

Notes on the Second Exposition of Matthew 28:16-20

II. QUOTABLE QUOTES AND SUMMARY NOTES

“The English word ‘disciple,’ normally designates a “follower,” “adherent” or “student” of a great master, religious leader or teacher.” (DJG, 176) The same goes for the equivalent word in ancient Greek.

Jesus said: “It is enough for the disciple to become like his master, and the servant as his master.” (Matt 10:25) It would follow from this that it would be inappropriate for the servant to be more _____¹ than his master.

“The mission of the disciples is to replicate themselves by going into the world to make other followers and learners of Jesus” (Rollin G. Grams.)

“The kingdom of heaven calls disciples to acts of littleness, not for ascetic reasons but for work in the kingdom.”² (Grams.)

“The choice of [taking up a] cross over [taking up a] sword is a choice regarding the means to achieve the end of Kingdom justice and righteousness which applies just as much to today's disciples as it did to Jesus' first disciples. Jesus went on to show his disciples literally what this meant . . . losing one's life in order to find it. The way of the sword is the way trying to ‘find’ life. Jesus says that this way actually results in losing one's life.” (Gram, 122.)

1.*“Matthew’s gospel is, at least in part, a manual on discipleship. In the process of handing on his tradition concerning the disciples, Matthew exalts Jesus as the supreme Lord and teacher of the historical disciples and post-resurrection community. Although the disciples are susceptible to incomprehension (as in Mark), Matthew emphasizes that Jesus’ teaching brings understanding. A number of factors point to Matthew’s intention to provide in his Gospel resources for discipleship: (1) the major discourses are directed at least in part to the disciples; (2) most of the saying directed to the disciples are in fact teaching on discipleship; (3) the disciples are portrayed in a positive yet realistic light; and (4) the disciples are called, trained and commissioned to carry out their climactic mandate to ‘make disciples’ (28:19). The goal of a believer’s life and faith is made clear, and the disciple is outfitted to make more disciples.” (DJG, 183.)

1.

2.“The student or disciple learned through hearing his teacher’s words and imitating his deeds. The combined group of prophets, righteous persons, disciples, wise men, and scribes of Matthew 10:41-42 and 23:34 reflect Jesus’s own identity as prophet, righteous person, teacher, wise man and teacher of the law. Imitation of Jesus is the key. When Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees that he would send them prophets, wise men, and scribes, he was, in effect, extending his own mission through the future activities of his followers. He is their template for mission.” (Vine, *Jesus and the Nations*, Introduction.)

¹ Supply any of a number of words: wealthy, coy, manipulative, pampered, prideful, etc.

² “The disciples’ littleness is also like that of Jesus in the sense that both are called to a missionary service, which may require giving up family, marriage, and property for the sake of the mission. . . . in Mt. 17:24-20:28 . . . Jesus’ own example of going to suffer in Jerusalem, of serving other, and of giving his life as a ransom for many are examples to his disciples of mission characterized by littleness. . . . ‘Littleness’ as an absolute can lead to asceticism; ‘littleness for mission’ disqualifies the ascetic life as self-indulgent.” (Gram, 121.)

3. "Four missions are presented in the Gospel of Matthew. The first mission is 'to the lost sheep of the House of Israel' scattered throughout the cities and villages of Galilee (Mat 4:15; 10:6; 15:24). This is the general focus of chapters 4–13. The second mission, an extension of the first, is to the Jerusalem-based shepherds of Israel (chapters 17–27). The third mission is a post-crucifixion mission to Israel, as anticipated by the prophets, wise men and scribes Jesus promises to send to the leaders of Israel in 23:34. The fourth and final mission is to all the nations (28:16–20). . . The fact that the teachings of Jesus in the first two missions provide the material for the proselytizing mission to the nations means that the nature and tenor of the earlier missions leak over into the final mission. The logic of the gospel is that the mission of Jesus to the nation of Israel provides the template despite differences in missional circumstances for the mission of his followers to the nations." (Vine, Introduction.)

4. "I have chartered in previous chapters a process whereby several idealized roles combine to transform the nation and prepare it for the kingship of Jesus. The prophet invites a distant nation into a closer relationship with God and warns of the consequences of a failure to accept the invitation. The righteous person focalizes the nation's response. The extension of hospitality to righteous persons by the nation results in a deferral of judgment. In contrast, the shedding of the innocent blood of the righteous hastens judgment. The student-teacher draws the nation into a closer relationship with Jesus through an intensely personal process of internalization of word and imitation of deed. Education guards against nominalism. Wise men function as leaders of the nation, guided by the 'mysteries of the kingdom of heaven' and protecting it from the most serious of threats, idolatry. Law-observant scribes ensure that the most important values of the covenant guide how the nation operates. Through these means, God's kingdom is established." (Vine, conclusion.)

Vine's five descriptors

I. Prophet

"[T]he prophet delivers a twofold message, first, focusing on salvation, and then, following the rejection of this message, on judgment."³

II. Righteous Person

"If the role of the prophet is to call a nation distant from God back into a close relationship with him, the role of the righteous person is to provide a focal point whereby the nation's attitude to God is made explicit. How the nation responds to the righteous person, known as a *Saddîq*, determines its fate. A positive response results in the delaying of judgment. Hostile treatment of the *Saddîq* precipitates judgment. . . . They are a polarizing presence that pressure the nation into choosing between acting with gracious charity or with unjustified violence. . . . In the Old Testament, human righteous . . . is viewed as

³ "[W]e encounter in Matthew an intentional sequence of prophetic motifs that chart what may be described as a divine dance between God and the city or nation. In this dance, the respective partners step toward or away from each other in choreographed moves which either end in embrace or rejection. The prophet is the interface between these two dense partners: (1) the calls to repent in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 are an invitation from God to a distant nation to draw near to him ; (2) the deeds of power in Matthew 8 and 9 testify that God himself has drawn near with the intention to save and transform the nation; (3) woe and judgment oracles in Matthew 11:20–24 and 23:13–39 warn that God, as a result of the nation's rejection of him, will once more draw near, this time not to save but to judge; and (4) following the rejection of the divine invitation, the parables of Matthew 13 polarize the nation, jolting a faithful remnant from their complacency while further hardening the already hardened hearts of the majority. These motifs chart a journey in which the prophet delivers a twofold message, first focusing on salvation, and then, following the rejection of this message, on judgment."

conformity to the will of God. . . . The righteous persons Jesus sends into the villages and cities of Galilee have the potential to delay judgment.”

III. The Disciple-Teacher

Disciple is “used seventy-three times throughout the Gospel in relation to the followers of Jesus . . . and . . . understood to refer to ‘one who engages in learning through instruction from another, [a] pupil, apprentice,’ and in a more technical sense to ‘one who is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of view, [a] *disciple, adherent*. . . . It is clear that the Evangelist’s discipleship ideal includes a strong educational component.”

“If the role of the prophet is to call the community back to God and that of the righteous person to nudge it toward righteous behavior, the role of the student-teacher . . . is to preserve the teachings of the master teacher.⁴ At the national level, such teachers guard against the development of a nominally observant populace who pay lip service to God. They seek to ensure that confession is matched by internal commitment, that whose professing religious commitment practice what they preach (cf. Matt 6:22-23; 23:3).”

IV. The Wise Man

A “spiritually discerning leader” . . . “a teachable leader” . . . A “religiously motivated community leader” . . . “who avoids the twin dangers of tyranny on the one hand . . . and on the other hand, an absence of power that results in chaos.” Such a leader would be one to whom responsibility is given that relates to ‘binding’ and ‘loosing,’ which Allison and Davies understand to be ‘to declare what is permitted . . . and what is not permitted,’ or what Mark Allan Powell interprets as “the application of scriptural commandments for contemporary situations.’ Things Jesus did in relation to His taking the prohibition against false oaths to pertain to all oaths, laws on hand-washing, etc. For example, “[w]ise men must decide whether judgment is required to safeguard the community or whether passing judgment may be, in certain circumstances, the ultimate act of hypocrisy,” . . . [or] “whether to respond positively to requests for help or to remain wary.”

V. The Scribe

“The missional purpose of Matthew’s idealized scribes is to promote the law of their King. My reasoning is this. The Evangelist presents Jesus as a king, a king who expresses his sovereignty over his kingdom, as with any king, by means of the law. . . A king whose law does not run writ cannot claim to have a kingdom or to be a king.

In this context, Jesus-scribes are commissioned to promote and implement their king’s law. In Matt 13:52, the “scribe disciplined for the kingdom” is graphically described as ‘throwing out’ [as in passing on to others] things from his treasure store. . . In other words, this is a scribe who promotes and distributes that which he has received.”

Littleness

“The most extensive clarification of this ‘littleness’ in ministry comes in Matthew 10, where the disciples are told that they are to go without supplies on a village by village mission to all Israel. The reason for this is that a reception of the kingdom message of Jesus will mean that the disciples too are received (in the sense of meeting their needs). To turn this around in ministry, the reception of finances and goods

⁴“Memorization played a key role in early years’ Jewish education. Jerome, for example, claimed that the Palestinian Jews of his day knew Moses [i.e., the Pentateuch] and the prophets [Josh-Kings] by heart. . . We can easily imagine a similar process by which the gospel was memorized pericope by pericope.”

from the missionary disciples would mean a rejection of the Kingdom message of Jesus. In a key passage in which Jesus calls his disciples 'little ones', he drives this point home: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a *prophet* in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward and whoever welcomes a *righteous person* in the name of the righteous person will receive the reward the righteous, and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these *little ones* in the name of a *disciple*, truly I tell you none of these will lose their reward' (Mt. 10:40–42). This passage is clearly echoed later in Matthew's gospel when Jesus describes who will be rewarded as 'sheep' as opposed to 'goats' for the way in which they treated 'the least of these my brethren' (Mt. 25:31ff.). The hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and prisoner are the disciples, sent out as missionaries to all nations just as they were sent out the villages of Israel. Their littleness in their missionary status is the key to salvation for the nations, whose reception of them with their message will mean a reception of Jesus in the Kingdom message. . . . [I]f the church is to fulfill its mission, it must do so in the power of the cross. Any interpretation of missions as simply seeking an *end* [i.e., goal] of justice becomes distorted if this path does not take the way (means) of the cross but of power." (Gram, 122.)

5. "Discipleship is modeled on Jesus' way of the cross [in Mt 17:24-20:28, which construes discipleship in terms of being little ones.] Over against construing Christian ministry in terms of leadership studies . . . we need to hear the specific challenge of discipleship in Matthew's gospel. **The simple check for Christians in their various relationships and ministries is to ask, 'Is this the way of the cross?'** [This approach is to be preferred over] exploring good leadership qualities." (Gram, 123.)

6. "The twelve disciples representing the twelve tribes of Israel equally represent the *restoration* of Israel and therefore an exiled Israel awaiting the Kingdom of God. The narrative of exile and restoration forms a hermeneutic for reading Matthew which is essential for interpreting the entire gospel. . . . Jesus' ministry [thus] needs to be understood in terms of a 'restoration of Israel' from 'captivity.'" (Gram, 123, fns 2, 5.)

7. "[F]or Matthew the deeds of obedience on the part of the disciples are marks of the church, for example, poverty, defenselessness, and love. And this is why for him the consequences of these deeds are also marks of the church, that is, enmity, rejection, suffering, and death. In this way Matthew achieves something remarkable; he places his marks of the church right in the centre of the concrete and at the same time ambiguous world. . . . Matthew [thus] helps us to speak of the church in worldly, concrete and thus real terms" (Luz, *Studies*, 163.)

Words used interchangeably (or associated) with "disciple" in Matthew: "servant," "little one" (10:42; 11:1); "child,"⁵ (7:11, 9:2; 15:26); "babes" (11:25; 21:16); "last one"; "brother," "eunuch" (19:12).

8. "Disciple terminology is surprisingly scarce in the OT, but other evidence points to a master-disciple relationship within the national life of ancient Israel. The one occurrence of what we would translate "disciple" in the singular [Hebrew *talmîd*] denotes a student or apprentice in musical instruction (1 Chron. 25:8). The plural form [Hebrew *lîmmûdîm*] occurs in Isaiah with reference to his own "disciples"

⁵ "The 'family' is a model for Christian community: God is called 'Father', the disciples leave their families (Mt. 19:29) and call each other 'brothers' (e.g., Mt. 18:21), Jesus refers to the disciples as 'children.' (Gram, "Not Leaders but Little Ones," 118.)

(Isa 8:16); the term seems to refer to their involvement in an educational process that emphasized listening on the one hand and speaking on the other (Isa 50:4).

“In spite of the relative absence of disciple terminology and explicit teaching on discipleship, the nature of the prophetic ministry (the prophets associated with Samuel, 1 Sam. 19:20-24; the sons of the prophets associated with Elisha, 2 Kings 4:1, 38:9:1), the writing prophets (Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer 36:32), the scribes (Ezra, Ezra 7:6, 11) and the wisdom tradition (Prov 22:17; 25:1; wise counsellors, Jer 18:18) provide compelling evidence for the existence of master-disciple relationships within the social structure of Israel. Each of these institutions was involved in the process of communicating the revelation of Yahweh (prophecy, law, wisdom) and the suggested intimacy of the relationship indicates mutual support in the task of revealing the word of the Lord to the nations.” (DJG, s.v. Disciples, 176)

Features of Discipleship in Matthew’s Gospel [After Wilkins]

Grass-roots and local

“Since Jesus focused his ministry in the Galilee region, the early disciples were drawn from an existing network of relatives (e.g., the brothers: Andrew and Simon Peter; John and James), business partners (e.g., Peter and Andrew were partners in the fishing industry with James and John, Lk 5:10), neighbors and acquaintances (most of the twelve disciples were from Capernaum and Bethsaida). (DJG, 177.)

Not all stayed

“[T]he early company of disciples was apparently a mixed sort. In John’s Gospel there is a unique record of disciples who had followed Jesus for some period of time, but after a discourse by Jesus which they found particularly hard to accept (cf. Jn 6:66). The expressions “going away to the things left behind” and “no longer walking with him” mark the return of these disciples to their old lives before they had begun to follow Jesus.” (DJG, 177.)

Working the crowd

An “objective of Jesus’ ministry among the crowd was to make them disciples. As he taught and preached to them, individuals were moved to faith and began to serve Jesus as Lord (Mt 8:18-21; 17:14-15; 19:16-22). Out of this neutral group referred to as “the crowd” came both disciples and opponents of Jesus. Making disciples from among the crowd was the objective of Jesus’ ministry in Israel (Mt 9:35-38), and the worldwide commission he gave to his disciples before he ascended was for them to make disciples of the nations (Mt 28:18)” (DJG, 177.)

The Twelve—and more

“Matthew and Mark have literary and theological purposes for generally identifying the disciples and the Twelve, but they are in agreement with Luke and John who more clearly speak of other disciples of Jesus.⁶ Luke seems to indicate that Jesus chose the Twelve from among a much larger number of disciples (cf. Lk 6:13, 17).

Women disciples

“The Gospels and Acts give prominent roles to various women who were disciples of Jesus. These women were part of the wider group of disciples around Jesus, but some of them physically

⁶ In the case of Matthew, note Wilkins, “At times it appears that Matthew purposely carries forward the traditional association of the disciples with the apostolic title ‘the Twelve’ (10:1), but on other occasions he implies a wider circle of disciples (8:21; 27:57).” (DJG, 182).

accompanied Jesus during his itinerancy. Luke tells of a preaching tour through Galilee during which Jesus and the Twelve ‘with him’ were accompanied by several women who had been healed by Jesus and were now contributing to the support of Jesus and the Twelve (Lk 8:1-3). While parallels can be found for women supporting rabbis and their disciples out of their own money, property or foodstuffs, the wording in Luke 8 indicates that these women were themselves disciples of Jesus (e.g., ‘with him’ . . . expresses discipleship in Luke’s Gospel and seems in this case to apply to the women; cf. Lk 8:38; 9:18; 22:56).⁷ Women disciples of a great master was an unusual occurrence in Palestine of the first century, as even the early disciples’ reaction to Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman reveals (Jn 4:27), yet these women exhibited the twin characteristics of Jesus’ disciples—they had paid the cost and were committed to him.⁸ This same group of women followed Jesus up to Jerusalem, attended the crucifixion and were the first ones to arrive at the empty tomb (Lk 23:49, 55; 24:9. . .).

Later, in the book of Acts, we find many women who had significant roles in the early church. Luke uses the feminine form of the word for disciple (*mathētria*,⁹ Acts 9:36) in a casual way, so indicating women believers were commonly called ‘disciples.’ (Wilkins, DJG, 178.)

Students of a model teacher

“Matthew has arranged his disciple material to accentuate Jesus as the effective teacher of his disciples. Each of the major discourses is primarily directed to the disciples (5:1; 10:1; 13:10, 36; 18:1; 23:1; 24:1-3), and teaching segments are often transformed into explicit discipleship-teaching pericopae [segments] by including the term ‘disciple’ (8:21, 23; 9:27; 10:42; 12:49; 13:10; 15:23; . . . [etc.]). On at least three occasions the teaching of Jesus leads to an explicit statement that the disciples understand (16:12; 17:13; 14:52), whereas Mark says that the disciples do not understand (cf. Mk 6:52; 8:21; 9:10, 32). Some scholars take this contrast . . . to mean Matthew has idealized the disciples by omitting or toning down anything negative about them. On the contrary . . . Matthew explicitly tells of their deficient faith . . . and . . . presents negative aspects of the disciples (e.g., 28:8, 56). Instead of idealizing, the theme of the disciples’ understanding accentuates Jesus’ teaching and his role as an effective teacher.” (DJG, 182.)

Realistic examples for us, having both positive and negative traits

*“Matthew has not intended the disciples to be an idealistic paradigm. He shows both positive and negative traits. The positive aspect, which is especially present in the discipleship teachings, shows what will happen to true disciples who fully obey and follow Jesus. The negative traits show what can happen to disciples who do not identify with Jesus in his obedience to the will of the Father (e.g., they stumble, 16:23; flee, 26:56; fall asleep, 26:40, 45; and act in brash boldness, 26:35). Portrayed both positively and negatively (15:23; 16:5-12; 17:6-7; 16:19; 19:13-15), the disciples become examples of imperfect followers of Jesus who are taught and who advance to understanding and solidarity with Jesus. And, as an example for Matthew’s church, they provide a very practical and realistic display of what it means to be called a disciple (28:16, 18).” (Wilkins, DJG, 182.)

⁷ As Wilkins argues “with him” seems indeed to be code language for being a disciple in the Lucan texts he cites (i.e., 8:38; 9:18; 22:56). But whether the women are here meant to be understood as disciples is not entirely clear. The word that connects the disciples “with him” and the women is the word *kai* (“and”), which can sometimes be translated “even.” In support of Wilkins’ suggestion, the word “also” in some translations (“and also some women”—so RSV, ESV, NASB) is not in the Greek text. In short, his suggestion is noteworthy and possible, but not certain.

⁸ Elsewhere (in his article on “Disciples”) Wilkins also describes what he calls “the twin prerequisites of discipleship—paying the cost and committing themselves to the cause.” (DJG, 177.)

⁹ The term is used to describe Tabitha (aka Dorcas), whose death prompted other disciples to petition Peter to come and raise her from the dead, which he did (Acts 6:38-42).

“In several instances the questions and responses Peter voices to Jesus on behalf of the disciples were issues that still spoke to the church of Matthew’s day (e.g., 15:15; 17:24-25; 18:21). As Jesus instructs Peter, instruction is provided for the church. The focus is on Jesus who promised to Peter, “I will build my church” and who had called him, corrected him and instructed him. As Jesus worked with and through Peter, so he would with the church.” (Wilkins, *DJG*, 183.)

Appendix A: On Marks of the Church as a Community of Disciples (After Luz)

1. *Church for Matthew is Missionizing, Proclaiming Church*

2. *For Matthew the Community Consists of Potential Itinerant Radicals*

“The primitive church did not [as often argued] consist of two groups of people who differed fundamentally in lifestyle and ethos, i.e., the itinerant radicals and the settled communities. Rather there was fluid interchange between them. Community members set out on mission and returned to their communities. Only this model corresponds to the fragments of historical evidence that we have. Only on this basis can we just understand why ‘discipleship’ in primitive Christianity does not merely designate the way of life of a special group of Christians but . . . came to mean the Christian way of life in general . . . Nowhere does Matthew say that all disciples *must* become itinerant radicals but he does make it clear that traveling in the course of proclamation is a way of life to which all are basically called. If [Matthew 10] really is discourse on discipleship and not on a special form of discipleship, then the whole community is addressed as a group of potentially itinerant radicals. Those who are unable to carry the full yoke of the Lord—in the sense of Didache 6:2— are to do what they can such as receiving travelers in their homes and bearing witness to the Son of Man in their own locality. (Luz, *Studies*, 153.)

3. *For Matthew, Poverty for the Sake of the Kingdom of God is a Constitutive Mark of Discipleship*

“[F]or Matthew proclaiming the gospel involves being unarmed and being poor.

In the light of Matthew 5:43–48 where perfection is associated with love and Matthew 22:34–40 where loving one’s neighbor is the greatest commandment, the call to renounce possessions and give to the poor must be understood as the concrete enactment of the command to love one’s neighbor. This is supported by the key phrase ‘treasure in heaven,’ a direct allusion to 6:19-21 and by the fact that in 19:23 following the commandment to renounce possessions refers directly to all disciples.

It is not a special instruction for a select few but a command to everyone. In 19:29 it is linked with the break with the family. It seems clear to me, then, that for Matthew going without possessions is an essential mark of all disciples. His tendency in ch[apter] 10, therefore, is not to allow the disciples every everything at home and expect poverty of them only when they are missionizing on the road. Rather life at home should resemble life on the road as closely as possible. Jesus’ command to poverty applies to both. Matthew did not prescribe a minimum legal poverty or renunciation level, but under the heading ‘greater righteousness’ he gives very clear directions on renunciation of possessions on the path to perfection. . . . For Matthew the

poverty of disciples is a decisive 'nota' [mark] of the church. It means nothing less than adopting the poverty of Jesus himself."¹⁰ (Luz, *Studies*, 155–56.)

IV. RELEVANT PASSAGES

John 6:60—*a text with wording that provides insight into the nature of discipleship*

"As a result of this many of his disciples went back to the things left behind and were no longer walking with him."¹¹

Matthew 10:41-42—*a text with synonyms for "disciple" and with insight on how the Great Commission is to be carried out*

"The one who receives a **prophet** because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a **righteous person** because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these **little ones** even a cup of cold water because he is a **disciple**, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." (ESV.)

Matthew 13:51-52—*a text with an important synonym for "disciple"—scribe— what that scribe-disciple does* [Jesus speaking to the disciples after his teaching on the Parables of the Kingdom]:

⁵¹"Have you understood all this?" They said to him, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every **scribe** who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Matthew 23:34—*a text with synonyms for disciple that describes the fate of some who fulfil the Great Commission*

[Jesus speaking to the religious leaders]:

³⁴"Therefore I send you **prophets** and **wise men** and **scribes**, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, [³⁵ So that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.]" (ESV.)

¹⁰ "It is unsurprising to find that this mark of the church in particular has been problematic in the history of interpretation. Matthew 10:9-10 was taken seriously in its literal sense when the text could be used to denounce opponents within the church who lived in luxury. It was also taken literally and seriously of course by Francis of Assisi for whom it became the crucial text of his life, and by the Waldense as a special rule for the *via apostolica*. Otherwise interpretation has been dominated by attempts to dilute the text its meaning, was moralized, turned into a warning against pride and meanness. The text was allegorized and said to be concerned with putting one's cares aside or putting on the true tunic, Christ himself. Its impact could be weakened by pointing to the differences in the various versions of the text in the Gospels. In the Reformation era, it is at least still emphasized that although preachers should be able to live free of worldly cares, they should only receive sufficient to feed and clothe themselves from preaching the gospel. As far as the contemporary situation in our churches is concerned . . . the direction Matthew gives us is hardly taken seriously." (Luz, *Studies*, 155-56).

¹¹ As John uses these terms, they imply these disciples began following Jesus for his novelty as a miracle worker and teacher. "They had made some kind of commitment to Jesus, but when his teaching did not conform to their expectations they left him. They were only loosely connected to the movement." (DJG, 177)

Appendix: Vine's "Motivating Readers for Mission"¹²

"The evangelist has written his Gospel in such a way as to encourage his readers to participate in mission. First, mission involves multiple discipleship roles. The educator is affirmed as being of equal importance to the prophet. The presence of the righteous person complements that of the scribe and the wise men. If the reader does not readily identify with any of these roles, a composite identity may be constructed drawing on a selection of disciple-related motifs within the Gospel. The history of interpretation testifies to the popularity of this approach. In distinguishing between various discipleship roles, the evangelist has relieved the reader of the burden of fulfilling all the tasks involved in the mission to the nations. Responsibility for the mission does not rest on any one pair of shoulders. It is a communal venture.

Secondly, the Gospel presents a broad range of missional scenarios. It models mission to the village, town, city, and nation. It models mission to different levels of society, to the sheep to the shepherds. It models entering a community, remaining there when accepted, and withdrawing when rejected. It models different psychological stances toward the community, whether it be the more distant and critical mindset of the prophet, to the more intimate mindset of the educator and the protective mindset of the wise man. It models mission undertaken by the literate and the illiterate, the educated and the uneducated. It models mission independent of monetary resources. In presenting such a diverse range of missional scenarios, the Evangelist reduces the ability of the reader to claim that the Gospel does not address his or her situation in some way.

Thirdly, the evangelist assigns great theological significance to the various reactions of the nations to this mission. On the positive side, I have argued that the evangelist holds out the possibility that the judgment of the nations may be deferred through a process of national transformation. Prophets diagnose the problem and warn the nation of the consequences of rejecting divine sovereignty. Righteous persons function as the salt of the earth. Their presence matters. When the nation extends hospitality to them, the nation itself is counted as righteous and preserved from judgment. When the nation ignores the needs of the righteous, future judgment will be more severe. Persecution of the righteous results in a hastening of judgement. Teachers guard against nominal allegiance by inviting the wider population into an intensive and intimate process of imitation. Wise men guide the nation, aware of their sovereign's plans for the future. Finally, scribes ensure that the public and legal culture of the nation is grounded upon a covenant relationship with their king as expressed in the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faith. They seek to integrate divine legal principles within existing legal systems and among the general populace. Acceptance of this initiative leads to national transformation as the sovereignty of king Jesus is established over the nations.

This transformation process reflects the Old Testament, in which Yahweh sent prophets and other representatives to Israel in order to bring the nation back to himself. When Israel responded positively, judgment was deferred. Similarly, when the nations accept the sovereignty of King Jesus, there is deferral of judgment, a delay of the *Parousia* [return].

This vision of national transformation extends beyond a narrow preoccupation with the salvation of individuals and instead provides us with a rich picture of what a restored nation might look like. It is a vision in which individuals are saved *within* rather than *from* their national contexts. It involves the whole of the nation accepting the sovereignty of Jesus and challenges those political theologies which focus on withdrawal from society or the separation of church and state. Such political theologies leave large parts of the nation outside the sovereignty of king Jesus. The Evangelist's vision is for the whole of

¹² Cedric E. W. Vine, *Jesus and the Nations: Discipleship and Mission in the Gospel of Matthew*, 2022,

the nation to accept design divine sovereignty and this is reflected in the broad range of discipleship roles and missional scenarios he presents. Both home and place, village and council, are to be encouraged to accept the sovereignty of their king.

This positive and optimistic portrayal of the nations' future is counterbalanced by a more sombre message. The nations are in a state of idolatrous lawlessness and already are under divine judgment. The Gospel warns that they are highly likely to respond to the disciples in the same way as the leaders of Israel responded to Jesus. They will reject their appeals to repent and instead will persecute them and shed their innocent blood. God will not, however, allow this to go unpunished. Justice will be restored when the Son of Man treats the nations in the same way they have treated his envoys. Those who have extended mercy to his followers will receive mercy. Those who rejected them will be rejected.

The factor that precipitates the *Parousia*, if we take Jesus' s mission to Jerusalem as the template for the mission to the nations, is the shedding of innocent blood. Over the generations, this blood pollutes the land to the extent that it becomes uninhabitable. Innocent blood cries out for justice. Only judgement can restore the land to an inhabitable site. We may infer from the multifaceted mission of Jesus to Israel that prior to the final judgment, God will send a host of different envoys reflecting the discipleship roles we have discussed, a climax of revelation, a testimony to the nations, a loud cry, in an attempt to turn a generation that reflects the generation of the flood away from their lawless ways. God responds to the cry of innocent blood with his own loud cry to the nations, a final and desperate appeal for them to change. When this initiative is rejected and more blood is shed, judgment becomes the only means by which divine sovereignty may be established.

The Evangelist does not anticipate a distant time in the future when Jesus will call his followers to participate in this mission. Instead, the call is always in the present, made anytime someone reads his Gospel and feels the conviction that they should participate in this mission. In this sense, there is always the possibility that a community of readers will read the Gospel and together feel convicted to embody all the discipleship roles I have described. When a community responds in this manner, they become a climax of revelation, a condemning testimony, a threat to those among the nations who would resist the sovereignty of King Jesus. Those who resist will likely respond with hostility. This hostility precipitates judgment.

In this sense, hastening the *parousia* requires two conditions, a community of followers who share the vision of the Evangelist and nations which respond with ultimate cruelty and violence. When these two conditions align, God is justified in judging the nations. When only the first condition is fulfilled, the final judgment will be more severe, but nevertheless may not be precipitated. This theology enables the followers of Jesus to contribute to the timing of the *parousia* but not to control it. They too must accept the sovereignty of the one who ultimately decides when it will occur. They too must respect the will of their father in heaven."