, agrees and so does Carson, *Matthew*, 507, as well as Turner, *Matthew*, 585. Cf. Jesus’ statement here with parallel statements in the OT concerning God’s word at Ps 119:89 and Is 40:8.


695 Jesus displayed this type of authority himself in Mt 4:23-25; 8:1-18, 28-34; 9:9-1-8, 18-34.

696 Exorcism and healing were considered supernatural acts taking place by supernatural power, see France, 377.

697 France, 377.
who felt John was a prophet, answer that they do not know. Jesus then refuses to tell them by what authority he is doing the things he is doing. These verses denote a dispute over the source of Jesus’ authority. Jesus implies his authority is from heaven by pointing to the one (John the Baptist) who pointed to him as the Lord whose way he was preparing (Mt 3:3). In contrast to the chief priest and elders whose hearts were ruled by their fear of the people and their desire to deny the source of Jesus’ authority, Jesus allows his works to speak for themselves. Thus his supernatural authority from heaven is sustained.698

The tenth and last occurrence is at the end of the gospel at Mt 28:18 where Jesus, after his death and resurrection, announces that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. Proceeding from that fact, Jesus then commands his disciples to go and make more disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything he himself has commanded. Here, Jesus claims “comprehensive” and “universal authority” as the terms “heaven and earth” seem to show.699 Not only here is Jesus himself in the highest position, all his own commands (πάντα οἶνεσα ὅσα ἐτελεία λαμψάτα οὖμίν) are to be what one is to be in compliance with. Obedience is thus to be supremely with him and his commands. For those who obey, Jesus promises that he will always be with them to the “very end of the age.” Here the presence of Jesus with men is conditioned upon the acceptance of his supreme authority and obedience to his commands.

698 France, 799, states, “No one who heard Jesus’ response could fail to understand the implied claim to continuity between his ministry and that of John, and therefore to a divine authority for it.” Cf. also Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 610. Allison and Davies, Matthew 19-28, 162, note:

To confess no estimate of John not only reveals blindness to the obvious but also amounts to denial of his prophetic authority. The leaders accordingly indict themselves, and their own lack of authority is made plain . . .

Jesus’ authority is not placed in doubt by his refusal to answer; rather is it indirectly confirmed: he need not submit to questioning at the hands of the chief priests and elders. His refusal is in fact veiled affirmation.

699 Nolland, 1265, states that this phrase indicates “comprehensiveness.” Gundry, Matthew, 595, says it designates “universal authority delegated to him” by God. Note how these meanings are implied in Matthew’s other usages of this phrase (“heaven and earth”) at 5:18; 11:25; and 24:35.
Summary of Jesus’ Authority as Seen Through the Use of ἔξουσία in Matthew

The use of the term ἔξουσία in Matthew reveals several elements with respect to Jesus’ authority. He has, first of all, “inherent authority.” It comes from his own nature and not an authority dependent on others as the teachers of the law had. Secondly, he demonstrated supernatural authority over physical issues and suffering through his spoken word. His word was also determined to be “eternal” and thus in the same class as God’s word. Thirdly, he established that he had God’s authority on earth to forgive sins. As such he assumed God’s role and made a radical claim to deity. Fourthly, Jesus had the authority to transfer his supernatural authority to his disciples. Fifthly, when challenged by the Jewish leaders as to the source of his authority, the manner of his reply upheld that his authority from heaven. And lastly, at the end of Matthew, Jesus announces his authority as universally and comprehensively supreme, and establishes that obedience to his commands is necessary for his presence to remain with his disciples.

Reflection on the Conclusions of Jesus’ Authority in Chapter III

In Chapter III, I determined that the general nature of Jesus’ authority was as follows: (1) Jesus is presented as the ultimate authority to be obeyed and (2) compliance must be with him and his words for entrance into the kingdom of heaven to be granted. The above survey of Matthew as a whole reveals that these general elements discovered in Mt 7:21-23 are harmonious with these general characteristics. In fact they truly enhance and reinforce what was discovered in Chapter III. Jesus indeed has ultimate authority in heaven and earth. He has messianic (regal) authority over God’s people. He sits at the right hand of the Father. He has supernatural power over nature and demons. His place in heaven is with the Father and the Holy Spirit as deity. He assumes the role of God in the forgiveness of people’s sins. He is Lord of the Sabbath and has
authority to give his life as a ransom for men. He even has the power to give his supernatural authority to his disciples.

With respect to compliance with his will for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, he is the Eschatological Judge and as such must be obeyed and his will satisfied for one to enter that kingdom.\(^700\) It is Jesus in his role as “Ultimate Knower” who is the door into a relationship with the Father and thus the avenue for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Without his experiencing (“knowing”) a person in a positive manner, no entrance into his kingdom will be granted. In addition without his permitting others to “know” the Father, no relationship with the Father is possible. It is Jesus to whom all authority from heaven has been given and as such he has the authority to command men’s obedience. His word is eternal and thus has the status of God’s word. It is Jesus’ words which must be obeyed and his commands which are to be heeded for his presence to abide with his disciples.

None of these conclusions contradict any of my conclusions in Mt 7:21-23. Rather they enrich them. As such, I conclude that my findings in chapter III are compatible, thus far with what I have discovered in this present chapter, with Matthew as a whole and that the nature of obedience in Matthew’s gospel involves Jesus as the ultimate authority and compliance with his words as necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This also seems to further support the corollary conclusion in Chapter III that the nature of obedience in Matthew is ultimately more Jesus-based than OT-Law-based.

\(^700\) I have only dealt with entrance into the future eschatological kingdom of heaven in this chapter. The possibility of a present entrance in Matthew outside of the Sermon on the Mount was examined already in Chapter III through the purview of the following verses: Mt 12:28; 18:3; 19:23-34; 21:31; and 23:13-14. That discussion showed the compatibility of present entrance into the kingdom of heaven in Matthew as a whole.
Transition of Authority in Matthew at Mt 28:18

As noted in the last section above, Jesus announces in the last chapter of Matthew (28:18) that he has *universal* authority. Scholars have debated whether Jesus’ statement about his authority here in the last few verses of this gospel is an indication of something new or if it is simply a reassertion or reaffirmation of the authority he already had and exercised throughout Matthew.  

Nolland argues that there is here a “vindication of authority rather than a new authority” undergirded by “Jesus’ death and resurrection.” For him Mt 28:18 is a fresh affirmation of his already possessed authority. Many scholars, however, seem to believe there is indeed something new indicated here. Osborne argues that “this is not a new authority, for it is linked to the authority Jesus displayed throughout his earthly ministry” but it is a “new level of authority.” Hagner argues that this authority is not entirely new but “depends upon a new basis,” a “new order of existence” involving Jesus’ enthronement and a “new stage of salvation history.” Carson believes that Jesus’ authority involves becoming “more absolute,” i.e., a larger sphere of authority involving the entire universe. France and Allison and Davies believe that it involves an allusion to Dn 7:13-14 and the coming to fruition of universal world dominion and authority prophesied there to be given to the Son of Man.

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701 See Nolland’s discussion of this question, 1264-65.
702 Nolland, 1265. The statement by Jesus in Mt 11:27, “All things have been committed to me by my Father,” could possibly be pressed to uphold this position, but even Nolland, 472, who holds this position, concedes that “the emphasis is, rather on the privileged status of the one who has received from God all that which is his to dispose.” Thus this phrase does not necessarily indicate that Jesus has “disposed” all of what has been committed to him but that he has the power to do so. From a contextual perspective, Carson, *Matthew*, 277, seems correct in saying that “‘all things’ may have reference not to ‘all authority’ (as in 28:18) but to ‘all divine knowledge,’ all knowledge of ‘these things’ (in v.25).” Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 320, also agrees stating that what is involved in the words “all things” that have been granted to Jesus here is the “knowledge of and . . . the ability to reveal the Father.”
703 Osborne, 1079.
In this section, I want to argue that there is indeed a dimension of “newness” that is indicated here in Mt 28:18, and that, while this verse may include the “newness” indicated by scholars above, there is another component that needs to be added to this discussion. This is the component of the transference of the administration of a present aspect of the kingdom of heaven to Jesus and his disciples. I have already argued in Chapter III that there is a present as well as a future aspect involved in the concept of the kingdom of heaven/God in Matthew. In Mt 21:43 there seems to be an indication that a present aspect of the kingdom was still under the administration or control of the then Jewish leaders. This verse, referring to the chief priests and Pharisees and in the context of Jesus’ authority being questioned (Mt 21:23-46), states, “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people (or nation) who will produce its fruit.” In my ThM thesis, I argue that the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (“kingdom of God”) in this verse is most closely associated with the Jewish idea of the present reign of God. As such these Jewish leaders then were functioning as “custodians and administrators of this rule.” They were stewards of this rule of God and thus possessed that authority and wielded it with respect to that rule. I also argue that the term ἐθνὸς (“nation”) in this verse exhibits its “political nuance” consonant with its juxtaposition with βασιλεία indicating a “political/governmental (‘national’) sense (consisting of leaders and followers) instead of its purely religious sense (‘people’)” for this verse. As such, this verse was determined to be speaking of a “political rule which was to change hands and not a people, per se.” That is, this verse predicts that “another ‘nation’ (consisting of leaders and followers) was to receive God’s rule.” This is consistent with the thrust of the juridical parable of the Wicked

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708 See Giles, “Matthew 21:43.”
711 Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 120.
712 Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 120.
Tenants within which this verse is found and the political flavor of Mt 21.\textsuperscript{713} A new nation was being formed by Jesus. He is the King and chooses new administrators of his rule (the twelve apostles)\textsuperscript{714} as is shown in his commissioning of them and his transference of some of his authority to them in Mt 10:1. In effect, I argued that Matthew’s gospel presents Jesus and his twelve apostles who, in conjunction with his other followers (other disciples), form a new εθνος. These new leaders (Jesus and his apostles) in the “political/governmental” sense function as the new administrators\textsuperscript{715} of God’s present rule in that new εθνος. It is this new nation which will produce the fruit he desires, a fruit that would seem (in parallel with the rest of Matthew) to involve making new disciples who express the “greater righteousness” of his teaching and thus “do the will of the Father in heaven.”\textsuperscript{716} This new εθνος, I determined, is what emerged as the church (Jesus + Apostles (as leaders) + Christians (as followers) = the new nation) in the first century. As such I concluded in my thesis that Mt 21:43 makes a “clear statement of God’s decision to transfer the administration of His salvific rule from the Jewish nation to the church of Christ.”\textsuperscript{717}

From this perspective, Mt 21:43 argues that the Jewish leaders, specifically the chief priests and Pharisees, still possessed some type of authority as administrators of the present

\textsuperscript{713} Note, for instance, that in this context Jesus marches into Jerusalem riding on a donkey as a king (21:5) and comes into and cleanses the Temple, which was considered a “nationalist stronghold,” (so Carson, Matthew, 442).

\textsuperscript{714} Note the twelve apostles seem to displace the twelve tribes of Israel and are seen as rulers on thrones with Jesus who judge the twelve tribes of Israel in 19:28. They become emissaries of God with the Holy Spirit speaking through them (Mt 10:19-20).

\textsuperscript{715} The apostles, in addition to Jesus, seem to be promised positions of binding authority, see Mt 16:19 and 18:19-20.

\textsuperscript{716} Compare the concept of “good fruit” in Mt 7:15-20 as part of the concluding section of the Sermon on the Mount, the main theme of which I have already determined as “greater righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.”

\textsuperscript{717} Giles, “Matthew 21:43,” 121. David L. Turner, “Matthew 21:43 and the Future of Israel,” Bibliotheca Sacra 159 (2002):61, similarly argues that this verse should be understood as “referring to a transfer of leadership in the kingdom from a fruitless Jerusalem religious establishment to the fruitful Matthean Christian Jewish community, led by Jesus’ apostles.” He, however, restricts this new leadership to the Matthean community and sees this community as the “eschatological remnant of Israel” which will “continue its mission to Israel while expanding its horizons to all nations.” For further support that what is signaled here is the concept of a new εθνος not simply a new leadership, see Wesley G. Olmstead, “A Gospel for a New Nation: Once More, the εθνος of Matthew 21:43,” in Jesus, Matthew’s Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton, Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge, eds. (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 115-32.
kingdom of God during Jesus’ time on earth. This is indicated by the future tense verb ἀρνηται in the phrase ἀρνηται ὑμοῦ (“will be taken away from you”). As a consequence, some authority of the administration of the kingdom of God still rested with them in some way even though the new King was on the scene.

This seems to be corroborated by Jesus’ statement in Mt 23:3 in his introduction to his castigating rebuke of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. There Jesus says these rulers “sit in Moses’ seat” and that the crowds and his disciples must “obey them and do everything they tell you.” This statement has caused scholars consternation. Viviano states that this passage is “perhaps the most puzzling verses to explain in the Gospel of Matthew . . .” This is because these verses, directing people to obey the teachers of the law and Pharisees and to do everything (πάντα) they tell them, seem to be diametrically opposed to the whole tenor of the rest of the Gospel. Everywhere else in the Gospel Jesus warns his followers to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees (e.g., Mt 9:10-13; 12:1-14; 15:1-14; 16:6-12; 23:15). Thus, Jesus, here, seems to be ordering them to obey their teachings while at the same time elsewhere he warns them against it. What is going on here?

The word ἐκάθισαν translated “sit” is classified by Turner as a “perfective aorist” and might be translated “they took their seat and still sit.” This seems to indicate that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were actively at that time sitting in the seat of Moses. This position would seem to mean that they were here functioning as the “custodians of Moses’ teaching.”

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718 Mohrlang, 22, for example, seems to have invented what he calls “Matthew’s dual citizenship in two communities” to attempt to explain Matthew’s castigation of the scribes and yet at the same time his commanding of his disciples and the crowds to do all that they say.


720 Powell, 419, agrees and states the following “These few verses appear to present ideas that flagrantly contradict what is said elsewhere in the Gospel, and, despite numerous attempts at resolution, many scholars have come to regard this passage as a vagrant pericope that simply cannot be reconciled with the theology of the overall work.”

721 Turner, *Syntax*, 72. Nolland, 923, gives the term a gnomic force and also translates it “sit.”

722 The term “Moses’ seat” is probably to be taken metaphorically, so Nolland, 923.

They were acting as “Moses’ legal successors, possessing all his authority” as well as being the “official Torah interpreters.” Out of respect for their position and authority concerning the Torah, the disciples were commanded by Jesus here in Mt 23:3 to follow what they said. This authority is thus not challenged by Jesus. Jesus rather accepts it and seemingly even supports it. In spite of this acceptance in principle, he did maintain that his personal authority and teaching was above theirs in the sense that he was the fulfiller of the law and that his understanding of the righteousness necessary for entering the kingdom of heaven was superior to theirs (Mt 5:20).

Hence, as long as these Jewish leaders retain the authority of Moses’ seat, one is to continue to obey everything they say. Only Jesus’ teaching can trump theirs at this time.

This authority situation however seems to change at Mt 28:16-20. Here Jesus claims supreme universal authority which would include the transference of the administration of the present rule of God (i.e., the custodianship of Moses’ teaching and his authority) to him and his disciples. The authority of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees at this point has been given to Jesus. This is a new authority structure, something not experienced in the OT or the OT law. It is Jesus’ commands his disciples must now obey and teach. They are “to obey (τηρεῖν) everything...”

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724 Carson, Matthew, 472. The teachers of the law (scribes) also held this view of themselves. Note the following from Aboth 1:1 in Danby, 446:

> Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue.

These teachers of the law seem to have even elevated their authority above the law. Note the following from Sanhedrin 11:3 in Danby, 400:

> Greater stringency applies to (the observance of) the words of the Scribes than to (the observance of) the words of the (written) Law. If a man said, “There is no obligation to wear phylacteries” so that he transgresses the words of the Law, he is not culpable; (but if he said), “There should be in them five partitions”, so that he adds to the words of the Scribes, he is culpable.

725 Turner, Matthew, 546.
726 Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 659, notes that this understanding is probably “more consonant with Matthew’s concern to affirm Jesus’ loyalty to the righteousness of Torah than is the conclusion that the statement is ironic or sarcastic” (contra Carson, Matthew, 473).
727 So Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 659.
728 For instance, note Jesus’ contradicting their teaching on divorce (19:1-12) and their teaching on the passage about honoring one’s father and mother (15:1-14).
Jesus has commanded them.²²⁹ Here, at this juncture, then, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees no longer retain their position as administrators of God’s kingdom and no longer hold the authority of Moses’ seat. No longer would they be in custody of God’s salvific rule. No longer would Jesus’ command in Mt 23:3 to obey them in their teaching capacity be binding. Only Jesus’ teachings would now have supreme authority. Only Jesus and his followers now have the right of administrating the rule of God. This is now solely in the hands of these new bearers of the rule of heaven. Hence, Jesus’ ensuing command after securing all authority in heaven and earth (including that of the administration of the rule of God): “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). The newness of the transference of the administration of the rule of God from the Jewish leaders to Jesus and his followers has now occurred! When understood in this light, mystification of the command of Jesus in Mt 23:2-3 to obey everything the teachers of the law and the Pharisees say on the seat of Moses loses its bafflement. At the time of the statement in Mt 23:3, these leaders still retained their authority. At Mt 28:19-20 they no longer possess it. Jesus’ ultimate authority is now complete.

Obedience in Matthew at 28:18 is demarcated by Jesus’ statement to obey “everything I have commanded you (πάντα δόσα ἐντελέχειαν ἵματιν).” While the term “command” has previously in Matthew been associated with the OT commandments of God given through Moses,²³⁰ it is now associated with Jesus and his teachings. This, surely an amazing statement to the Jewish mind, becomes in essence a new law, or perhaps better, a new way of life (in contrast

²²⁹ Note that these are the same words Jesus’ used when referring to obeying what the teachers of the law and Pharisees said to do in 23:3 (πάντα...δόσα...τηρεῖτε). There thus seems to be a transference here in obedience from that of the teachers of the law and Pharisees in their position as legal successors of Moses and custodians of his teachings to Jesus and his teachings.

to the OT way of life without Jesus). This new life “encapsulates all of Jesus’ teaching as commands to be followed.”\textsuperscript{731} It is the way of greater righteousness, a way of doing the will of Jesus’ Father. Because of the holistic nature\textsuperscript{732} of Jesus and his ministry, Allison and Davies are surely correct when they state that \textit{ἐν τῶι λαμάην},

\begin{quote}
. . . refers not to one command or to the Sermon on the Mount but to all of Jesus’ teaching—not just imperatives but also proverbs, blessings, parables, and prophecies. But more than verbal revelation is involved, for such revelation cannot be separated from Jesus’ life, which is itself a command. \textit{ἐν τῶι λαμάην} accordingly unifies word and deed and so recalls the entire book: everything is in view. The earthly ministry as a whole is an imperative.\textsuperscript{733}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Reflection on Authority Transference and the Nature of Obedience in Matthew}

The transference of authority expounded above further defines the nature of obedience in Matthew. No longer are the teachers of the law and Pharisees to be seen as custodians of the rule of God. No longer are their teachings on the law authoritative nor their position as Moses’ legal successors binding. It is obedience to Jesus that is now obligatory. The authority that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees had as administrators and custodians of the kingdom of heaven (including the custodianship of Moses’ teaching and his authority) has now been transferred to Jesus and his followers who represent the \textit{new} authority structure. Hence, this finding also seems to point more to a \textit{Jesus-based} notion than an \textit{OT-law-based} notion for obedience necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven in Matthew.

\textsuperscript{731} Osborne, 1082.
\textsuperscript{732} Jesus’ ministry was holistic in that he came not simply to give verbal commands but his life (Mt 20:28). To obey him is to answer his call to be his active disciple not only in teaching but in living discipleship, i.e., to obey him is to follow him (Mt 4:19; 11:28-30; 19:21, etc.).
\textsuperscript{733} Allison and Davies, \textit{Matthew 19-28}, 686.
Jesus’ Relationship to and Effect upon the OT Law

In this section, I will attempt to survey and evaluate Jesus’ relationship with and his teachings’ effect upon the law in Matthew outside of Mt 7:21-23. I will survey only those passages which (1) seem to contribute significantly to this theme and (2) which explicitly reference Jesus’ teaching in association with the law. I will then allow those conclusions to inform what was discovered concerning this topic in Chapter III with respect to Mt 7:21-23.\textsuperscript{734}

Jesus and the Law in the Sermon on the Mount

As was determined above in Chapter III, with respect to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus came to fulfill the law through his life and teachings. He was to accomplish this not by simply being the one who expounds on the true meaning of the law, nor to help people be in compliance with the law down to its “least jot and tittle,” and neither to simply be the authoritative interpreter of the law, but in his person and teaching he was to uphold it in its intended predicted eschatological purpose and ultimate goal. In doing this, he and his teachings were that to which the law pointed and thus through him “the eschatological will of God” was revealed. In this scenario, the law remains eternally valid but only as revealed through the person, work, and teaching of Jesus. Jesus and his teachings then constitute a newness that goes beyond the law. In addition, the consequence of Jesus and his teachings upon the OT law seems to be that it makes the law at several points superfluous and obsolete. These points include the laws against murder,

\textsuperscript{734} It is beyond the scope of this thesis to conduct an in-depth exegetical examination of every passage in Matthew dealing with this subject. Passages not considered here, but which may have tangential connection with how Jesus’ teaching affects the law include (but are not exhausted in) Mt 9:14-17; 11:13; 11:25-30; 13:52; 15:3-20; and 17:1-13, 24-27.
adultery, divorce, and the laws about oaths and retaliation. It is obedience to Jesus and compliance with his teachings that are now supremely important.

**Jesus and the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-14)**

In Mt 12:1-14, Matthew presents Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees concerning what is lawful (ἐξεστίν) on the Sabbath. He does this in two sections: Mt 12:1-8 dealing with Jesus’ position with respect to the Sabbath and Mt 12:9-12 dealing with Jesus’ pronouncement of what is allowed on the Sabbath.

**Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-8)**

Mt 12:1-8 presents the Pharisees questioning Jesus about the permissibility of his disciples picking grain on the Sabbath when they were hungry, something which they judge as “unlawful (οὐκ ἐξεστίν).” Jesus answers with two scenarios, each of which point to Jesus’ authority. In the first case Jesus points to the incident in I Sm 21:5-6 where King David and his companions enter the house of God and eat the consecrated bread when they were hungry, something which the OT law designates as only the privilege of priests (Lv 24:5-9). Instead of answering the charge of his disciples’ breaking the Sabbath, Jesus directs the discussion toward the authority of the individuals with respect to this law. David claimed authority in his situation that overruled or made superfluous the specific point of law which governed the eating of the concreted bread. Jesus here seems to be claiming at least the authority of David to justify what his disciples had done. Contextually, asserting that “something greater” is here (vs 6), it would

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735 This word is used here in this passage 4 times: 12:2, 4, 10, 12. Bauer, *Lexicon*, 274, gives this word the definition of “it is permitted, it is possible, proper.” In the context here of keeping the Sabbath it seems to unquestionably have the connotation of “lawful,” cf. France, 455, who gives it this definition here.

736 France, 459, notes that here “the point is who it was who was, exceptionally, allowed to break the law.”
seem that he, as the Messiah, is claiming that he is greater than David. Hence, if so, the implicit concept here would be that if David and his companions had authority greater than the law, how much more would Jesus and his disciples have authority greater than the law.\footnote{Jesus seems to be using a \textit{qal wahomer} argument here as the use of the term “greater” in vs 6 would suggest. On this, see Osborne, 452, Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 309, and France, 459. Cf. also Nolland’s discussion, 483, of five different possibilities of how the behavior of David may relate to Jesus and his disciples here.}

In the second case, Jesus notes that the priests in the temple themselves break the Sabbath law by doing their duties in the temple serving God on the Sabbath, yet are innocent. This is followed by Jesus’ shocking statement about himself\footnote{Since the term “one greater than (\textit{mei`zovn})” is neuter here, various interpretations such as “kingdom of God,” “love,” and “mercy,” have been suggested as its referent (see Nolland, 484, n. 16). However, since similar phrases used with \textit{d\ddot{o}de} (“here”) are found used with a neuter (\textit{plei`on}) in 12:41 and 42 where they are in comparison with individual people (Jonah and Solomon) in a context dealing with Jesus’ authority, the understanding of \textit{mei`zovn} referring to a person does not seem to be obviated. As such, in this context which seems to have a christological emphasis (note for example the terms “Son of Man” in vs 8), I, along with many scholars (so for example, Carson, \textit{Matthew}, 281-82, Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew 8-18}, 314, Nolland, 484, France, 460-61, Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 310, Osborne, 453, and Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 223), take this to be a referent to Jesus.} that “one greater than the temple is here.” Jesus, by this use of a \textit{qal wahomer} argument, is saying that as temple work by priests takes precedence over observing the Sabbath, so Jesus and his ministry takes precedence not only over the temple but over the priests work as well as the Sabbath.\footnote{Turner, 310. Cf. also Osborne, 453. D. A. Carson, ed., \textit{From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 67, states, “Jesus is saying that just as the Old Testament Scriptures made provision for a certain class of persons with authority to override the Sabbath because of their work, so Jesus Himself has the authority to override the Sabbath because (sic) of His work.”} Jesus then explains that the Pharisees’ understanding of the law, which did not see his authority as Messiah and which did not understand the concept of mercy over sacrifice (vs 7), resulted in their condemning those who were innocent (i.e., Jesus’ disciples). He then follows this with another shocking statement that he is “Lord of the Sabbath.”\footnote{France, 463, states that this statement would be “unthinkable” and “the most extraordinary claim to an authority on a par with that of God himself.” Osborne, 454, states that here “Jesus has absolute authority over the Sabbath as cosmic Lord and the final interpreter of Torah . . . Jesus exhibits supreme lordship/authority over the Sabbath and its regulations.”} Since the Sabbath is a creation of God (Gn. 2:3) and it is considered God’s Sabbath (e.g., Ex. 31:13; Lv 19:3. 30; Is 56:4), this statement puts Jesus on the same level as God. Hence, here one experiences again the divine Lordship of Jesus. Jesus, as Lord, is in complete command of the meaning and application of the Sabbath law. Carson notes
that Jesus now claims “a position to handle the Sabbath law any way he wills, or to supersede it in the same way that the temple requirements superseded the normal Sabbath restrictions.” The Sabbath law is thus now proclaimed to be totally subservient to Jesus. This is a new and powerful revelation in which Jesus goes beyond the law. Jesus, the one greater than David, the one greater than the temple, the one greater than the Sabbath, is now the determiner of what is lawful to do on the Sabbath.

What is Lawful on the Sabbath (Mt 12:9-14)

In Mt 12:9-14, Jesus visits a synagogue on a Sabbath where a man with a shriveled hand was present. The Pharisees there asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus asks them a question as to whether they would rescue a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath. He, then assuming that they would do so, uses another qal wahomer argument that since a man is more valuable than a sheep, one should, even more, help him out on the Sabbath. Jesus then makes a very general and broad statement that it is lawful (permissible) to do good (καλῶς ποιεῖν) on the Sabbath (vs 12). The general nature of Jesus’ statement here concerning the Sabbath would then seem to be that of a general principle, not simply one that is restricted to certain activities on the Sabbath. Jesus then illustrates this “doing good” by healing the man with the shriveled hand on the Sabbath. This general principle instruction by Jesus seems to be a

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741 Carson, Matthew, 283.
742 The use of ὄχλος here would seem to indicate that a positive answer is expected, Bauer, Lexicon, 603.
743 France, 465, notes that this statement lacks “specificity” and is in “striking contrast to the rabbinic desire to leave nothing to individual judgment.” He also notes that in contrast to rabbinic rules which are “prohibitive” this is phrased in a positive form, similar to the Golden Rule. He then states that “the onus” is “on the individual to decide what is ‘good.’” While this latter statement would seem to be true, the decision would necessarily be determined by what Jesus would consider constitutes “good” since he is Lord of the Sabbath, not necessarily simply what an individual may capriciously decide.
744 This is contra Nolland, 488-89, who argues that it “cannot mean that the goodness of any activity justifies its taking place on the sabbath.” His conclusion, however, does not take into account what seems to be the general notion of the Jesus’ statement here which he feels is “not absolute.” Others, in agreement with the position I am positing here, see this statement to be likened to the general statements of loving ones neighbor (see Turner, Matthew, 313, France, 465, Allison and Davies, Matthew 8-18, 321).
new teaching as it does not seem to be something explicitly directed in the OT. Since one can hardly argue that it is against the will of God to “do good” every day of one’s life, it would seem that as long as one is “doing good,” the Sabbath law can be broken. In essence, then, Jesus sanctions breaking the Sabbath law in the name of “doing good.” This new pronouncement by Jesus, in his role as Lord of the Sabbath, would seem to make the Sabbath law obsolete and unnecessary. Here Jesus goes beyond the law. The Sabbath law has been replaced by the general concept of “doing good” which in this case constituted the exercising of compassion or mercy. To embrace this involves following Jesus and embracing his Lordship, here, his Lordship over the Sabbath.

**Summary of Jesus and the Sabbath**

Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath in Mt 12:1-14 indicates two things: (1) He is both Lord of the Sabbath and (2) it is permissible for one to “do good” on that day. Jesus as divine Lord of the Sabbath is in charge of determining what is permitted as he is greater than David, greater than the priests, greater than the temple, and greater than the Sabbath. In this capacity, he establishes the principle that one can break the Sabbath law if he is “doing good.” Embracing Jesus’ teaching on this subject involves one embracing him as Lord of the Sabbath. Since, as determined earlier, he is the fulfiller of the law and the one to which it pointed, in essence one does not break the law in following Jesus. Rather, one actually fulfills the law in following Jesus’ teaching here. This constitutes a newness with respect to Jesus’ relationship to the law and it goes beyond the law. I know of no text in the OT law that explicitly endorses any action on the Sabbath which might be embraced by the general principle of “doing good.” In making these moves, the Sabbath law

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745 Contrast Mohrlang, 10, commenting on 12:1-8, who does not believe Jesus allowed for any invalidating of the Sabbath law. See my discussion of Mohrlang’s position in Chapter II above.
becomes outdated and obsolete since it would seem to be the will of God to always be “doing good.”

**Jesus and Divorce (Mt 19:1-9)**

In Mt 19:1-9, Jesus is confronted again by the Pharisees. This time it is over the question of whether it is permissible (ἐξετιν) for a man to “divorce his wife for any and every reason.” In answering this, Jesus refers back to creation and states that “what God has joined together, let man not separate.” The Pharisees then question him, referring to Dt 24:1-4, as to why Moses allowed divorce by giving one’s wife a certificate and sending her away. Jesus then explains that Moses made that rule because the people’s hearts were hard and because it leads to adultery. He then counters Moses’ rule by referring to the creation standard and stating that divorce is not permissible except for πορνεῖα. Since in Jesus’ day the concept of direction given by Moses was considered God’s law (i.e., basically referring to the Pentateuch), it is hard to conclude anything less happening here than that Jesus is countering something in the law. Even if one sees this stipulation in Dt 24 as a “concession” of Moses or a “condescension” of God, or a result of God exercising his “will in response to the circumstances brought about by human sin,” and even if in Dt 24:1-4 Moses did not command divorce but only permitted it, the result would still seem to be the same: Dt 24:1-4 is abrogated by Jesus and his teaching. Jesus is again

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746 France, 719.
747 So Carson, Matthew, 413, Allison and Davies, Matthew 19-28, 14, Keener, 464, and Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 548.
748 So France, 720.
749 So Allison and Davies, Matthew 19-28, 14.
750 Allison and Davies, Matthew 19-28, 13.
751 Contra, Gundry, Matthew, 379, and Mohrlang, 12. Carson, Matthew, 418, states that here “any permission for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1” is abrogated “if that permission extends, or is thought to extend, beyond sexual sin.” Deines, 69, states, “Even if Jesus is in agreement with the school of Shammai here, he is nevertheless critical of the permission given by Moses.” Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 548-49, also seems to admit this in his statement with reference to the Genesis creation account, that “Jesus thus pits Moses against Moses. The implication is that the new era of the present kingdom of God involves a return to the idealism of the pre-fall Genesis narrative. The call of the
exercising his divine Lordship authority as the fulfiller of the law in bringing about his “greater righteousness” to assert a new directive (note his λέγω δὲ υμῖν in Mt 19:9),\(^{752}\) that except for πορνεία, divorce is not allowed.\(^{753}\) As elsewhere, Jesus in his teaching here addresses issues of the heart.\(^{754}\) As such, “hardness” of heart is dealt with in his kingdom and “concessions” to that “hardness” are not allowed or needed. Possessing a “good” heart renders Dt 24:1-4 unnecessary. This OT stipulation in Dt 24 is thus countered by Jesus and it becomes obsolete and superfluous.

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**Jesus, Perfection, and the OT Commandments (Mt 19:16-26)**

In Mt 19:16-26 Jesus encounters a rich young man who inquires what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds that he must obey the commandments. The man then asks “Which ones?” Jesus follows listing four commandments from the Decalogue, including the commandments not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to give false testimony, and to honor his father and mother. Then he adds another scripture from the law to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. The man then responds to Jesus and claims that he has done all of these things and inquires what he still lacked. In response to this question, Jesus tells him that if he wants to be perfect or complete (τελείως, vs 21), he needs to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and then come and follow him.

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\(^{752}\) Not unlike his δὲ λέγω υμῖν in the Sermon on the Mount at 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, and 44.

\(^{753}\) Not only is the directive against Moses’ concession new, Jesus here reveals a new teaching in the use of his exception clause μὴ ἔπιλος πορνεία in vs 9. I am not aware of any place in the OT law where divorce is explicitly allowed for the case of πορνεία.

\(^{754}\) See Chapter III above.
The first impression one may come away with in this scripture from vs 17 is that Jesus sanctions obedience to the OT commandments as a way of entering into eternal life. But Jesus does not seem to be saying that obeying the commandments is sufficient as he then also addresses what the man lacked, i.e., what it would take to be “perfect” or “complete.” The concept of “perfect” had already been expounded on by Jesus in Mt 5:48. It is an essential element in the “greater righteousness” necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven and the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount introduced at Mt 5:20. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven (which leads to entrance into life) is only possible for those who embrace the “greater righteousness” of Jesus’ teaching which involved embracing Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law and obeying his teachings. These teachings include the necessity of following Jesus in discipleship (cf. Mt 19:25-30). This is exactly what Jesus commands the man to do in vs 21. He must sell everything and follow Jesus. Complete surrender is implied. The man, however, would not commit to the perfection of Jesus’ direction. He chooses to allow his wealth to stand in the way, something Jesus also warned against in the Sermon on the Mount. There, as part of his expounding of the “greater righteousness,” Jesus commanded his disciples not to store up treasures on earth and not to attempt to serve both “God and money” (Mt 6:19-24). As such, this rich young man, although he had claimed to obey all the commandments, did not embrace Jesus’ stipulations as to what is necessary for “entering life” or “entering the kingdom of heaven.” Obedience to the OT commands, thus, is shown to be insufficient for entering into life.

In this scenario, one once again encounters Jesus adding something new to the OT law. Jesus requires those who would enter into life to follow him. This requirement goes beyond any

755 Note Jesus’ statement, “obey the commandments” in response to the man’s question as to what he needed to do to get eternal life. With respect to the idea of “eternal life,” it, here, seems to have a similar meaning to “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Note their parallel association at 18:3 and 18:8-9. On this, see also France, 683-84.

756 Carson, Matthew, 424, agrees and states that “what Jesus everywhere demands as a condition for eternal life is absolute, radical discipleship. This entails the surrender of self.”

757 Turner, Matthew, 470, notes that it is “striking . . . that Jesus appends his own commands to those of Moses.”
stipulation in the OT law. With respect to the relationship of Jesus to the law, this section of Matthew shows that the law is insufficient. One must go beyond the law and embrace Jesus and his teachings. Only then would sufficiency be realized. Without Jesus, the eschatological fulfiller of the law and obedience to him, one cannot enter into eternal life. While one could possibly see here support for the idea of OT law + Jesus as sufficient, this passage does not explicitly address this. Neither does it seem to address any superfluity of the law. It does, however, address the necessity of obeying Jesus and following him to attain entrance into eternal life.

**Jesus and the Greatest Commandments (Mt 22:34-40)**

Mt 22:34-40 presents an expert of the law testing Jesus with the question as to which commandment in the law is the greatest. Jesus responds that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind (Dt 6:5). The second greatest commandment is to love one’s neighbor as one’s self (Lv 19:18). Jesus then adds, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Although there is evidence in the OT and Jewish literature of attempts at summarizing the law or isolating the most important aspects of it, it is only first here, that I am aware of, that these two verses are tied together as explicitly that upon which the entire law and prophets “hang (κρεμάω).” The implication seems to be that these two laws (speaking of the one principle of “love”) summarize the whole law. They are

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759 E.g., see Pss 15; 24; Is 66:2b; Jer 22:3-4; Am 5:24; Mi 6:8; Zec 7:9-10; 8:16-17, and Jubilees 36:7-8. See also Nolland, 909, 937, and France, 843-44, for discussions on this.
760 Some Jewish texts might be understood as attempting to bring together these two verses however, see Testament of Issachar 5:2 and Testament of Daniel 5:3. My reference here, however, is to the OT. Since I am understanding Jesus’ words in his divine Lordship in Matthew as God’s words, I am understanding Jesus teaching here as God’s direction, not simply a human teaching. This would then be the first time these two verses would seem to be divinely put together as summarizing the law and the prophets.
761 Bauer, *Lexicon*, 451, translates κρεμάω as “depend” here. He translates the entirety of verse 40 in the following manner with comment: “All the law and the prophets hang (depend) on these two commandments . . . (as a door hangs on its hinges, so the whole OT hangs on these two comm.).”
set forth here as primary. They are part of the law, yet the rest of the law depends on them. All other laws must be understood through the purview of these two. Mohrlang is probably correct when he says that “the law is maintained, but the dual love commandment is viewed as the most important of the law’s demands and the key to its meaning—i.e., as the principle of love becomes the primary hermeneutical principle for interpreting and applying the law.”\textsuperscript{762} The law would be maintained however only when seen holistically through a commandment tier system. Since all laws other than the law of love must be interpreted and applied through the sieve of these two laws,\textsuperscript{763} abrogation of individual laws ensues when the law of love is invoked. But since one would then be following a “higher” commandment, i.e. the law of love, the law as a whole would not seem to be abolished. Jesus, as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, would fit into this scenario very well. He is not a destroyer of the law but the fulfiller through his teaching concerning himself and the principle of the greatest commandments, even if some individual laws are abrogated. The understanding of Jesus’ position with the law which was discovered earlier in Chapter III of him being the eschatological fulfiller of the law and the one to whom it points is entirely compatible here.

In this passage, then, Jesus makes love the all-encompassing principle by which one is to live in following him. It is first vertical (loving God) and then second horizontal (loving one’s neighbor). Since the explicit conjoining of these two scriptures as those upon which the entire

\textsuperscript{762} Mohrlang, 95. In agreement that the law of love is being set up here as the hermeneutical principle to follow when applying other laws is France, 847, Nolland, 910, Hagner, \textit{Matthew 14-28}, 648, and Osborne, 824. This is contra Allison and Davies, \textit{Matthew 19-28}, 246, who believe that this is a common “misinterpretation” and should be understood not as “purely numerical” nor “second in the order given,” i.e., “not numerical in importance” (243), but as “simply the most basic or important demand of the law.” Saying that it is the “most basic or important demand of the law,” however, would seem to necessarily indicate some type of hierarchy of importance and thus seemingly of application, otherwise the term “most important” would lose all practical relevance. Although Bauer, \textit{Lexicon}, 569, translates \textit{διόμοια} (“like”) in vs 39 with reference to the second commandment, as “\textit{just as great as this one},” and thus would seem to give support for Allison and Davies position above, Osborne, 823, is surely correct when he says, “love for others flows out of and is made possible by love of God, both experiencing God’s love and returning that love to God . . . loving God is the higher sphere that encompasses the other.” Hence the first commandment is higher than the second.

\textsuperscript{763} This calls to mind the parallel passage in Mt 7:12 in which the Golden Rule of loving one’s neighbor as one’s self summarizes the law and the prophets.
law hangs seems to be a new priority element not explicitly found in the OT, one finds here a new component which Jesus, in his divine Lordship as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, adds to the OT law. This new component, the prioritizing of certain commandments in the law over others, inevitably leads to the practical annulment of lesser commands in the rule of Jesus’ kingdom.

With respect to the meaning of the concept of “love,” it can be noted that the term “love (ἁγαπάω)” is a translation of the Hebrew term ἡµ “love” in Dt 6:5 and there it has the meaning of loyalty or covenantal faithfulness. William L. Moran states concerning this Hebrew term in Deuteronomy,

Above all, it is a love which must be expressed in loyalty, in service, and in unqualified obedience to the demands of the Law. For to love God is, in answer to a unique claim (6:4), to be loyal to him (11:1,22; 30:20), to walk in his ways (10:12; 11:22; 19:9), to keep his commandments (10:12; 11:1,22; 19:9), to do them (11:22; 19:9), to heed them or his voice (11:13; 30:16), to serve him (10:12; 11:1,13). It is, in brief, a love defined by and pledged in the covenant—a covenant love.

This love or loyalty is not simply a following of the demands of God without any affection or heart for God. Jacqueline E. Lapsley has persuasively argued that love in Deuteronomy has “an affective dimension.” Hence, the meaning in Dt 6:5 has to do with sincere “affective” loyalty or heart-faithfulness to God. One is to love God with all one’s heart, being, and strength. These three words indicate that this loyalty is to be unconditional and consist in one’s total or “full

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764 The concept of prioritizing the OT law was not new to the Jews of Jesus day as they seemed to have been doing this also in their endeavor to determine which commandments were “light” and “heavy” (see France, 842, and Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 646). The newness here however, seems to be at a different level, i.e., that of divine sanction. Mt 22: 34-40 is not the only place Jesus seems to determine a priority for OT laws. He also alludes to it in Mt 23:23 where, in castigating the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, he states, “you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”


devotion.” Since Jesus here in Mt 22:37 is quoting Dt 6:5, there would seem to me to be no reason that this basic meaning of בַּחַל should not also be what should be understood here in Mt 22:37-40 in the use of the term ἀγαπάω.

Having shown previously that Matthew presents Jesus up to this point in his gospel as divine Lord and that his Lordship must be embraced to enter the kingdom of heaven, this loving God with all one’s heart, mind, and soul would here in Mt 22 implicitly refer also to Jesus. Unconditional covenanted affective loyalty and complete devotion to Jesus would then be a paramount requirement of this verse. Loyalty to Jesus and his teachings is thus placed above all other laws. Hence, while the law is not shown here in Mt 22 to be superfluous in any explicit detail, the potential for it is indeed in place with Jesus’ new prioritizing of the law of love, his position as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, and his status as divine Lord.

Summary of Jesus’ Relationship to and Effect upon the OT Law

In each of the five passages surveyed above, Jesus has added a newness that goes beyond the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is presented as the ultimate goal of the law fulfilling its eschatological purpose. As such, he and his teachings disclose things beyond what the law explicitly stated. While the law remains eternally valid, it is only valid as revealed through Jesus teachings and work. In this way Jesus and his teachings comprise a newness, a newness which goes beyond the law. Jesus’ teachings on the Sabbath reveal two new things that also go beyond the law. These are his being Lord of the Sabbath and the determination that the Sabbath law can be broken in the name of “doing good.” In Mt 19, Jesus’ teaching on divorce constitutes a new directive with respect to Moses’ teaching in Dt 24: 1-4. Jesus, in essence, abrogates Moses’

teaching there and establishes a new teaching that it is only in the case of πορνεία that divorce can ever be allowed. In the case of the rich young man (Mt 19: 16-26), Jesus adds to the OT law making discipleship and obedience to him necessary for anyone to be perfect and enter into life. In Jesus’ teaching on the greatest commandments (Mt 22:34-40), his pairing of these two scriptures as those upon which the entire law hangs establishes a new priority element not explicitly found in the OT. This action seems to constitute a new hermeneutical principle for applying the OT law. In addition, Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as divine Lord up to Mt 22 implies that Jesus is included in the greatest command to love the Lord with all one’s being. As such, Jesus adds to the law both an explicit newness of commandment priority establishing the love command as the hermeneutical key for applying the law, and an implicit newness that obeying Jesus is included in obeying the greatest commandment.

Jesus’ teachings in these five passages also uncovered several consequences or effects upon the OT law. With respect to the Sermon on the Mount, several points of the law are rendered superfluous and obsolete. These points include the laws against murder, adultery, divorce, and the laws about oaths and retaliation. Jesus’ commandments dealing with the heart and the concept of love have now superseded these laws. Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath in Mt 12:1-14 allowing the Sabbath law to be broken by one “doing good,” not only allows for the abrogation of this law but makes the Sabbath law obsolete. It would seem that since it is always God’s will to be “doing good,” by doing so on the Sabbath, the Sabbath law becomes unnecessary. In every case, Jesus teaching on “doing good” overrides any way the Sabbath law may appear to be broken. Jesus teaching on divorce in Mt 19:1-9 expressly abolishes Moses’ direction in Dt 24:1-4. No longer is divorce to be allowed except for πορνεία. Thus this part of the OT law has been replaced by Jesus’ new direction. Jesus’ teaching about the rich young man revealed that the OT law was insufficient or inadequate for one to enter into life. Following and
obeying Jesus is what makes one perfect. Jesus’ teaching on prioritizing the greatest commandment of love (Mt 22:34-40) over all other laws sets up the scenario of potential annulment of all lesser commands under Jesus rule.

Thus Jesus not only adds several new elements which go beyond the OT law, his teachings also render parts of the law superfluous, obsolete, insufficient, and unnecessary. He even abolishishes and replaces certain points of the law with his own direction and sets up a hermeneutic within the law that potentially allows for many other laws to become superfluous.

All of this takes place in Jesus’ position as the eschatological fulfiller of the OT law. Obedience is now no longer to the law but to Jesus. He becomes the standard and it is he who determines the status of OT law and its commands in the lives of his disciples. As such, there is here an obedience shift from the OT law to Jesus in congruence with what was discovered in Chapter III. The concept of the law to be obeyed has been modified. It no longer refers merely to the OT law but the law as fulfilled in Jesus and his teaching. This is also consistent with what was determined in Chapter III with respect to the meaning of ἄνωμία. Being an “evil doer” in its broad semantic range with respect to the will of God now must include disobedience to Jesus and his superior teachings. This would also support my critique of Sim’s view in Chapter III concerning the use of ἄνωμία in Mt 7:23 as not referring simply to the OT law but to one’s rejection of Jesus and his teachings. The term ἄνωμία in Matthew takes on a new dimension, a new semantic range. The law and the will of God to which this word now refers embrace the supremacy of Jesus and his teachings beyond the OT law.

In addition, this survey also calls into question Mohrlang’s assertion that Jesus’ relationship with the law should be viewed within the framework of the law.768 Considering the above, it would appear that Jesus’ relationship with the law needs to be seen within the

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768 See my discussion in Chapter II as well as Mohrlang, 11 and 25.
framework of *his person and his teachings* as the eschatological fulfiller of the law. The framework of the law is not sufficient. Jesus and his teachings, which go beyond the law to bring about “greater righteousness,” are, in essence, the *new framework* for obedience in Matthew. This corroborates my conclusion Chapter III that obedience in Matthew is *Jesus-based* instead of *OT-law based*.

**The Uniformity of Obedience in Mt 7:21-23 with Matthew as a Whole**

As has been shown above, the conclusions concerning the *general* nature of obedience discovered in Mt 7:21-23 in Chapter III are consistent with the rest of Matthew. Jesus is presented throughout the gospel of Matthew as the ultimate authority to be obeyed and compliance must be to him and his words for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Further, even the *specific* elements found first on Jesus’ lips at Mt 7:21-23 concerning Matthean obedience discussed in Chapter III have also been shown to be generally consistent with the whole of Matthew. These include (1) “doing the will of the Father” as including the specific content of “greater righteousness” in Matthew at 7:21 through its inclusio association with 5:20 in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, 769 (2) Jesus’ divine Lordship, (3) Jesus as the Eschatological Judge, (4) the necessity of *Jesus’* positive experiential knowledge (as “Ultimate Knower”) of someone as the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, (5) the insufficiency on Judgment Day of anything except complete humility and full compliance with Jesus and his teachings, and (6) the new element of embracing disobedience to Jesus and his teaching in the meaning of what it means to be an “evil doer.” I conclude then that the discoveries in Chapter III

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769 Although not specifically dealt with in this chapter, the meaning of “doing the will of the Father” was, in Chapter III, allowed to have a semantic range not only of “greater righteousness” found in the Sermon on the Mount, but also to incorporate many other nuances from Matthew’s use of the phrase or its equivalent at 12:50 and 21:31 as well as Matthew’s use of the individual terms *θέλημα* and *θέλωθολομαί*. This, thus, engendered its consistency with the whole of Matthew.
with respect to Mt 7:21-23 are harmonious with the whole of Matthew and thus constitute bonafide elements in Matthew’s theology of obedience. Consequently, then, I also conclude that my comprehensive summary statement concerning Matthean obedience in Mt 7:21-23 is well-founded: Obedience in Mt 7:21-23 involves “doing the will of the Father” through embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, as divine Lord and Eschatological Judge, as the absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator on the order of Yahweh of the OT (i.e., the “Ultimate Knower”), with a totally humble-before-Jesus heart and life that exhibits “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented positive experiential relationship with the Father, Jesus, and others, as defined solely by Jesus.

**Assessment of the Crux of this Study**

This study began with the crux issue of determining whether Matthew held to an OT-law based obedience for entrance into the kingdom of heaven in contrast to what seems to be Paul’s law-free faith-based entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This study was then narrowed to evaluate only the Matthean side of the crux issue, i.e. whether obedience in Matthew, specifically as seen through Mt 7:21-23, is OT-law based where one must necessarily obey the Torah for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. I have determined above, in this chapter, that the general nature of obedience in Matthew is indeed not OT-law-based but Jesus-based. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven is determined by Jesus in his role as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, and obedience to him and his commands, not based on obedience simply to the OT law. Jesus is not to be seen within the confines of the law but as the eschatological fulfiller of the law; he is, in essence, above the law. As such he, in his ultimate authority, is able to abrogate, and make
superfluous or obsolete OT laws as he sees fit. To enter into the kingdom of heaven necessitates that one submit to Jesus as Lord in his ultimate authority and obey his commands no matter what effect his commands may have on the OT law. For the Jews of Jesus’ day, this move would seem to have required incredible faith. It would have been an obedience and faith paradigm shift. Jesus was now the one to be trusted with one’s eternal destiny. The law had to be understood as insufficient. In coming to faith in Jesus, one would need to let go of the law and embrace Jesus in his fulfillment of it. To do this would indeed have constituted a giant faith step. Hence, Matthean obedience is not OT-law-based but faith-in-Jesus-based. Obedience in Matthew therefore marks a shift from the OT law to Jesus, its ultimate fulfills. As a consequence, this study calls into question the position of Sim and others discussed in the first chapter of this study (Research Concern) which holds that Matthew posits an OT-law based obedience. Conversely, Matthew posits an obedience that is faith-in-Jesus-based.

Specifically with respect to Mt 7:21-23, this passage, in its consistency with the whole of Matthew and as examined in its Sermon on the Mount context, would also seem to present a faith-in-Jesus-based obedience. Here it is Jesus in his divine Lordship and ultimate authority who is now to be embraced and obeyed. It is Jesus as Eschatological Judge who must be satisfied. It is Jesus as the “Ultimate Knower” whose tests for greater righteousness one must pass to be known by him in order to qualify for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is by following Jesus that one escapes being included with those classified as “evil doers.” Embracing this Jesus involves a giant faith step by the Jews who had up to this point embraced the OT law as the way to follow God. Hence, Mt 7:21-23, in consonance with Matthew as a whole, also presents obedience as faith-in-Jesus-based.

770 In the sense that this Matthean obedience is Jesus-focused, it might also be considered law-free. However, Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law does not separate himself totally from the law but is connected to it as that to which it pointed.
Assessment of Sim’s Claim that Matthew 7:21-23 is Anti-Pauline

As discussed earlier, David Sim, in his article on Matthew 7:21-23, argues that these verses are anti-Pauline. He states, “. . . the ones condemned at the final judgement in Mt 7:21-23 are Pauline Christians. . .”. This conclusion he admits rests “. . . largely on the use of the word ἀνομία.” He also asserts that, with respect to Matthew, “The Law-observant evangelist affirmed that Paul and similar Christians would be utterly rejected by Jesus at the time of the judgement on the basis of their liberal attitude to the Torah.” Sim’s position in this article and in the statements above, assumes two foundational elements which my investigation calls into question.

The first element is that the people condemned in this passage are of a group in the Pauline camp. This is based on Sim’s view that the use of the word ἀνομία here in Mt 7:21-23 refers specifically and only to “failure to observe the Mosaic Law.” In Chapter III, I have shown that, because of the general nature of the use of this term, Sim’s claim that ἀνομία refers to an antinomian group has no lexical basis. I have also shown that ἀνομία should not be restricted to the narrow understanding of anti-OT law. Rather, the phrase ἐργάζομαι + ἀνομία indicates any conduct of many wide ranging actions which are in opposition to the law and the broader will of God. In addition, I have determined that the term ἀνομία must be understood in light of Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the OT law. Consequently, the idea of “workers of lawlessness” or “evil doers” must not be limited to the details of the OT law.

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772 Sim, “Matthew 7:21-23,” 327.
774 Sim, “Matthew 7:21-23,” 327. In examining Sim’s position stated in this article in this section, I will stay within the parameters of the delimitation of this study. That is, I will only analyze his position from the perspective of what has here been discovered in Mt 7:21-23 and Matthean obedience theology. For a broader perspective and critique of Sim’s position on Matthew’s anti-Paulinism, see Joel Willitts, “The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: A Response to a Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel,” HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 65 (2009): 150-57.
775 Sim, “Matthew 7:21-23,” 326.
as Sim holds. Instead, the law and the will of God take on a new semantic range which embraces the supremacy of Jesus and his teachings and goes beyond and even at points modifies and makes superfluous the OT law. Hence, Sim’s false assumption concerning the general use of the term \( \dot{\alpha} \nu \omega \nu \dot{\iota} \alpha \) and its use here in Mt 7:21-23 seriously calls into question his assertion that these verses are referring to Paul or Pauline Christians and that this passage is thus anti-Pauline.

The second element involves Sim’s position concerning the “continuing validity of the Torah as an essential component of Christian existence.” Sim believes that Mt 7:21-23 condemns those false Christians who hold the position of Paul, i.e., that of being “Law-free.” Sim thus posits two groups: the Matthean group that holds to the Torah to be obeyed in its entirety and the Pauline group which he believes holds that the Christian is totally free from any observance of the law. With respect to Matthew’s position on the law, Sim states, “Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus dictated that the Torah (\( \nu \oomicr o \varsigma \)) was to be obeyed in its entirety by his followers (Matt 5:17-19).” Sim, to his credit, does believe that obedience to the will of the Father involves obeying Jesus’ teachings, but believes that Jesus categorically required the law “to be followed in full.” He thus seems to argue the following scenario: Obedience to the OT Law unchanged + Jesus = doing the will of God resulting in entrance into the kingdom of heaven. As such, Sim seems to see Jesus as functioning within the framework of the law, something I argue above that seems to be erroneous. I have, in contrast, argued the following scenario: Obeying Jesus as the law’s eschatological fulfiller + his teachings = doing the will of God resulting in entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This was based on a study of the prophetic use of \( \pi \lambda \eta \rho \omega \) in Mt 5:17 and the growing scholarly consensus that this term used here should carry the sense of Jesus being that to which the law pointed, i.e., the revealer of the “the eschatological

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776 Sim, “Matthew 7:21-23,” 325.  
will of God.” In this position, Jesus, as the law’s fulfiller, allows the law both to be preserved (i.e., not destroyed) (Mt 5:17) and at the same time, at least at points, to be superfluous, obsolete, insufficient, unnecessary, and even abolished. Sim seems to see only two options being presented with respect to the law for a disciple of Jesus: obedience to the law unchanged even down to all its minutiae or a complete abandonment of everything in the law. What I have attempted to argue above is a third scenario in which the law, though subject to change by Jesus, is not destroyed but fulfilled even down to its “smallest letter” and “least stroke of a pen” (Mt 5:18) through Jesus and his teachings. I have argued that Jesus in his supreme authority is above the law and it is he and his teachings that must be obeyed for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. I have also argued that Jesus and his teachings go beyond the law to bring about “greater righteousness” and together become the new framework for obedience in Matthew. The law is not the framework for obedience; it is now Jesus and his teachings. In whatever way Jesus’ modifies the law, he fulfills it and as such preserves it. This understanding modifies what seems to be Sim’s view of the “continuing validity” of the law. The law continues to be valid, not through obedience down to its minutiae, but through obedience to Jesus in his fulfillment of it. If this view is accepted, then Sim’s view that the law must be obeyed in every detail as understood pre-Jesus would be untenable.

Based on an analysis of these two elements (the nature and use of ἀνομία and the understanding of Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law), Sim’s argument that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline rests, from a Matthean theological perspective, on very questionable grounds. Sim has thus not convincingingly argued that obedience in Matthew is strictly OT-law-based nor that Jesus operates within the framework of the law nor that the term ἀνομία can sustain the meaning of an “antinomian group.” This, then, also calls into question one of the foundations of his argument (the Matthean base) that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline. The comparison Sim makes
between Matthew and Paul is thus determined to be invalid as it is based on an unsound appraisal of Matthean obedience theology.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The Nature of Obedience in Matthew 7:21-23

This investigative study had as its goal, as described in the Research Concern, the determination of the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the obedience theology of Matthew’s gospel for the purpose of evaluating whether these verses present an *OT-law-based* entrance into the kingdom of heaven. This assessment was then to be used in determining the validity of David Sim’s claim that Mt 7:21-23 presents an anti-Pauline perspective with respect to obedience to the law and entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter II constituted an in-depth review of (1) Mohrlang’s work dealing with his appraisal of the general orientation of Matthean ethics, and (2) Godfrey’s and Park’s exegetical works specific to Mt 7:21-23. One of the goals of the review of these works was to determine areas of opportunity for advancement of scholarly knowledge in the understanding of Mt 7:21-23 and its contribution to Matthean obedience theology. It was determined that these areas included (1) deeper grammatico-historical study of the passage with a focus on the context, meanings, content, and use of the concepts of “doing the will of the Father,” “I never knew you,” and “obedience,” (2) a revisitation of what Jesus’ fulfillment of the law, its validity, and love as the law’s hermeneutical key may entail, and (3) a reexamination of the meaning of “lawlessness (*ἀνομία*)” here in this passage.

Chapter III engaged in an exegetical study of the meaning and function of Mt 7:21-23 in relation to the Sermon on the Mount to determine this passage’s contribution to the notion of obedience in Matthew. In the process of this investigation, a focus on the three areas noted above for knowledge advancement was maintained and a fresh contextual exegetical study of this
passage in its place in the Sermon on the Mount was performed. Positionally, Mt 7:21-23 was
determined to be part of the conclusion of the Sermon which was comprised of Mt 7:13-27. As
such the content of the earlier parts of the sermon were allowed to inform Mt 7:21-23.
Contextually, it was discovered that the Sermon on the Mount details two major themes: (1)
Jesus’ purpose and authority as fulfiller of the law and the prophets (Mt 5:17-19) and (2) the
necessity of a greater righteousness essential for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5:20).
These were revealed through two structural inclusios demarcated by the words “the law and the
prophets” (at Mt 5:17 and 7:12) and “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” (at Mt 5:20 and
7:21).

Jesus’ relationship with the law in the Sermon on the Mount was determined not to be in
the function of an authoritative interpreter but as its upholder in its intended predicted
eschatological purpose and ultimate goal. This understanding was based on embracing the
prophetic use of πληρόω as its intended meaning in Mt 5:17. In this sense, Jesus in his person and
teachings fulfills the law in an “eschatological will of God” sense. What Jesus taught was that to
which the law pointed. From this perspective, the law was determined to be eternally valid but
only as revealed through the person, work, and teaching of Jesus. Jesus thus had authority to
reveal the eschatological will of God to which the law pointed. This perspective of Jesus’
relationship with the law was assumed in the exegesis of Mt 7:21-23.

With respect to the second theme in the Sermon on the Mount, that of “greater
righteousness for entrance into the kingdom of heaven,” it was discovered that Mt 7:21
epexegetically connects the three ideas of “doing the will of the Father,” “Jesus not knowing
someone,” and idea of being “evil doers (ἐγκαίνια ὄμεν τὴν ἁνομίαν)” to the main theme of the
Sermon on the Mount, i.e. “greater righteousness,” in Mt 5:20. All four of these concepts inform
each other giving a more thorough understanding of the eschatological will of the Father.
“Greater righteousness” in Mt 5:20 in parallel with “doing the will of the Father” in Mt 7:21 was examined for content to inform the idea of “doing the will of the Father.” It was determined that the Sermon on the Mount gives an abundance of examples of “greater righteousness” that are involved in the meaning of “doing the will of the Father” in Mt 7:21. These examples were considered to be “tests” of qualification for entrance into the kingdom and include but are not exhausted in (1) obedience and submission to Jesus himself and his teachings in his eschatological fulfillment of the law, (2) ridding oneself of anger, lust, desire for divorce, oaths, and retribution, and replacing these with unconditional love even for one’s enemies, (3) giving alms, praying, and fasting from a humble heart intentionally presenting oneself to the Father in secret for God’s glory instead of doing them to receive glory from men, (4) storing up treasure in heaven by having a heart totally committed to doing God’s will, (5) ridding oneself of worry by putting one’s trust completely in God and seeking him first, (6) refusing to usurp God’s authority to condemn but instead practicing introspection and healing of self so one, in humility, can help others with their struggles, (7) cherishing one’s relationship with the Father in a way that embraces his goodness and depends on him for good gifts, (8) positively loving and treating others in a way that one would want to be treated by them, (9) choosing to follow God through the narrow gate and on the narrow road, (10) being a good tree which bears good fruit, (11) cultivating a positive relationship with the Father to do his will and with Jesus in a manner in which he “knows you,” (12) hearing and obeying Jesus’ words, and (13) being a person who is humble or poor in spirit, who mourns, who is meek, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, who is merciful, who is pure heart, who is a peacemaker, and who is persecuted because of righteousness. It was determined that all of these could be summarized the notion of embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law with a heart and life exhibiting a selfless, good-for-others oriented relationship with the Father and others.
From the perspective of what qualifies for Jesus’ “knowing” a person in Mt 7:23, it was determined that Matthean obedience here teaches (1) the insufficiency of both performing mighty works in Jesus’ name and addressing him as “Lord, Lord,” (2) the need to present oneself relationally to Jesus in a completely humble and submissive manner, (3) there is a time limit for securing this intimate relationship with Jesus (entrance into the kingdom of heaven is possible only up to the point of the Eschatological Judgment; after that, there is no recourse), (4) one must embrace Jesus as the divine Lord and Eschatological Judge and please him and (5) one must embrace Jesus as the definitive and absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator for one’s life in line with the OT concept of “being known” by Yahweh.

From the perspective of the phrase ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἁγνόμιαν in Mt 7:23, it was determined that the general use of this phrase lends itself better to the translation of “evil doer,” than the more narrow law-focused translation of “workers of lawlessness.” It was also concluded that this phrase cannot lexically sustain Sim’s claim that it refers here to an antinomian group. Rather it refers to any conduct or action which is opposed to the law and God’s will. As such, contextually, since what Jesus’ does is God’s will, this phrase must be understood in a new light in which the framework of obedience shifts from the OT law to Jesus in his capacity as the fulfiller of the law. No longer does obedience to God and doing the will of the Father refer mainly to the Torah but the Torah as fulfilled through a relationship with Jesus and the embracing of his teaching. Jesus and his teachings have here become the new obedience framework. Being an “evil doer” now includes those who do not embrace Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law.

“Doing the will of the Father” thus was found to involve all of the things noted above being informed by the three phrases of “greater righteousness,” the concept of Jesus “knowing” a person, and the meaning of the phrase ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἁγνόμιαν. The content of “doing the
will of the Father” however is not limited to a study of the Sermon on the Mount since this idea was discovered to occur in several other places in Matthew. Those other places reveal that this idea includes the following as bonafide elements to be embraced in the Matthean concept of “doing the will of the Father:” (1) being a loyal disciple to Jesus and his teachings involving an *intimate familial relationship* with the Father and Jesus, (2) repentance on the part of the one who follows Jesus, followed by grace extended to and received by those who are repentant, (3) allowing God’s will to be done here on earth and to do all that one can to prevent Jesus’ disciples from being lost, (4) the utmost importance of practicing mercy toward those in need, (5) the healing of the diseased and giving of food to the hungry, (6) the desire to love and protect God’s people, (7) the acceptance of the necessity of Jesus’ suffering and dying on the cross for the ransom of men, and (8) coming to an intimate relationship with the Father securing it through Jesus’ will. Hence, “doing the will of the Father” in Matthew is revealed to involve a plethora of obedience elements.

In a related aspect, the concept of “entrance into the kingdom of heaven” in Mt 7:21 also adds to Matthew’s obedience theology. It was determined that the term “kingdom” carried both a present and future nuance in Matthew and also involves the active rule of God in one’s life. As such, entrance into the kingdom (or rule) of God involves one’s submissiveness to God’s will in one’s life in embracing “greater righteousness.” Entrance can be gained in this present age and come to fruition in the future age. Without entrance through embracing the “greater righteousness” of Jesus in this present age, however, it was determined that Mt 7:22-23 implies that entrance into the future eschatological kingdom would be barred.

The contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to Matthean obedience theology thus has numerous components. In addition to the above, it was discovered that these verses unveil at least six “first time appearance” elements in Matthew with respect to obedience: (1) “doing the will of the
Father” is here first given the content of “greater righteousness,” (2) Jesus’ divine Lordship is assumed through the medium of Jesus’ own words first here, (3) Jesus as the Eschatological Judge is also presented in his own words first here, (4) the necessity of Jesus’ positive experiential knowledge as “Ultimate Knower” of someone as the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven whether present or future is first explicated here, (5) the insufficiency of words of address and bonafide charismatic works in the name of Jesus in lieu of total humility before Jesus for qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven is first found here, and (6) the implied new connotation of what it means to be an “evil doer” now involving refusing to embrace Jesus as the law’s fulfiller is found here first.

It was additionally determined that the contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the obedience theme of Matthew’s gospel could be summarized as follows: Obedience in Mt 7:21-23 involves “doing the will of the Father” through embracing Jesus and his teachings as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, and as divine Lord and Eschatological Judge, as the absolute personal-relational-experiencer and relational-test evaluator on the order of Yahweh of the OT (i.e., the “Ultimate Knower”), with a totally humble-before-Jesus heart and life that exhibits “greater righteousness” consisting of a selfless, good-for-others oriented positive experiential relationship with the Father, Jesus, and others, as defined solely by Jesus.

It was further noted that the most prominent contribution of Mt 7:21-23 to the general nature of obedience was twofold: (1) Jesus is presented as the ultimate authority to be obeyed and (2) compliance with him and his words is necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven to be granted. No longer is it simply the God (Yahweh) of the OT who is in authority; now it is Jesus who assumes God’s position of divine Lord, the Eschatological Judge, and the relational “knower” of people and their hearts. No longer is compliance to be seen through the purview of the law but through the new framework of Jesus and his words. Entrance into the kingdom of
heaven only comes through embracing Jesus’ “greater righteousness.” The law is insufficient. As a result of this exaltation of Jesus and the necessity of obedience to his words, it was also concluded that obedience in Matthew was *Jesus-based* rather than OT-law-based.

Chapter IV consisted of a survey of the general nature of obedience in Matthew as well as an examination of Jesus’ relationship with and effect upon the law outside of Mt 7:21-23. Only the most prominent features of this obedience (the ideas of Jesus’ authority, obedience to him, and his relationship with the law) were surveyed. The goal was to determine whether the elements contributing to Matthean obedience theology discovered in Chapter III were in harmony with the rest of Matthew and then to use these results to evaluate the *crux* of this present study concerning the nature of Matthean obedience and Sim’s charge that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline.

Jesus’ authority was examined by considering the various titles given to Him, the use of the term ἐξουσία, and the theme of authority transference to Jesus in Matthew. It was discovered that not only was the general nature of Jesus’ authority discovered in Chapter III concerning Mt 7:21-23 (i.e. his being presented as the ultimate authority to be obeyed and the necessary compliance with him and his words for entrance into the kingdom of heaven) found to be in harmony with the rest of Matthew, these concepts were actually *enhanced* and *reinforced*. Jesus is presented in Matthew outside of 7:21-23 as the *ultimate authority* in heaven and earth. He sits at the right hand of the Father. He has supernatural power over nature and demons. His place in heaven is with the Father and the Holy Spirit as deity. It is compliance with Jesus’ words which is now highlighted. This is especially pronounced in Mt 28:16-20 where Jesus assumes all authority in heaven and earth and commands his disciples to obey everything he commanded them. This conclusion was noted as thus also supporting the corollary idea determined in Chapter III that obedience in Matthew is indeed *Jesus-based* more than OT-law-based.
With respect to Jesus’ relationship to and his effect upon the law, it was determined that Jesus in his teaching added a newness that went beyond the law. This newness caused the law at points to be superfluous, obsolete, insufficient, and unnecessary. At times Jesus even abolished and replaced part of the law with his own direction. His new hermeneutic of loving God as the greatest command was shown to implicitly include Jesus himself in his divine Lordship. He and his teachings are thus to have first place in one’s life. As a result, Jesus as the law’s eschatological fulfiller becomes the standard for determining the status of OT law and the validity of its commands in the lives of his disciples. It is Jesus and his teachings which go beyond the law to bring about the “greater righteousness” necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Obedience to the law could not do this as it was insufficient. As a result, contra Mohrlang, obedience in Matthew is to be viewed within the framework of Jesus’ person and his teachings rather than within the framework of the OT-law. It was thus determined that there is a new framework brought by Jesus within which obedience is to be viewed and enacted. This results in an obedience shift from the OT law to Jesus in Matthew in congruence with what was discovered in Chapter III. Obedience in Matthew was determined once again to be more Jesus-based than OT-law-based.

As indicated above, the conclusions concerning the general nature of obedience in Matthew reached in Chapter III were found to be in correspondence and thus corroborate the conclusions there. However, the investigation in Chapter IV allowed one to go even further and determine that even the specific elements found first on Jesus’ lips at Mt 7:21-23 concerning Matthean obedience were generally in unison with the rest of Matthew. These included (1) “doing the will of the Father” as including the specific content of “greater righteousness” in Matthew at 7:21 through its inclusio association with Mt 5:20 in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, (2) Jesus’ divine Lordship, (3) Jesus as the Eschatological Judge, (4) the necessity of
Jesus’ positive experiential knowledge (as “Ultimate Knower”) of someone as the qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, (5) the insufficiency on Judgment Day of anything except complete humility and full compliance with Jesus and his teachings, and (6) the new element of embracing disobedience to Jesus and his teaching in the meaning of what it means to be an “evil doer.” As such the conclusions in Chapter III were determined to be valid as harmonious and bonafide elements in Matthew’s theology of obedience.

Evaluation of the Crux of this Study

Marshaling all these discoveries concerning Mt 7:21-23, the Matthean side of the crux of this study, concerning whether obedience in Matthew was OT-law-based, was evaluated. It was discovered that Matthew teaches a more Jesus-based obedience than an OT-law-based obedience. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven is determined by Jesus in his role as the eschatological fulfiller of the law, and obedience to him and his commands. It is not based on obedience to the OT law. This new obedience of following Jesus was shown to go beyond the law and produce a “greater righteousness,” a righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven. The embracing of Jesus in his ultimate authority as Lord, his position as Eschatological Judge and “Ultimate Knower,” and complete obedience to his words as the eschatological fulfiller of the law necessitated a paradigm shift in the hearts and lives of those who would follow him. As a result it was determined that this would constitute a giant faith step and that obedience in Matthew is indeed to be understood as faith-based. It is faith-in-Jesus-based.
Evaluation of Sim’s Claim that Mt 7:21-23 is Anti-Pauline

All of the above results were then assembled to evaluate Sim’s claim that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline. It was noted that Sim’s argument was based on two foundational underpinnings: (1) that the term ἀνομία refers to an antinomian group (here a Pauline group), and (2) that Matthew holds to a continuing validity of the OT law unchanged by Jesus, in which the OT law must be obeyed in full. With respect to the term ἀνομία referring to an antinomian group it was determined that this term does not carry this nuance of meaning and that this view has no lexical basis. As a result, Sim’s claim at this point rests on a false assumption. With respect to the continuing validity of the law, it was noted that Matthew teaches a new framework within which obedience is to be understood and carried out. Through the prophetic understanding of πληρώσει in Mt 5:17, no longer is obedience seen within the framework of the OT law but within the framework of Jesus and his teachings as its ultimate fulfiller. In this position Jesus has the authority to go beyond the law and even modify it to bring about the greater righteousness necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. As such the law is not destroyed but fulfilled even down to its “smallest letter” and “least stroke of a pen” (Mt 5:18). This is done not through the purview of obedience to the OT law but through obedience to Jesus and his teachings. The law then continues to be valid, not through obedience down to its minutiae (which seems to be Sim’s view), but through obedience to Jesus in his fulfillment of it. Based on an analysis of these two elements (the nature and use of ἀνομία and the understanding of Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law), it was determined that Sim’s argument of Mt 7:21-23 being anti-Pauline rests, from a Matthean theological perspective, on very questionable grounds. Sim has not convincingly argued that obedience in Matthew is strictly OT-law-based nor that Jesus operates within the framework of the law, nor that ἀνομία can sustain the meaning of an “antinomian
group.” As such, the Matthean base of Sim’s argument and its subsequent conclusion that Mt 7:21-23 is anti-Pauline was determined to be untenably grounded on an unsound appraisal of Matthean obedience theology. Sim’s argument was therefore determined to be invalid.

**Further Research Needed**

This study is an in-depth study of Mt 7:21-23 which evaluates one component (the Matthean side) of Sim’s argument asserting that Matthew presents an anti-Pauline perspective. To more fully evaluate Sim’s claim with respect to Matthew, further in-depth studies of other Matthean passages which Sim claims to be anti-Pauline, such as Mt 5:17-19; 13:36-43; 16:17-19; and 28:16-20, also need to be done. This would help shed more light on Matthean obedience and add to the knowledge gained in this study. In addition, to persuasively compare Matthew with Paul, similar in-depth studies need to be made on the nature of obedience in Paul. Such Pauline concepts as “obedience” (e.g., Rom. 5:19; 6:16-17; 15:18; 16:19, 26), “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5), and “obedience to the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thes 1:8), need to be studied to ascertain if Paul’s concept of obedience is compatible with the Matthean obedience uncovered in this study. The Pauline idea of “faith” also needs to be explored and determined if it is compatible with the notion of faith uncovered here in Matthew. Qualifications for entrance into the kingdom of heaven and equivalent ideas in Paul need to be studied to allow for appropriate comparison with the conclusions here in this study. The idea of how obedience fits into Paul’s so called “law-free Gospel” needs to be evaluated and compared to Matthew’s concept of faith-in-Jesus-based obedience. The idea of “law-free” needs to be examined as to whether it is an appropriate designation for Pauline obedience. If so, it needs to be determined if it is equivalent to Matthew’s faith-in-Jesus-based obedience which embraces Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of the OT
law. In addition, the notion of obedience through the concepts of Jesus’ Lordship, his position as Eschatological Judge, and “Ultimate Knower” need to be examined in Paul to appropriately compare Pauline obedience with Matthean obedience revealed here in Mt 7:21-23.

Fundamentally, the idea of obedience in what Sim claims is Paul’s “law-free gospel” needs to be evaluated to determine (1) if Sim’s definition of “law-free” obedience is indeed Paul’s view and (2) if so, is it compatible with Matthew’s faith-in-Jesus-based obedience uncovered here in this study.

**Obedience Expected of a Disciple of Christ**

Mt 7:21-23 teaches that the disciple of Christ must embrace Jesus as the eschatological fulfiller of the law. As such, the locus for obedience is not to be the OT law but Jesus and his teachings. Jesus must be embraced and submitted to in his divine Lordship and his position as Eschatological Judge. Through obeying Jesus and his teachings, one dons “greater righteousness,” does the will of God, and enters into the kingdom of heaven. This obedience in doing the will of God is not to be understood as perfection without grace. It is rather to be seen in the context of God’s familial relationship where mercy abounds. Here, repentance and acceptance of God’s grace is part of doing the will of God. The disciple of Christ is responsible to surrender any claim to worthiness for entrance into the kingdom of heaven as a result of addressing Jesus as Lord or performing great works in Jesus’ name. Rather he must present himself before Jesus in complete surrender for evaluation exclusively by Jesus, the “Ultimate Knower” and relational-test evaluator. The disciple will pass the test if he comes to Jesus with a totally humble heart and a selfless good-for-others oriented positive experiential oriented relationship with the Father, Jesus, and others, exhibiting “greater righteousness” as defined exclusively by Jesus. In this way
Jesus will “know” the disciple and entrance into the kingdom of heaven is assured. Without this, the so-called disciple will be banished from Jesus’ presence forever and branded an “evil doer.”
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# Appendix A:

A Comparison of Recent Outlines of the Sermon on the Mount

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