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Isaiah and Matthew

The Prophetic Influence in the First Gospel

A REPORT ON CURRENT RESEARCH

BY ADRIAN M. LESKE

Introduction

I was drawn to this research by three major concerns. First of all was the conviction that the message of Jesus and the Gospels must be studied primarily from the perspective of the Jewish heritage. Since Jesus grew up in a Jewish household and in a Jewish community it seemed appropriate to approach his message and mission as presented in the Gospels from that point of view, rather than reaching back piecemeal into ancient Israel's literature for understanding of particular concepts. Such a conviction means approaching the Gospels with a fairly thorough understanding of Jewish history and literature, particularly from the time of the exile onward, and looking for evidence of an underlying Jewish contextual authenticity.

Second was the consideration of the Jewish nature of the Gospel of Matthew. This Gospel is replete with Semitisms and OT quotations and allusions. The integral nature of the ten so-called formula citations, as well as the quotations of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, shows not only that the author himself was thoroughly familiar with the context of each of the prophetic quotations but that he expected his readers would be also. He often combined words from two different texts into one quotation in order to alert the reader to the context of both (e.g., 2:6 [Mic. 5:1-2 and 2 Sam. 5:2]; 2:23 [Isa. 11:1 and 60:21]; 11:10 [Exod. 23:20 and Mal. 3:1]; 21:5 [Isa. 62:11 and Zech. 9:9]; 21:13 [Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11]; 27:9

[Jer. 18:1-13; 19:1-12; and Zech. 11:12-13]).¹ His thorough knowledge of the OT scriptures is also indicated sometimes in subliminal messages. For example, in 3:4, to describe the Baptist's clothing, he uses words almost identical to the description of the garments worn by Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8, in order to alert the reader to recognize John as the returning Elijah (cf. 11:14; 17:13).² Similarly, in 27:41-43 he has characterized the chief priests, scribes, and elders with the very words used to describe the wicked in Psalm 22:8 and Wisdom 2:10-20 (an echo of Isaiah 53), in order to point out that these religious leaders in Jerusalem are actually the wicked who persecute the righteous Servant of Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, that is, Jesus.

While most scholars recognize that this Gospel must have been written by a Jewish Christian primarily for Jewish Christians, most, since B. H. Streeter, have argued that the author re-Judaized the gentile Gospel of Mark and a saying source Q. Yet a close study of the Gospel itself shows no evidence of "re-Judaizing," but rather a fairly thorough Semitic background and understanding of the context of the many OT quotations and allusions found in it. Nevertheless, this idea of "re-Judaizing" has led scholars considering the Jewish nature of the First Gospel, because of Matthew's distinctive references to law and righteousness, to look for Matthew's Jewish influences in rabbinic Judaism, though that approach does not mesh too well with the distinctly antagonistic attitude toward Pharisaic Judaism found in this Gospel. Moreover, this supposedly catechetical approach not only makes Matthew the creator of many of the sayings of Jesus, but it also creates more problems than it solves. While the Gospel may show some general evidence of

1. H. C. Kee, "The Function of Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark 11-16," *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 175-78, mentions the following conflated citations as characteristic of Mark's style: 1:2-3 (Exod. 23:20; Mal. 3:1; and Isa. 40:3); 1:11 (Isa. 42:1 and Ps. 2:7); 11:1-11 (Zech. 9:9 and Ps. 118:25-26); 11:17 (Isa. 56:7 and Jer. 7:11); 12:1-12 (Isa. 5:1-2 and Ps. 118:22-23); 13:24-26 (Isa. 34:4; Josh. 2:10; Ezek. 32:7-8; and Dan. 7:13-14); and 14:62 (Dan. 7:13 and Ps. 110:1). As well as other citations mentioned above, all of these are found in Matthew's Gospel. Zechariah 9:9 does not appear in Mark 11:1-11, but it does in Matthew 21:5. Mark 1:2-3 has every indication of being a conflated summary of quotations regarding the Baptist incorporated into the Isaian quotation, the arguments of Joel Marcus notwithstanding in his *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 13-16.

2. Mark 1:6 also contains this allusion to the garments of Elijah, but since Mark omits the whole pericope of Jesus' witness concerning John together with Jesus' provocative statement that John is Elijah (Matt. 11:14), the primary purpose of the allusion is lost.

style similar to later exegesis, the overwhelming influence in it is clearly prophetic.

Furthermore, as I studied the Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel in relation to the other Synoptics, I became convinced that the greatest factor inhibiting real understanding of Matthew's message was approaching it from the perspective of the Two Source Hypothesis. I became convinced that one must study the First Gospel on its own merits as originating in a Jewish environment and responding to the Jewish message of a Jewish Jesus. Take, for example, Matthew 12:1–42. The various pericopes in this chapter form an integrated whole, illustrating the growing opposition and rigidity of the Pharisees over against Jesus as the Anointed One of Matthew 11:2 (Isa. 61:1), who is gathering the faithful to be part of the restored Kingdom of God. The two sabbath stories (12:1–8, 9–14) illustrate this purpose. The disciples pluck grain and eat because they *were hungry* (v. 1). Appeasement of hunger is a sign of the renewal of the covenant relationship and restoration of the Kingdom (Isa. 32:6; 49:10; 65:13; cf. 58:6–7, 10). It is the Kingdom which takes precedence over the ritual keeping of the law ("Something greater than the temple is here," v. 6). Similarly, the healing of the man with the withered hand is another sign of the coming of the Kingdom. The reference to rescuing a sheep on the sabbath (vv. 11–12) is important in the Jewish context because Jesus' purpose is the gathering of the lost sheep of the house of Israel (9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 18:10–14; cf. Isa. 40:10–11; 49:9–10; Zech. 10:2, 6–10). In spite of Pharisaic opposition the restoration of the Kingdom continues (v. 15). All this, Matthew points out, is to fulfill the role of the Servant (12:18–21=Isa. 42:1–4).

This activity is followed (v. 22) by the healing of the blind and dumb demoniac which, in a sense, continues the quotation of Isaiah 42, for in v. 7 the Servant's role is "to open the eyes that are blind," picking up the Isaianic motif of healing the blindness of God's chosen people and restoring them to faithful relationship (see Isa. 29:18; 35:5, 6; 42:16, 18, 19; 43:8). In contrast, the continued blindness of the Pharisees is seen in their readiness to condemn Jesus' healings as sorcery (v. 24). Jesus' response, "if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you," is a direct reference to Isaiah 42:1 and 61:1 (cf. Isa. 44:3; 59:21). The allusion to Isaiah 49:24–25 (vv. 29–30) is integral to the role of the Servant who is to *gather* the scattered

of Israel (Isa. 49:5). So Yahweh promises (Isa. 49:25): "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you and I will deliver your children." Therefore, not to be *gathering* with Jesus is to be scattering (v. 30), to be aligning oneself with tyrants and oppressors, and to be contending with God. This is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven (vv. 31–32). For this act the Pharisees are condemned — not for their opposition to Jesus, but for their opposition to the Spirit of God. For they are certainly not those described in Isaiah 59:21 (vv. 34–37). The only sign given to them is the sign of Jonah (vv. 38–42), who was sent to witness to Nineveh as illustration of Israel's role to be a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). But "something greater than Jonah, something greater than Solomon is here" — it is the Kingdom of God engendered by the Spirit which has come upon them (v. 28).³

All this in Matthew forms an integrated whole. But in the corresponding account in Mark 2:23–3:30, which follows roughly the same order, this development of the motif is lost. Most of the key indicators are omitted, so that even the allusion to Isaiah 49:24–25 retained by Mark (3:27) has lost its essential meaning. The stories in Mark have thus become a series of disconnected pericopes. The same is true of Luke to some extent. He places the sabbath stories before the choosing of the Twelve in 6:1–11, connects the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit with the somewhat conflicting phrase, "he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (12:9–10, a somewhat different version of Matt. 10:33), and places the story about casting out demons by Beelzebul and the seeking of a sign in 11:14–26, 29–32. To interpret Matthew through Mark and Q would be to destroy the integrity of the Matthean account.

Third, in a related study of important themes such as the poorman motif, justice and righteousness, messianic kingdom in 2 Isaiah and

3. Luke also records these two *πλεῖον* sayings (Luke 11:31–32), but they have lost their connection with the Spirit and Kingdom of God partially through his interpretive statement, "As Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation" (11:30). Consequently, there has been a tendency to interpret the *μεῖζον πλεῖον* sayings in Matthew as referring to Jesus as Son of Man/Messiah, e.g., W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 128; John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1980), 129, 138; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 2:314, 357; Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 330, 335.

postexilic literature, I became convinced that the hopes for restoration expressed particularly in 2 and 3 Isaiah and how these hopes were developed in later prophetic writings were the basis of the message of Jesus as presented in Matthew's Gospel. So all this led to my present study.

The Contribution of Second Isaiah

Second Isaiah's message is a profound one — a vision of impending deliverance and restoration. It is a vision of Yahweh's everlasting love reaching out to exiled Israel, remembering their sins no more, calling them from death to life with a renewed purpose to live as his faithful people and thus to become a *people covenant* and a *light to the nations* (42:6; 49:6, 8). The people Israel were not only to gather the scattered of Israel and Judah together as God's children but were to be God's witnesses to the nations, because with Yahweh as their King they would dwell together forever in covenant faithfulness and in peace. As the nations watched, they too would be drawn to seek the same kind of relationship with Yahweh and to acknowledge him as the universal and only true God.

Many themes from Second Isaiah's plan of restoration become the focus of the message in the NT, particularly in Matthew's Gospel. Themes that come out in this Gospel more clearly than elsewhere include the proclamation of the good news that Yahweh will reestablish the Kingdom, not as the kingdom of Judah, or of David, but as the Kingdom of God. God himself will reign, he will be their shepherd (40:10, 11). The nation will return to the time prior to the monarchy, when God ruled as King over his covenant people. Israel, which has been the afflicted and dispossessed (*'ny w'byôn*), the one who mourns, will be comforted, redeemed, forgiven, will have reward and recompense, and will be filled with God's Spirit. They will experience God's justice and righteousness and will respond with *their* righteousness, because God's *torah*, his teaching, will be written in their hearts (51:7). Over and over again Israel is declared to be God's chosen one, his Servant, his Beloved, carried from the womb in order to perform the divine purpose. So God will heal them of their blindness, their deafness, their lameness; he will raise them from the dead to fulfill that purpose.

Up to the time of the exile Servant Israel had been like a sword in

a sheath, like a polished arrow in a quiver waiting for the time to fulfill its purpose, not just to gather the scattered people, but to be a *people covenant*, a light to the nations that God's "salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (49:5–8). For that reason the Servant will again see his seed and prolong his days; he will rise from the death of the exile so that *by his knowledge* (i.e., relationship with God) *the Righteous One will make many to be accounted righteous* (53:10–11). So in God's Kingdom, Servant Israel as a corporate entity is now to fulfill the role of David, and the everlasting covenant made with David is now transferred to the Servant, to those who are willing to give witness to the reign of God in their lives (55:1–5).

Continuation of Second Isaiah's Message by the Prophetic Minority

It becomes evident⁴ that the message of Second Isaiah was carried on by a faithful prophetic minority, not only among those who soon returned to Judah, but also by those who long after looked to the fulfillment of the hopes and aspirations expressed by that prophet of the exile. This is evident particularly in the following textual traditions.

Third Isaiah

When the first disciples of Second Isaiah finally returned to Judah, the trees were not actually clapping their hands (Isa. 55:12–13). There was opposition from the Zadokite priesthood, resistance from the people already settled in Judah, and no hope for seeing an immediate fulfillment of Second Isaiah's restoration plan. The Righteous One, now more broadly defined as "the people of steadfast love" (*'nšy ḥsd*), the faithful, was perishing (Isa. 57:1). But in the disappointment and disillusionment that followed, the promises of the restoration and Israel's purpose were reaffirmed (chaps. 60–62).

The transfer of the everlasting covenant, originally made with David to the faithful of Israel, as a whole was taken very seriously. Thus Servant

4. As Paul D. Hanson has clearly shown in his *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

Israel is *anointed* (61:1) to bring good news to the afflicted, and the everlasting covenant is reaffirmed (61:8). The people are now the "crown of beauty" and a "royal diadem" in the hand of Yahweh who reigns (62:3). The faithful are described as the fulfillment of the messianic promise of Isaiah 11:1 — they are the "shoot" (*nyr*) of God's planting (60:21) who will mature into "oaks of righteousness" (61:3). They will be known also as "the priests of Yahweh" and as "the ministers of our God" (61:6). Thus the responsibility for covenant faithfulness and fulfilling Israel's purpose is placed entirely into the hands of the righteous ones. Once again, therefore, they were to become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6; cf. Isa. 62:12) under God's rule. They may still be the *suffering* Servant, those "crushed and afflicted in spirit," but God is with them (Isa. 57:15; 66:2 — picking up the terminology of 53:4).

Malachi

Some of this Isaianic influence is continued in Malachi, mostly in terms of an intense criticism of the Zadokite priesthood and the desire that the Levites will soon take over the priestly duties. Malachi looks forward to the day when the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked burned as stubble. The work finishes with the promise of the coming of the prophet Elijah to restore relationships, lest God smite the nation with utter destruction (4:5–6).

Zechariah 9–14

The struggles of the prophetic minority, those who carried on the hopes and ideals of Second and Third Isaiah, are cataloged again later by the author of Zechariah 9–14. His message is expressed as two major revelations received during different celebrations of the annual Feast of Booths. The first vision begins by portraying Yahweh as the great Warrior-King coming to fulfill the promises to his people of an expanded kingdom in which they will dwell in security and peace. This was a covenant promise recited every year at the three major festivals: "I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders" (Exod. 34:24). In the midst of these promises of God's rule over an expanded kingdom, the announcement is made: "Lo, your king comes to you; righteous and saved

is he, afflicted and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass" (according to the MT). This announcement draws on two passages: Zephaniah 3:14–15, which speaks of God as the King in their midst, and Isaiah 62:11, which also comes out of a harvest-festival context (62:6–12). In the announcement in that context the faithful had been told: "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God" (62:3), and these people were to receive a new name: "The holy people, the redeemed of Yahweh" (62:12; cf. Zech. 14:5).

The king here (9:9–10) is not some future messiah or Davidide; rather, the faithful people represent the rule of God and are to replace the present corrupt priesthood and civic leaders (10:3). The faithful in these visions are referred to as "the house of Judah" (10:3; 12:4), or "clans of Judah" (12:5, 6), or "tents of Judah" (12:7). This is why the "king" is depicted as coming into Jerusalem riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of a she-ass, just as Judah was depicted entering Shiloh for the Feast of Booths in Genesis 49:10–12. This "king" is described as *righteous*, *saved* (cf. Isa. 53:11; 57:1; 45:17, 22), and *afflicted* (Isa. 53:4, 7; cf. 41:17; 49:13; 51:21; 61:1; 66:2; cf. 57:15; Zeph. 3:12) — all terms used of the Servant in Isaiah. Further echoes from Isaiah in the following verses bear out the correspondence:

9:10: "He shall command peace to the nations"
(cf. Isa. 42:1, 6; 52:7)

9:11: "I have set your captives free" (Isa. 42:6–7; 49:9; 61:1–3)

9:12: "Today I declare that I will restore to you double"
(Isa. 40:2; 61:7; cf. 54:1–3)

9:13: "Arrow" and "sword" recalled (Isa. 49:2–4)

9:16: "They are the flock of his people" (Isa. 40:11)

"Like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land"
(Isa. 62:3)

9:17: Grain and new wine (cf. Isa. 62:8–9)

Thus chapter 9 is really a celebration of the Kingship of Yahweh, whose justice is represented not by a Davidic king, nor through the priesthood, but through the lives and actions of his faithful people. Yahweh will use the people, not only to bring peace and security, but to extend his gracious rule over all nations (9:11–17). Chapter 10 (vv. 2–4) describes how God will strengthen the house of Judah who "wander like sheep, af-

flicted for want of a shepherd" and make out of them the cornerstone (Isa. 28:16), the tent peg (Isa. 33:20; 54:3), the battle bow (cf. 9:13), and every commander (cf. Isa. 60:17).

The second vision begins (12:1) with virtually a quotation of Isaiah 42:5, with allusions in v. 2 to Isaiah 51:13–16, 17–23. In this vision it is God who reigns — he is the King, the Lord of hosts (14:16), to whom the nations will come to celebrate the Feast of Booths. In the struggle to achieve this reign, the house of Judah suffers but is ultimately victorious. It suffers because of the house of David and the inhabitant(s) of Jerusalem. These latter will repent of their deeds and are to be cleansed from their sin and impurity (12:10–13:1). The result will be that on that day, when they celebrate the Feast of Booths, their worship will no longer be regarded as under the exclusive privilege of the priesthood, but all will participate — worship will be entirely democratized (14:20–21; cf. Isa. 61:6; 66:21; cf. 65:1–12).

Jonah

In the Book of Jonah, the prophet Jonah is really a caricature of Israel, which fails to carry out its purpose to be a people covenant and a light to the nations as described in Second Isaiah. When commanded by God to do so, Jonah tries to go in the opposite direction and must undergo a death and resurrection experience in order to turn and carry out the divine purpose. Even then Jonah seems more concerned for his own comfort than for the welfare of all the people.

Daniel

The motif of Servant Israel representing God's rule before the nations takes on a different expression in Daniel 7. The corporate figure of the Servant becomes the more symbolic image of "one like a son of man," who stands for "the holy ones of the Most High" (7:18, 21, 22, 25; cf. v. 27). This corporate figure is "one like a son of man" in contrast to the oppressing nations, depicted as beasts. He "comes with the clouds of heaven" in contrast to the beasts, who come up out of the sea of chaos. The "holy ones" are those mentioned in Isaiah 62:12; 63:18; and

Zechariah 14:5 rather than "angels."⁵ They are the people who remain faithful to "the holy covenant" (Dan. 11:28–30), the wise who shall make many understand (11:32; cf. Isa. 53:11). Under suffering and persecution the concern turns toward judgment of the kings and nations who oppress, and to vindication and power for the righteous. Ultimately, the righteous will shine like the brightness of the firmament (see Isa. 60:1–3), turn many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3; cf. Isa. 53:11), and possess the Kingdom of God forever.

Wisdom of Solomon

The work offers a picture of the "righteous poor man" (δικαίος πέννης, 2:10) who professes to have knowledge of God (2:13; cf. Isa. 53:11), who calls himself a child/servant of the Lord (παῖς κυρίου, 2:13), who "blesses the final times of the righteous" (μακαρίζει ἔσχατα δικαίων, 2:16) and boasts that God is his Father (2:16; cf. Isa. 63:16; 64:8), who is the righteous one, the son of God (2:18, ὁ δίκαιος υἱὸς θεοῦ). The Righteous One is a collective term for "the righteous ones" (3:1) whom God tested and found worthy (3:6) — "like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them" (3:6; cf. Isa. 53:8). The continuing stream of prophetic thought can be seen again in 3:8: "They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever."

The Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71)

In these parables the author has taken various titles given to the Servant in the Isaian literature and combined them with the concept of the Son of Man in Daniel. Thus, "Chosen One," "Righteous One," "Anointed One," "that Son of Man" are titles used indiscriminately of an individual who becomes God's agent to vindicate the righteous, chosen, holy ones — titles used for the faithful generally. The corporate figure of Isaiah and Daniel has become an individual who acts on behalf of the righteous chosen ones and sits on God's throne in order to pronounce divine judgment on the oppressors, and thus to deliver the faithful from

5. In disagreement with John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 123–26, and *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 83–85.

persecution, suffering, and martyrdom. These righteous and chosen ones will be saved and the dead raised on that day (51:1–4), and they will wear the garments of glory (62:15; cf. Isa. 61:10). They will form the congregation of the righteous established by the Son of Man (38:1; 45:1; 53:6) and dwell in peace in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits (39:6–7; cf. Wisd. 5:15–16). The author draws on many Isaianic concepts to describe both the faithful and the Son of Man and also demonstrates the influence of Daniel and Wisdom of Solomon in his descriptions of both.

All these writings give evidence of a prophetic stream of thought, a developing prophetic heritage carried forward through history by a faithful prophetic minority, despite persecution and oppression. This is the particular Jewish heritage of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. No other writing in the New Testament bears such strong evidence of the influence of the thought of Second Isaiah and how his hope of the restoration of God's reign after the exile was reaffirmed, reshaped, and transformed in the above writings as time went on. The mission and message of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, therefore, must be considered in the light of this developing prophetic heritage.

The Prophetic Tradition in Matthew's Gospel

The Importance of Galilee

One must assume that this prophetic stream continued among the common people but not in Jerusalem/Judea, where the temple cult and the religious leadership of Sadducees and Pharisees were strong. The purest form of the prophetic influence would likely have existed some distance from Judea, where it could continue without too much pressure from Jerusalem. Galilee probably would have been an ideal place for such influence — separated from Jerusalem by Samaria, tinged with diaspora concerns regarding temple and Torah. It is possible that Nazareth gained its name from *nsr*, the "shoot" of Isaiah 11:1; 53:2; 60:21 (cf. Matt. 2:23). That *nsr* was used already at the time of Jesus of the faithful of Israel is clear from the Qumran psalms (1QH 6:15; 7:19; 8:5–10). The term "Nazorean" would have identified a person who followed in this prophetic tradition and sought to fulfill the role of faithful Israel as the "shoot of God's planting." This term refers to a movement rather than to a place.

Thus Jesus was often referred to as "Jesus the Nazorean" (Matt. 26:71; Luke 18:37; John 18:5, 7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9), and Paul was later called a "ringleader of the party of the Nazoreans" (Acts 24:5). Nazareth, therefore, may have been established by a group who wished to live out that role of true Israel. Later, however, its proximity to Sepphoris would have made it an unlikely base for any minority movement. The Pharisee party appears to have exerted the greater influence in Lower Galilee, and this may be why Matthew always refers to "their synagogues." Rather, Upper Galilee seems to have become the home of Jewish religious movements which regarded the priesthood in Jerusalem as corrupt. George Nickelsburg has pointed to Upper Galilee as the place of origin of *1 Enoch* and the *Testament of Levi*, and an anti-Jerusalem bias with a focus more to Mount Hermon than Mount Zion, suggesting reasons why Jesus revealed his mission at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13–28).⁶ We find the same emphasis in Matthew — it is regularly to "the mountain" in Galilee to which Jesus leads his disciples and where he gives his revelation.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom in Word and Deed

Matthew speaks of Jesus' activity as *teaching*, *proclaiming* the good news of the Kingdom, and *healing* (διδάσκων, κηρύσσων, θεραπεύων — 4:23; 9:35). The good news of the Kingdom is that announced in Isaiah 40:9 and 52:7. The heart of Jesus' message throughout this Gospel is the restoration of the Kingdom of God — the direct rule of God over his people who have his teaching in their hearts (Isa. 51:7), and who are called to be a people covenant and a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6, 8; cf. Matt. 5:13–16). Seen against the background of Isaiah 40–66, it becomes clear that the Beatitudes (5:3–12) which introduce the Sermon on the Mount are not a list of ethical requirements, but the proclamation of the good news to the faithful that the Kingdom has come to them. The various titles given to the faithful in Isaiah 40–66 are summarized in the Beatitudes, and the promises are announced as now having been

6. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee," *JBL* 100 (1981): 575–600.

fulfilled.⁷ This is the good news of the Kingdom proclaimed further in various parables throughout Jesus' preaching.

However, this proclamation is announced also in Jesus' actions, particularly his acts of healing recorded in chapters 8–9 and summarized in Jesus' response to John's disciples in Matthew 11:2–6. All these and other miracles are depicted as signs of the restoration of God's Kingdom, in fulfillment particularly of Isaiah 29:18–20; 35:5–7; 41:17–20; 42:7, 18–22; 61:1–3. The phrase "deeds of the Anointed One" (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 11:2) clearly points to Jesus fulfilling the role of the Servant, the Anointed One of Isaiah 61:1.

Law and Righteousness in the Prophetic Tradition and in Matthew's Gospel

In spite of the strong anti-Pharisaic bias in Matthew, NT scholars of the past have often presupposed that νόμος in Matthew was to be understood somewhat in a forensic sense in accordance with the rabbinical legal tradition. This has led to various problems of interpretation and a sense of conflict in Matthew's Gospel between the evangelist as redactor and the person of Jesus in their approaches to law. Or the understanding has given rise to an overemphasis on Jesus as the new Moses, as a lawgiver setting down new requirements in the Beatitudes (5:3–12) and requiring more scrupulous standards (5:20).⁸ When understood against the prophetic background a strong contrast becomes clear between how the Pharisees understood *torah* and how the Matthean Jesus understood it. The prophets understood *torah* as meaning "teaching" rather than "law" in a forensic sense, particularly that teaching of God uttered by

7. For a fuller description see Adrian M. Leske, "The Beatitudes, Salt, and Light in Matthew and Luke," in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 816–39.

8. See some of the discussions on law, for example, by Günther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," and Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 15–51, 59–164. Also see Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Matthäus*, 3d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 143–58; Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäus Evangelium* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), 31–75; R. G. Hammerton-Kelly, "Attitudes to the Law in Matthew's Gospel: A Discussion of Matthew 5:18," *BibRes* 17 (1972): 19–32; Robert Banks, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17–20," *JBL* 93 (1974): 226–42; Alexander Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1974), 33–67.

the prophets in their call to covenant faithfulness. In the prophetic literature *torah* and God's *word* are synonymous (Isa. 1:10; 2:3; 5:25; 8:16, 20; 24:3, 5; 30:9, 12; etc.). It is this prophetic teaching of faithfulness to the covenant relationship which is quite evident in Matthew whenever Jesus speaks about the law and/or the prophets (5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40). Thus, Jesus is commonly addressed as "teacher" (διδάσκαλος) in the First Gospel. Only Judas the betrayer refers to Jesus as "rabbi" (26:25, 49).

The same problem arises with Matthew's use of "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη, 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32). There has been a tendency to interpret it forensically as meaning "right moral conduct" — the demand of God to live according to the norm of the law — as the word was used in rabbinic literature.⁹ Yet a study of *šdq*, *šdqh* in the prophetic literature and the Psalms, particularly in the Isaiah corpus, reveals that "righteousness" is a relational term, often used in conjunction with such other relational terms as *'mūnh*, *'mt*, *hšd*, and *rḥmym*, and has the general meaning of covenant faithfulness, both human and divine. Matthew's Gospel thus refers to both God's righteousness, for which the faithful hunger and thirst (5:6; 6:33), and human righteousness (5:10, 20; 6:1), by which they relate to God as Father and to one another in love, the commandment on which hang *all* the law and the prophets (22:40).

Jesus' Mission

In this prophetic context it becomes clear that Jesus' mission is (1) to exemplify in himself the role of Servant Israel to be a people covenant and a light to the nations; thus he is identified as such in the references to and quotation of Isaiah 42 at his baptism (3:17), in 12:18–21, and in the transfiguration (17:5). (2) His mission is also to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel into the Kingdom of God and to train them in the ways of the Kingdom, in order to help Israel become what it had been chosen to be: a people covenant, a light to the nations. (3) Facing growing opposition, Jesus informs his disciples of the need for him, as exemplar of the Servant, to relive the whole history of Israel — even

9. See, for example, Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, SNTSMS 41 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 105; Strecker, *Der Weg*, 150–53; David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in the Semantics of Soteriological Terms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 129; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:327, 453, 460, 500, 577, 661.

the death of the exile — in order for the resurrection to happen. Thus he must relive Isaiah 53 and the sign of Jonah. The significance of Jesus' death and resurrection in Matthew's Gospel is studied from this point of view. (4) Finally, he comes as the Son of Man to vindicate and to judge.

Christology in Matthew

In order to understand Matthew's Christology, it is necessary to see it against the background of the whole prophetic heritage as outlined above.¹⁰ While the Gospel begins by emphatically proclaiming Jesus as "son of David, son of Abraham" (1:1), as the fulfillment of *all* messianic hopes, in response to Pharisaic criticism, the evangelist goes on to show that Jesus fulfills his messiahship primarily by assuming the role of God's Chosen One, Servant Israel, and relives Israel's history in microcosm (Matthew 2). He is identified as the Servant at his baptism (3:17; Isa. 42:1) and then undergoes testing in the wilderness (4:1–11), as Israel was tested. But whereas Israel in the past has failed, Jesus as Servant Israel succeeds. Matthew's quotation of Isaiah 42:1–4 in 12:18–21 emphasizes that it is as Servant Israel that Jesus always speaks and acts. Matthew's Jesus, however, uses the term "Son of Man" as a self-designation, not only because of its representative nature, but also because it has come to be the all-embracing title for the role of the Servant as this role has evolved and been transformed by the prophetic minority, reflected particularly in the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71). Peter's answer at Caesarea Philippi to the question, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt. 16:13) is given with this understanding. "You are the Anointed One" refers to the use of that term in Matthew 11:2, where it is clearly a reference to Isaiah 61:1, and the phrase "son of the living God" alludes to Hosea 1:10, where this was a title to be bestowed on restored Israel. Thus, it is revealed to the disciples that Jesus is fulfilling the role of Servant Israel. So it is in this context (16:21) that Jesus reveals to them that he, the Son of Man, must now bring the Servant's role to completion. The exile for Israel had been an experience of suffering and death, but God had raised the nation

10. For my summary of that influence, see Adrian M. Leske, "The Influence of Isaiah on Christology in Matthew and Luke," in *Crisis in Christology: Essays in Quest of Resolution*, ed. William R. Farmer (Livonia, Mich.: Dove Booksellers, 1995), 241–69.

up to fulfill the divine purpose of bringing many to righteousness (Isa. 53:11; cf. 49:1–13). Israel's failure to carry out this mission had meant that Jesus needed to undergo suffering, death, and resurrection on behalf of the faithful, and thus to lead them to fulfill that original purpose, and to "make disciples of all nations" (28:19).

The impact of Isaiah 53 on Christology in Matthew cannot be seen in isolation, but must take into consideration the whole purpose of the Servant/Son of Man to be a living covenant and a light to the nations. Through coming as that Servant/Son of Man and giving himself as a "ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28) Jesus makes it possible for the faithful to follow his example and to fulfill Israel's purpose. Jesus' response to the sons of Zebedee in Matthew 20:20–28 further illustrates how Jesus saw his ultimate mission and how that mission relates not only to Isaiah 53, but also to the rest of the Isaianic message of the restoration of the Kingdom of God.

In order to understand fully the context of that response one needs to recall that Second Isaiah described the exile as Israel being "sold" to their oppressors because of their covenant transgressions (50:1; 52:3; cf. Judg. 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; 1 Sam. 12:9; Ps. 44:13). But now that they have done double for all their sin, their iniquity is pardoned (Isa. 40:2), and Yahweh will now *redeem* them. They will soon return from exile because, as the prophet constantly tells them: "Your *Redeemer* [g'l] is the Holy One of Israel" (41:14).¹¹ This language draws from the legal tradition that when a person had been sold into slavery because of debt, someone of his own family could redeem him by paying a ransom price and thus restore him to honor (Lev. 25:48–49). Yahweh's kinship with Israel, which gives him that right, is emphasized repeatedly: God is both father and mother to Israel, whom he has "formed in the womb" for himself to be his Servant (43:21; 44:2, 21, 24; 45:10–11; 46:3–4; 49:5, 14–15), and also functions as husband (50:1–2; 54:4–8). The prophet reminds the exiles that God has redeemed them in the past, giving Egypt as their *ransom* (*kpr*) and Ethiopia and Seba in exchange. He will do it again, "because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you. I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life" (43:1, 3–4). So the exiles are

11. Yahweh is referred to as *Redeemer* thirteen times in Isaiah 40–66. The verb *g'l* is used another ten times.

urged to return along God's way as the *redeemed, the ransomed of Yahweh* (35:9–10; 44:22; 51:10–11).¹²

Yet the matter of the ransom price for Israel's redemption is of concern. But the prophet assures the people that God's hand is not shortened so that it cannot redeem (50:1–2). To the cry of the exiles, "You have made us like sheep for slaughter and scattered us among the nations, you have sold your people for a trifle, demanding no high price for them!" (Ps. 44:13), Second Isaiah responded: "Thus says Yahweh, 'You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money!'" (52:3). For God has pleaded the cause of his people and has now taken away from them the "cup of staggering, the bowl of his wrath" (51:17–23). Jeremiah had spoken of God's judgment on Judah and the nations as drinking the "cup of God's wrath" (Jer. 25:15–31; 49:12), a theme continued by Ezekiel (23:31–33). Now that period was ended. The exiles would return shouting joyfully the good news of Zion: "Your God reigns!" (52:7). With this in mind Israel's experience of the exile is recalled, in Isaiah 53, as a suffering and death experience, a guilt-offering (*'šm*, 53:10) for their own transgression, from which God has raised them up to be his Servant and to fulfill their purpose of being a living covenant, a light to the nations (49:1–8), to "bear the sin of many" and "to make many to be accounted righteous" (53:11–12). Servant Israel, now having been redeemed by God, was now — through this death and resurrection experience — to become the means of redemption (or the ransom price) for the nations.

It is against this background that Jesus, exemplifying the Servant in himself and training his disciples to fulfill the role of Servant Israel, responds to the sons of Zebedee: "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" (20:22). It is that cup of God's wrath which had been taken away from Israel (Isa. 51:22), but because of the evidence of continuing transgression in opposition to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom, that cup is once more in the hands of Servant Israel in the person of Jesus (see 26:39). So Jesus will now complete the role of Servant, bear the nation's iniquities, and give his life as a *ransom* (λύτρον) *for many* (20:28) — "he bore the sin of *many*" in order to "make *many* to be accounted righteous"

12. The verbs *g'l* and *pdb* have virtually the same meaning and are used in synonymous parallelism also in Hosea 13:14 and Jeremiah 31:11, always in the context of God gathering his scattered people.

(Isa. 53:11, 12). Λύτρον is not the translation of *'šm* in Isaiah 53:10 but rather picks up the whole Isaian concept of divine redemption. The verb λυτρόω was commonly used as the translation for both *g'l* and *pdb* in the LXX. Once again, God is giving a person in exchange for Israel's life (see Isa. 43:4), and the Son of Man is the atoning ransom price.¹³ There can be no doubt that Isaiah 53 forms the basis of Matthew 20:28, but the proof is found in the context and meaning of Isaiah as a whole and not in the search for verbal similarities in the LXX version.

It is interesting to note that the account in Mark 10:35–45 is almost identical with Matthew 20:20–28. There is one significant difference, however. To the question about drinking the cup, Mark adds "or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized" (Mark 10:38). This addition would seem to indicate that Mark not only connects the reference to the cup primarily to the cup in the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:23–24, 36), but that he is also influenced by the Pauline baptismal theology of Romans 6:3–4. Mark thus seems to focus more on the death of Jesus as a sacramental act than on its connection with Second Isaiah. Luke turns the account into a more general reference to service (Luke 22:24–27) and omits any reference to the "ransom" concept for his gentile readers.

Conclusion

The influence of the Isaianic material in the Gospel of Matthew is profound. It is evident that the mission and message of Jesus had developed to a large degree from this material and how it evolved in the later prophetic literature. This Isaianic material is not only evident in Matthew but also, to a lesser degree, in Mark and Luke. Taking into consideration that Matthew was written for a Jewish Christian audience and Mark and Luke primarily for gentile Christians, who would not always appreciate the many allusions to the prophetic literature, that many allusions remain in more muted form speaks strongly for the authenticity of the more extensive quotations and allusions in Matthew. This raises once again the whole question of the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels. A fresh appraisal of the synoptic problem is necessary from the perspective of the influence of the prophetic literature on the New Testament.

13. See Leske, "Influence," 261; Hill, *Greek Words*, 53–81.