

## ***Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology***

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p.50

“As physical localizations of the relationship between Yahweh and his people, the sacred mountains of the OT can most accurately be described as covenant mountains.”

pp82-83:

“More specifically, we have been able to identify four types of religiously significant mountains in this period—at least two of which (the first and last in the following list) are uniquely Jewish:

1. *Covenant Mountain*. The sacred mountains of the OT are best viewed as covenant mountains, i.e. sacred sites at which the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people was established and maintained. The most striking manifestation of this mountain category in the Second-Temple period was the tendency within Judaism (and later within Samaritanism and Jewish Christianity) to read the sacred mountain into the biblical text as the site for every significant event in *Heilsgeschichte*, even back to the creation of Adam himself.

2. *Cosmic Mountain*. With Hellenistic influence in Palestine providing a bridge for foreign ideas, there was an influx of cosmic concepts into Jewish thinking about Mount Zion and about mountains in general. Zion was seen as both Omphalos and *axis mundi*, and Zion along with other mountains became points of entry into the heavenly sphere. In Jewish apocalypticism there was a fusion of cosmic and eschatological elements—elements which in later Rabbinic thought were treated separately.

3. *Mountain of Revelation*. Particularly in Jewish apocalypticism, mountains often appear as places where revelations are bestowed. Revelational mountains were generally of two kinds: in one—which probably developed under the influence of the Sinai narratives—the revelation is in the form of divinely-given information, often concerning the events leading up to the End; in the other—which is more characteristically cosmic—the mountain provides a point of entry into the heavenly sphere, where the secrets of heaven and earth are revealed.

4. *Eschatological Mountain*. In this period, with its heightened interest in eschatology generally, there was also a focus on mountains as sites for eschatological events. The roots for such an interest are found in OT Zion eschatology, and there are many passages which focus on Mount Zion as an eschatological site. But other mountains functioned in this way as well: the mountain of the Messiah in 4 Ezra 13; the cosmic mountain of 1 Enoch 24-25; the various mountains associated with the revelation of the temple vessels; Mount Gerizim; the Mount of Olives which was the site of one attempted messianic gathering and was to be the place of the resurrection; Mount Sinai where Moses and Aaron were expected to gather the faithful. In all of these traditions the mountain *qua* mountain is treated as a site that carries with it the potential and promise of eschatological activity. As such, the eschatological mountain is a special form of covenant mountain: it is the mountain where covenant promises are consummated.”

## ***The Mountain of Commissioning*** (chap 10 – pp.170-90)

p.170:

“There is general and widespread agreement among scholars that 28.16-20 was carefully crafted in accordance with the evangelist’s particular theological interests in such areas as christology, ecclesiology and salvation history, and that it serves as a summary and climax of these themes as they are developed throughout the Gospel.”

p.174:

“Mt 28.16-20 was carefully crafted by the evangelist as the key and climax of his Gospel.”

Three main statements:

- proclamation
- commission
- promise

How get at theological heart of 28.16-20?

- a) literary form?
- b) OT connections?
- c) unified Christological conception?
- d) Matthean use of Synoptic material?

p.179:

None of these conclusive ... “But rather than abandoning the question, we suggest that what is needed is a fresh approach. Let us turn the question around: What light is thrown on the theology of the passage if we begin not with the statement of the risen Lord but with the mountain setting in which this statement is uttered?”

His answer – the three components all make sense as a working of Zion tradition:

p.180:

“Now Matthew’s closing scene on the mountain in Galilee is a highly eschatological pericope, for it inaugurates an age in which Jesus exercises universal authority and in which the long-anticipated (cf. 8.11; 12.21), but formerly-prohibited (cf. 10.5f.; 15.24), mission to the Gentiles is to take place. Is it possible, therefore, that Zion overtones are present in this closing mountain scene? In the discussion that follows, we hope to demonstrate that each of the three segments of the saying of the risen Lord in vv.18-20 resonate with themes drawn from eschatological traditions associated with Mount Zion, and so to conclude that the mountain reference in v. 16 leads us into the theological heart of the passage.”

- a) enthronement – Ps 2.8 (and see Rev 2.26f) – the Messiah enthroned on Zion corresponds to the “all authority” proclamation
- b) ecclesiology – eschatologically gathered people – esp esp Is 2.2-5 and also Is 25.6 and 56.7.

p.182:

“Verses 19-20a contain more than just a mission command. With the terms μαθητεύσατε, βαπτίζοντες, διδάσκοντες and ἐνετειλάμην we are brought into the centre of Matthew’s ecclesiology. In this command to make disciples who adhere to Jesus’ teachings and who are visibly identified with him in baptism, we have the charter of the Church, the constitution of the eschatological people of God. In our study of Zion eschatology we found that it was to Mount Zion that the scattered people were to be gathered in the last days and that there they would be newly constituted as God’s people. And in our investigation of earlier Matthean depictions of mountain-top gatherings (the Sermon, the feeding), we found reasons for believing that in Matthew’s view the disciples and crowds were being invited to participate, albeit in a preliminary way, in the type of eschatological fellowship that had been anticipated for the restored people of God on Zion, God’s holy mountain. Is there evidence in vv. 19-20a that the mountain setting of this command was similarly intended to provide a link with the Zion expectations developed in Second-Temple Judaism?”

Objection that these are centripetal rather than the centrifugal of gt commission? “two essentially different patterns of salvation?” Neah – Is has centrifugal anyway – law goes forth. And more importantly ...

- a. is overstatement of the centrifugality of gt commission

p.184:

“The first is that the emphasis in the passage is not on ‘going’ at all. There is a curious permanence about the situation described in the closing scene. Matthew does not describe the

breaking up of this mountain fellowship; Christ promises to be continually present with his disciples, yet there is no account of his or his disciples' departure from the mountain. The Gospel leaves us with a picture of the Church as a mountain-top gathering with Christ at the centre. As for the presence of πορευθέντες in the mission command, the participial form of [the verb] is often used in Matthew (and elsewhere) in conjunction with an imperative in such a way that the participle has no independent syntactical function. The idea of 'going' is not stressed, and indeed is present only in so far as it is necessary to 'go' in order for the command to be fulfilled."

- b. not mountain but Christ is the gathering point:

p.184:

"This leads into a second and more fundamental observation: that the gathering point throughout the Gospel for the eschatological people of God is not the mountain, but Christ himself. For Matthew, Christian experience is not merely a matter of replacing one mountain in Jerusalem with another mountain in Galilee. It is Christ who has replaced Zion as the centre of eschatological fulfilment, and the mountain motif in Matthew acts as a vehicle by which Zion expectations are transferred to Christ."

Illustrated by magi who care only about Jer-m / Beth-m according to whether or not *Jesus* is there.

- c) promise of abiding presence –

pp.186-87:

"The culmination of this strand of OT thought is to be found in the belief that God was present with his people on Zion, 'the mountain which God desired for his abode' (Ps 68.16). It is Zion (Ps 135.21; Joel 3.21) or Mount Zion (Ps 74.2; Is 8.18) or the holy mountain (Ps 43.3; Joel 3.17) that is the place where God dwells. Because Jerusalem is 'the holy habitation of the Most High', Israel can declare: 'The Lord of Hosts is with us (עִמָּנוּ), the God of Jacob is our refuge' (Ps 46.4,7,11).

'With'-terminology is encountered in this connection in a number of important passages in the OT and the literature of Second-Temple Judaism. Ezek 34, which deals with the re-establishment of the [187 starts] scattered flock of God on the 'mountain height of Israel', ends with the declaration: 'And they shall know that I, the Lord their God, am *with* them (אִתָּם), and that they, the house of Israel, are my people' (v. 30). In Zech 8.23, Gentiles beg to be allowed to accompany Israelites on their procession back to Jerusalem, 'for we have heard that God is *with* you'. In Jub 1.17f. God declares that when the sanctuary is renewed on Mount Zion (cf. vv. 27f.) then 'I will dwell *with* them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'. Similarly Life of Adam and Eve 29.7 speaks of the restored house of God where he 'will dwell *with* men on earth'. And in Rev 21.2f., John, seeing 'the holy city, new Jerusalem' descending to 'a great, high mountain', hears a voice declare: 'Behold, the dwelling of God is *with* men, and he will dwell *with* them, and they shall be his people and God himself will be *with* them'."

Summary of his Zion argument – p.188: "There is solid evidence, therefore, to indicate that each of the three statements in 28.16-20 is deeply rooted in the eschatological expectations connected with Mount Zion. Matthew's closing passage is not to be seen merely as a compilation of Matthean themes with no inner cohesiveness—as something of a table of contents to the material of the Gospel. Rather, the mountain setting of v. 16 provides the clue to the connective thread running through the various elements of the passage and binding them tightly together. The passage as a whole partakes in a profound unity provided by Matthew's christological reinterpretation of Zion eschatology: the exalted Jesus is the gathering point for the eschatological people of God and the locus of God's presence with his people. The mountain setting functions as the vehicle by which these Zion expectations are transferred to Christ in whom they find their fulfilment. Whatever apocalyptic and Sinai overtones are present have been gathered up into this larger vision."

### ***The Mountain Motif in Matthew's Gospel*** - chap 12, pp.193-202

pp.193-96 – how the other Matthew mountains relate:

- a) mountain of temptation – "antithetical parallel" to mountain of commissioning:

p.194:

"The first and last Matthean mountains stand as literary brackets within which the drama of the obedient, suffering, yet finally vindicated Son is played out."

- b) mountain of teaching – p.194-95: “The teaching which was given on the former mountain was, by means of the instructions given on the final mountain, made the basis of life in the Church.”
- c) mountain of feeding ... hmmm
- d) mountain of transfiguration – links through the temptation: p.194: “The Mountain of Transfiguration is thus linked both with the Mountain of Temptation – on which issues of obedience, sovereignty and Sonship first become clear – and with the Mountain of Commissioning – where the sovereignty of the obedient Son is fully manifested.”
- e) mountain of eschatological discourse – both use “end of the age” – 24.3, 28.20. p.196: “By linking these two passages together, Matthew set the Eschatological Discourse within the more complete vision of the place of the Church in *Heilsgeschichte* that was able to be articulated only after the resurrection.”

p.196-97:

“Thus the mountain in Matthew serves as a place for Jesus and his community.”

Summary – p.197 – “In Matthean perspective, therefore, it is when Jesus is ‘on the mountain’ that his significance and the nature of his mission are most clearly seen. Consequently it can be said that mountains in Matthew function not primarily as places of revelation or isolation, but as eschatological sites where Jesus enters into the full authority of his Sonship, where the eschatological community is gathered, and where the age of fulfilment is inaugurated.” (in his terms – issues of Christology, ecclesiology, and salvation history)

### **Summary – pp.199-200**

“In the final analysis, then, the mountain in Matthew is able to carry out its role as an eschatological site—specifically as the place of the enthronement of the Son, of the establishment of the end-time community, and of the inauguration of the new age—because of Matthew’s consistent and undergirding christological reinterpretation of Zion eschatology for which Mt 28.16-20 provides the most certain indication.

So, when Matthew’s mountain motifs viewed from the perspective of the final mountain in the chain, the true significance for Matthew of ‘Jesus on the mountain’ can be seen: in Jesus and his ministry all of the hopes which had been associated with Zion have been fulfilled. He is the promised messianic Son whose enthronement to universal [p.200 starts] sovereignty had long been anticipated. He was the one to whom the people gathered for healing, feeding, teaching and eschatological fellowship. Not only was he the one around whom the eschatological community gathered, but in a more profound sense Jesus was himself the fulfilment of the hopes for the restoration of Israel. Matthew defines Jesus’ Sonship in terms not only of royal messianology but also of true Israel. In the opening chapters of the Gospel, Jesus is depicted as the one who was called to recapitulate in his own life the path of obedient Sonship that God’s Son Israel had failed to complete. In Jesus’ vindication on the Mountain of Commissioning, therefore, we see the fulfilment of the hopes of the restoration on Mount Zion: it was to Jesus, rather than to restored Israel—or better, to Jesus as the restored Son Israel—that the Gentiles were to gather to participate in eschatological salvation. This being the case, there was no continuing need for the temple. In Jesus rather than the temple is to be found the long-awaited fulfilment of the promise of ‘God-with-us’. With Jesus something ‘greater than the temple’ has arrived (Mt 12.6). The procession of the Gentile Magi with their eschatological gifts has as its goal not Jerusalem nor the temple, but Jesus himself (Mt 2).

This vision of Christ comes to its most complete expression in Mt 28.16-20, and it is this passage which provides the framework in which the other mountain scenes find their place. Like so much else in the First Gospel, Matthew’s mountain theology is to be understood *von hinten her*. When this perspective has been grasped, it can be recognized that the mountain motif is a device used by the evangelist to make the christological statement that Christ has replaced Zion as the centre of God’s dealings with his people; in him all the hopes associated with Zion have come to fruition and fulfillment.”