

Matthew's portrait of Jesus

ABSTRACT

Studies in Matthean Christology often tend to focus merely on the titles given to Jesus in this Gospel. These titles are considered as key words to convey the early Christians' confession of Jesus. Such an approach holds the risk of assuming that Matthew had a worked out "Christology" and that these titles had universal and fixed meanings. In this article I argue that such titles provide helpful pointers to Matthew's understanding of Jesus, but on condition that their meanings are carefully interpreted within the context of the Matthean narrative. One also has to read beyond the titles and recognize allusions and motifs which Matthew uses to present his compelling narrative of Jesus.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main focus of Matthew's Gospel falls on Jesus. Therefore it is essential for any person who studies Matthew's thoughts to consider his understanding of Jesus as he portrays Him to his readers. In considering this topic, scholars often refer to "Matthean Christology". Such a reference holds the risk of assuming that Matthew had a worked out doctrine as is well known in modern discussions on Christology. However, Matthew does not present a systematic doctrinal Christology.

Until quite recently the Christology of a New Testament book has been considered merely as the study of the honorific titles such as "Christ", "Lord", "Son of Man" and "Son of God" (e.g. Cullmann 1957; Hahn 1963). Titles, however, are not the only or necessarily the most useful indicators of the Christological understanding of the New Testament authors (Keck 1986:368-370; Senior 1997:53). It is disputable to assume that Matthew thought in terms of established Christological titles, as modern scholars would do. The study of titles frequently does not take into account the textual contexts of these titles. Luz (2005:83) indicates that honorific titles should be considered within the Jesus narrative of each Gospel. Gospel writers often transformed the traditional semantic field of such titles and defined them within their new contexts. For this reason the "synchronic and diachronic aspects" (Luz 2005:85) must be considered. Account must be taken of where Matthew meets his readers in their traditional Christological thinking and how he shapes it in the development of the narrative. Many of the titles Matthew used for Jesus were drawn from the Old Testament and Judaism. As he applied them to Jesus, he added new layers of meaning.

Titles remain important indicators of what the author thought of Jesus. Yet they have to be interpreted within their specific contexts. Titles form part of an overall narrative. They can not be isolated from their context.

This article aims to indicate how Matthew portrays Jesus as the main Character in his compelling story. His use of titles is explored and then put in context of main Christological themes in his Gospel.

2. TITLES USED FOR JESUS

2.1 Christ

Matthew's Gospel opens with the titles “Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ” (Mt 1:1). The combination “Jesus Christ” functioning as double name is almost unknown in the gospels (France 1989:280). It is likely that in Matthew 1:1 “Christ” is used as a title applied to Jesus at the beginning of the gospel. Matthew's genealogy triumphantly concludes with “Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός” (Mt 1:16). When the “story” begins, Matthew states at the outset “Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν” (Mt 1:18). From this it is clear that Matthew chose this title to explain his understanding of Jesus. Matthew's teaching of Jesus is rooted in Israel's Messianic expectations, history and Scriptures.

Once this significance of Jesus has been stated, Matthew uses this title surprisingly rarely. It occurs in three episodes each in which the question who Jesus is explicitly comes to the forefront.

The first occurrence is when John enquires “Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν;” (Mt 11:2). Significantly the title Christ does not come from John directly, but Matthew's editorial introduction makes it clear that the deeds of Christ prompted the enquiry “Ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης ἀκούσας ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ” (Mt 11:2). In Jewish Scripture the Messiah was someone that was anointed by God for a special service (e.g. 1 Sam. 9:15-16; 10:1; 16:3. 12-13). This term is often used as a royal title (1 Sam. 24:6; 2 Sam. 1:14; Ps. 2:2). The idea of a suffering and eventually crucified Messiah was foreign to and unexpected in the Judaism of Jesus' days. John therefore had doubts whether Jesus was the Messiah.

In the second occurrence the title is rightly used by Peter “Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς” (Mt 16:16) as a result of divine revelation. Matthew confirms in his narrative that the title was rightly applied (Mt 16:17-20), even though Peter still misunderstood the full implication of that term (Mt 16:21-23).

Another cluster of references identifying Jesus as the Messiah occurs in Matthew's narrative of the Passion Week in Jerusalem. Jesus clashes with religious leaders in an episode that stresses his Davidic and messianic connections: “Συνηγμένων δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων, Τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ περὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τίνος υἱὸς ἐστίν; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Τοῦ Δαυὶδ. λέγει αὐτοῖς, Πῶς οὖν Δαυὶδ ἐν πνεύματι καλεῖ αὐτὸν κύριον λέγων” (Mt 22:41-42). Jesus also affirms that no one should be called teacher, except the Christ: “μηδὲ κληθῆτε καθηγηταί, ὅτι καθηγητὴς ὑμῶν ἐστὶν εἷς ὁ Χριστός.” (Mt 23:10). In his answer to the disciples on the signs at his return, He warns them not to believe in counterfeit messiahs: “τότε ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, Ἴδού ὧδε ὁ Χριστός, ἢ, Ὡδε, μὴ πιστεύσητε· ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφήται” (Mt 24:23-26). At Jesus' hearing before the Jewish council Jesus' affirmative answer to the high priest's question echoes the language of Dan. 7:13-14¹: “Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζώντος ἵνα ἡμῖν εἴπῃς εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Σὺ εἶπας· πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἂπ' ἄρτι ὀφείσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ” (Mt 26:63). After that the title is only used when mocking or accusing Jesus (Mt 26:68). When Pilate offers to release Barabbas, he alludes to the fact that some call Jesus the Messiah (Mt 27:17, 22).

Significantly in none of these cases Jesus himself uses this title. Jesus continues to

1 In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

sacrifice himself in a way that by far exceeds John, Peter and the high priest's understanding of the title. Without now entering into the complex debate of the messianic secret, it seems unlikely from the way Matthew (and even Mark) used this title, that they tried to cover up the fact that Jesus did not regard Himself as the Messiah. The ambivalence can rather be found in the historical context of Jesus' ministry. During his ministry the popular understanding of the Messiah's task (which John, Peter and the high priest shared) was significantly different to what subsequently became clear after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the post-Easter situation the new understanding of Messiahship became accepted. The way Matthew (and Mark) used the term "Christ" signified something different from what it would have meant in the pre-Easter situation. The difference between the understanding of "Christ" during the period of Jesus' ministry and when Matthew wrote his Gospel probably explains why Jesus did not publicly claim the title for Himself. Seen from this perspective it is clear why Keck's warning (1986:368-370) must be taken seriously. One cannot study the title "Christ" outside its context. Such an approach would cause a serious distortion of Matthew's portrait of Jesus.

2.2 Son of David

The expectation of the Davidic Messianic king was widespread in Judaism and frequently used in rabbinic texts. In parts of Judaism the first son of David, Solomon, was even known as exorcist (the Testament of Solomon) (Luz, 2005:86). It was expected that the eschatological "Son of David:" would appear in the messianic era as miracle healer.

Matthew tells the story of Jesus as the "Son of David". The title "Son of David" occurs more frequently in Matthew's gospel than in the rest of the New Testament (France 1989:284; Turner 2008:33). Matthew uses this common expectation about the "Son of David" as point of departure to explain the meaning of Jesus' miracles (Luz 2005:86; Senior 1997:57). Matthew argues that Jesus is the expected "Son of David", but that He does more than commonly was expected. Israel's Messiah was meant to be the Lord of the world.

Matthew introduces the concept "Son of David" in the title of his book and Jesus' genealogy. "Son of David" stands alongside "Christ" in the first verse: "Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ" (Mt 1:1). Matthew emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage. King David plays a key role in his genealogy (Mt 1:16-17). This point is underlined when the angel addresses Joseph as "son of David" (Mt 1:20). By divine intervention Jesus, the virgin's Son, is the descendent of David. Jesus as the Davidic Messiah inherits the promises God made to David and brings God's rule upon Israel. Matthew identifies Jesus with Israel's traditional messianic hopes and expectations, but Jesus does even more. Thus Matthew paves the way for the story of the ruling and healing of the merciful Son of David in the main body of the Gospel (Turner 1008:33). This emphasis seems to be rooted in Jewish Biblical texts such as 2 Sam. 7:14-16; Pss. 2; 89; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5 and Jer. 23:5-6).

As with the title "Christ", Jesus also does not use the title "Son of David" of Himself, though it is freely used by others of Jesus. It is used by crowds who discuss his power (Mt 12:23) and especially by those who expect healing from Him (Mt 9:27; 15:22; 20:30, 31). Almost every use of the title is in direct relation to his healing power and the appeal to "have mercy" (Duling 1977/8:392-410). Healing and mercy were understood as the characteristic activities of the Son of David (cf. Mt 11:2-6). Matthew presents Jesus in his healing ministry as Son of David. Significantly the title "Son of David" in Matthew is mainly used by people of no social or theological standing, the blind, dumb, lame and demon-possessed. It is these "no-accounts" that correctly recognized who Jesus was, while Israel's leaders attributed his power to Satan (Kingsbury 1976:598-601). The grace of the healing Jesus helps the ordinary people of Israel to

identify Jesus as the Son of David, who fulfils their Messianic hopes. Matthew demonstrates how Jesus' Davidic lineage is related to his royal authority to help the needy.

With his triumphal entry the enthusiastic crowds shouted praise to God: “Ὡσαννὰ τῷ υἱῷ Δαυίδ· Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου· Ὡσαννὰ ἐν τοῖς ὑψίστοις.” (Mt 21:9) echoing the language of Ps. 118:25-26.

Israel's Jewish leaders, however, rejected his healings categorically (Mt 9:34; 12:24-32, 38-42; 16:1-4; 21:15). The title “Son of David” is often associated with the healing of the blind. Metaphorically Jesus the Messiah heals Israel's blindness. But the scribes and the Pharisees remain blind (Mt 23:16-26).

During the Passion Week when the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders increased, Jesus' final dispute is cast in terms of his identity as Messiah and “Son of David”. It is this title that was central to his rejection (Mt 22:41-45). From this pericope it becomes clear that Jesus is even more than the Son of David. He is David's Lord “Δαυὶδ καλεῖ αὐτὸν κύριον” (Mt 22:45). This pericope takes up what the sick had anticipated when they addressed the son of David as “Lord” (Mt 9:28; 15:22, 25; cf. 21:9) and followed Him. It also points to the end of Matthew's narrative on Jesus (Mt 28:16-20). Yet this passage also narrates how the Pharisees rejected Jesus. According to Matthew their rejection implies that they do not understand their own Scriptures which points out that the son of David is called “Lord” (Ps. 110)².

Matthew replaces the political Jewish hopes of the Son of David. The title “Son of David” should not be interpreted at the level of national political restoration in the form of the return of the kingdom of David as was commonly understood. The acclamation “Ὡσαννὰ τῷ υἱῷ Δαυίδ” (Mt 21:9, 15) carries this nationalistic connotation.

2.3 Son of Abraham

Jesus' title as “Son of Abraham” occurs immediately after He has been identified as the “Christ” and the “Son of David”: “Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ” (Mt 1:1). Matthew stresses his Abrahamic lineage in Mt 1:2 and 17 not only to show his Jewish roots, but also as the one in whom God's promises made to Abraham culminates (Turner 2008:33). Matthew reminds his readers of God's promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed in him (Gen. 12) and of Abraham's near sacrifice of his only son (Gen. 22).

The warning of John to the Pharisees and Sadducees not to rely on the Abrahamic origins (Mt 3:9) is significant. Repentance, not descendance from Abraham is required to avoid the coming judgment (Mt 3:8-10). This theme is advanced by Jesus' response to the faith of the Roman officer (Mt 8:10-12). Gentiles (not Jews as the leaders who came to John) would share in the great eschatological banquet with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

2.4 Immanuel

Matthew's narrative tells of the community's religious experiences with Jesus as “God with us”, Immanuel (Kupp, 1996:243). He opens his narrative with “καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, ὃ ἔστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός” (Mt 1:23), a citation from Isa. 7:14. Matthew does not only mention it, he even translates it to ensure that his reader does not miss the point. Right at the beginning of his narrative Matthew opens the idea that the baby is Himself God.

Later in the narrative the “with us” motive reappears in his promise that “οὗ γάρ εἰσιν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἕμὸν ὄνομα, ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν” (Mt 18:20). Jesus refers to

² Thus Mt 22:41-46 reflects the Matthean community's separation from Israel in their claim of Israel's Biblical heritage (Carter, 2000:5).

situations beyond his physical presence. Through his physical birth He became “God with us” but continues to fulfil that role even after his ascension.

Matthew concludes climactically with “καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος” (Mt 28:20). Matthew 28:20 thus forms a literary *inclusio* with Matthew 1:23 by which God’s presence among his people is represented by Jesus (Luz 2005:85; Senior 1997:174; Turner 2008:34). Where Paul and John would talk of the presence of the Holy Spirit as the means of God’s continuing presence among his people, Matthew denotes this position to Jesus. He is the new and definitive form in which God is present with his people.

2.5 King

The episode of the wise men who came to search for the newborn King of Israel initiates the theme of the rival between the evil pretender Herod and God’s true ruler: “Ποῦ ἔστιν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; εἰδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἦλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης ἐταράχθη καὶ πᾶσα Ἱεροσόλυμα μετ’ αὐτοῦ” (Mt 2:2) (Turner 2008:34). Matthew describes the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem as the act of a King (Mt 21:5) as he cites Isa. 62:11³ to that effect. When Jesus predicts his future judgment He portrays Himself as the enthroned Son of Man (Mt 25:31). As King He will separate the blessed from the cursed (Mt 25:34, 40-41). At his hearing, Jesus accepts Pilate’s question as a true statement of his kingship (Mt 27:11). He endures the soldiers’ mocking of the title (Mt 27:29) and the sarcastic reference to it on the signboard above his head on the cross (Mt 27:42). Even the religious leaders mock Jesus’ kingship (Mt 27:42). However, after his resurrection He is given all authority and as exalted King sends his disciples into the world (Mt 28:18), a portrait that echoes Dan. 7:13-14.

2.6 Lord

Matthew made abundant use of the word κύριος. He uses the word 80 times in comparison to 18 times in Mark and 103 times in Luke (Rigaux, 1968:196). Bornkamm *et al* (1963:41-43) has indicated that Matthew consistently uses “Lord” as the term by which his disciples and people asking favors address Jesus, while Mark and Luke use a wider variety of terms such as “teacher” and “master”. Matthew never uses term “teacher” when Jesus’ disciples address Him. Matthew chose the term “Lord” with its overtones of power and authority demanding submission and obedience (Mohrlang 1984:74; Rigaux 1968:196). When Jesus’ opponents address Him, they never use the term “Lord”, but rather “teacher” and then almost in a derogatory way.

This form of address does not necessarily denote the divine Name *Yahweh*, the sacred *Tetragrammaton*, as it is translated in the LXX. Matthew uses the title against the background of its use in Greco-Roman times, ranging from a polite greeting of a human superior to a term for the Roman emperor who was considered to be divine (Turner 2008:35). The 25 cases where Lord is applied to Jesus, are all in the vocative (κύριε) with the implication of a respectful address (Mt 13:27; 21:30; 25:20, 22, 24; 27:63). From the context it is nevertheless obvious that Matthew used this term implying a degree of unique authority.

From the simple honorary title, it developed into the designation of the risen Jesus and Judge. Matthew 3:3 cites Isa. 40:3 applying to Jesus a passage that originally referred to *Yahweh*. In Matthew 7:21-22 Jesus is addressed as Lord in his capacity as eschatological judge. Frequently those who desire to be healed address Jesus as Lord (Mt 8:2, 6, 8; 15:22, 25, 27; 17:15; 20:30-31,

3 “The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’”

33) and so do his disciples (Mt 8:21, 25; 14:28, 30; 16:22; 17:4; 18:21; 26:22).

At times Jesus calls himself Lord, as when He warns his disciples that if people called Him as their Lord the prince of demons, it will be worse for them as for his servants (Mt 10:24-25). Jesus expresses his authority over Sabbath law by referring to Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8). He identifies Himself as Lord when He sends his disciples to get a donkey and its colt for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:3). He describes his return as the coming of the Lord (Mt 24:42).

2.7 Son of Man

The expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is used more than 100 times in the Jewish Bible and more than 90 times in Ezekiel alone. It most often describes the frail and finite humanity in contrast to the awesomeness of God (Turner, 2008:36). Matthew uses the expression some 30 times with three distinctive nuances; his humanity, his glory as coming King and his present power and authority as recognized by his disciples.

Most scholars agree that the background for this title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is Jewish and to be found in the vision of “one like the son of man” in Dan. 7:13-14 and in 4 Esdras 13:3. Matthew repeats Mark’s use of it 13 times and is parallel to Luke 8 times. His other uses of the term are unique to Matthew (Rigaux 1968:198). He fills the contents of this title with the history of Jesus. The title is related to the earthly condition of Jesus, as the one that has to suffer and die, but also to his future vindication and glory. This double reference is applicable when looking at the references of this title in all the Gospels together. The “Son of Man” is the one who is homeless, rejected, blasphemed, the one who is handed over and killed. Yet He is also the one with power over sins, who is risen, who is exalted and who comes in judgment (Luz 205:110).

The “Son of Man” sayings are missing in the prologue and in the Sermon on the Mount. In the main section of the Gospel narrative they start to appear occasionally from Matthew 8:20. The expression is not introduced or explained as such. There is a high density of these sayings in two sections, namely between Matthew 16:13 and 17:22 (6 times) and between Matthew 24:27 and 26:64 (12 times). 18 of the 30 occurrences appear in these passages. Matthew indeed uses the term with reference to the humiliation of Jesus in Matt 13:37 (The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man); 16:13 (Who do people say the Son of Man is?) and 26:2 (the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified). However, in most of its uses it refers to the future vindication and glory of the Son of Man (France 1989:288). Many of these passages echo Dan. 7:13-14, even with reference to clouds, heaven, coming, glory, kingdom and judgment (Mt 24:30; 25:31; 26:64). Matthew unfolds the meaning of this expression through the various stages of his Jesus story; from his homelessness, persecution, passion and death to his resurrection, exaltation and *parousia* as eschatological judge (Luz, 2005:88). Yet, the expression “Son of Man” is not primarily and expression of Jewish hope. This expression had a relatively stable semantic field in Christian tradition.

Though these elements are also present in Mark and Luke, they are more strongly put in Matthew (Luz 2005:100). Matthew includes additional predictions of the coming of the Son of Man before the mission to the towns of Israel is complete: “οὐ μὴ τελέσητε τὰς πόλεις τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἕως ἂν ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” (Mt 10:23). He describes how it would be at the end of the age. “ἀποστελεῖ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ, καὶ συλλέξουσιν ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα καὶ τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν” (Mt 13:41). He depicts Jesus as looking forward to the renewal of all things “ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ” (Mt 19:28). Matthew includes a striking climax in the vision of the final judgment: “Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι

μετ' αὐτοῦ, τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ· καὶ συναχθήσονται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ ἀφορίσει αὐτοὺς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ ὁ ποιμὴν ἀφορίζει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐρίφων, καὶ στήσει τὰ μὲν πρόβατα ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ, τὰ δὲ ἐρίφια ἐξ εὐωνύμων.” (Mt 25:31-33). The Son of Man is thus equated with “ὁ βασιλεὺς” who will judge between the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:34).

It is also Matthew only who includes references to the *parousia* with the Son of Man: ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ ἀστραπὴ ἐξέρχεται ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ φαίνεται ἕως δυσμῶν, οὕτως ἔσται ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ...” (Mt 24:27, 37, 39).

It therefore seems that Matthew related the term “Son of Man” specifically to the ultimate goal of Jesus’ mission. After his suffering and humiliation Jesus will be exulted and enthroned to judge the nations. Matthew use this term primarily as a title of majesty, not as humiliation.

Matthew uses this expression to distinguish between the understanding disciples and the ignorant and malicious opponents on whom the judgment of the Son of Man will come (Luz 2005:90, 106). The majority of the public Son of Man sayings are polemical (Mt 9:6; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40). In Matthew 11:19 and 12:32 “this generation” speaks against the Son of Man. In response to his Son of Man sayings they decide to destroy Him (Mt 12:8). The Jewish leaders do not understand who Jesus is. Unlike Jesus’ Jewish opponents, the disciples came to know the true “Son of Man”. Almost all sayings about the coming and all sayings about the suffering and rising Son of Man are private instruction to the disciples. The disciples learned that Jesus who has no home (Mt 8:20), who is blasphemed (Mt 12:40), who is regarded as glutton and drunkard (Mt 11:9) and who is accused of false interpretation of the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-14) is none other than the exulted and coming eschatological judge. Thus the stages of Matthew’s story are reflected in the “Son of Man” expression. His humiliation and death is counter pointed by his resurrection and enthronement; and his condemnation with his future judgment. Matthew’s expression of the “Son of Man” reflects the bridge between the Jewish apocalyptic expectation of a heavenly judge and the Christological understanding of the two natures of the Judge, his humanity and exaltation.

2.8 Son of God

Some scholars argue “ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ” is the pre-eminent title of Jesus in Matthew (Kingsbury 1976:591; Senior, 1997:54). With biblical texts such as Pss. 2:7⁴ and 89:27⁵ as background, Matthew presents Jesus as the virginally conceived Son who uniquely signifies the presence of God with his people (Mt 1:23). With both the baptism of Jesus as his transfiguration God declares from heaven that Jesus is his beloved Son: “Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός” (Mt 3:17; 17:5). Jesus is also recognized as Son of God by the demons (Mt 8:29), and demonstrates this in his authority over the weather (Mt 14:33). He is designated as such by the high priest which is accepted by Jesus (Mt 26:63), and recognized by the centurion (Mt 27:54). Jesus also indirectly presents Himself as Son of God in the parable of the tenants (Mt 21:37) and directly to his disciples with regard to the coming of the Son of Man (Mt 24:36). The impact of these references is increased in Matthew by the development of the narratives (France 1989:293).

The divine declaration of Matthew 3:17 is challenged by the devil when he also uses “Son of God” in his temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:3 and 6. In this temptation focus is placed on Jesus’ relationship with his Father. Jesus does not succumb to the temptation to manifest his unique sonship with spectacular acts. He rather shows his sonship by submission to the will

4 I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

5 I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.

of the Father (Turner 2008:34). Jesus' acceptance of the title "Son of God" in Matthew 26:63, which ironically echoes the testimony of Peter in Matthew 16:16, is used as ridicule against Him. Bystanders at the cross use the title sarcastically (Mt 27:40, 43). In contrast, the recognition by the centurion is emphasized by supernatural events and confessions by the whole guard (Mt 27:40, 43, 54).

Other than Mark the title "Son of God" is used by the disciples on the lake (Mt 14:33) and in Peter's declaration (Mt 16:16). Peter's significantly links the titles "Messiah" and "the Son of the living God". The application of Hos. 11:1 to the infant Jesus (Mt 2:15) depends on recognition that He is the Son of God. In the hymn of jubilation Jesus declares his unique relationship with the Father which gives Him unique authority: "Πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ ὃ ἔαν βούληται ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι" (Mt 11:27). This major proclamation regarding the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son "is a jewel of the Synoptic tradition" (Rigaux, 1968:203).

In Matthew Jesus refers to God as "Father" some 44 times (e.g. Mt 11:27; 24:36; 28:19), compared to 4 in Mark and 17 in Luke. In its usage Jesus differentiates between "My Father" and "your Father" emphasizing the unique relationship and mutual knowledge between Jesus and the Father (Luz 2005:94).

The most significant Matthean feature is that the Son of God proves Himself by living in obedience to the Father (Luz 2005:94). He thus adds an ethical dimension to the expression (Mt 3:15; 4:1-11). The Son reveals Himself as the meek and humble Son (Mt 11:29) who will act on behalf of humankind accordingly (Mt 12:1-14). The Son of God goes the way of passion in obedience to the Father (Mt 16:21). The antitypical reference to Matthew 4:8-10 in Matthew 28:16-18 suggests that the obedient Son of God will one day be the true ruler of the world.

In Jewish history it was not totally unknown for a human being to be called "Son of God" (France 1989:295). In several occasions David or his successor was called son of God (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27). The frequent use of Ps. 2:7 in the New Testament indicates how the hope of a Messiah from the line of David developed, which became an important development in the identification of Jesus as the Son of God. In the intra-testamental books of Wisdom righteous and holy men were hailed as "sons of God" (Ben Sira 4:10; Wisd. 2:16-18; Ps. Sol. 13:9). This development is probable echoed in the crucifixion scene where Jesus is being mocked as the righteous man who claims to be the "Son of God".

Ironically the Jewish leaders do not recognize Jesus as the "Son of God", but put Him to death (Turner, 2008:35). Matthew portrays through parabolic imagery their rejection of God's unique Son (Mt 21:33-41; 22:2-14). At the end of their disputes Jesus alludes to Ps. 110:1 indicating that his sonship is both Davidic and divine (Mt 22:45).

2.9 Teacher

In Matthew the term "ὁ διδάσκαλος" is almost always used by those who did not follow Jesus, such as the teachers of the law, Pharisees, tax collectors, Sadducees and supporters of Herod, to address Jesus (Mt 9:19; 9:11; 12:38; 17:24; 19:16; 22:16, 24). His disciples never call Him teacher. However, in three instances Jesus calls Himself teacher (Mt 10:24-25; 23:8; 26:18). For Matthew the title teacher does not mean something sinister as such, but for his followers He is more than their teacher.

3. THE PORTRAIT OF JESUS BEYOND TITLES

The titles Matthew used to describe Jesus provide important pointers towards Matthew's

understanding of Jesus. Yet to get a fuller understanding of his portrait of Jesus, one has to read them in context of the broad intention of Matthew's narrative.

Matthew intends to persuade his readers that Jesus is the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel. This becomes plain in Matthew's use of fulfilment citations and the development of the fulfilment motive (Menken 2004:9). Jesus is the one who is to come "ὁ ἐρχόμενος" (cf. Mt 11:2). In Him all that was central to Israel's life and calling has reached its perfect embodiment.

Isaiah's vision of the Servant of *Yahweh* (Isa. 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12) features strongly in Matthew's portrayal of Jesus (France, 1989:299). The description of Jesus by the heavenly voice at his baptism and transfiguration echoes Isa. 42:1. The series of announcements of the necessity of Jesus to suffer and his words at the last supper about his blood shedding and ransom for many echoes Isa. 53:10 and 12. Matthew's statement that Jesus' baptism was intended to fulfil all righteousness (πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην) (Mt 3:15) probably alludes to "my righteous servant will justify many" (Isa. 53:11). In Mat. 8:16-17 Jesus' healing ministry is described in terms of the fulfilment of "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). The growing opposition against Jesus which leads up to the decision to destroy Jesus along with his non-confrontational character remind one of the prophecy: "He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice" (Isa. 42:2-3). Matthew portrays Jesus as this gentle Servant who has the mission to bring justice for the whole world, a mission He would not give up despite the fiercest opposition. Jesus is also the obedient Son of God and thus makes his whole life an offering of obedience culminating in his self offering on the cross as a ransom for many. For Matthew the role of the gentle servant of *Yahweh* models the mission of Jesus, who came "αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν" (Mt 1:21).

Matthew applies language which is reminiscent of Jewish Wisdom to Jesus (France, 1989:305; Senior, 1997:59; Suggs, 1970:9). Jesus concludes on the lack of interest of "this generation" on the ministry of John and Jesus with "καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς" (Mt 11:19). Matthew thus identifies Jesus with the personified Wisdom. Matthew 11:25-30 ("Δεῦτε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς. ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πραῖς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· ὁ γὰρ ζυγὸς μου χρηστὸς καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἐλαφρόν ἐστιν.") strongly alludes to Wisdom with words that echo Ben Sira 51:23-27⁶. In Ben Sira the sage calls his hearers to take on Wisdom's yoke to find the rest which she has to offer, and which he himself experienced. In Matthew Jesus offers his own yoke and will himself give rest to those who learn from Him. In Matthew 23:34-39 Jesus repeatedly appeals to the people who continue to reject Him. In contrast to the parallel passages in Luke (11:49-51 and 13:34-35) it is not Wisdom who makes these appeals, but Jesus Himself. In poetic descriptions God's Wisdom is described as God's messenger to humanity that experienced both rejection (Ben Sira 51:1-12)⁷ and acceptance (Prov. 9; Ben Sira 51:23-50). Matthew deliberately uses Wisdom language to signify that Jesus is the one in whom the Wisdom of God speaks.

6 Draw near to me, you who are untaught, and lodge in my school. Why do you say you are lacking in these things, and why are your souls very thirsty? I opened my mouth and said, Get these things for yourselves without money. Put your neck under the yoke, and let your souls receive instruction; it is to be found close by. See with your eyes that I have labored little and found myself much rest.

7 I give thanks to thy name, for thou hast been my protector and helper and hast delivered my body from destruction and from the snare of a slanderous tongue, from lips that utter lies. Before those who stood by thou wast my helper, and didst deliver me, in the greatness of thy mercy and of thy name, from the gnashing of teeth about to devour me, from the hand of those who sought my life, from the many afflictions that I endured ...

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is presented as an object of worship. In a Jewish environment this would be regarded none less than blasphemy, but Matthew presents the reasons why Jesus should be honoured as such. Matthew argues that Jesus acted with unparalleled authority. The crowds reacted with amazement on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους, ἐξεπλήσσαντο οἱ ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ· ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν." (Mt 7:28-29). In Matthew 8-9 his authority is prominently presented in his mighty works and repeatedly commented on, e.g. "Ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι ἐφοβήθησαν καὶ ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν τὸν δόντα ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις" (Mt 9:8). A three-part arrangement of the ten miracles in these chapters can be detected (Senior 1997:60). Three miracles focus on Jesus' power to heal (Mt 8:1-17) and can be depicted as "therapeutic" stories. The miracles in Matthew 8:18-9:17 focus on the theme of discipleship. Those in Matthew 9:18-34 focus on the faith of the community. All these miracles are important for Matthew's Christology to emphasize his authority. Along with his supernatural power, goes his supernatural knowledge. He is aware of unspoken words (Mt 9:4; 12:25; 22:18). He has the armies of heaven at his disposal (Mt 26:53-54). It is this authority of Jesus that provides the basis of the concluding scene: "Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς." (Mt 28:18).

Matthew frequently speaks of Jesus as Jewish orthodoxy would speak of God. The scribes objected to Jesus' claim of forgiveness as being blasphemous (Mt 9:2). Jesus does not apologize for his boldness, but confirms it by a physical healing. According to Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus uses his own name in inviting people to enjoy rest under his yoke. This personification of Wisdom was understood as God Himself in his wise dealing with creation. Jesus' identification with God also surfaces with his demand for the total loyalty of his followers (Mt 10:37-39) and his claim that one's final destiny rests on one's relationship with Him (Mt 7:21-23). In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus is described as the judge. People are judged according to the way they have responded to Him. Jesus will sit on the throne of glory ("καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ") (Mt 25:31) and will act as King (Mt 25:34). As end time judge He will act according to the pattern the Old Testament describes as the role of *Yahweh* (Mt 25:31). Therefore Jesus could claim: "Ὁ ἐμὲ δεχόμενος δέχεται τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με" (Mt 10:41). Jesus declares the exclusive knowledge between Him and the Father: "οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ ὃς ἔαν βούληται ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι." (Mt 11:27). Matthew's Jesus frequently applies Old Testament language of theophany to Himself (Mt 13:41; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31). Most strikingly is when Jesus assumes sovereignty with reference to Dan. 7:9-14. He is occupying the throne of God as judge (Mt. 25:31ff.).

Matthew also uses the device of typology in his portrait of Jesus. A number of passages can be identified in which Jesus is pictured as the "new Moses" (Allison, 1993:25-26). The Moses typology is present in the birth narrative where the wicked king slaughters the children of Israel in an attempt to destroy the infant Messiah (Mt 1-2; cf. Ex. 1:1-2:10) (Stendahl 1995:70) As Moses Jesus faced the desert test (Mt 4:1-11; cf. Ex. 16:1-17:7). Jesus is presented as the Lawgiver on the mountain (Mt 5-7) (Loader 1997, 165). He has intimate knowledge of God (Mt 11:25-30). With his transfiguration on the mountain the name of Moses is explicitly named (Mt 17:1-9). The Moses typology emphasizes the authority of Jesus as well as his Jewish heritage (and of the Christian community). Jesus is represented not as one that broke with the religious heritage of Israel, but the one who came to fulfil it (Menken 2004:90).

Matthew's teaching on Jesus finds its climax in Matthew 28:16-20. Though it contains no Christological title as such, it echoes motifs from the earlier Christological texts. The command to baptize "εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος" (Mt. 28:19) is a clear

Trinitarian formula. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are invoked on an equal footing. There is no doubt about their divinity. Many scholars recognize in the pronouncement "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18) together with his authority over "all nations" (Mt 28:19) and his promise of presence "to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:20) an echo of Dan. 7:14. In these verses we find a Christological reshaping or the Daniel saying and the "enthronement of the Son of Man" (Davies 1963:197).

This conclusion to the narrative demonstrates how Matthew's Christology goes beyond the Christological titles. Matthew's Christology is more than a semantic field structured by titles which define different components of the field. It is rather a story of a Person in whom God is "with us", Immanuel. Christology is in the whole narrative. Matthew gives us a proclamation which is derived from the living faith of an evolved Christian community. The divinity of Jesus is affirmed with certitude. Matthew's subject is ultimately not a theology, but Jesus.

4. CONCLUSION

Matthew has used a range of means to express his understanding of Jesus. He applied to Jesus an array of titles that had a tradition of meaning that developed from the Jewish Scriptures and Judaism. He gave these titles a specific nuance within the context of his narrative. Using allusions to biblical motives and characters such as the suffering servant, Wisdom, the authoritative teacher and miracle worker and the new Moses he presented Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament expectations of the "one that is to come". The evangelist portrays Jesus in profound and exalted terms. Through Him God became present in an unprecedented way. In Him God inaugurated the new definite age of salvation.

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