The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew

by

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- Above all, my wife, Di, for enabling me in so many ways. A scholar, minister and my beloved life partner, her love, creativity, generosity and support have enriched this study from its earliest days to completion, and beyond.
I hope this study is helpful for others exploring the theme of the Kingdom in Matthew. I love the Scriptures and especially Matthew; this has been so since my first experiences as a follower of Jesus. I am thrilled to teach Biblical studies in groups, churches and colleges. Happily, further research in Biblical studies increases my opportunities to do this. Most importantly, though, further research like this thesis is a vital part of my own spiritual growth and development.

Two thousand years after the Gospel of Matthew was written, I believe the challenge of the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth can still be found behind and within the text. This challenge is ever present.

Mike Esbensen
Autumn 2010
## Abbreviations

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<td>ABR</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<td>EphTheolLov</td>
<td>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal Of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JournPentTheol</td>
<td>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</td>
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<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
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1.0 Introduction

This study focuses on the specific usage of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew. ‘The Kingdom of God’ is one of numerous ‘Kingdom’-expressions in the Matthaean narrative. It will be seen, however, that this term is used specifically to declare who are the legitimate people of ‘the Kingdom’ and how Israel’s leaders brought about their loss of ‘the Kingdom,’ along with dire implications for the nation itself. Moreover, Matthew’s Gospel dramatically warns its community that in order to remain people of this ‘Kingdom’ they must not emulate contemporary Pharisaic expressions of faith.

1.1 ‘The Kingdom’ in the Gospel of Matthew

‘The Kingdom’ as proclaimed by the Matthaean Jesus indicates God’s realm, where God is acknowledged and experienced, in the present as well as in the eschatological future.¹ As such ‘the Kingdom’ is a tensive symbol, which includes “a set of

¹For a more detailed discussion of ‘the Kingdom’ in Matthew see J D Kingsbury, Matthew (2nd Ed), (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 66-81.
meanings that can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed by any one referent.”

This theme of ‘the Kingdom’ dominates the Gospel of Matthew. A variety of ‘Kingdom’-expressions occur fifty times throughout the narrative. These ‘Kingdom’-expressions explicitly or implicitly include: ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) thirty two times; ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) four times; 'the Kingdom' (τῆς βασιλείας) four times; 'gospel of the Kingdom' (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) three times; 'the Father's Kingdom' [implied] (ὁ πατήρ . . . τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ) twice; 'the Kingdom of their [the righteous] Father' (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν) once; 'my [Jesus'] Father's Kingdom' (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου) once; 'the Son of Man's Kingdom' (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου . . . τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ) twice; and ‘Jesus’ Kingdom’ [implied] once. The theological import of ‘the Kingdom’ is elucidated by four further kingdom references: ‘Satan’s Kingdom’ (once) and ‘kingdom’ as a generic term (three times).

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2 This statement by N Perrin, with insights derived from works by P Wheelwright and P Ricoeur, is quoted in R Farmer, “The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Matthew,” in W Willis (Ed), The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 121.


4 For all references to the following list see Table 1 on page 4.

5 Some manuscripts contain a fifth reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) in Mt 6:33. Reasons for not accepting this rendering are set out in the relevant exegetical section.
Clearly the dominant ‘Kingdom’-expression in Matthew is ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν ουρανῶν). This formulation is unique to Matthew.⁶ The associated ‘Kingdom’-expression, ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ), however, is not unique to Matthew. Although the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is found frequently in the other Synoptic Gospels (14 times in Mark and 31 times in Luke), it only occurs four times in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). This study demonstrates that this term is utilised intentionally in the Matthaean narrative for specific theological purposes.

⁶See also U Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Translated by W C Linss), (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 167.
# Table 1

‘Kingdom’ References in the Gospel of Matthew

| ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) | 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19 (twice), 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1 |
| ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) | 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43 |
| ‘the Kingdom’ (ἡ βασιλεία) | 8:12; 13:19, 38; 25:34 |
| ‘gospel of the Kingdom’ (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) | 4:23; 9:35; 24:14 |
| ‘the Father’s Kingdom’ [implied] (ὁ πατήρ...τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ) | 6:10, 33 |
| ‘the Kingdom of their [the righteous] Father’ (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν) | 13:43 |
| ‘my [Jesus’] Father’s Kingdom’ (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου) | 26:29 |
| ‘the Son of Man’s Kingdom’ (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ... τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ) | 13:41; 16:28 |
| ‘Jesus’ Kingdom’ [implied] (τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου) | 20:21 |
1.2 ‘The Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew

The ‘Kingdom’-expression, ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) is used sparingly in the Matthaean narrative, on only four occasions, as noted above. Scholars rightly regard ‘the Kingdom of God’ as an alternate expression for ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ However, while the tensive symbol of ‘the Kingdom’ is indicated in both these ‘Kingdom’-expressions, there is more to be explored regarding the literary purposes behind Matthew’s distinctive use of ‘Kingdom’ terminology.

It has often been suggested that ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is Matthew’s preferred ‘Kingdom’-expression because it provides a circumlocution which avoids direct usage of the divine name. Yet here is the heart of the matter: this explanation does not account for the four occasions when Matthew intentionally uses the formulation ‘the Kingdom of God’ (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).

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At this point scholarly discussion diverges. The term ‘the Kingdom of God’ may be dismissed as simply meaning the same thing as ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ or as a literary device to avoid repetition. If attention is drawn to its unusual presence it may be explained as a formulation within Matthew’s source, which, for some reason, was allowed to stand. At best, the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ may be noted, but the only conclusion drawn is that this formulation emphasises the word ‘God.’ Different reasons are given as to why such emphasis might be significant in the immediate context.

While scholarly discussion of this question is usually found in the midst of wider commentary on the Gospel of Matthew or in monographs, a handful of recent studies have specifically focused on ‘Kingdom’-expressions in Matthew. The following survey of these studies seeks to gather insights into the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ as it appears in the Matthaean narrative.

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9The following arguments, as well as other nuances, are discussed in detail in the exegetical sections of this study. References need not be pre-empted and essentially repeated here.
1.3 Recent Studies on ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew

M Pamment examines the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ with respect to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ in the Gospel of Matthew. She understands ‘the Kingdom of God’ as representing “a present kingdom.”10 This contrasts with ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ which “refers to a wholly future reality which is imminent but otherworldly . . .”11 According to Pamment, the First Evangelist uses the term ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ to refer to God’s sovereignty, actualized and recognized in the past and present here on earth, especially in the covenant relationship with Israel in the past, and more generally wherever a response is made to the call to righteousness or wherever evil is overcome by good. In other words, entry into the kingdom of God is equivalent to meeting the conditions of entry into the kingdom of heaven.12

Pamment’s approach at least attempts to discuss the terms ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and ‘the Kingdom of God’ as ‘Kingdom’-expressions in their own right. However, her thesis does not convincingly account for references such as Mt 19:23-24, in which these two ‘Kingdom’-expressions appear to be interchangeable.13

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11 Ibid., 232.
12 Ibid.
13 See also critiques in W D Davies & D C Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew (Vol I)*, (Edinburgh: T & T
J C Thomas likewise examines the two terms ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative. Thomas suggests that the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ “is a literary device which Matthew used to draw attention to significant issues for his community.”  

This proposal is made on the basis that if these two ‘Kingdom’-expressions are synonyms then the intentional use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in only four places in the Matthaean narrative must be for graphic emphasis.  

This concise study by Thomas is highly insightful. The use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Mt 19:24 is still not easily accounted for, but Thomas indicates a possible way forward. He “modestly proposes” that more might be discovered about ‘the Kingdom of Heaven/God’ phrases in Matthew by employing “literary analysis, along with traditional historical critical approaches . . .”  

R L Mowery examines the expressions ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ ‘the Kingdom of God’ and ‘the Kingdom of the Father’ in

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15 Thomas, “The Kingdom of God,” 141.  
16 See also the critique in Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 591.  
17 Thomas, “The Kingdom of God,” 141.
terms of the Matthaean audience who heard them. While noting the problematical verse Mt 19:24, Mowery observes that the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is used almost exclusively in Jesus’ confrontations with the religious leaders. Moreover: “thirty-two of the fifty Matthean occurrences of the noun ‘God’ are in the words of Jesus or John the Baptist to their opponents or the words of their opponents . . .”

Thus Mowery sees the Matthaean usage of the noun ‘God’ as part of a literary strategy in which opposition to Jesus is highlighted and the divine name is directly invoked. Mowery’s study is useful and helps to clarify some distinctive emphases in the Matthaean narrative.

R Foster explores the use of the term ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ in the Matthaean narrative. He develops his discussion with a brief discussion on ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew.

Foster outlines some of the difficulties with ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’/future and ‘the Kingdom of God’/present thesis put forward by Pamment. Reference is also made to the

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19 Ibid., 403.
20 Ibid.
21 See also comment in Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 591.
23 Ibid., 488-489.
aforementioned studies by Thomas\textsuperscript{24} and Mowery\textsuperscript{25} but there is no dialogue with their arguments. Nevertheless, the literary approaches advocated by these earlier works, at least, are taken up by Foster, as he sees the First Evangelist’s use of ‘the Kingdom of God’ phrase as part of the narrative structure of Matthew’s Gospel.\textsuperscript{26}

The four instances of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ “occur between two pivotal narrative markers of Jesus’ escalating conflict with the religious leaders.”\textsuperscript{27} These markers are Mt 12:14, where “the religious leaders . . . for the first time . . . plot how to destroy Jesus,”\textsuperscript{28} and Mt 21:46, where “the religious leaders are explicitly said to want to kill Jesus.”\textsuperscript{29}

Foster’s study is helpful in his utilisation of literary analysis. He demonstrates that the term ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is “more than simply a circumlocution or stylistic variation of a phrase.”\textsuperscript{30} In so doing he also throws light on a possible framework for understanding the enigmatic term ‘the Kingdom of God.’ France’s comment that this approach still does not explain Mt 19:24 has

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 495.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 488, 494.
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 494-495.
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 494.
\textsuperscript{28}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 495. Curiously Foster overstates the drama here: Mt 21:46 only says that the religious leaders “tried to arrest” Jesus.
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 499.
some validity\textsuperscript{31} but it does not detract from Foster’s key insight that a wider narrative framework is required for understanding ‘Kingdom’-expressions in Matthew’s Gospel.

1.4 Ways Forward For Studies on ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew

From the studies discussed above, it appears that development of Pamment’s approach is problematic. There does not seem to be enough evidence that Matthew distinguishes between present and future, respectively, in the terms ‘the Kingdom of God’ and ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ However, it seems that there is much to be gained by further literary analysis of the Matthaean narrative.

Thomas’ suggestion that utilising tools of literary analysis along with traditional historical-critical approaches\textsuperscript{32} is an essential starting-point for further research in this area. Literary analysis can provide fresh tools which view the text of Matthew as a literary whole. In this way the dynamics within the entire narrative can be explored. The integration of literary and historical-critical analyses is also important for holistic understanding in New Testament

\textsuperscript{31}France, \textit{Matthew}, 271-272.
\textsuperscript{32}Thomas, “The Kingdom of God,” 141.
studies. Foster’s observation is seasonable here: “In recent decades developments in literary theory and sociology of religion have fallen like rain on the fertile soil of biblical studies and produced a harvest of new insights into the biblical text.”

The inclusion of historical-critical approaches also means that the theological concerns for locating meaning and providing a historical context, however arbitrary this might appear, are maintained. New Testament scholarship in the service of the wider Christian community continues to hold these concerns as essential. The New Testament documents are appreciated as more than ‘classic literature.’ (May the harvest of new insights heralded by Foster continue!)

Foster’s assertion that the narrative structure of Matthew’s Gospel can provide the answer to why the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is used is clearly pertinent. But his identified “pivotal narrative markers” are best located elsewhere: it is fruitful to examine the occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in terms of a wider narrative structure which takes into account related themes and concerns in Matthew’s Gospel.

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33 Foster, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 487.
34 Ibid., 494.
35 Ibid.
Within an appropriate narrative structure it may be possible to extend Thomas' argument further, that “the use of kingdom of God in 12.28; 19.24; and 21.31, 43 is deliberate and is intended to emphasize the specific teaching of these passages.” Moreover, as Mowery observes, such teaching appears to be related to Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders.

This study seeks to demonstrate the intentional use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew. Literary insights will be utilised, with special attention to wider narrative structure. Historical-critical insights will be in constant dialogue throughout. It is to be hoped that this study, too, may “contribute in a small way to a better understanding of both Matthew and his community.”

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36 Thomas, “The Kingdom of God,” 142.
37 Mowery, ”Matthean References,” 403.
38 Thomas, “The Kingdom of God,” 146.
2.0 Methodology

In recent decades there has been an increasing interest in the phenomenon of ‘reading’ in New Testament studies. ‘Reading’ a text can imply a vast array of understandings, definitions and literary/philosophical theories. The landscape is such that it is fruitless to argue for the superiority of one way of reading and interpreting over others; it seems enough to take an approach and pursue it with consistency.

Kingsbury observes: "Literary-critically, the Gospel of Matthew is a unified narrative, or ‘artistic whole’." This study will investigate the significance of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the narrative of Matthew, drawing upon the insights of both narrative criticism and historical-critical exegesis.

This investigation seeks to be multi-faceted and creative within the parameters of scholarly dialogue, rather than mechanically addressing a rigid checklist against the passages under discussion. Hence this study will incorporate the following

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41 For a discussion of narrative criticism and how it can be applied to the Gospel of Matthew, see Powell, Narrative Criticism and Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 1-42.
elements in a rigorous discussion of the relevant passages of Matthew’s Gospel.

2.1 Historical-Critical Insights

This study will utilise insights from historical-critical scholarship in order to provide a consistent exegetical interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew. Insights will be drawn from textual criticism, the two-source hypothesis and redaction criticism.

It will be assumed throughout this study that the First Evangelist intentionally adapted and reshaped the Gospel of Mark, with reference to an available Q Source,\(^4\) as well as to his own unique tradition.

Insights of redaction criticism will be employed in order to determine Matthew’s own distinctive theological concerns, reflected in his editing and compositional reworking of his sources. As Gundry says: “The comparison undertaken here will show that the peculiarities of Matthew derive almost wholly from his own revisions of and additions to Mark and the materials shared only

\(^4\)See also D Senior, *Matthew*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 25. Luz puts it succinctly when he says that to question the two-source hypothesis “… is to refute a large part of the post-1945 redaction-critical research in the Synoptics, a truly daring undertaking which seems to me to be neither necessary nor possible.” See Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 46.
with Luke (i.e., the materials usually designated Q). Matthew also revises and reworks scripture.

2.2 Narrative Criticism

In dialogue with the exegetical tools utilised, this study will also utilise insights from narrative criticism. This approach implies that the narrative of Matthew’s Gospel comprises a world of its own. Thus the concern is with Matthew’s narrative and its discourse.

Matthew’s narrative tells a story of the life of Jesus. Within this story, settings, characters and events are organised so as to comprise the plot, or flow, of what unfolds. Settings and events will be discussed where they give rise to the focus of ‘the Kingdom of God.’ The essential characters discussed include Jesus, ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘John the Baptist,’ as they pertain to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s narrative.

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44See Kingsbury, Matthew (2nd Ed), 16.
45Ibid. Here Kingsbury draws upon insights from S Chatman.
46See Powell, Narrative Criticism, 23. Powell likewise draws upon insights from Chatman.
Matthew’s discourse concerns *how* his story of Jesus is told. The notions of author, narrator and reader are relevant here.\(^\text{47}\)

The ‘implied author’ of the Gospel of Matthew is suggested by the narrative itself.\(^\text{48}\) The narrator is “the voice that the implied author uses to tell the story.”\(^\text{49}\) In the Matthaean narrative this narrator is omnipresent, omniscient with respect to the world of the story, speaks in the third person and provides privileged information for the reader.\(^\text{50}\) The ‘implied reader’ of the Gospel of Matthew is the reader presupposed by the narrative.\(^\text{51}\)

Usually there is value in placing critical distance between the ‘implied author’ and the ‘real author’ (the First Evangelist). However, in the narrative of Matthew the implied author and the narrator are in full accord in the narrative. Hence this study will refer to Matthew in the sense of being ‘the author.’\(^\text{52}\) There will be occasions, however, where ‘Matthew’ designates the narrative entity of the First Gospel. The distinction will be clear in the immediate context of the discussion.

In this study ‘the reader’ denotes the ‘implied reader’ of the Matthaean narrative. References to Matthew’s community and *Sitz*...
im Leben indicate Matthew’s original flesh-and-blood readers. In the communal worship context, they would not necessarily be reading and/or hearing the Gospel of Matthew in its chronological order of events. Yet in this study there is a closeness between ‘the reader’ and Matthew’s community.

Other issues relevant to the discourse of Matthew’s narrative include special words which reveal Matthew’s thought world, and the use of repetition and inclusio. Special words and terms used by Matthew include all ‘Kingdom’-expressions, ‘Pharisees,’ ‘fruit/s,’ ‘John the Baptist’ and ‘Isaiah.’ Moreover, all ‘Kingdom’-expressions, references to ‘Pharisees,’ and to bearing ‘fruit/s’ will be traced through the entire narrative, as these three themes come together in 21:43, 45. Repetition involves the recurrence “of the same or similar terms, phrases, or other elements” and “usually indicates emphasis.” Inclusio involves: “the repetition of features, words, phrases, and so on at the beginning and the ending of a unit, thus having a ‘bracket’ function.”

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54 Ibid., 18.
2.3 Wider Narrative Framework

This study will examine the wider narrative framework in which the small number of references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ appear. Such an approach is helpful to determine how the rhetorical use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ functions in the Matthaean narrative as a whole. Indeed, the theological significance of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is only understood when viewed within its wider narrative framework.

A starting point in this exegesis is that a new section commences in the Matthaean narrative with each new geographical setting. Thus although the first reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ appears in Mt 12:28, it is part of the wider passage Mt 12:15-50. Likewise, the last reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the narrative, in which its removal is announced, is Mt 21:43. This saying is part of the wider passage Mt 21:23-23:39.

Thus the narrative framework proposed in this study extends from 12:15 to 23:39. It is important to note that such a framework is initially based on the patent observation that the term ‘the

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55This structure does not disregard the helpful insights gained from the thematic pattern identified in W D Davies & D C Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew (Vol 2)*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 233-234. It simply allows for a different basis on which to organise the narrative.
Kingdom of God' first appears in the Matthaean narrative at 12:28 and appears for the last time at 21:43.

It is within this extended section that Jesus declares that ‘the Kingdom of God’ “came upon” ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28) and ultimately “will be taken from” them (21:43; cf. 21:45). Moreover, these first and last occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ form an *inclusio* within the narrative structure.

Such an approach does not claim an overriding structure for the Gospel of Matthew based on the occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God.’ Attempts to find a structure for the Gospel of Matthew are numerous and have been discussed at length elsewhere.56

Rather, the proposed framework recognises the extensive ‘Kingdom references’ found throughout the narrative, especially the distinctively Matthaean formulation, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ ‘The Kingdom of God’ is one of the cluster of such ‘Kingdom expressions.’ However, it is used in the Matthaean narrative for specific theological purposes.

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2.4 Matthew’s *Sitz im Leben*

Having discussed Matthew’s theological purposes utilising exegetical and narrative-critical insights, a sketch of the *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew’s community will be offered. These insights incorporate concerns of form criticism and historical criticism, but from a broader perspective.\(^5^7\)

Conclusions will be drawn from an examination of the whole Matthaean narrative instead of focusing only on separate pericopes in isolation.\(^5^8\) Matthew’s *Sitz im Leben* can be indicated from a more holistic approach to the narrative as an entity. A lead is provided by Senior when he says

To what extent can one deduce specific knowledge about the circumstances of the author and his audience from the contours of a narrative? Does, for example, the Gospel’s emphasis on the negative role of the Pharisees in its story of Jesus tell us anything at all about the relationship of Matthew’s community to Pharisaic Judaism? ... I believe that literary texts do have the capacity to provide, if not a window on the world behind the text, then at least a

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\(^5^8\) For example, Thomas makes effective use of rhetorical analysis to propose that Matthew may be emphasising certain issues by the selective usage of the term ‘the Kingdom of God.’ See Thomas, “Kingdom of God,” 141-146. Each reference is examined in its own immediate context, however.
translucent screen through which we can see some defined characters.\textsuperscript{59}

3.0 Analysis

This section examines the texts which refer to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative. The overall context of the *inclusio* for this exegesis, within the wider narrative, is Mt 12:15-23:39. What follows is a detailed discussion of the relevant passages within this *inclusio*, that is; Mt 12:15-50; 19:15-20:16 and 21:23-23:39.

3.1 'The Kingdom of God Came Upon You' (Mt 12:28):

Analysis of Mt 12:15-50

This section discusses the following themes in the Matthaean narrative leading up to 12:15: ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees,’ and ‘fruits.’ Then these three themes will be discussed as they combine in 12:15-50. This investigation will allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the first occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (12:28).
3.1.1 The Theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in Mt 1:1-12:14

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ appears for the first time in Mathew’s Gospel when John the Baptist proclaims that “the Kingdom of Heaven [ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν] has come near” (3:2). Its sudden appearance takes the reader by surprise because ‘the Kingdom’ has not been anticipated in the narrative to this point (1:1-3:1).

Jesus likewise proclaims that “the Kingdom of Heaven has come near” (4:17). For the reader, this identical message closely links the ministry of Jesus with that of ‘John the Baptist.’

Jesus’ ministry expands upon his inaugural proclamation and is characterised by preaching 'the gospel of the Kingdom' (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας), accompanied by deeds of healing (4:23). Jesus goes on to expound the meaning of ‘the Kingdom’ in the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29).

‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ belongs to “the poor in spirit” (5:3) and to those who “are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (5:10). A person's status in ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is dependent upon their 'doing' and 'teaching' the law and the prophets (5:17-19).61

60 See also Anderson, Matthew’s Narrative Web, 86-90.
61 The term 'the Kingdom of Heaven' is used twice in this passage.
There is also a prerequisite for 'entering into' 'the Kingdom of Heaven': Jesus' disciples must be more righteous than the scribes and 'Pharisees' (5:20). In prayer, Jesus' disciples must ask for (God) the Father's 'Kingdom' to come (Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς... ἔλθετω ἡ βασίλεια σου) (6:9-10). They are to 'pursue first' the Father's 'Kingdom' and His righteousness, before other concerns will be addressed by God (6:33).  

Then 'the Kingdom' is mentioned with a sudden, dramatic change of emphasis and identification. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, (eschatological) entrance into 'the Kingdom' and doing the will of the Father in Heaven are directly linked with Jesus' identity. Jesus declares: “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one doing the will of

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62 The text is taken here to read: "... for your Heavenly Father has known that you need all these things. But pursue first the Kingdom (τὴν βασίλειαν) and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you" (6:32b-33). Thus the text according to: a vg² (Eusebius) (Gregory-Nyssa) (Didymus) Macarius/ Symeon; Speculum is considered to be most accurate.

Other witnesses which have various readings, while nonetheless maintaining τὴν βασίλειαν without a modifier, include: B 1646 cop²³ bo it² Cyprian Augustine. See B Aland, K Aland, J Karavidopoulos, C M Martini & B M Metzger (Eds), The Greek New Testament: Fourth Revised Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 21-22.


2 However, the flow of the narrative from 6:32b makes a modifier redundant and it seems the earliest witnesses understood this. See also Gundry, Matthew, 119; Luz, Matthew 1-7, 400; G Strecker, The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary (Translated by O C Dean), (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988 [1985]), 139-140.
my Father in Heaven” (7:21). This teaching, and the Sermon as a whole, is concluded with an emphasis on ‘hearing and doing’ Jesus’ teaching (7:24-27). Thus for Matthew hearing and doing Jesus’ teaching appears to be synonymous with doing the will of the Father in Heaven. Moreover, fulfilling this criteria is essential for entering ‘the Kingdom’ “on that day” (7:22).

Suddenly the reader is aware that ‘the Kingdom’ is intimately linked with the person of Jesus in an unprecedented way. Specifically, response to Jesus' ministry implies response to ‘the Kingdom.’

For Matthew the necessary response to Jesus is ‘faith,’ on the part of Gentile or Jew (8:10). Consequently, Jesus says to ‘the ones following’: “But I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the Kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.”

Here the reader notes that the narrative is becoming more pointed with respect to sharing in ‘the Kingdom.’ Earlier ‘John the Baptist’ declared that God is able to raise up children to Abraham

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63See also Kingsbury, Matthew (2nd Ed), 67, 74-75; Kingsbury, Matthew: A Commentary, 59; Kingsbury, Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 137.
64Literally, “sons.”
from the stones (3:9); he said this to “many of the Pharisees and Sadducees” who were coming to ‘John’ for baptism (3:7)!

Abrahamic heritage is not enough to ensure participation in ‘the Kingdom’ in the Matthaean narrative.

The Sermon on the Mount shows that response to Jesus is crucial in terms of relationship with ‘the Kingdom’ (7:21-27). Now for the first time Jesus indicates that those who presume to be part of the radically inclusive ‘Kingdom’ can actually exclude themselves (8:11-12). In context “children of the Kingdom” implies Israel (8:10). Moreover, there is a definite juxtaposition of Israel and Gentiles in 8:5-13. Thus there is another dimension to the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in the narrative: some groups\(^{65}\) within Israel will forfeit ‘the Kingdom’ through lack of faith.

Jesus continues his teaching and healing ministry in Capernaum and beyond, and then in his own city (8:14-9:34), revealing ‘the Kingdom’ in action. This activity of Jesus is emphasised again: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their [the Pharisees’]\(^{66}\) synagogues and preaching the

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\(^{65}\) That there will be Jews present in the eschatological ‘Kingdom’ is indicated by the (distinctively Matthaean) phrase, “east and west” (8:11); i.e. Jews and Gentiles. Cf. Luke’s rendition of this Q saying; Lk 13:29.

\(^{66}\) Although some witnesses omit 9:34 they are exclusively Western: D it\(^{adk}\) syr' Juvenecus Hilary. The Committee includes 9:34, giving it a B rating, which indicates that it is almost certainly part of the original manuscript. See Aland, \textit{et.al.,} \textit{The Greek New Testament,} 32; Metzger, \textit{Textual Commentary,} 20-21.
gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness” (9:35).

Here a new section begins in which Jesus’ discourse to the twelve disciples launches their mission to Israel (9:35-10:42). The twelve are to carry out the same ministry of Jesus, except for teaching, and their proclamation is to be: “The Kingdom of Heaven has come near” (10:7). This addition of the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ and its Matthaean formulation ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (10:7) has the effect of maintaining continuity between ‘John the Baptist,’ Jesus and Jesus’ disciples. ‘John the Baptist’ proclaims ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (3:2) and introduces Jesus; Jesus proclaims ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (4:17) and gathers disciples; Jesus instructs his twelve disciples to proclaim ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ to Israel (10:7).

The inclusion of 9:34 is to be preferred for at least two reasons: 1. The sheer volume of witnesses; and 2. For literary reasons. ‘Their’ synagogues (9:35) is understood as ‘the Pharisees’ synagogues’ (9:34 prepares for this association). This qualification of the synagogues almost exactly recalls 4:23, where Jesus also teaches in ‘their’ synagogues. On this earlier occasion ‘their’ was similarly qualified as ‘the first four disciples’ synagogues.’ Mt 4:18-22 likewise prepared for this association.

Gundry also argues for the inclusion of 9:34 with the additional reason of “parallelism ... in vv 27-31, 32-34”; Gundry, Matthew, 180.

This temporary omission is rectified at the end of the narrative, 28:16-20.

Here the reference to ‘the Kingdom’ in Matthew’s narrative has been added by the Evangelist, directly influenced by the Q tradition (cf. Lk 9:2). Matthew’s unique formulation, however, ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, is used once again. In Mark 6:7-13 on the other hand, no specific message is given for the disciples to proclaim. Lk 9:2 includes the formulation τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, which is possibly closer to Q. Matthew’s concern is to continue the pattern from Mt 3:2 and 4:17.
Jesus then underscores the significance of the mission of ‘the Kingdom.’ In his words to the crowds, Jesus declares that although ‘John the Baptist’ is great, the ‘little ones’ in ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ are even greater (11:11). Here Jesus alludes to those disciples whom he sends on mission to Israel (10:42).

This declaration is immediately followed by an enigmatic saying concerning ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and violence (11:12). Jesus says that from “the days of John the Baptist” until Jesus' own ministry ‘the Kingdom’ “suffers violence” and “violent ones seize it” (11:12b). This saying emphasises the theme of persecution against those in the service of ‘the Kingdom.’

Consequently in the narrative section Mt 1:1-12:14 the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ appears 17 times. It has been formulated in various ways: ‘gospel of the Kingdom’ (4:23; 9:35), ‘God the Father’s Kingdom [implied]’ (6:10, 33), ‘the Kingdom’ (8:12), and (overwhelmingly) ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19 [twice], 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12).

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ arrives suddenly in Matthew’s narrative (3:2), surprising the reader. ‘John the Baptist’ (3:2), Jesus (4:17) and his disciples (10:7) are all depicted as being in the

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69 This saying is taken from Q (cf. Lk 7:28). Matthew's formulation ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ however, is unique.

70 This saying is taken from Q (cf. Lk 16:16). Matthew's formulation, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is again unique.

71 See also Schweizer, Matthew, 262; Gundry, Matthew, 209-210.
service of ‘the Kingdom.’ However, it is clear at the end of Jesus’ first major discourse that ‘the Kingdom’ is intimately linked with the person of Jesus in an unprecedented way (7:21-28). Therefore Jesus’ words and deeds assume greater import.

The last reference to the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in this section foreshadows persecution (11:12). The reader anticipates further conflict centred on ‘the Kingdom.’

3.1.2 The Theme of ‘The Pharisees’ in Mt 1:1-12:14

From the moment ‘the Pharisees’ are introduced in Matthew’s narrative the reader understands that they are enemies of ‘the Kingdom.’ ‘John the Baptist’ suddenly proclaims the imminence of ‘the Kingdom’ (3:2) and baptises followers in the Jordan River as they confess their sins (3:5-6). For many religious leaders such as ‘Pharisees’ and Sadducees to be among those who respond (3:7a), is surely an amazing and heartening prospect. ‘John the

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72The inclusion of ‘the Pharisees’ here is a distinctively Matthaean addition to Q || Lk 3:7.
73For an understanding of ἐπὶ in this context see L Morris, The Gospel according to Matthew, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 57; S D Toussaint, Behold the King: A Study of Matthew, (Portland: Multnomah, 1981 [1980]), 68. Contra Carter’s suggestion that this phrase in Mt 3:7 should be translated: "... many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming against the baptism ..." This translation says that ‘John the Baptist’ is defending his baptismal ministry against the leaders’ opposition. See Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 96. In order to maintain this interpretation, ‘John the Baptist’s’ question: “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (3:7b) must be ironic; Ibid., 97. The
Baptist’ is not impressed, however. In an astonishing attack he implies that they are devious and religiously unclean, that their vested interest in avoiding God’s judgement results in a display of repentance which is mere hypocrisy and that they presume upon their Abrahamic heritage (3:7b-9).

The disorienting aspect of this encounter, for the reader, is that Israel’s religious leaders have not provided any reason for ‘John the Baptist’s’ outburst; in fact, on the face of it, they have shown good reason for approval!74 In order to maintain confidence in the narrative, therefore, the reader must rely on the discernment of ‘John the Baptist.’ For the narrative to make sense here, the reader must make the assumption that there is a justifiable reason for regarding ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees as enemies of ‘the Kingdom.’

The antagonistic attitude of ‘John the Baptist’ is shared by Jesus. After ‘John the Baptist,’ Jesus likewise comes proclaiming ‘the Kingdom’ (4:17) and expounds its nature in a long discourse (5:1-7:28). Suddenly Jesus introduces ‘the scribes and Pharisees’ into his teaching, as negative examples: “For I say to you all that dynamics of the narrative, however, indicate that “many of the Pharisees and Sadducees” were responding to ‘John’s’ baptism, and his aggressive reaction is surprising for the reader. ‘John the Baptist’ continues to address ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees throughout 3:7b-12. Implicit in ‘John’s’ words to these leaders is that these leaders are not integrated and consistent in their response.

74 See also Overman, Church and Community in Crisis, 55.
unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven” (5:20).  

Now Jesus’ antagonistic attitude confronts the reader. To this point the scribes have correctly interpreted the scriptures concerning the birth of the Christ (2:4). ‘The Pharisees’ have done nothing since they were rejected, along with the Sadducees, by ‘John the Baptist’ (3:7-9). The reader can only assume that ‘the Pharisees’ at least, have not heeded ‘John the Baptist's’ warning to demonstrate sincere repentance (3:10-12) or that somehow they were involved in his arrest (4:12a). In either case no opposition to Jesus has been made explicit in the narrative to this point.

Further, Jesus’ warning concerning true righteousness sets up a tension between these religious leaders and ‘the Kingdom.’ ‘The Pharisees,’ as well as the scribes, are shown to be enemies of ‘the Kingdom’: their righteousness falls outside its realm (5:20).

‘The Pharisees’ then have serious concerns about Jesus’ way of life. They ask Jesus’ disciples: “Why does your teacher eat with

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75 This inclusion of ‘the Pharisees’ here is distinctively Matthaean.
76 It is true that the scribes “do Herod’s bidding” in the Matthaean Birth Narrative; see Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 116. However, Herod’s murderous duplicity is only revealed as the narrative unfolds. Thus the scribes become implicated with Herod.
77 P Luomanen mentions the high demands of Matthaean discipleship in this context; P Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew’s View of Salvation, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 85. His study can be enhanced with the narrative-critical observation that here in the Matthaean narrative Jesus attacks the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ without provocation.
tax collectors and sinners?” (9:11). Jesus’ initial reply is reasonable; he offers grace to those who are ill (9:12). Then his next comment is more confronting: “But go and be a disciple (μάθητή) of this: ‘I want mercy and not sacrifice’ . . .” (9:13a). Jesus is unimpressed with the interpretive approach of ‘the Pharisees.’ This pericope shows that Jesus has serious concerns about ‘the Pharisees’ and their way of life.  

Immediately after this exchange ‘John’s’ disciples declare their approval of fasting and include ‘the Pharisees’ as supporters of this discipline (9:14). Jesus, however, clearly understands his movement as qualitatively different from, and superior to, the Pharisaic way of life (as well as the continuing Baptist movement). Thus far in the narrative Jesus has attacked ‘the Pharisees’ regarding their standard of righteousness (5:20), challenged their understanding of God’s requirement of mercy according to Hos 6:6 (twice; 9:13a; 12:7) and disregarded their observance of fasting (9:14-17)! Rather than responding to ‘Pharisaic’ attacks the Matthaean Jesus is continually provoking them.

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78 This reference to ‘the Pharisees’ has its basis in Mk 2:16.
79 From 9:11 onwards ‘the Pharisees’ indeed precipitate conflict with Jesus; see R Beaton, Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 181. However, a narrative-critical analysis underlines Jesus’ prior antagonism towards ‘the Pharisees.’
80 This reference to ‘the Pharisees’ has its basis in Mk 2:18. Matthew has tightened up Mark’s repetitive sentence which mentions ‘the Pharisees’ twice; consequently there is now only one reference to them.
At this point the reader remains confronted by this antagonism of ‘the Pharisees,’ first by ‘John the Baptist,’ and now, repeatedly by Jesus. In order to make sense of this the reader must continue to have faith in the perspectives of ‘John the Baptist’ and Jesus. Yet no reasons have been provided in the narrative to this point. Moreover, A J Saldarini notes that

... despite Matthew’s highly negative view of the Jewish leaders, their behavior, analyzed according to conventional social norms, was neither unusual nor evil. ... Matthew has not disguised the fact that many of the questions asked by the Pharisees and scribes are legitimate matters for discussion in first-century Judaism. ... All of these disputes over Jewish law and the disputants’ status and authority in the community are normal conflicts found in any society. ... [However] Within the narrative, the virulence of Jesus’ polemic against his opponents is out of all proportion to their attacks on him. ... 81

It is not surprising that ‘the Pharisees’ then declare their total opposition to Jesus. When Jesus heals a mute demon-possessed man, ‘the Pharisees’ respond that Jesus is in league with “the ruler of the demons” (9:34). 82 At last ‘the Pharisees’ openly respond to Jesus’ ministry with a scathing judgement that he is not of God. Referring to Mt 9:34, Saldarini notes: “The one explicitly hostile charge against Jesus is that of witchcraft. . . .” 83

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82 Matthew has distinctively altered Mark’s reference to ‘the scribes’ (Mk 3:22) to read ‘the Pharisees’ here.
Jesus responds by “. . . teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness” (9:35). Here the narrator indirectly rebukes ‘the Pharisees’ by blatantly contradicting their assessment of Jesus. For the reader it is clear that Jesus and ‘the Pharisees’ are diametrically opposed; therefore ‘the Pharisees’ are mutually exclusive with ‘the Kingdom.’ Moreover, the reader begins to align his or her perspective with that of the narrator, who is clearly endorsing Jesus’ ministry. Thus for the reader, Jesus’ antagonism of ‘the Pharisees’ in particular, becomes justified.

The narrator continues to rebuke ‘the Pharisees’ indirectly by describing the crowds as “distressed and weary,” without shepherd-leaders (9:36). In response, Jesus sends out his twelve disciples on mission to Israel with the message of ‘the Kingdom’ (10:1-7). This message entails the opposite way to ‘the Pharisees.’ The reader continues to be confirmed in support of Jesus, and, by implication, ‘John the Baptist,’ and in opposition to ‘the Pharisees.’

‘The Pharisees’ might well suppose that they have good reason to oppose Jesus as being in league with the ruler of the demons; the next time they confront him, his disciples are violating the Sabbath (12:1-2).\(^\text{84}\) Their disapproval is surely a sign that they

\(^{84}\text{Matthew’s reference to ‘the Pharisees’ (12:2) has its basis in Mk 2:24.}\)
are defenders of God's way! However, Jesus argues against them (12:3-7) and makes the provocative claim: “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (12:8). Thus Jesus disregards the ‘Pharisaic’ understanding of the Sabbath.

Immediately following this incident Jesus enters ‘their synagogue’ (12:9). In the presence of a man with a withered hand they ask Jesus if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath (12:10a,b). For the first time the narrator includes the motivation of ‘the Pharisees’: “. . . in order that they might accuse him” (12:10c). The reader is made aware that ‘the Pharisees’ are not concerned with the plight of a man with a disability; they are simply out to trap Jesus. The reader is becoming more aligned with the narrator’s perspective against ‘the Pharisees.’

Jesus’ argument concludes that: “. . . it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (12:12b). So ‘the Pharisees’ have succeeded in entrapping Jesus: their understanding of the Sabbath is contested yet again (12:13).

After Jesus heals the man ‘the Pharisees’ “. . . went out and took counsel against him so that they might destroy him” (12:13-14).\textsuperscript{85} The reader receives this privileged information from the narrator and is now totally aligned with Jesus and the way of ‘the

\textsuperscript{85}In the context of Jesus’ words ‘the Pharisees’ do what is unlawful: that is, they do evil on the Sabbath!
Kingdom.’ The reader perceives that ‘the Pharisees’ are devious in their tactics and treacherous in their intent. ‘The Pharisees’ have made it their mission to destroy Jesus and so impede ‘the Kingdom.’

This section of the narrative (Mt 1:1-12:14) concludes with the most ominous threat so far. Finally ‘the Pharisees’ plan to destroy Jesus (12:14).86 The reader is now aware of the gravity of the situation: if Jesus is destroyed then in a sense ‘the Kingdom’ is destroyed. At this point the narrative has presented the reader with two mutually exclusive options: either ‘the Pharisees’ survive and ‘the Kingdom’ vanishes or ‘the Kingdom’ flourishes at the expense of ‘the Pharisees.’87

3.1.3 The Theme of ‘Fruit’ in Mt 1:1-12:14

When ‘John the Baptist’ refuses baptism for the Sadducees and ‘Pharisees’ his challenge to them is to “produce fruit (καρπὸν)”

86 Matthew’s reference to ‘the Pharisees’ here has its basis in Mk 3:6. Anderson comments that the portrait of the religious leaders as “evil antagonists of Jesus” is established by this stage. See Anderson, Matthew’s Narrative Web, 108. This is true. However, it must be noted that the reader has experienced ‘John the Baptist’ and Jesus as antagonists of the religious leaders first.

worthy of repentance” (3:8).\textsuperscript{88} The reverse is also formulated by ‘John the Baptist’: “. . . therefore every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (3:10).\textsuperscript{89} So ‘fruit’ indicates the outworking of repentance. It is not made clear, however, what this repentance entails.

This theme of ‘fruit’ appears again in the early days of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus similarly echoes ‘John the Baptist’s’ imagery of ‘fruit’ in the Sermon on the Mount. The disciples are warned concerning the danger of false prophets (7:15). Such people will be known “by their fruits” (7:16).\textsuperscript{90}

Jesus declares: “. . . every good tree produces good fruits but the rotten tree produces evil fruits” (7:17).\textsuperscript{91} He continues: “A good tree is not able to produce evil fruits nor is a rotten tree able to produce good fruits” (7:18).\textsuperscript{92} Then Jesus announces the judgement awaiting trees that do not ‘produce good fruit.’ What is striking is that Jesus again repeats ‘John the Baptist’s’ words to ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees, almost verbatim: “Every tree not producing good fruits is cut down and thrown into the fire” (7:19; cf. 3:10).\textsuperscript{93} The

\textsuperscript{88}From Q || Lk 3:8.
\textsuperscript{89}From Q || Lk 3:9.
\textsuperscript{90}From Q || Lk 6:44.
\textsuperscript{91}From Q || Lk 6:44.
\textsuperscript{92}This additional saying has been added by Matthew.
\textsuperscript{93}This additional saying is unique to Matthew.
implication is that ‘false prophets’ specifically refer to ‘the Pharisees.’

Jesus concludes this teaching: “So by their fruits you will know them” (7:20). As an isolated saying this recognition on the basis of ‘their fruits’ can be arbitrary; ‘good fruits’ have still not been defined. In context, however, Jesus is warning his disciples about ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees; ‘the Kingdom’ is at odds with their way. ‘The Kingdom’ demands repentance. On the only occasion where ‘many’ of ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees show repentance however, they are rejected (3:7-12).

In this section of the narrative (1:1-12:14) the theme of ‘fruit’ appears in two passages. ‘John the Baptist’ employs the image when challenging ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees (3:7-12), and Jesus employs it to warn his disciples against false prophets (7:15-20). The last four occurrences of ‘fruit/fruits’ (7:18-20) reveal distinctly Matthaean redaction. The literary technique of repetition is also used in various ways, to establish a connection between these two passages.

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94 Once again this additional saying is unique to Matthew.
95 See Luz, Matthew 1-7, 440; Gundry, Matthew, 130.
At this point the reader is aware of an intimate link between the themes of ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’\(^\text{97}\) and producing ‘fruit.’ That ‘the Pharisees’ plan to destroy Jesus (12:14) indicates the nefarious quality of their fruit.

\(\text{3.1.4 ‘The Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘Fruit’ in Mt 12:15-50}\)

Jesus’ withdrawal from the scene of the death plot of ‘the Pharisees’ (12:15a) provides the location for the next setting. Jesus heals ‘all’ who followed him and warns them not to make him known (12:15b-16). The narrator declares this activity to be a fulfillment of Isa 42:1-4 (12:17-21).\(^\text{98}\) Moreover, the emphasis on ‘the Gentiles’ (12:18, 21) indicates that the message of Jesus is gaining acceptance beyond Israel.

Next, Jesus heals a blind and mute demon-possessed man, prompting ‘all the crowds’ to say: “Surely this one is not the Son of

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\(^{97}\) The linking of ‘the Sadducees’ with ‘the Pharisees’ throughout this section is not maintained as a dominant image. The reader becomes aware that the narrative does not keep pursuing ‘the Sadducees.’ The hostility shown towards Jesus and the subsequent plot to destroy him is associated only with ‘the Pharisees.’

\(^{98}\) This reference to ‘Isaiah’ is distinctively Matthaean redaction of Mk 3:7-12. For a thorough discussion of the First Evangelist’s use of Isaiah 42:1-4 in this section of Matthew’s narrative see Beaton, \textit{Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel}, 122-173.
David?” (12:22-23). It is at this point that ‘the Pharisees’ respond with a vicious attack on the identity of Jesus.99

‘The Pharisees’ say: “This one does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons” (12:24).100 The narrator intrudes immediately to let the reader know that Jesus knew their thoughts (12:25a). In turn Jesus responds with a

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99 There is not a little irony here as the death plot of ‘the Pharisees’ was the reason for Jesus’ withdrawal (12:15a). Jesus has just warned those who follow not to reveal him (12:16). However the crowds’ wonderment concerning Jesus as the Son of David immediately brings ‘the Pharisees’ into the scene! R Bultmann notes that the inclusion of ‘the Pharisees’ here is distinctively Matthaean; see R Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition (Revised Edition)* (Translated by J Marsh), (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994 [ET 1963; German original 1921]), 14.

1 From an anthropological perspective Mt 12:24ff is best understood as a struggle between groups in the context of a ‘witchcraft society.’ See Malina & Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names*, 1-32. An exploration of how Matthew’s narrative “undermines itself” here is found in B W Longenecker, “Evil at Odds With Itself (Matthew 12:22-29): Demonising Rhetoric and Deconstructive Potential in the Matthean Narrative,” *BibInt* 11 (March-April 2003), 503-514. Although this study does not discuss ‘the Kingdom of God’ it is helpful for understanding the possible tensions between Matthew’s communities and Pharisaic Judaism.

100 In Mk 3:22 Jesus’ opposition is from “the scribes who came down from Jerusalem.” Here Matthew alters this to ‘the Pharisees’ (12:24).

1 B R Doyle comments that the role of ‘the Pharisees’ in this part of the narrative is to initiate opposition to Jesus; see B R Doyle, “A Concern of the Evangelist: Pharisees in Matthew 12,” *ABR* 34 (1986), 17. This is correct but it must also be noted that there has been a history of antagonism against ‘the Pharisees’ in the Matthaean narrative, from ‘John the Baptist’ and Jesus.

2 Also, Anderson identifies the literary device of double stories used here by Matthew. ‘The Pharisees’ responded in a similar manner earlier when Jesus healed a mute demon-possessed man (9:32). The crowds express their amazement at Jesus’ power (9:33) and ‘the Pharisees’ respond: “By the prince of demons he casts out the demons” (9:34). This episode foreshadows 12:22ff and thus prepares the reader for Pharisaic opposition to Jesus. In this second episode, however, the drama is heightened by the greater disability of the demon-possessed man, the greater response of the crowds, the addition of ‘Beelzebul’ to the words of ‘the Pharisees’ and Jesus’ stinging reply to ‘the Pharisees.’ See Anderson, *Matthew’s Narrative Web*, 119-122, 177-179.
blistering attack upon ‘the Pharisees’ (12:25b-37). His first argument is based on simple logic: if Satan is casting out himself then how will his kingdom stand (12:25b-26)? ‘The Pharisees’ have not truly identified Jesus’ source of power.

Jesus continues his argument, addressing the inconsistency of ‘the Pharisees’: why is it that he alone is accused of having the power of Beelzebul (12:27a)? The sons of ‘the Pharisees’ evidently have an exorcism ministry; where does their power come from (12:27b)? Therefore ‘the Pharisees’ will be judged by their own sons (12:27c).

Jesus goes further, however, to make an incredible announcement. He declares:

“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God came upon you” (12:28).

With this statement the reader is surprised on at least two different levels.

First, this conclusion is not inevitable. Having established that Satan cannot cast out Satan (12:25-27), Jesus could be expected to say:

“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons,

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101 Malina & Neyrey discuss Jesus’ reaction to deviance labelling here in terms of repudiation, evasion and redefinition. See Malina & Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names*, 63-65. The reader recognises that the issue at stake is: who is deviant, the religious leaders or Jesus? This issue reflects the concerns of Matthew’s community.
then I am overpowering Satan.”

Then the subsequent sentence would naturally follow: “... Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house” (Mt 12:29). Thus the reference to ‘the Kingdom’ here is jarring.102

Second, this formulation of ‘the Kingdom’-saying has never been used before. There have already been several different formulations of ‘the Kingdom’ in the narrative. However, each time ‘the Kingdom’ has been proclaimed in direct speech, it has always been expressed as 'the Kingdom of Heaven' (3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Here for the first time Jesus announces ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) (12:28).

102 This jarring effect is a powerful literary device. Davies & Allison note that 12:27, 28 are a puzzling combination but fail to draw literary conclusions. See Davies & Allison, Matthew (Vol 2), 340-341. Nolland seeks to resolve the tension by arguing that vv27 and 28 probably did not originally stand together; Nolland, Matthew, 499-500. This implies an awkwardness and unawareness in Matthew’s narrative, however, which does not recognise the Evangelist’s literary skill.


Carter says that ‘the Kingdom of God’ formulation here “intensifies the contrast with Satan.” See Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 273. Such a contrast would be made clearer by directly mentioning Satan. Here, ‘the Pharisees’ are explicitly addressed, as Carter notes; Ibid.
Thus this ‘Kingdom’-saying is so unexpected that the reader experiences something of its dramatic arrival.\textsuperscript{103} The impact for the reader is underscored by the fact that 12:28 contains the only ‘Kingdom’-saying in this section of the Matthaean narrative 12:15-50.\textsuperscript{104} After a general reference to “every kingdom” (12:25) and mentioning Satan’s kingdom (12:26), Jesus’ argument reaches a climax with the reference to ‘God’s Kingdom’ (12:28). This development is satisfying as a progression of Jesus’ argument; it nonetheless highlights the unprecedented expression ‘the Kingdom of God.’\textsuperscript{105}

Further, the reader is struck by Jesus’ ominous words to ‘the Pharisees’: “. . . the Kingdom of God came upon you” (12:28b).\textsuperscript{106} In

\textsuperscript{103} As Anderson notes: “After the implied reader recognises similarity, variations stand out.” See Anderson, “Double and Triple Stories,” 75.

\textsuperscript{104} A Stock asserts that the immediate section of 12:22-32 “is dominated by the logion that the Kingdom of God has broken in.” A Stock, \textit{The Method and Message of Matthew}, (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1994), 200. See also F D Bruner, \textit{Matthew: A Commentary; Volume 1: The Christbook - Matthew 1-12 (Revised and Expanded)}, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 562. This observation is underlined by the Matthaean formulation ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Jesus’ conflict with ‘the Pharisees’ here. Foster notes the “shock value” of this formulation of ‘the Kingdom’ here: Foster, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 494-495.

\textsuperscript{105} Gundry argues that: “Matthew retains ‘of God’ [from Q||Lk 11:20] for correspondence with the foregoing references to Satan’s kingdom (v 26) and the Spirit of God (v 28a).” See Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 235. This observation is helpful but there is more to be explored with a narrative-based approach.

\textsuperscript{106} For an excellent scholarly discussion of Mt 12:28||Lk 11:20 see G R Beasley-Murray, \textit{Jesus and the Kingdom of God}, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 75-80. While helpful in the context of the historical Jesus it does not discuss Mt 12:28 from the standpoint of Matthew’s narrative purposes.

\textsuperscript{1} Davies & Allison discuss various aspects of this Kingdom-saying; see Davies & Allison, \textit{Matthew (Vol 2)}, 339-341. Yet they do not address the crucial issue: Mt 12:28 is directed specifically towards ‘the Pharisees.’ Bruner recognises this issue and even
view of the history of antagonism between Jesus and these religious leaders the implication is that God’s realm has arrived, but it entails judgement upon ‘the Pharisees.’¹⁰⁷


¹⁰⁷See also D R A Hare, *Matthew*, (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 139-140. Morris notes that the root of ἐφανερόν here: “... may also signify ‘come upon’ with the idea of confrontation or hostility.” See Morris, *Matthew*, 316. A similar interpretation is found in France, *Matthew*, 474, 480.


2 Similarly, I H Jones’ comment concerning God’s Spirit, Jesus’ exorcisms and the presence of ‘the Kingdom’ overlooks the theme of judgement in 12:28. See I H Jones, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (London: Epworth, 1994), 80. See also Beaton’s discussion on this section; Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, 181-183, 190. Specifically Jesus declares here that ‘the Kingdom of God’ “came upon you [Pharisees].” Nolland’s observation that ‘the Kingdom of God,’ as it has come upon ‘the Pharisees’ and others, “represents a challenge” is pertinent, if understating the drama by overlooking Matthew’s literary strategy. See Nolland, *Matthew*, 501.

3 G N Stanton comments on the sustained accusations that Jesus was a ‘magician.’ He notes that in Matthew 12, the First Evangelist reacts by presenting Jesus as working in the power of the Holy Spirit. See G N Stanton, *A Gospel For A New People: Studies in Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 177-180. However, Stanton does not emphasise that Matthew achieves this result by his use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God.’

4 D Patte discusses the significance of the phrase ‘the Kingdom of God’ here; see D Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew’s Faith*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 176-177. He distinguishes between the terms ‘the Kingdom of God’ and ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ while recognising that they are complementary. In Mt 12:28 he suggests that the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ designates “God’s power which is universal even though his authority is not universally acknowledged. ...” (176). This helpful insight needs to be more specific: God’s power has arrived upon ‘the Pharisees’ as they assign Jesus’ power to Beelzebul.
The theme of judgement on 'the Pharisees' is also heightened by the parallelism of 12:27-28. The sons of 'the Pharisees' will be their judges (12:27c); 'the Kingdom of God' has come upon them in judgement (12:28b). This much is also made clear in the argument that follows.

Jesus implies that he has bound Satan, the Strong One and that in his ministry he is plundering Satan's house (12:29). So whoever is not with Jesus is against him (12:30). Yet denigrating the identity of Jesus the Son of Man will be forgiven; the unforgivable sin is to denigrate the Holy Spirit (12:31-32).

This statement is not a general warning to avoid attributing the power of the Holy Spirit to the power of Satan, however. It specifically underlines the state of 'the Pharisees.' The introductory phrase: “Therefore I tell you (Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν) . . .” (12:31) recalls Jesus' words to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, concerning material possessions (6:25). Here this stern pronouncement is made to 'the Pharisees,' concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The implication here, though, is that they are incapable of repentance. This fact is revealed as Jesus continues his damning reply.

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108 For a discussion of how such contrast is heightened see W G Thompson, Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt. 17,22-18,35, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 105-106.
Jesus recalls the imagery of ‘fruit’: “Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree rotten and its fruit will be rotten. For by the fruit the tree is known” (12:33).\(^{110}\) The reader recalls these words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount: those producing rotten fruit are false prophets (7:15-18).\(^{111}\)

This image of ‘fruit’ also recalls ‘John the Baptist’s’ emphasis on repentance (3:7-12).\(^{112}\) Specifically, it recalls his castigation of ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees for not producing ‘fruits’ that befit repentance. Jesus now uses these same inflammatory words here to declare that ‘the Pharisees’ are incapable of repentance:\(^{113}\) “You offspring of snakes [cf. 3:7b], how are you able to speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person, out of the good treasure brings forth good and the evil person, out of the evil treasure brings forth evil” (12:34-35).

Jesus concludes this line of argument by emphasising that ‘the Pharisees’ will ultimately be justified or condemned by their

\(^{110}\)These three references to ‘fruit’ are uniquely Matthaean.


\(^{112}\)See also Anderson, “Double and Triple Stories,” 75; Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 139-140.

\(^{113}\)Charette sees 12:33 as Jesus’ call to ‘the Pharisees’ to repent: B Charette, *The Theme of Recompense in Matthew’s Gospel*, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 129-130. However, the scathing words in 12:34 indicate that the Matthaean Jesus believes ‘the Pharisees’ are incapable of changing. See also Anderson, *Matthew’s Narrative Web*, 178.
words (12:36-37).  

Throughout this vigorous tirade, however, Jesus has not given any hope that ‘the Pharisees’ will redeem themselves. The subsequent reply of “some of the scribes and Pharisees” bear this out: their next words demand a sign from Jesus (12:38).

This request is not for a miracle in general; the healing of the blind and mute demon-possessed man was surely such a sign! The religious leaders have endured public humiliation from Jesus and they want him to provide a sign to legitimate his behaviour. Jesus responds with contempt: no sign shall be given “except the sign of Jonah the prophet” (12:39). This ‘sign’ implies Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection to come (12:40), which demands the appropriate response to Jesus. With reference to Jonah and Nineveh, and the Queen of the South and Solomon, Jesus hammers home the impending judgement coming “on this generation” because of its refusal to repent (12:41-42).

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114 Anderson rightly notes that by this stage the reader sees Jesus’ reply to ‘the Pharisees’ as warranted; Ibid., 179.

115 Bultmann categorises Mt 12:22-37 as an apophthegm; specifically, a “controversy dialogue occasioned by Jesus' healings.” See Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, 12-14. Bultmann’s form-critical analysis is insightful here, yet narrative analysis yields more thorough appreciation of Matthew’s distinctive emphasis in the Gospel’s overall structure.

116 This reference to ‘the Pharisees’ has its basis in Mk 8:11. Although this pericope is in a different section in Mark’s narrative (Mk 8:11-12), Matthew includes it here as part of the Beelzebul controversy.

117 Kingsbury’s comment here does not go far enough: Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, 73. Hare is more specific in his understanding of ‘sign’ here: Hare, Matthew, 142.
Jesus concludes his reply by indicating that it is not enough to experience the healing of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is required otherwise the ‘unclean spirit’ returns with others, and so Jesus’ ministry will have been in vain (12:43-45c). These harsh words are not a warning; they predict the fate of the scribes and ‘the Pharisees,’ and their era (12:45d).

The passage concludes with a lesson on who is ‘inside’ and who is ‘outside’ God’s realm. Jesus’ mother and brothers are described as standing ‘outside,’ which is poignant (12:46). Jesus leaves them ‘outside’ and teaches that those who are ‘inside’ are those who “do the will of my Father in Heaven” (12:50).

It is only as the location changes that the reader discovers where this section (12:15-50) has taken place. Spatially the narrative has been located in ‘the house’ (13:1). This detail is satisfying at the level of story, as the reader’s picture is either confirmed or revised. Yet the image of the house does not detract

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from the symbolism within 12:15-50. The concepts of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ hold, no matter where the action took place.\textsuperscript{121}

‘The house’ also underlines the image of the unclean spirit returning to where it came from (12:44). Will Jesus’ disciples continue to do the will of his Father in Heaven in the ongoing journey (12:50)? If not, then the image of the unclean spirit’s return will apply to them too.

Further, the reader is now able to reflect on the recent movement of Jesus. He has withdrawn from the synagogue of ‘the Pharisees’ (12:15) into ‘the house’ (13:1). This may provide some insight into the \textit{Sitz im Leben} of Matthew’s community. Matthew’s community may well have seen this movement as representative of their own.\textsuperscript{122}

\section*{3.1.5 ‘The Kingdom of God’ in Mt 12:28}

‘The Kingdom of God’ in 12:15-50 is an integral part of the overall ‘Kingdom’ theme in the Matthaean narrative. It complements the dominant expression ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ However, ‘the Kingdom of God’ is more than merely another

\textsuperscript{121}See also M H Crosby’s discussion of ‘house’ and ‘kingdom’ in Mt 12:45-50, and its wider context: M H Crosby, \textit{House of Disciples: Church, Economics, and Justice in Matthew}, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 55-59.
\textsuperscript{122}See also Overman’s comment on the increasing isolation of the Matthaean community: Overman, \textit{Church and Community}, 186.
expression for ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ The unexpected nature of its appearance and its formulation permits the following observations.

Mt 12:28 is the first time the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ appears in the narrative. As such the reader experiences its dramatic impact.

This is the first ‘Kingdom’ proclamation which originates with Jesus. Prior to this the proclamation of ‘the Kingdom’ originates with ‘John the Baptist’ (3:2). Jesus subsequently takes over this proclamation (4:17; 10:7). However, in Mt 12:28 Jesus claims his authority with respect to ‘the Kingdom’ and makes a devastating pronouncement against ‘the Pharisees.’ He does not repeat ‘John the Baptist’s’ message nor does he expound the nature of ‘the Kingdom.’ He reformulates the theme so that ‘the Kingdom’ is proclaimed as a present reality which implies judgement on ‘the Pharisees.’ To emphasise that ‘the Kingdom’ proclamation has been redefined here, Jesus also reformulates the expression. He announces ‘the Kingdom of God.’

The scope of this startling ‘Kingdom’ proclamation is also reformulated. In Mt 12:28 ‘the Kingdom of God’ is not proclaimed to everyone in general (3:2; 4:17) nor focused only on Israel (10:7). It is proclaimed to ‘the Pharisees’ alone. Further, Jesus does this
after ‘the Pharisees’ have spuriously identified his exorcism power as belonging to Beelzebul (12:24).

‘The Kingdom’ in Mt 12:28 is not proclaimed as having “come near” (3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Jesus announces that “the Kingdom of God came upon you.” Jesus does cast out demons by the Spirit of God; therefore ‘the Kingdom of God’ has arrived upon ‘the Pharisees’ right now. This arrival of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ implies God’s judgement. It is not a general statement that “God’s realm is occurring in the midst of the people, if only ‘the

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123 Contra Beare, Matthew, 279. Beare’s only argument is based on a general discussion of Greek vocabulary and not literary considerations.

Pamment also rightly identifies that ‘the Kingdom of God’ here has a present characteristic: Pamment, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 230. However, her comment that the saying in Mt 12:28 refers to “the miracles of both Jesus and of the disciples of the Pharisees” is inadequate; Ibid. Rather, Matthew wishes to stress the uniqueness of Jesus’ ministry; so too Verseput, Rejection of the Humble Messianic King, 227.

1 W F Albright & C S Mann seek to place ‘the Kingdom of God’-saying here “... firmly in the context of the future judgement (xii 27, 36) ...” See W F Albright & C S Mann, Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 155. However, Mt 12:27 could also be applied to the present; the eschatological future is in view from Mt 12:31 onwards.
2 C H Dodd’s discussion of the Greek is also helpful here but he does not deal with Matthaean redaction: C H Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (Rev Ed), (London: Collins, 1961 [1935]), 35-37.
125 Thomas notes that the formulation, ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Mt 12:28) is Matthew’s deliberate way of emphasising the specific teaching of the passage: Thomas, “Kingdom of God,” 142.
Pharisees’ would take note.”

That ‘the Pharisees’ are introduced into this section at 12:24 is solely due to Matthew’s redaction of ‘the scribes’ (Mk 3:22). That ‘the Pharisees’ remain in this section is also solely due to Matthaean redaction of a different part of Mark’s narrative (Mk 8:11-12) which likewise refers to ‘the Pharisees.’ Clearly Matthew wanted ‘the Pharisees’ to be the recipients of Jesus’ declaration that ‘the Kingdom of God’ ‘came upon’ them as judgement.

In terms of Matthew’s literary strategy, Jesus’ antagonism of ‘the Pharisees,’ like ‘John the Baptist’s’ before him, has foreshadowed this moment. The presence of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ implies their status before God as those who are: opposed to Jesus (12:30); blasphemers against the Son of Man (12:32); blasphemers against the Holy Spirit (12:31-32), hence eternally unforgiven; false prophets who produce rotten ‘fruit’ (12:33-34); self-condemned (12:37); unrepentant (12:39-42); and unchanged by Jesus’ ministry (12:43-45). That ‘the Pharisees’ have no argument against Jesus’ scathing attack in 12:25-37, 39-45 indicates that they are utterly outside the realm of God.

‘The Kingdom of God’ is associated with the theme of ‘producing good fruit,’ which indicates repentance. Jesus goes on

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126 Contra the suggestion in Senior, Matthew, 122.
to articulate this point, after announcing the arrival of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ (12:33, 39-42).

This theme of ‘fruit’ is intentionally added by Matthew into 12:15-50, thus indicating his redactional concern. Moreover, the use of repetition of ‘fruit/fruits’ with ‘John the Baptist’s preaching as well as the Sermon on the Mount, reveals Matthew’s literary strategy in order to link the themes of ‘the Kingdom of God’ and ‘fruit/fruits.’

‘The Kingdom of God’ recalls the ministry of ‘John the Baptist.’ After ‘the Kingdom of God’ proclamation and the theme of producing good ‘fruit,’ Jesus echoes ‘John the Baptist’s’ offensive words to ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees: “You offspring of snakes!” (12:34; cf. 3:7). 127

The section which includes this first occurrence of ‘the Kingdom of God’ saying makes reference to the prophet Isaiah. Matthew’s reference to ‘the Gentiles’ (12:18, 21; cf. Isa 42:1, 4) and to God’s establishment and approval (12:18; cf. Isa 42:1), highlights the growing distance between Israel and Jesus, typified by ‘the Pharisees.’

Moreover, the narrator provides privileged information for
the reader in this section. Twice the reader is told that Jesus is

127 While the theme of ‘fruit’ is also part of John the Baptist’s message to the Sadducees and ‘the Pharisees’ (3:8-12), Jesus has already made this theme his own (7:16-20). He has applied it in an additional sense to indicate false prophets.
aware of the actions of ‘the Pharisees’: to destroy him (12:15) and in ascribing his exorcisms to Beelzebul (12:25). These literary features serve to alert the reader simultaneously to the covert, destructive work of ‘the Pharisees’ and the heightened awareness of Jesus. This Jesus has provoked ‘the Pharisees’ during his earlier ministry and is leading up to an unprecedented ‘Kingdom’-declaration.

All these observations indicate that the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is highly significant at this point in the narrative. As Schweizer notes: “The irruption of the Kingdom of God is depicted more clearly here than anywhere else.” Further: “The entire section [presumably Mt 12:22-37] is dominated by Jesus’ saying about the sudden presence of the Kingdom of God.”

Whereas Jesus announces the ‘closeness’ of ‘the Kingdom’ to all people (4:17), he declares to ‘the Pharisees’ that ‘the Kingdom’ “came upon” them (12:28). The specific term used in this instance is, for the first time, ‘the Kingdom of God.’ The arrival of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ (Mt 12:28) is a powerful moment in the unfolding of Matthew’s Gospel.

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128 Hill itemises the themes of ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘fruit’ and ‘the Pharisees’ in his discussion of 12:25-37 but fails to connect them: Hill, Matthew, 216-217.
129 Schweizer, Matthew, 287.
130 Ibid., 289.
3.2 Rich People and the Kingdom of God (Mt 19:24):

Analysis of Mt 19:15b-20:16

This section discusses the following themes in the Matthaean narrative from 13:1-19:15a: ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees,’ and ‘fruits.’ Then these three themes will be discussed in relation to 19:15b-20:16. This investigation will allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the second occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (19:24).

3.2.1 The Theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in Mt 13:1-19:15a

M Saucy observes that after “the nation’s” rejection of Jesus throughout Matthew 11-12: “Jesus no longer spoke of the nearness of the kingdom.”131 Previously, the nearness of ‘the Kingdom’ has been proclaimed by ‘John the Baptist’ (3:2), Jesus (4:17) and in Jesus’ instructions to the twelve disciples (10:7). From the foregoing analysis of Mt 12:15-50, the reader is aware that ‘the Kingdom’ has now come uncomfortably near ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28).

‘The Kingdom’ is the main concern of the third major discourse in the narrative, Matthew 13.\textsuperscript{132} The disciples are given privileged insights with respect to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ unlike the crowds (13:11).\textsuperscript{133} Jesus explains the parable of the sower to his disciples (13:18-23), identifying the seed as 'the word of the Kingdom' (13:19).\textsuperscript{134} Hence it is clear that there is a direct link between the sower (Jesus) and the seed ('the word of the Kingdom'), as well as the subsequent response (those who hear this word and 'bear fruit').

Throughout the rest of this discourse, different aspects of ‘the Kingdom’ are given in parables. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ is producing ‘plants’ in this age amidst the enemy's ‘weeds’; the separation, however, will only take place at the eschatological harvest (13:24-30, 36-43).\textsuperscript{135} ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ has small,
insignificant beginnings, but produces great results (13:31-32).\textsuperscript{136} ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ spreads and subverts to great effect, like leaven in a large quantity of flour (13:33).\textsuperscript{137}

In Jesus’ interpretation of the parable of the weeds of the field (13:36-43),\textsuperscript{138} the ‘good seed’ denotes ‘the children of the Kingdom’ (13:38).\textsuperscript{139} These ‘children’ are not necessarily Jewish, as was made clear earlier (8:12). ‘The children of the Kingdom’ are those who hear and practise Jesus’ teaching (7:24), thereby fulfilling the Law (5:17-19). On the other hand, the Son of Man’s angels "will gather together from his Kingdom, all the scandalous things and the ones doing lawlessness" (13:41). They will be thrown "into the furnace of fire" (13:42) and will include those who consider themselves to be ‘children of the Kingdom’ by heritage (8:12).

Consequently, by this stage in the narrative Matthew has redefined what it means to be ‘children of the Kingdom’: how one relates to the Son of Man determines one’s status in ‘the Kingdom.’ Moreover, by identifying ‘the good seed of the Kingdom’ with ‘the

\textsuperscript{136}This parable is taken from Mk 4:30-32. Again, the Marcan term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Mk 4:30) is reformulated as the Matthaean term ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (Mt 13:31).

\textsuperscript{137}This parable is taken from Q/Lk 13:20-21. Once more Matthew’s formulation ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is unique; cf. ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Lk 13:20).

\textsuperscript{138}This passage is unique to Matthew.

\textsuperscript{139}This is an inclusive rendering and a more accurate understanding of the phrase οἱ νίοι τῆς βασιλείας (‘the sons of the Kingdom’).
children of the Kingdom’ (13:38), the reader recognises that such can now only exist through the action of the Son of Man.

Furthermore, ‘the Kingdom’ (13:38) is synonymous with “the Son of Man’s . . . Kingdom” (13:41), which is also expressed as “the Kingdom of their [the righteous ones’] Father” (13:43). This continual interlinking between Jesus, the Father and ‘the Kingdom,’ is achieved by different formulations of ‘the Kingdom.’ The diverse range of Matthaean expressions for ‘the Kingdom’ paradoxically underlines the centrality of Jesus. For Matthew, understanding and relating to Jesus is crucial to being part of this ‘Kingdom.’

Following Jesus’ interpretation of the weeds of the field, Matthew presents two more parables.\textsuperscript{140} In both, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ is described as a reality which gives all and demands everything in response (13:44, 45).

The final image in this discourse on the parables concerns the great net where the evil will be separated from the righteous at the end of the age (13:47-50).\textsuperscript{141} The dominant image here is judgement (13:50).

\textsuperscript{140} Both parables, 13:44 and 13:45-46, are from Matthew’s own source.
\textsuperscript{141} Again this parable is unique to Matthew.
At the end of this discourse Jesus links discipleship with ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (13:52). Specifically, he speaks of disciples ‘of the Kingdom of Heaven.’

This image is yet another way in which Matthew presents his multifaceted theme: discipleship of Jesus is discipleship of ‘the Kingdom.’ The other facets of this theme so far include: ‘the Kingdom’ being the domain of God, the Father (6:10, 32-33); doing God the Father's will (7:21); hearing and doing Jesus' words (7:24-27); doing what the Law requires (5:19); and, of particular interest in this study, ‘producing the fruits’ of ‘the Kingdom’ (12:33; 13:23), which includes doing righteousness (5:20).

The explicit theme of ‘the Kingdom’ becomes conspicuously absent in the narrative section which follows. Saucy comments that “a turning point” has taken place in the parables of ‘the Kingdom’ in Matthew 13. After Matthew 13 ‘the Kingdom’: “... is ‘far’ rather than near, nonracial rather than ethnic, related to suffering rather than overtly powerful, and secretly disclosed to insiders rather than proclaimed to all.”

Redaction criticism confirms

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142 For a discussion on the narrative of Matthew, taking 13:52 as a key reference point, see E Wainwright, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in E S Fiorenza (Ed), Searching the Scriptures: Volume Two - A Feminist Commentary, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 635-677. This important contribution to Matthaean studies seeks to ‘revision’ according to the “inclusive basileia vision of Jesus”; Ibid., 635.

143 Saucy, “Kingdom-of-God Sayings,” 196.

144 Ibid..
Matthew’s de-emphasis of the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in Matthew 14-15.¹⁴⁵

Explicit reference to ‘the Kingdom’ reappears when Jesus promises Peter “the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” (16:19).¹⁴⁶ Jesus goes on to declare: “‘Truly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will definitely not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom’” (16:28).¹⁴⁷ The reader notes that once again ‘the Kingdom’ and Jesus are intimately linked in the narrative.

Various aspects of ‘the Kingdom’ are expounded in the fourth discourse of Jesus, concerning community life (18:1-19:1a). The discourse begins with the disciples’ question, concerning the ‘greatest’ in ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (18:1).¹⁴⁸ Jesus’ answer reveals the upside-down nature of ‘the Kingdom’: unless Jesus’ disciples “change and become like children” they will never enter into it (18:2-3).¹⁴⁹ As if to underline this point, this is followed by a

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¹⁴⁵ The narrative flashback recounting John the Baptist’s death (14:3-11) omits reference to Herod’s offering to his daughter “up to half of his kingdom” (Mk 6:23; cf. Mt 14:7). Clearly this image does not suit Matthew’s purpose at this point.
¹⁴⁶ This saying only appears in Matthew; cf. Mk 8:27-30.
¹⁴⁷ Matthew has taken this saying from Mk 9:1. However, Matthew’s version uniquely associates Jesus’ identity with ‘the Kingdom’ here.
¹⁴⁸ Matthew has taken this passage from Mk 9:33-37. However, Matthew alone has placed the context of ‘greatness’ in relation to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’
¹⁴⁹ Matthew has significantly redacted Mk 9:35-37 here. The teaching on receiving ‘the Kingdom’ like a child in order to enter has its basis in Mk 10:15. Matthew has inserted this saying in Mt 18:3, changing the Marcan term ‘the Kingdom of God’ to his characteristic formulation, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’
distinctively Matthaean addition, expressing the same idea in a
different formulation: “Therefore, whoever will humble themselves
like this child, is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (18:4).

Then there are teachings concerning children (18:5-6),
temptations and sin (18:7-9),¹⁵⁰ and the priority of the ‘little ones’
(18:10-14). The last teachings in this discourse deal with
reconciliation and relationships (18:15-22). Finally, to emphasise
the imperative of forgiveness, Jesus concludes with a story of an
unforgiving servant (18:23-35).

It is significant that this story is introduced with the phrase,
“Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .” (18:23).¹⁵¹ Here
another facet of ‘the Kingdom’ emerges: the community's
withholding forgiveness from a sister or brother, withholds the
forgiveness of Jesus’ Heavenly Father (18:35).

In this way the fourth discourse of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel
concludes. Furthermore, this discourse begins and ends with
reference to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ The reader is aware that life
in ‘the Kingdom’ is inextricably bound with life in the community of
Jesus.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew deletes a Marcan reference to ‘the Kingdom’ here. Mt 18:8 follows Mk 9:43, 45 in referring to entering ‘life’ as opposed to judgement. However, Matthew continues with this image (Mt 18:9) whereas Mark mentions entering “the Kingdom of God” (Mk 9:47).
¹⁵¹ This reference to ‘the Kingdom,’ like the whole story (18:23-35), is unique to Matthew.
There are two further references to ‘the Kingdom’ in this section of the narrative. Jesus speaks of those who “make themselves eunuchs on account of the Kingdom of Heaven” (19:12). Jesus also says, to his disciples: “Allow the children and do not forbid them to come to me, for to such ones belongs the Kingdom of Heaven” (19:14). The reader notes that even basic human relationships and roles are radicalised in ‘the Kingdom.’

In the narrative section Mt 13:1-19:15a, explicit reference to ‘the Kingdom’ appears twenty times. Again it has been formulated in various ways: ‘the Kingdom’ (13:19, 38), ‘the Son of Man’s Kingdom’ (13:41 [implied]; 16:28 [implied]), ‘the Kingdom of their Father’ (13:43) and (overwhelmingly) ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:12, 14).

3.2.2 The Theme of ‘The Pharisees’ in Mt 13:1-19:15a

After a short absence, ‘the Pharisees’ (and scribes) return. Jesus systematically rebukes them for attacking his disciples regarding handwashing (15:1-9). The disciples later question Jesus

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152 This reference to ‘the Kingdom,’ like the whole context (19:10-12), is unique to Matthew.
153 This teaching and its context is taken from Mk 10:14. It has already been noted that Matthew alone deletes the corollary saying here, from Mk 10:15.
concerning ‘the Pharisees’ being ‘scandalised’ (15:12). Here the narrative presents the disciples as wanting direction from Jesus as to how to respond to the influence of ‘the Pharisees’.154

Jesus’ response is scathing: “Every plant which my Heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted . . .” (15:13). In the light of his earlier parable of the weeds of the field, Jesus is implying that ‘the Pharisees’ are ‘weeds,’ ‘the sons of the evil one,’ planted by the Devil (13:25, 38, 39). Jesus tells the disciples to ‘abandon them’ (15:14a); moreover, ‘the Pharisees’ are ‘blind guides’ (15:14b). Thus the depiction of ‘the Pharisees’ in the narrative gets worse: they have never been established by God. The reader is confirmed in the anti-Pharisaic stance: they are truly of the Devil.

Later ‘the Pharisees’ (and Sadducees) ask Jesus to show them a sign from Heaven (16:1). Jesus’ reply (16:2-4a) echoes his earlier exchange with some of the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ (12:38-39): no sign will be given to “an evil and adulterous generation” except the sign of Jonah.

As ‘the Pharisees’ reappear in the narrative, the narrator continues to show his bias against them. He informs the reader that ‘the Pharisees’ (and Sadducees) were not merely asking Jesus for a sign, they were ‘tempting’ him (πειράζοντες) (16:1). The only

154While Mt 15:1-11 has been taken over from Mk 7:1-16, this additional concern of the disciples (Mt 15:12-14) is unique to Matthew.
other one who has ‘tempted’ Jesus in the Matthaean narrative is the Devil (4:1-10).\textsuperscript{155} Accordingly ‘the Pharisees,’ at least, are portrayed as in league with the Devil. The reader is further confirmed in this outlook, as the narrator aligns himself with Jesus.\textsuperscript{156}

The literary technique of repetition used here also encourages the reader’s bias against ‘the Pharisees.’ Revisiting the earlier exchange between Jesus and ‘the Pharisees’ (12:38-39),\textsuperscript{157} this confrontation reinforces the depth of conflict between them.

As Anderson observes

The Pharisees are becoming more perverse in the course of the narrative. ... The Pharisees have not learned a thing. They are portrayed as characters with no faith or understanding. They still seek a sign. The second episode [Mt 16:1-4] also allows the implied reader to contrast their behavior with that of the Canaanite woman (15.21-28) and the crowds who marvel at Jesus’ healing power and glorify Israel’s God (15.29-32).\textsuperscript{158}

It is also important to note that Matthew has created this scene here. Whereas the (almost identical) earlier exchange (12:38-39) was taken from Mk 8:11-12, this second appearance (16:1-4) has no parallel in Mark. The reader notes that the scene is not only

\textsuperscript{155}\textsuperscript{Note the occurrence of πειρασθήναι (4:1), πειράζων (4:3) and ἐκπειράσεις (4:7). Even Jesus’ model of prayer seems more pointed in this light: “And do not bring us into testing (πειρασμόν), but deliver us from the evil one” (6:13).}

\textsuperscript{156}\textsuperscript{See also Anderson, Matthew’s Narrative Web, 116-117; Bauer, The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel, 68-71.}

\textsuperscript{157}\textsuperscript{Anderson notes that Mt 12:38-42 and Mt 16:1-4 have twenty-four words in common: Anderson, Matthew’s Narrative Web, 122.}

\textsuperscript{158}\textsuperscript{Ibid., 122-123.
repeated, the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is intensified.

The significance of this passage is further enhanced by the next pericope, where Jesus says to the disciples: “Take care and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (16:6). After correcting the disciples’ gross misunderstanding (16:7-11a) Jesus repeats his warning: “…beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (16:11b). The image is of the corrupting influence of ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees, which is detrimental to Jesus’ followers.

While the repetition of this saying would be enough to make the point, the narrator intrudes again: “Then they understood that he did not say to beware of the leaven of the loaves, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (16:12). This comment is for the reader alone. The narrator declares his hand once more, to entrench the reader in opposition to the religious leaders.

After this concentrated attack on ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees by both Jesus and the narrator, ‘the Pharisees’ disappear from the narrative again. It is some time before they reappear.

When eventually ‘the Pharisees’ approach Jesus again, this time with a question concerning a man’s power to dismiss his wife (19:3), Jesus successfully meets their renewed challenge to his
authority (19:4-9). Once again, however, Jesus does not merely respond to the questions from ‘the Pharisees’; he attacks them personally. He asserts that Moses’ certificate of dismissal was only put into place “because of your hardness of heart” (19:8). Once more Jesus raises the level of antagonism between the religious leaders and himself.

There is a deeper level to be found in this episode as well. Yet again the narrator intrudes to provide the reader with privileged information. ‘The Pharisees’ not only approach Jesus with a question, they ‘tempt’ (πειράζοντες) him once more. This reinforces the reader’s impression that ‘the Pharisees’ have sinister motives and so deserve Jesus’ antagonistic responses. The reader finds it striking that this is the second time in a row that ‘the Pharisees’ have appeared in the narrative to ‘tempt’ Jesus (16:1; 19:3). The impression is gained that this tempting role is a primary function of ‘the Pharisees.’

At this point in the narrative the reader is provided with more reasons to be hostile towards ‘the Pharisees.’ Twice ‘the Pharisees’ have been described as tempting Jesus (16:1; 19:3). The reader is now even more aware that the motives of ‘the Pharisees’ are sinister. They deserve Jesus’ attacks in this section of the narrative (15:3-9, 13-14; 16:4, 6, 11; 19:8).
As well as having continuing confidence in the narrator the reader identifies ‘the Pharisees’ most prominently of the religious leaders. Although ‘the Pharisees and scribes’ engage Jesus in dispute (15:1), it is the disciples who are concerned with the reaction of ‘the Pharisees’ (15:12). And although Jesus warns against the influence of ‘the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (16:6, 11), it is ‘the Pharisees’ who appear again, to ‘tempt’ Jesus once more (19:3). ‘The Pharisees’ are now the one group who are consistently portrayed as provoking Jesus, and who seek to discredit and destroy him.

3.2.3 The Theme of ‘Fruit’ in Mt 13:1-19:15a

In this section of the narrative the theme of ‘fruit’ appears only in Jesus’ parables discourse (13:1-52). In the first parable (13:3-9) Jesus describes the fate of the various seeds sown. The climax of the parable concerns seed which “fell upon the good earth and brought forth fruit, some one hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold” (13:8).\textsuperscript{159} In keeping with the image of ‘fruit’ in the narrative (3:8; 7:16, 19, 20) this parable refers to those who repent or respond appropriately to the ministry of Jesus (and ‘John the Baptist’).

\textsuperscript{159}This image of fruit is taken from Mk 4:8.
This imagery of ‘fruit’ is developed further when Jesus explains this parable (13:18-23). In this explanation Jesus explicitly mentions ‘unfruitfulness’ and ‘fruitfulness.’ “And the seed sown among the thorns: this is the one hearing the word and the anxiety of the age, and the deceit of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (13:22).160 This teaching echoes the earlier admonition not to be anxious for the things of this life in the face of God’s provision (6:24-34).

Jesus then gives the opposite scenario: “But the seed sown upon the good soil, this is the one hearing the word and understanding it, who indeed bears fruit and produces a hundredfold, another sixtyfold, another thirtyfold” (13:23).161 Hence ‘understanding’ (συνειδής) Jesus’ teaching is another aspect of repentance.162

Jesus goes on to provide another example of bearing ‘fruit’ in the next parable (13:24-30). A man sowed good seed in his field. His enemy sowed weeds among the wheat. “And when the grass sprouted and brought forth fruit, then the weeds also appeared” (13:26). These two are allowed to grow together until the harvest,

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160 This image of ‘unfruitfulness’ is taken from Mk 4:19.
161 This teaching is taken from Mk 4:20. As in Mt 13:8 Matthew reverses the order of the yield (Mark has ‘thirtyfold, sixtyfold, hundredfold’).
162 The ‘wise and understanding’ (11:25) and the ‘many crowds’ (13:13-17) are contrasted with Jesus’ disciples here. Also note that this theme of ‘hearing and understanding’ is a Matthaean concern: Mark has ‘hearing and accepting’ (Mk 4:20).
when the weeds are separated from the wheat (13:27-30). So it is
clear that among Jesus’ community there will be those who are
enemies, ‘weeds’ which threaten its growth. Moreover, Jesus’
explanation of this parable (13:37-43) implies that the good seed
which ‘bore fruit’ are ‘children of the Kingdom.’ These ones have
been established by Jesus, ‘the Son of Man’ (13:37-38).

So the final image of ‘fruit’ in the section Mt 13:1-19:15a is
self-referential. Those who respond appropriately to Jesus’ ministry
‘hear and understand’ (13:23). Yet they are so from the outset
(13:37).

Thus the Matthaean narrative can appear somewhat circular
in its depiction of who is ‘inside’ and who is ‘outside’ Jesus’
community. Those who are ‘inside’ have been made so and they
show their nature by their response to Jesus. Those who are
‘outside’ were always so and were established by their father, ‘the
Evil One,’ the Devil (13:38-39). The ‘outsiders’ show that they are
‘outside’ by opposing Jesus and his followers.
3.2.4 ‘The Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘Fruit’ in

Mt 19:15b-20:16

After Jesus lays his hands upon the children (19:15a) the narrator signals a change of scene: “. . . he went away from there” (19:15b). In this new geographical setting, Jesus is encountered by a young man (19:16-22) and subsequently teaches his disciples (19:23-20:1-16).163

Jesus discusses the theme of ‘entering into life’ with the young man (19:16-19). Jesus’ subsequent invitation to the young man to go, sell his possessions, give to the poor and follow himself, results in the young man’s departure (19:21-22).

Then Jesus engages his disciples concerning the matter. The first teaching is a ‘Kingdom’-saying: “Truly I say to you that a rich person will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven with difficulty”

163While it is helpful to divide these two scenes into smaller parts, it is important to note the extent of the whole scene, 19:15b-20:16, with its inherent theology. See also M L Barré, “The Workers in the Vineyard,” BibToday 24 (3/1986), 174 [notwithstanding numerous typographical errors]. Barré also provides convincing literary reasons for regarding Mt 19:16-20:16 as a unit: Ibid., 175-177.

Doyle discusses Mt 19:1-20:34 as one significant unit; see B R Doyle, “The Place of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16,” ABR 42 (1994), 39-58, esp 42-47. While profitable, Doyle’s division of the narrative does not rely on a change of geographical location.

The same comment can be made concerning Carter’s excellent and comprehensive discussion on Matthew 19-20: W Carter, Households and Discipleship: A Study of Matthew 19-20. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994). Moreover, while Carter’s treatment of Matthew 19-20 is the most thoroughgoing discussion of this section of the Matthaean narrative, the possible significance of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is not one of his concerns.
Hence Jesus equates ‘being perfect’ (19:21) with ‘entering into the Kingdom.’ This ‘Kingdom’-saying is clear, in view of what has just happened; indeed the rich young man would not enter into ‘the Kingdom.’

Then Jesus emphasises this teaching with another ‘Kingdom’-saying: “But again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the Kingdom of God” (19:24). The truth of this dramatic second Kingdom-saying is not as apparent as the preceding one. Granted, the rich young man has just demonstrated how difficult it is for the rich to enter into ‘the Kingdom.’ Now, however, Jesus is saying that it is impossible for the rich to enter.

Further, this new ‘Kingdom’-saying is remarkable for being the second occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (τῆν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). Matthew has taken this ‘Kingdom’-saying from Mk 10:23. Characteristically the Marcan term, ‘the Kingdom of God’ (τῆν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ) has become the Matthaean term, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (τῆν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν).

The other Matthaean reference to ‘being perfect’ is in the context of loving one’s enemy (5:43-48). This is why Matthew adds ‘love of neighbour’ to the list of commandments Jesus gives to the young man (Mt 19:19b; cf Mk 10:19).

The inclusion of the word κάμηλον here is regarded by the Committee as certain. Some manuscripts contain κάμπλον (‘rope’): 579 1424 l 524 l 673 l 858 l 859 l 866 Cyril. See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 73. Metzger notes: “The two Greek words had come to be pronounced alike.” See Metzger, Textual Commentary, 40. See also D A Hagner, Matthew 14-28, (Dallas: Word, 1995), 559.

This ‘Kingdom’-saying is taken from Mk 10:25. Albright & Mann render this phrase as ‘God’s Kingdom’; see Albright & Mann, Matthew, 230, 233. Either way it does not help their argument that this expression indicates the eschatological Kingdom; so too Kingsbury, Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 145. It is ambiguous: ‘the Kingdom of God’ here could indicate the present realm of God or the eschatological ‘Kingdom.’
basileia του θεου) in the Matthaean narrative. This new development has the reader’s immediate attention. It is the first time this expression of ‘the Kingdom’ has appeared in the narrative since 12:28.

After this dramatic ‘Kingdom’-saying, the disciples are “greatly amazed” and wonder who then can be saved, if indeed someone so righteous falls short (19:25). Jesus asserts the ability of God to do what appears impossible (19:26).

It is here that Peter steps forward with another concern. He and the other disciples have done exactly what Jesus asked of the rich young man; what then will be their fate? (19:27). Jesus solemnly declares that there will be a privileged place for these twelve disciples, along with himself, as eschatological judges of Israel (19:28). Moreover, anyone who radically renounces everything on account of Jesus’ name “... will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life” (19:29).

Such teaching requires further explanation, however, so Jesus provides another ‘Kingdom’-saying: “But many who are first will be last and last first. For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a house

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168 The disciples’ disturbance here may reflect “the common wisdom that wealth was a sign of God’s blessing.” See Senior, Matthew, 219.
169 Peter’s question: τι ἀρα εσται ημιν; (19:27) can be rendered: “What then will happen to us?” or: “What then will we have?” See also Barré, “The Workers in the Vineyard,” 176-177, who suggests Matthew may be intending deliberate ambiguity.
170 Matthew has inserted this Q saying (cf. Lk 22:30b) here into his Marcan source.
master, who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his
vineyard . . .” (19:30, 20:1).171 The resulting parable of the
labourers in the vineyard (20:2-16) illustrates that there is no
individual status in ‘the Kingdom’; all are equal.

After this teaching a new section begins.172 However, the
reader is left puzzled. In this section of narrative (19:15b-20:16)
there has been no reference to the religious leaders, in particular
‘the Pharisees.’ Jesus has only addressed the rich young man
(19:15b-22) and his disciples (19:23-20:16).173

Further, there has been no reference in this section to the
theme of ‘fruit.’ The reader has been anticipating reference to ‘the
Pharisees’ and ‘fruit,’ along with the expression ‘the Kingdom of
God’ (19:24). This expectation has been set up by the earlier
passage concerning ‘the Kingdom of God’ (12:15-50).

Hence the reader is forced to revise the understanding of the
expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ gained in the narrative so far.
Jesus’ earlier declaration indicated that ‘the Kingdom’ ‘came upon’
‘the Pharisees’ (12:28). Subsequent to the rich young man’s failure
to follow Jesus, the reader learns that it is impossible for a rich
person to enter into ‘the Kingdom’ (19:24). The reader wonders

171 This ‘Kingdom’-saying is uniquely Matthaean.
172 The geographical setting changes: “And going up to Jerusalem ...” (20:17).
173 Mowery notes the uniqueness of Jesus using the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ when
speaking to his disciples here: Mowery, “Matthean References,” 402.
whether ‘the Kingdom of God’ is merely an alternative term for ‘the Kingdom,’ with no other significance. Such a revision is possible for the reader as the remainder of the narrative is negotiated.

Yet muted questions persist for the reader. Why has the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ occurred so sparingly in the narrative? With the term ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ dominating the narrative, why introduce the phrase ‘the Kingdom of God’ so suddenly in 12:28 and 19:24, if it is only to say the same thing? This last question is especially pertinent to Mt 19:23-24, when ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and ‘the Kingdom of God’ occur in immediate succession.

The reader has cause to wonder if there is an indirect reference to ‘the Pharisees’ in this passage after all. Earlier Jesus rigorously upheld the Torah, with two ‘Kingdom’-sayings: “Whoever therefore relaxes one of these least commandments and teaches others to do so, will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them, will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven” (5:19). The man who approaches Jesus in 19:16 is at least a model of keeping the commandments (19:20).

However, Jesus also asserted that ‘keeping the commandments’ like the scribes and ‘the Pharisees’ is not enough. “For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”
(5:20). The man who encounters Jesus in 19:16-22 is as good as any righteous scribe or ‘Pharisee.’ This is not enough, however.

Jesus harks back to the Sermon on the Mount again when he addresses what the man is ‘lacking’: “If you want to be perfect (πελειος) . . .” (19:21a; cf. 5:48). The man does not aspire to this perfection and he leaves (19:22). The reason given by the narrator is that “. . . he had many possessions” (19:22b).

The reader notes that Jesus gives his ‘Kingdom’ teachings to the disciples after the man leaves (19:23, 24; 20:1-16). On the one hand, this fact would detract from any indirect association with ‘the Pharisees.’ On the other hand, it is pertinent that Matthew’s Jesus addresses his disciples with this term, ‘the Kingdom of God’ in order to emphasise the standard required (19:24). An implication is that ‘Pharisaic’ righteousness is not enough. Without ‘perfection,’ or Jesus’ standard of fulfilling the Torah, wealth will keep disciples from entering into ‘the Kingdom.’

The association of judgement with the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ may well be a severe warning to Matthew’s own community. Hare suggests: “What is implied by ‘perfect’ in 19:21, then, is not a

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174 This point and the associated argument is inspired by comments in Hare, *Matthew*, 226-227.

175 France suggests (without reference to ‘Pharisees’) that this phrase might have been chosen “to emphasize the opposition between the two ‘kings,’ God and Mammon ...” See France, *Matthew*, 737.
new rule (voluntary poverty) which is added to the old
commandments but Jesus’ interpretation of the Torah.”

However, such associations are only implied. Yet the reader
works with the narrative to address such questions. The reader’s
questions are enhanced by redaction criticism. Mt 19:15b-20:16
has its source in Mk 10:17-31. In Mark’s account of the rich young
man there are three ‘Kingdom’-sayings. As noted, the first of these,
concerning rich people entering into ‘the Kingdom,’ has been taken
over by Matthew (Mk 10:23 = Mt 19:23). Here Mark’s term ‘the
Kingdom of God’ is typically altered by Matthew to read ‘the
Kingdom of Heaven.’ The same effect is achieved however: rich
people will have difficulty entering into ‘the Kingdom.’

The second Marcan ‘Kingdom’ reference, concerning the
difficulty of anyone entering into ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Mk
10:24b), is omitted by Matthew. Clearly Matthew does not want to
stress the general inaccessibility of ‘the Kingdom.’

The third Marcan ‘Kingdom’ reference, concerning the saying
about a camel and an eye of a needle, is included by Matthew (Mk
10:25 = Mt 19:24). However, this time Matthew maintains the
Marcan expression, ‘the Kingdom of God.’ This is the only time
Matthew takes over a ‘Kingdom’-saying from Mark and maintains

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176Hare, Matthew, 226-227.
the expression, ‘the Kingdom of God.’ At the very least it must be noted that this is the deliberate work of Matthew.

In assessing the significance of this redaction, M D Goulder asserts: “Matthew always uses the standard rabbinic ‘kingdom of heaven’ unless he has a reason.” Gundry comments that Matthew does this “… probably for variation from the parallel v23c … ” When Matthew has always consistently altered the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ from his Marcan source, this explanation is unsatisfying. Foster suggests that Matthew’s purpose in retaining the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ here is “to demonstrate to the disciples, who gave up everything to follow Jesus (19.27), that they must continue to do so to maintain their honoured position and not lose it by rejecting God.” This suggestion is the most plausible.

Further, Matthew has sought to expand on the nature of ‘the Kingdom’ in this passage. Matthew includes another ‘Kingdom’-

177 This fact greatly weakens Hagner’s assertion that ‘the Kingdom of God’ “… stands in exact parallelism with τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ confirming that for Matthew the difference is merely terminological.” See Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 561. At the same time Hagner notes that τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ is “unusual” in Matthew and rarely appears in the narrative: Ibid.; see also Morris, Matthew, 493. Hence the need for further investigation.
179 M D Goulder, Midrash and Lection in Matthew: The Speaker’s Lectures in Biblical Studies 1969-71, (London: SPCK, 1974), 332. Unfortunately, although Goulder adds that the emphasis is on God, so that the expression is best rendered ‘God’s kingdom,’ he does not explain the significance of the ‘Kingdom’-saying here: Ibid..
180 Gundry, Matthew, 389-390; similarly Nolland, Matthew, 795.
181 Foster, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 495.
saying to discuss the ‘first-last,’ ‘last-first’ saying (Mk 10:31 = Mt 19:30). The Matthaean narrative explains: “For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a house master . . .” (20:1). The resulting parable of the labourers in the vineyard (20:1-15) and the concluding saying (20:16) are unique to Matthew.

Hence Matthew’s account of Jesus and the rich young man, and Jesus’ subsequent teaching for his disciples, uniquely depicts the theme of ‘the Kingdom.’ Redaction criticism shows that Matthew’s alteration of Mark’s account is instrumental in achieving this distinctive theology.

Specifically, Matthew’s concern involves more than expounding the radical equality of ‘the Kingdom.’ Through his deliberate use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God,’ Matthew emphasises the danger that wealth presents for those who would enter into ‘the Kingdom.’

3.2.5 ‘The Kingdom of God’ in Mt 19:24

In the section Mt 19:15-20:16, the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is part of the overall ‘Kingdom’ theme present in the Matthaean narrative. It is related to the dominant term ‘the Kingdom of
Heaven.’ With this in mind the following observations can also be made.

Mt 19:24 is only the second reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative. The reader wonders whether it is merely another ‘Kingdom’-expression\textsuperscript{182} or part of Matthew’s literary strategy to address a crucial issue.

Reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ is again given only by Jesus. The only other persons to have proclaimed ‘the Kingdom’ in the Matthaean narrative are John the Baptist (3:2) and Jesus’ ‘twelve disciples’ (10:7). Whereas John and Jesus’ disciples proclaimed ‘the Kingdom’ in terms of ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ Jesus proclaims and expounds ‘the Kingdom’ using a variety of terms, including ‘the Kingdom of God’ here in 19:24.

The term 'the Kingdom of God' is ambiguous with reference to time. It may indicate a present dimension\textsuperscript{183} or the eschatological future.\textsuperscript{184}

The term ‘the Kingdom of God’ here does not contain accompanying references to ‘the Pharisees,’ ‘fruit,’ ‘John the

\textsuperscript{182}For example R E Menninger regards ‘Kingdom of God’ and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ as apparently synonymous in 19:23f; see R E Menninger, \textit{Israel and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew}, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 165.

\textsuperscript{183}See Pamment, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 232.

\textsuperscript{184}See Albright & Mann, \textit{Matthew}, 233. However, their conclusion is dubious: “The rich man may indeed enter the Messianic Community, the Kingdom of heaven, but at the judgement a far stricter account will be demanded of him than of others ...” Ibid. The rich man does not enter the ‘Messianic Community,’ he leaves (19:22)!
Baptist’ or ‘Isaiah.’ However, as suggested above, there may be an indirect reference to ‘the Pharisees.’ Likewise the image of the vineyard in the subsequent parable (20:1-16) may indirectly invoke the image of ‘fruit.’ Yet such references are indirect at best, which means that associations with ‘John the Baptist’ and ‘Isaiah’ become even less certain.

Mt 19:24 is the only time Matthew takes over a ‘Kingdom’-saying from Mark and retains the expression ‘the Kingdom of God.’ This fact would suggest that Matthew has been intentional in his reworking of Mark.185

In terms of literary devices, Matthew does not provide any privileged information for the reader concerning characters’ motives in this passage. In fact, Matthaean redaction deliberately achieves this result by omitting Mark’s reference to Jesus’ ‘love’ for the inquirer (Mk 10:21; cf. Mt 19:21).

Yet having provided the reader with such privileged information, along with the associated themes of ‘the Pharisees,’ ‘fruits,’ allusions to John the Baptist and Isaiah, with the appearance of ‘the Kingdom of God’ in 12:28, this passage in Matthew 19-20 gives the reader pause for thought. At this point in

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185 Contra Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 598. The different ‘Kingdom’-expressions may ultimately denote the same reality but there would appear to be significance in their placement in Matthew’s narrative.
the Matthaean narrative, ‘the Kingdom of God’ is a mystery in more ways than one.

3.3 “The Kingdom of God Will Be Taken From You” (Mt 21:43): Analysis of Mt 21:23-23:39

This section discusses the following themes in the Matthaean narrative from 20:17 to 21:22: ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees,’ and ‘fruits.’ Then these three themes will be discussed as they combine in 21:23-23:39. This investigation will allow conclusions to be drawn concerning the third and fourth, and final, occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (21:31, 43).

3.3.1 The Theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in Mt 20:17-21:22

In the section 20:17-21:22 ‘the Kingdom’ is explicitly mentioned only once, in an expression indicating that it is ‘Jesus’ Kingdom’ (20:21). Thus the earlier ambiguous references to ‘the Kingdom of the Son of Man’ (13:41; 16:28) become more sharply defined.

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186 This designation is Matthew’s alteration of “in your [Jesus’] glory” (Mk 10:37).
3.3.2 The Theme of ‘The Pharisees’ in Mt 20:17-21:22

After Jesus deals with ‘the Pharisees’ regarding their issue of dismissing wives (19:1-9), they disappear from the narrative throughout Mt 20:17-21:22. The chief priests and the scribes oppose Jesus in the temple (21:15, 16) but ‘the Pharisees’ are not specifically mentioned. Indeed, the chief priests appropriately take on a key role now that Jesus begins his Jerusalem ministry. However, ‘the Pharisees’ have not disappeared altogether.

3.3.3 The Theme of ‘Fruit’ in Mt 20:17-21:22

The only time the theme of ‘fruit’ appears in this part of the narrative is when Jesus is hungry and approaches a fig tree (21:18, 19). Jesus: “. . . found nothing on it except only leaves. And he said to it, ‘No fruit will ever come from you again!’ And the fig tree withered at once” (21:19).

This reference to ‘fruit’ is taken from Mk 11:14, however, Matthew places this story in a different context. In Matthew, this story is not directly linked with Jesus’ demonstration in the temple;

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187 The Marcan narrative likewise has no reference to ‘Pharisees’ in this corresponding section, Mk 10:32-11:25.
Mark locates this story in two parts (Mk 11:12-14, 20-26), on either side of the temple demonstration (Mk 11:15-19).

Within the Matthaean narrative this episode concerning the fig tree takes place as one unit (21:18-22), after Jesus’ temple demonstration (21:12-16). Matthew’s redaction of this fig tree story emphasises the power of faith. In Jesus’ subsequent teaching to the disciples (21:20-22), however, there is a hint of more to come. The reader is left with the image of Jesus being hungry and unsatisfied with a tree which should have produced ‘fruit’ for him. His words: “No fruit will ever come from you again!” (21:19), are best understood as a declaration of fact, not as a ‘curse,’ as in Mark’s narrative (Mk 11:21).

The reader senses that this saying of Jesus in Matthew is not a fit of pique; ‘fruit’ in the narrative has always indicated repentance and appropriate response to the ministry of Jesus and ‘John the Baptist’ (3:8; 7:16, 19, 20). Those who do not ‘produce fruit’ are opposed to ‘the Kingdom’ (13:24-40). Moreover these ‘fruitless’ ones are like this because they were established by their father the Devil (13:38-39).

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188 In Mark, Jesus’ subsequent teaching to the disciples also highlights faith, as well as prayer and forgiveness (Mk 11:22-25). However, the following elements are omitted by Matthew: a) the reason for the barrenness of the fig tree (“... for it was not the season for figs”) (Mk 11:13); b) the description of the fig tree as “having been withered from the roots” (Mk 11:20); and c) Peter’s reference to Jesus “cursing” the fig tree (Mk 11:21).

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Thus the story of the ‘fruitless’ fig tree (21:18-22) serves as an ominous symbol. Moving into the next part of the narrative, the reader is prepared for Jesus’ ‘hunger’ and subsequent disappointment. Those people who should respond to Jesus will not. The reader anticipates that Jesus will denounce them as he denounced the fig tree.

3.3.4 ‘The Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘Fruit’ in Mt

21:23-23:39

When Jesus is teaching in the temple the chief priests and the elders of the people question his authority (21:23). Jesus challenges them with respect to their understanding of ‘John the Baptist’s’ authority (21:24-27). The implication here is that authority for both Jesus and ‘John the Baptist’ has its source in God.

That the chief priests and elders of the people are aware of this source of authority is made clear in their discussion among themselves (21:25b-26). The religious leaders are aware of the inconsistency of their attitudes to ‘John the Baptist’ and Jesus. It seems that not even Jesus hears their discussion; the reader alone
observes the unfolding strategy of the leaders here.\textsuperscript{189} Thus the reader knows that the religious leaders are fully aware of their own duplicity (21:27a). Moreover, the reader is aware that only he/she is privileged with this insight.

These different levels of awareness allow the reader to appreciate the intensity of the conflict between Jesus and his ‘Kingdom’ on the one hand, and the religious leaders on the other. Both ‘John the Baptist’ and Jesus proclaimed ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’; rejection of them implies rejection of their message. Such rejection entails dire consequences.

Matthew’s Jesus follows this exchange with a story concerning two sons (21:28-32).\textsuperscript{190} Hearing and doing ‘the father’s

\textsuperscript{189}This literary device is taken directly from Mk 11:31-32.

\textsuperscript{190}Stanton notes that at this “crucial point in the ‘story line’ of the whole gospel, the text is in disarray.” See Stanton, \textit{A Gospel For A New People}, 37. The Committee gives a C rating for the text provided in the UBS 4th Edition of Mt 21:29-31a, indicating the difficulty in deciding between the variants. See Aland, \textit{et. al.}, \textit{The Greek New Testament}, 81. See also R Cameron, “Matthew’s Parable of the Two Sons,” \textit{Forum} 8 (3-4, 1992), 201; Davies & Allison, \textit{Matthew (Vol 3)}, 167.


\textsuperscript{1} Nonetheless, the reading of UBS 4th Edition of Mt 21:29-31a is accepted here: ο’ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Οὐ θέλω, ὑστερον δὲ μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπῆλθεν. προσέλθων δὲ τῷ ἐτέρῳ εἶπεν ὡσαύτως; ο’ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Ἐγὼ, κύριε, καὶ οὐκ ἀπῆλθεν. τὰς ἐκ τῶν δύο ἐποίησεν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς: λέγοις, ‘Ο πρῶτος, λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰσραήλ, Ἀμήν λέγω ὅτι οἱ τελῶνται καὶ αἱ πόρναι προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. (“But he answered: ‘I do not want to.’ But later, having changed his mind, he went. And he approached the other child and said the same. And he answered: ‘I will go, sir.’ And he did not go. Which of the two did the will of the father? They said: ‘The first.’ ”) See Aland, \textit{et. al.}, \textit{The Greek New Testament}, 81.
will’ is more important than mere words of intent. This point is highlighted by the literary technique of involving Jesus’ antagonists in his parable against them. The chief priests and the elders rightly identify the son who did his father’s will (21:31a). Hence the reader is reinforced in the impression that the religious leaders know what is true; their opposition is not based on a concern for God’s will.

This literary technique is used to great effect as Jesus applies the religious leaders’ own conclusion to them. Jesus announces one of the consequences of their actions: “. . . Truly I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going ahead of you into the Kingdom of God” (21:31c).

2 The reasons given by the Committee include: 1. The witnesses that support this reading are slightly better than the rendering in reverse order. 2. Internal cohesion of the text: v29 corresponds with v31 and v30 corresponds with v32. See Metzger, Textual Commentary, 44-46.

3 Schweizer’s helpful and succinct discussion endorses this approach: Schweizer, Matthew, 411. This reading also “represents the majority tradition”; see France, Matthew, 801.

W E Langley discusses the three different textual possibilities in 21:28-32 and recognises the difficulties inherent in all of them: W E Langley, “The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) against Its Semitic and Rabbinic Backdrop,” CBQ 58 (2/1996), 229-234. He concludes by saying that whichever way the text should read and however the religious leaders answer Jesus, an “unpleasant shock” awaits them: Ibid., 234-238, 242.

1 Therefore both sons are ‘disobedient’ in one respect: one initially, the other subsequently. How much worse it is to be completely disobedient (i.e. the religious leaders); Ibid., 238-241.

2 Although Langley’s argument is persuasive the position taken here is that ‘doing the will of the Father’ is expressed in actions (7:21-27). It is also intimately related with entrance into ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (7:21; 21:31).

192This provocative saying is uniquely Matthaean, while its context, Mt 21:28-32, is probably taken from Q (cf. Lk 7:28-30). Matthew has added this parable and teaching to Mk 11:27-33. Contra Schweizer’s comment that Matthew “found the saying in fixed form in his sources.” See Schweizer, Matthew, 410. From both redaction- and narrative-
Here Jesus implies that the tax collectors and prostitutes are responding appropriately to ‘the Kingdom’ message, and so are entering into ‘the Kingdom’s’ realm, in the present. Jesus gives the reason for his conclusion: “... For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed in him. But even though you saw this, you did not repent later to believe in him” (21:32).

Jesus’ declaration here is damning enough for the chief priests and elders. However, the reader is jolted to attention with the specific formulation of the ‘Kingdom’-expression, ‘the Kingdom of God’ (τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). This is the third occurrence of this term in the Matthaean narrative. After reviewing the possible significance of this phrase at Mt 19:24, the reader is at least aware that Jesus is drawing attention to an important issue here. Critical perspectives it is difficult to hold that the Evangelist would have included traditional material without considering the overall narrative context (if 21:31 is traditional).

193 See also Pamment, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 232; Mowery, “Matthean References,” 402. 194 J Gibson notes that the expression ‘the tax collectors and the prostitutes’ could have implied their allegiance to Rome, an alien occupying force; J Gibson, “Hoi Telonai kai hai Pornai,” JTS 32 (1981), 429-433. Hence the shame of the leaders of Israel is apparent: allies of the Gentiles are entering ‘the Kingdom’ ahead of them. 195 See also Goulder, Midrash and Lection, 332. Goulder asserts that the Evangelist uses the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (emphasis his) emphatically: “… to show the equivalence, God = the father of the parable ...” Ibid., 414; also Nolland, Matthew, 863. While this stylistic observation may be made in the immediate context, the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ has greater import in the wider narrative.

1 Albright & Mann distinguish between the (present) ‘Messianic Community,’ ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and the (eschatological) ‘Father’s Kingdom,’ ‘the Kingdom of God.’ See Albright, & Mann, Matthew, 263-264. This approach is too simplistic: ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ can also indicate a future dimension (e.g. 7:21; 13:47-50). Likewise
Yet the reader also notes that this encounter is another conflict scene with Israel’s leaders, as in 12:28. ‘The Pharisees’ are not mentioned, however, only ‘the chief priests and the elders of the people’ (21:23). Similarly the theme of ‘fruit’ is not explicit. However, Jesus’ story of the two sons asked to work in the vineyard (21:28-31b) is suggestive of this theme. The theme of repentance is explicit (21:32) and so the image of ‘bearing fruit’ is vividly recalled (3:8, 10; 7:17-19; 12:33).

There is also reference to ‘John the Baptist’ in this section of the narrative (21:23-27, 32). In 12:15-50 the ministry of ‘John the Baptist’ was implicitly recalled in the context of the ‘the Kingdom of God’ reference. Here in Matthew 21 the ministry of ‘John the

‘the Kingdom of God’ can indicate present or future: see also W D Davies & D C Allison, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew (Vol 3), (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 169.

Luz identifies the synonymous nature of the two ‘Kingdom’-expressions used here. However, while acknowledging the unusualness of ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s narrative, Luz states that this term "comes from earlier tradition." See U Luz, Matthew 21-28: A Commentary (Translated by J E Crouch), (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 30. Closer narrative-critical analysis suggests that Matthew has more intention in the construction of his narrative.

Thomas suggests that the use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ here “was a warning to the community about the dangers of presuming on one’s place in the kingdom.” See Thomas, “Kingdom of God,” 145. This insight is helpful, but needs to be explored further, with regard to other related themes.

It is true that there is a characterisation of Israel’s leaders in the Matthaean narrative; see S van Tilborg, The Jewish Leaders in Matthew, (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 4-5. However, the literary impact of Matthew’s use of ‘the Pharisees’ is lessened if it is assumed that they are part of the group described here as ‘the chief priests and the elders of the people.’ Historically ‘the Pharisees’ may well have been part of this group; the reader may even understand that they are present here. However, the reader notes that Matthew does not specifically name ‘the Pharisees’ at this point.

The first two references to ‘John the Baptist’ (Mt 21:25, 26) are taken from Mk 11:30, 32 respectively. The third reference (Mt 21:32) is uniquely Matthaean.
Baptist’ is explicitly discussed in the context of another reference to ‘the Kingdom of God.’ The theme of ‘John the Baptist’ underlines the related themes of ‘bearing fruit’ and ‘repentance.’

Consequently, the import of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ is reviewed again by the reader here. While the overall image of ‘the Kingdom’ is implied in 21:31, the specific use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ recalls the theme of judgement, as in 12:28. At this point the reader is acutely alert to the battle concerning ‘the Kingdom’; the reader is keenly anticipating the significance of the expression ‘the Kingdom of God.’

The narrative does not disappoint. Jesus continues to address the religious leaders: “. . . Listen to another parable. There was a man, a house master, who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it and built a tower. He leased it to farmers and went away” (21:33). The reader notes the

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198 The religious leaders’ reaction is not given. Jesus immediately launches into another parable. The reader experiences the effect of a growing intensity of Jesus’ words to these leaders. This literary technique links the parable of the evil tenants (21:33-46) with the preceding parable of the two sons (21:28-32) in an intimate way.

recurrence of the vineyard imagery. The focus has sharpened, from a man who asks his sons to work in the vineyard (21:28), to a man who builds his own vineyard and expects his tenants to work in it (21:33).

More specifically, however, the reader is struck by the extensive description of the fence, wine press and tower. Reference to a vineyard is enough; these extra details are clearly conveying more. The reader recalls this imagery from the ‘Song of the Vineyard’ in Isaiah, where each of these details is given (Isa 5:1, 2a,b,c,d). This significant parable in Isaiah goes on, however, to describe the ‘unfruitfulness’ of the vineyard (Isa 5:2e,f). As a consequence, a devastating conclusion is given against Israel (Isa 5:3-7). The reader anticipates a similar progression in Jesus’ parable here.

The theme of ‘fruits’ arises naturally, in the parable’s own context: “And when the season of fruits came near . . .” (21:34a).  

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200 See also Charette, Recompense, 136. This allusion to ‘Isaiah’ is taken from Mk 12:1-12.
201 Matthew’s starting point for this ‘fruits’ imagery is the sole reference in Mk 12:2. It is important to note the difference between the two Gospels here. Mk 12:2 reads: “... And he sent a slave to the tenant farmers in the season, in order that he might receive from them his share of the fruits of the vineyard.” This is the sole Marcan reference to ‘fruits’
Here the reader is aware that an appropriate response will be expected from the tenant farmers (3:8, 10; 13:23).

The reader is also aware that the expression, “the season of fruits came near [ἡγγίσεν]” (21:34a) recalls the image of ‘the Kingdom’ having ‘come near’ [ἡγγίσεν] (3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Early in this parable, then, the reader is aware that a fitting response is expected at a time of (eschatological) reckoning.

So the next event is consistent: the house master sends his slaves to the tenant farmers to receive ‘his fruits’ from the vineyard (21:34b). However: “. . . the tenant farmers took his slaves. They beat this one, killed another and stoned another” (21:35). The reader is shocked. The Isaianic parable mentioned ‘bloodshed’ and the cry of the oppressed (Isa 5:7). Jesus’ parable is more specific: bloodshed and the cry of the oppressed refers to the fate of the house master’s slaves, caused by the tenant farmers’ violent uprising.

The house master responds by sending even more slaves, who meet the same end (21:36). Finally the house master sends his son, with the view that the tenant farmers will respect this personal treatment.

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202 This reference to ‘fruits’ is taken from Mk 12:2 as noted above.
203 So too Hill, Matthew, 299.
delegation (21:37). The basic Isaianic parable has become dramatically heightened. The attempts to receive ‘the fruits’ due to the house master have been numerous. They have all ended in bloodshed and death. The house master’s son is the ultimate emissary.

“But the tenant farmers, when they saw the son, said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take possession of his inheritance.’ And they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him” (21:38, 39). Hence the house master’s pre- eminent ambassador is utterly rejected.

Jesus asks his audience to complete the story:

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204 This translation is based on the reading according to most textual witnesses: “‘... αὐτὸν ἐξῆλθον ἐξω τοῦ ἀμπελώνος καὶ ἀπέκτειναν’” (21:39). D (Θ ἀπέκτειναν αὐτὸν) l 292 1/2 1859 1/2 859 1/2 ἅ b, c, d, e, f, f(2), h, n(1) vg ms geo Irenaeus arm; Juvenecus Lucifer Augustine reads: “‘... αὐτὸν ἀπέκτειναν καὶ ἐξῆλθον ἐξω τοῦ ἀμπελώνος.’” See Aland, et. al., Greek New Testament, 82. This variant reading appears to be assimilated with Mk 12:8, however, where the son is killed first and then thrown out of the vineyard. Matthew alters the Marcan text to reflect that Jesus had been killed outside the city. Luke also makes the same alteration (Lk 20:15). The majority of witnesses is to be preferred, indicated by the Committee’s A rating; Ibid.; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 47; Derrett, “Allegory and the Wicked Vinedressers,” 431.

205 It is possible that the tenant farmers assume that the owner of the vineyard has died and that the son, the inheritor, is now in charge. See B Malina & R L Rohrbaugh, Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 133. Conversely, for the landowner, sending his son is in order. This action indicates that legal proceedings are being taken up against the tenant farmers. See Hester, “Socio-Rhetorical Criticism and the Parable of the Tenants,” 40. However the tenant farmers understand the son’s arrival, in their treatment of him, they are rebelling against the owner of the vineyard.
“Therefore when the Lord of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenant farmers?” (21:40). The answer is given directly: “They said to him, ‘He will bring those evildoers to an evil end and he will lease the vineyard to other farmers, who will give back to him the fruits in their seasons’ ” (21:41).

Once again Jesus involves his antagonists in his parable directed against them (cf. 21:31b). The reader is even more aware of the religious leaders’ duplicity and complicity in their opposition to Jesus and ‘the Kingdom.’ Further, the reader is aware that the religious leaders answer in terms of Jesus’ own teaching on ‘producing fruits.’ Thus the reader is becoming even more aware of the narrator’s controlling hand.

While the answer given is suggested by the parable, Jesus emphasises the significance of the Lord of the vineyard’s rejected son. “Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected became head of the corner. This came about from the Lord and it is amazing in our eyes”? ’ ” (21:42). This loaded allusion to Ps 118:22-23 also briefly delays

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The reader notes the increasing pointedness of this parable. The house master (οἰκοδεσπότης) (21:33) is now described as ‘the Lord/owner of the vineyard’ (ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀναπελώνος) (21:40). The allusion to God is clear.

This additional reference to ‘fruits’ is uniquely Matthaean.

This literary device is uniquely Matthaean. In Matthew’s source Jesus answers his own question (Mk 12:9).
Matthew’s dramatic conclusion to the parable.\(^{209}\) It is an effective literary device, increasing the reader’s experience of tension.\(^{210}\)

Jesus’ conclusion is devastating: “For this reason I say to you (διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ἵματι),\(^{211}\) the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits” (21:43).\(^{212}\) Here the nature of the ‘vineyard’ becomes explicit for the reader: it is ‘the Kingdom’\(^{213}\) which is being ‘leased’ to Israel’s leaders.\(^{214}\) This lease,

\(^{209}\) For Matthew, then, the theme of Israel’s rejection of God’s Son (Mk 12:10-11) is compounded with the themes of ‘the Kingdom’ and ‘producing fruits.’

\(^{210}\) Contra Cope’s suggestion that there is a “lack of connection” between the Psalms quotation and the surrounding verses; Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained*, 85, 122.

\(^{211}\) This expression is used in the earlier passage, 12:15-50. Having just given the first ‘Kingdom of God’-saying there (12:28), Jesus then says: “For this reason I say to you (διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ἵματι) ...” (12:31) and continues to expound blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and producing ‘good fruit’ (12:31-33). Along with the related themes of ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘fruits,’ this literary expression links 12:15-50 with 21:23-23:39. This grammatical insight is noted for a different purpose in B B Scott & M E Dean, “A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount,” in D R Bauer & M A Powell (Eds), *T Reasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 345.

\(^{212}\) This controversial saying is found only in the First Gospel. Matthew adds this declaration of the transfer of ‘the Kingdom’ to Mk 12:10-11. See also Stanton, *A Gospel For A New People*, 331. S Byrskog allows that Matthew may have created 21:43 himself, drawing on the earlier occurrence in 21:31; see S Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, (Stockholm: Almqist & Wiksell, 1994), 384. While 21:31, 43 are closely linked with the recurrence of this phrase, ‘the Kingdom of God,’ a narrative-critical approach allows for further observations over the wider Matthaean narrative. Byrskog notes the other occurrences of ‘the Kingdom of God’ but does not explore how these might link with Matthew 21; Ibid.. It is problematic to suggest that Matthew may have used different ‘Kingdom’-expressions unchanged as he found them in his sources; a possibility entertained in K G C Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew 23*, (Sheffield: JSNT, 1995), 26. Redaction and narrative analysis allow for more intentionality at work here.

however, will come to an end. ‘The Kingdom’ will be ‘taken from’
Israel’s leaders and, by implication and extension, will no longer be
the exclusive domain of Israel.215

Further, this ‘Kingdom’ will be “given to a nation producing
its fruits” (21:43).216 ‘John the Baptist’ prepared the religious

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1 The origin of this parable in Isaiah 5 explicitly identifies the vineyard as Israel (Isa 5:7). Such an identification is too literal for Matthew’s presentation here, however, which in turn is a reworking of Mk 12:1-9. Matthew has changed the emphasis from “Israel = the rightful people of God” to “a nation manifesting ‘the Kingdom’s’ way = the rightful people of God.” Contra Kingsbury, Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 71.

214 Contra the somewhat apologetic argument in France, Matthew, 816-817. Luz’s comment that ‘the Kingdom’ here is “something that Israel’s leaders have thus far possessed” is perhaps too strong; see Luz, Matthew 21-28, 42. Matthew appears to reconceive the nature of ‘the Kingdom’ here so that attachment to its reality is tentative and conditional.

1 Jesus’ insult to the religious leaders is also evident here. He identifies them with the lower status of ‘tenant farmers’ in the parable; moreover they are identified as ‘evil tenant farmers!’ Jesus’ intense provocation of the religious leaders does not go unnoticed by the reader. See W R Herzog, Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed, (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 102-104, for a discussion of relevant socio-economic background. On the “interpretive twist” in this parable see also E H Horne, “The Parable of the Tenants as Indictment,” JSNT 71 (1998), 113.

2 As for the result of this provocation, Stanton rightly notes that the “gulf between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders becomes steadily wider”; see Stanton, A Gospel For A New People, 184.

215 See also Luz, Matthew 21-28, 42; U Luz, Studies in Matthew (Translated by R Selle), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 246-247; Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven, 177; Bauer, The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel, 48; implied in Pamment, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 231.


2 Saldarini, in his extended study, especially highlights the polemic of 21:33-46 against the religious leaders and stresses that this concern is not against the Jewish people as a whole, who are contrasted with their leaders. See Saldarini, Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community, 58-63. The text indeed bears witness to the focus on the religious leaders, especially Matthew’s emphasis on ‘the Pharisees,’ who have profoundly let down the people of Israel. However, there appears to be dire implications for the wider community: the entire nation is ultimately included in the divine judgement. 21:33-46 indicates more than a need for a change of leaders. Such an overarching theology does not preclude anyone who responds appropriately to Jesus, which has occurred throughout his ministry in the narrative. These various aspects inform the reader’s expectation here; the remainder of the Matthaean narrative will either confirm or amend this understanding.
leaders for this possibility (3:7-12). Likewise Jesus expressed his approval at appropriate responses to his ministry, in contrast to Israel as a whole (8:10-12; 15:21-28). The preceding parable (21:28-32) also foreshadows ‘the Kingdom’ comprising a people beyond Israel alone.\footnote{This further reference to ‘fruits’ here is distinctively Matthaean.} The reader is aware that the ultimate transfer has been announced by Jesus: the removal of ‘the Kingdom’ from its traditional ‘tenant farmers’ to a nation which will respond appropriately to God.

Yet the reader is also alert to the ‘Kingdom’-expression used by Jesus; ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία του θεοῦ (21:43). This fourth occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the narrative indicates that Matthew is highlighting a crucial issue.\footnote{The understanding of ‘nation’ here is taken as synonymous with ‘people.’ Matthew is not providing a simplistic contrast of Jew and Gentile. So too A-J Levine, The Matthean Program of Salvation History: A Contextual Analysis of the Exclusivity Logia, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984), 161-165; L M White, “Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community,” in D L Balch, (Ed) Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 224-225; Saldarini, “Reading Matthew,” 171-173. Even a more specific contrast between “Jewish nation” and “Christian nation” is unhelpful here; see D C Sim, The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 148-149. Contra Beare, Matthew, 431.} Like the

\footnote{Goulder argues that: “The expression is used by Matthew emphatically, God’s Kingdom ... to show the equivalence, God = the owner of the vineyard.” See Goulder, Midrash and Lection, 414 (emphasis his). Once again Goulder’s helpful insight could be developed further with the aid of narrative criticism.}
reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in 21:31, it is accompanied by the image of ‘producing fruits’ (21:34). Moreover, the parable is dominated by the image of ‘fruit’ in its ‘season’ (21:34, 41). The imperative of responding appropriately to ‘the Kingdom’ has never been more stark in the Matthaean narrative.

Yet there is more. Jesus continues: “And whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces and on whomever it falls will be crushed” (21:44). Here Jesus makes it clear that the judgement of this theme needs to be considered within the context of associated themes to appreciate Matthew’s other concerns.

Menninger suggests that the personal form, ‘the Kingdom of God,’ is especially used in 21:43: “… to emphasize God’s presence with his people, which is now the church.” See Menninger, *Israel and the Church*, 24 (emphasis his); see also Charette, *Recompense*, 137. While this point is relevant, it is important to note the accompanying themes of judgement associated with this phrase, ‘the Kingdom of God’: ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘fruits.’

This emphasis on ‘fruit’ is so distinctive to Matthew that Weren observes that 21:33-46 “would be more appropriately named the parable of the fruits, rather than the parable of the tenants.” See Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5,1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants,” 21.

This is a rendering of Mt 21:44: “Καὶ ὁ πέσαν ἐπὶ τῶν λίθων τούτων συνθηκασθήσεται· ἔφ’ ὁν δ’ ἀν πέση λιμήσει αὐτῶν.” This verse is included (with only minor variants) in the earliest and majority of manuscripts. However, Mt 21:44 is omitted by the following witnesses: D 33 ita, b, d, e, ff (1), ff (2), s, ss, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius. See Aland, *et. al., Greek New Testament*, 83. The Committee has decided to retain this verse within the text but enclosed within square brackets. It is given a C rating to indicate the difficulty in deciding between variants: Ibid.; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 47.

Overall there are grounds for including v44 in the text, for the following reasons: 1. Copyists’ error could account for its omission. 2. Even though it may seem that this verse is an early interpolation from Lk 20:18, the words are not the same. 3. The most compelling reason is the one which appears to argue for its ‘interpolation’: it does not seem to flow smoothly after v43. See Ibid.; also Schweizer, *Matthew*, 415.

V44 would seem more fitting after v42. Yet this argument is dependent upon Luke’s use of these sayings in Lk 20:17, 18, which immediately follows his account of the parable of the wicked tenants (Lk 20:9-16).

The apparent awkwardness of Matthew’s text makes sense within his own logic. The Matthaean version of this parable and subsequent teaching interweaves the importance of ‘the Kingdom’ and the Son. This point is a central concern for W L Kynes;
'the Kingdom’ is intertwined with the judgement of the Son. Just as the evil tenant farmers will be brought “to an evil end” because of their response to ‘the Kingdom’ (21:41), so too they will be ‘crushed’ by the Son they have rejected (21:44).

Here the reader reviews what has transpired throughout Mt 21:33-44. This ‘parable’ is patently allegorical. The ‘slaves’ are God’s prophets and the ‘Son’ is Jesus, the ‘heir.’ The ‘vineyard’ (‘the Kingdom’), formerly ‘leased’ to Israel’s leaders, will be transferred to others. Further, the ‘nation’ producing ‘the fruits’ of ‘the Kingdom’ will fulfill the parable of the sower. Jesus’ ‘word of the Kingdom’ is productive in the ‘good soil’: it “indeed bears fruit” (13:23).

see his discussion of 21:44 in W L Kynes, A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 141-143. See also Charette, Recompense, 138-139; Hare, Matthew, 250; Gundry, Matthew, 430-431. Jones’ comment is also pertinent: “... v.44 agrees with the tenor of the whole passage.” See Jones, Matthew, 133.

221 If v44 is to be included, it is to be understood as part of Jesus’ speech. See France, Matthew, 817-818; Luz, Matthew 21-28, 36.

222 “Matthew is developing a precise allegorical application in which the first group is the early prophets and the second group the later prophets; hence the addition of stoning to their fate ...” See Crossan, “Wicked Husbandmen,” 453.

223 Kingsbury asserts that Jesus’ parable here “is a key event that exerts critical influence on action in Matthew’s story still to come.” See Kingsbury, “Wicked Husbandmen,” 653. While the motif of the Son is of crucial importance throughout Jesus’ trial and Passion, it is interesting that at this point the narrative highlights the related theme of ‘the Kingdom.’

224 It is significant that Jesus gave this earlier teaching to his disciples (13:10ff). Such disciples will constitute the ‘nation’ ‘producing the fruits’ of ‘the Kingdom’ (21:43). Howell notes that the Matthaean theme of ‘bearing fruit’ is related to “obedience to God’s will (cf. 3.8 10; 7.16ff.; 12.33).” See Howell, Matthew’s Inclusive Story, 151. In connection with ‘the Kingdom’ and ‘the Pharisees,’ however, it is important to note the imperative of repentance.
Jesus’ pointed parable about the evil tenant farmers (21:33-40) is concluded by the religious leaders themselves (21:41). Here an expected response from Jesus would be the saying in 21:43. However, Jesus draws their attention to a reference from the Psalms (21:42). He goes on to say that “for this reason” ‘the Kingdom’ will be taken from them (21:43a). The association is clear: for Matthew, the rejection of the Son results in the removal of ‘the Kingdom.’

Yet intimately linked with the ultimate priority of the Son is the imperative of ‘producing the fruits of the Kingdom’; therefore ‘the Kingdom’ will be transferred to ‘a nation’ (εὐνοοῖς) which will do exactly that (21:43b). Then Jesus refers to the Son again. The parallel Hebrew poetry of 21:44 declares that opposition to the Son brings about one’s own destruction. For Israel’s leaders and

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225 For example cf. Mark’s sequence: the consequences are announced by Jesus (Mk 12:9), followed by the reference to the Psalms (Mk 12:10, 11).
226 Davies & Allison assert that “for this reason” (διὰ τοῦτο) refers to 21:33ff; see Davies & Allison, Matthew (Vol 3), 186. However, while failing to ‘produce fruits’ has implications of judgement, the removal of ‘the Kingdom’ here seems related to the murder of the Son.
227 Albright & Mann assert that 21:43, 44 are ‘secondary commentary,’ because the usual Matthaean implication of ‘Kingdom of God’ is different. Further, 21:43 does not arise naturally from the parable and it “interrupts the connection between vs. 42 and vss. 44, 45-46.” See Albright, & Mann, Matthew, 265. From a narrative-critical perspective however, these are all relevant issues! The ‘Kingdom’-saying here is intended to be jarring for the reader; Albright & Mann’s response is evidence of this. Their assumptions concerning the Matthaean implication of ‘the Kingdom of God’ need to be informed further by narrative criticism.
228 See also Senior, Matthew, 242; Davies & Allison, Matthew (Vol 3), 176-177; Kingsbury, Structure, Christology, Kingdom, 71.
ultimately for the nation itself, such destruction entails loss of place in ‘the Kingdom.’

Hence the reader is aware that Jesus highlights the pre-eminence of the Son (21:42), who determines the fate of ‘the Kingdom’ and the tenant farmers (21:43). The ‘fruits of the Kingdom’ are clearly an outworking of the response to the Son too. While the evil tenant farmers may plot to have the Son between a rock and a hewn place, the reverse will apply (21:44).

Yet the reader is also aware that Jesus does not explicitly identify himself as this Son. The only image Jesus associates with ‘the Son’ is ‘the stone’ (cf. 21:39, 42, 44). The overtones are strong, yet Jesus will not make such a direct claim for himself. The reader recognises that claims for or against Jesus must be made by others and so each person must complete the story for themselves (21:43). The appropriateness of their response is then indicated by the ‘fruits’ they produce. Thus the reader is acutely involved in the narrative here.

The narrative continues: “And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables they perceived that he spoke about them” (21:45). The reader is surprised. Jesus’ words in this section have been to “the chief priests and the elders of the people”
(21:23). They are the ones who have engaged in dialogue with him (21:23, 25-27, 31, 41). Yet here, after some devastating pronouncements, it is the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ who come to centre stage.

Matthew does not class ‘elders’ as synonymous with ‘Pharisees’; these have always been referred to as different groups. It is also unnecessary to reconstruct the scene to explain the presence of ‘the Pharisees.’ (For example: ‘They were part of the crowd, but not mentioned in 21:23. At 21:45, the action now concerns the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees,’ so the elders of the

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229 This is Matthew’s reworking of Mark’s antagonists here, “the chief priests and the scribes and the elders” (Mk 11:27).

230 Edwards notes this point but then draws no conclusion: Edwards, Matthew’s Story, 75; so too Davies & Allison, Matthew (Vol 3), 188. D E Garland also makes this observation but develops it in terms of the plot only; see D E Garland, Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary, (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 219. J P Meier notes the change here but does not discuss it in terms of narrative criticism: J P Meier, The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel, (New York: Paulist, 1979), 152. Stanton discusses this point in terms of Matthew’s ‘anti-Jewish polemic’: Stanton, A Gospel For A New People, 153.

1 Nolland allows for Matthew’s literary activity here as it links with 12:14 onwards, as well as through Matthew 22 and beyond: Nolland, Matthew, 880. Similarly Luz notes Matthew’s literary strategy here with respect to the representative nature of ‘the Pharisees’ in the narrative, as well as their involvement in the death plot against Jesus from 12:14; see Luz, Matthew 21-28, 43. While Nolland and Luz provide the most developed discussions on Matthew’s literary technique here, neither relates these insights with the usage of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the overall narrative.

231 The elders (τῶν πρεσβυτέρων) are mentioned in 15:2. ‘The elders and chief priests and scribes’ (τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων) are mentioned in 16:21. ‘The Pharisees’ (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι) are mentioned as a singular group in 9:11, 14, 34; 12:2, 14, 24; 15:12; 19:3. ‘The Pharisees and Sadducees’ (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ Σαδδουκαῖοι) are mentioned together in 3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 12. ‘The scribes and Pharisees’ (τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων) are mentioned together in 5:20; 12:38. ‘Pharisees and scribes’ (Φαρισαῖοι καὶ γραμματεῖς) are mentioned in 15:1.
people recede from the scene’).  

Although the chief priests and the elders of the people are engaging with Jesus here (21:23ff), it is essential for Matthew that ‘the Pharisees’ feature as opponents at this point. That ‘the Pharisees’ appear so suddenly and intrusively here is an effective literary device. Instead of rewording the opening scene and including ‘the Pharisees’ at 21:23, the reader’s attention is dramatically gained with their unexpected entrance into the centre of the narrative. That ‘the Pharisees’ have not been mentioned since their question concerning the dismissal of wives (19:3f) underlines the suddenness of their reappearance now.

This literary technique also ensures that the three themes of ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘fruits’ are dramatically linked again. These themes, along with the reference/allusion to ‘Isaiah’ (12:17-21; 21:33), recalling the ministry of ‘John the Baptist’ (12:28, 33-37; 21:23-32), and the grammatical link made with the phrase: “For this reason I say to you (Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν) . . .” (12:31; 232 See also the comment in Patte, Matthew, 306.  

21:43), allow the reader to see an *inclusio* between 12:15-50 and with what has transpired in 21:23-45.

In the earlier passage Jesus declared to ‘the Pharisees’ that “... the Kingdom of God came upon you” (12:28). Now Jesus declares that “... the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits” (21:43). In context this saying is given to “the chief priests and the elders of the people,” but at 21:45 the reader is told that the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ apply it to themselves.

This last point is striking. Jesus has not directed anything against ‘the Pharisees’ here. It is not even implied that he gave these parables with ‘the Pharisees’ in mind. He has given this teaching to the chief priests and the elders of the people. ‘The Pharisees’ enter this scene and apply Jesus’ words to themselves. The pointed nature of the parables in 21:28-44 could lead the reader to expect that the chief priests and the elders of the people might perceive that Jesus had spoken about them. However, for

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234 This point is subtly different from Patte’s limited observation that “the parable is about the ‘chief priests and the Pharisees.’” See Patte, *Matthew: A Structural Commentary*, 298.

1 It is also perplexing that Patte comments on the presence of ‘the Pharisees’ here yet has no comment on the pertinent term ‘the Kingdom of God.’ This point is noted because Patte expounded on nuances of the terms ‘the Kingdom of God’ and ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ in Matthew 12; see Patte, *Matthew: A Structural Commentary*, 176-177. ‘The Kingdom of God’ ‘came upon’ ‘the Pharisees’ in 12:28; it ‘will be taken from’ them in 21:43 (according to their own acknowledgement as well). Hence it is important to take into account the overall narrative structure of Matthew to see the possible significance of ‘the Kingdom of God.’
‘the Pharisees’ to appear and make this connection, it is clear that Matthew is highlighting a crucial theme for the reader.\(^{235}\)

The reader understands that the narrator has brought ‘the Pharisees’ into the scene here in such a sudden, jarring manner that significance must be attached to it. The narrator’s comment in 21:45 is intrusive and is intended for the reader alone. The reader recognises that privileged information is provided here, to show how ‘the Pharisees’ (as well as the chief priests) interpret Jesus’ words. They see Jesus as a serious threat.

The perception of the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:45) provides the grounds for their subsequent response. The chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ “... wanted to arrest him but they were afraid of the crowds, since they regarded him as a prophet” (21:46).\(^{236}\)

Here the reader is provided with a stark contrast: either choose the way of the religious leaders, in particular, ‘the Pharisees,’ or the faithful, ‘fruitful’ way of Jesus and ‘the Kingdom.’

As G Barth notes, in the Matthaean narrative

\(^{235}\)Hence the narrator does not merely ‘make explicit’ what has just occurred; cf. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 192. The narrator introduces a new theme here, one which was not explicitly named (cf. the different characters mentioned at 21:23).

\(^{236}\)This reaction shows that they repudiate the message of Jesus’ parable; see Kingsbury, “Wicked Husbandmen,” 653. The reader is also aware of the unfolding theme of contrasts from 21:23-46. The tax collectors and the prostitutes betray their allegiance to Rome as they enter ‘the Kingdom’; the religious leaders betray their allegiance to ‘the Kingdom’/vineyard as they do not produce its ‘fruits.’ This thought is an extension of the insights in Gibson, “Hoi Telonai kai hai Pornai,” 429-433.
Everywhere the threat of judgment has a hortatory aim: to incite to the doing of God's will. The judgment threatens the disciples in particular. The hortatory direction of Matthew's interpretation is especially clear in his additions to the parable of the wicked husbandmen, in Matt. 21:41 and 43.237

G Bornkamm concurs that for Matthew, even followers of Jesus are not exempt from the demands of God. Mk 12:1-11 presents the parable of the vineyard as the rejection of Israel which has already taken place, with the subsequent handing over of the vineyard to others.238 Bornkamm rightly notes that Mt 21:33-42 presents this parable as having a future dimension: the disciples also need to assess “whether they are the nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom (21.43).”239

Yet ‘the Pharisees’ have not left the scene. While they are still there, wanting to arrest Jesus but constrained by the crowds, Jesus directs another parable to them and the other religious leaders.

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237 G Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law” (Translated by P Scott), in G Bornkamm, G Barth & H J Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew (2nd Ed), (London: SCM, 1982), 60. Jones notes that this warning is implied in the previous pericope (21:28-32): Jones, Matthew, 132.

238 G Bornkamm, “End-Expectation and Church in Matthew” (Translated by P Scott), in G Bornkamm, G Barth & H J Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew (2nd Ed), (London: SCM, 1982), 43.

239 Ibid. So too Schweizer, Matthew, 415; D E Garland, The Intention of Matthew 23, (Leiden: E J Brill, 1979), 32; Hare, Matthew, 250-251; Jones, Matthew, 133. None of these observations, however, detract from the narrative insight that Jesus addresses the religious leaders here (21:23) and that ‘the Pharisees’ specifically appear at 21:45.
“And having answered, again Jesus spoke to them in parables saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man, a king, who prepared a wedding feast for his son . . .’ ” (22:1). Having given the dire announcement of ‘the Kingdom’s’ removal from the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43, 45), Jesus expounds the relationship of ‘the Kingdom’ to those who fail to respond (22:3-8) and those who do respond appropriately (22:9-10). He then goes further, to describe the fate of those whose response is considered inadequate (22:11-14).

At the conclusion of this ‘Kingdom’ teaching ‘the Pharisees’ leave and gather together in order to set a verbal trap for Jesus (22:15). It is significant that the reference to the chief priests drops out. Once more Matthew is concerned primarily with ‘the Pharisees’ and their reactions to Jesus and his ‘Kingdom’ ministry. Moreover, Matthew again provides privileged information for the reader. While the other characters in the scene are aware of the

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240 This is Jesus’ response to the treachery of the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:46). Morris allows for this possibility: Morris, Matthew, 547; so too Davies & Allison, Matthew (Vol 3), 197. It is a comment for the reader alone.

241 The basis of the parable (Mt 22:1-9) is taken from Q || Lk 14:15-24.

242 In this way Matthew’s community is warned once more to keep ‘bearing fruit.’ Howell also notes the hortatory nature of this parable: Howell, Matthew’s Inclusive Story, 152. Buckley highlights the inclusion of “the nations”; see Buckley, Seventy Times Seven, 37-38.

243 See also Stanton, A Gospel For A New People, 153.
departure of ‘the Pharisees,’ the reader alone is made aware of the full scope of their activity.  

Here ‘the Pharisees’ are the impetus behind the discussion concerning paying taxes to Caesar (22:16-22). However, Jesus silences ‘their disciples’ and the Herodians who accompany them.  

In this scene the narrator provides more privileged information for the reader: “But Jesus knew their evil . . .” (22:18a). The reader is told that Jesus’ refutations and verbal confrontations involve more than skill, he is aware of his opponents’ motives. Following this exchange, Jesus similarly deals with the Sadducees’ issue concerning resurrection (22:23-33).

It is at this point that ‘the Pharisees’ themselves ‘gather’ (συνήχθησαν; literally, ‘synagogue together’) in order to confront Jesus directly (22:34). “And one of them, a lawyer, questioned,

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244 This literary device is found in the source, Mk 12:13. Matthew’s distinctive contribution here, however, is to highlight the initiative of ‘the Pharisees.’

245 Matthew alters Mark’s text here. In Mark, Jesus’ initial antagonists are ‘the chief priests, the scribes and the elders’ (Mk 11:27). “They send some of the Pharisees and the Herodians” to Jesus in order to entrap him (Mk 12:13). For Matthew ‘the Pharisees’ comprise the primary opposition to Jesus here.

246 This literary device is taken from Mk 12:15b. However, Matthew has heightened the drama by referring to ‘their evil’ (πονηρίαν αὐτῶν) as well as ‘tempting’ him (πειράζετε) and their ‘hypocrisy’ (ὑποκριταί).

247 Matthew alters Mark’s favourable picture of a sympathetic scribe in this pericope (Mk 12:28, 32-34). In particular Matthew omits any reference to the scribe being ‘not far’ from ‘the Kingdom’ (Mk 12:34).

248 ‘Lawyer’ (νομικός) is taken as included in the text here. It is noted that the Committee gives this word a C rating here and encloses it in square brackets, indicating the difficulty in deciding between variants. νομικός τις appears in E* F G H 0233 Lect172, which may have been introduced by copyists from the parallel passage in Lk 10:25. νομικός is
tempting him . . .” concerning the ‘great commandment’ (22:35-36). Jesus answers him comprehensively (22:37-40). Once again the narrator provides more privileged information for the reader: the lawyer does not merely question Jesus, his motivation is to ‘tempt’ him (22:35). Thus the reader is repeatedly shown that ‘the Pharisees’ cannot be trusted. Their actions proceed from motives which seek to threaten ‘the Kingdom’ and Jesus’ way.

While ‘the Pharisees’ are gathered, Jesus asks them a question concerning the Sonship of the Messiah (22:41-45). Ultimately Jesus’ question remains unanswered; “nor did anyone dare from that day to ask him any more questions” (22:46). Consequently Jesus has the last word over ‘the Pharisees’ and every other group.

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249 All these elements are distinctive to Matthew’s narrative here: the motivation of the questioner, the privileged information given to the reader and the statement that it was one of ‘the Pharisees.’
250 Garland notes that unlike Mk 12:35-37a: “Matthew has the question addressed specifically to the Pharisees”; see Garland, Intention of Matthew 23, 24.
251 This comment allows the reader to anticipate the remainder of the narrative. Specifically, the authority of Jesus and ‘the Kingdom’ is emphasised, over and against the authority of ‘the Pharisees,’ as well as other religious leaders.
252 Matthew has radically altered Mark’s text here as well: the statement concerning none daring to ask any more questions is made after Jesus’ commendation of the sympathetic scribe (Mk 12:34). Further, the question of the Messiah’s Sonship is raised by Jesus in a monologue while he is “teaching in the temple” (Mk 12:35-37). Again
Having silenced his chief antagonists Jesus launches into an address “to the crowds and to his disciples’ (23:1ff). Jesus begins by warning against the hypocrisy of the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ (23:2-7) and gives correctives to their behaviour (23:8-12). Having done so Jesus proceeds with a series of seven woes upon the scribes and ‘Pharisees.’

The first woe concerns the relationship between the scribes and ‘Pharisees,’ and ‘the Kingdom.’ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the Kingdom of Heaven in front of people. For you do not enter nor do you permit those who are entering to go in” (23:13). This devastating accusation has its

Matthew has made these scenes heighten the encounters between Jesus and ‘the Pharisees.’

253 Here Mt 23:6-7a is taken directly from Mk 12:38d-39. However, whereas Mark’s Jesus refers to ‘scribes’ (Mk 12:38b), Matthew’s Jesus refers to ‘the scribes and the Pharisees’ (Mt 23:2a). These same scribes and ‘Pharisees’ are also hypocritical in their legalism (Mt 23:4); cf. Luke’s version of this Q source, where they are identified as ‘lawyers’ (Lk 11:46).

254 The reader notes that although Jesus addresses the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ from 23:13, these words are within the setting of Jesus’ address “to the crowds and to his disciples” (23:1). It appears that the practices of the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ are found within his own churches, to some extent. See Meier, The Vision of Matthew, 161; P S Minear, Matthew: The Teacher’s Gospel, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), 116-117; Edwards, Matthew’s Story, 79.

255 This saying has its basis in Q || Lk 11:52. However, while Luke refers to ‘lawyers’ taking away ‘the key of knowledge’ Matthew refers to ‘scribes and Pharisees’ shutting ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ These differences reflect Matthew’s concerns (e.g. Mt 12:28) and so indicates redaction by the First Evangelist. See also Gundry, Matthew, 460. Albright & Mann question the originality of 23:13 because it does not agree with their notion of “the precise interpretation given to Kingdom of heaven in this gospel ...”! See Albright, & Mann, Matthew, 279-280 (emphasis theirs). Their follow-up comment is pertinent, however. People may be dissuaded from the Christian community “...by supposing that it is simply another manifestation of Pharisaic Judaism.” See Albright, & Mann, Matthew, 280.
basis in Jesus’ earlier saying 21:43).  

Once ‘the Kingdom’ is transferred to ‘a nation producing its fruits’ this exclusionary practice will cease.

The second woe concerns the missionary activity of the scribes and ‘Pharisees,’

whose proselytes become even worse than they are (23:15).

Jesus believes that the leadership of the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ has a powerful, albeit destructive influence.

The third woe describes the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ as ‘blind leaders’ (23:16), ‘fools and blind men’ (23:17) and ‘blind men’ (23:19).

The issue concerns the priority given to swearing on the things upon the altar without due recognition of the altar itself (23:16-19). Moreover Jesus reminds them that God precedes the altar (23:20-22).

The fourth woe concerns the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ having neglect of “the more important things of the law: justice and mercy

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256 The implication here is that people of Israel are also prevented from being part of ‘the Kingdom.’ So the reader’s expectation at 21:43 is confirmed.

257 This verse is unique to Matthew.

258 Some manuscripts include another woe concerning the devouring of widow’s houses (23:14). This verse is clearly an interpolation. The Committee definitely excludes this verse from the text. See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 88; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 50; Newport, Sources and Sitz im Leben, 135.

259 Some manuscripts have ‘Fools and blind men’ (μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ) here but this phrase has most likely been inserted from 23:17. ‘Blind men’ (τυφλοὶ) is given a B rating by the Committee, indicating that its inclusion in the text is almost certain. See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 89; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 50. Gundry allows for either reading: see Gundry, Matthew, 463. In any case it does not affect the basic thrust of the saying.

260 This woe and its attendant teaching (23:16-22) is unique to Matthew.
and faith’ (23:23). Jesus continues: “ Blind leaders, who strain the gnat but swallow the camel!” (23:24). Earlier Jesus taught that it is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for the rich to enter ‘the Kingdom’ (19:24). In contrast, here the impossible is achieved by the scribes and ‘Pharisees’: ‘the camel’ is swallowed! (23:24). Jesus condemns the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ for achieving the impossible: being scrupulously lawful yet failing to keep the law.

The fifth woe deals with the external purity but internal impurity of the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ (23:25). Consistent with earlier teaching (15:10-11, 17-20), Jesus radicalises the practice of purity so that it is genuine (23:26).

The sixth woe (23:27) continues this theme but Jesus suggests no hope for reform. He condemns the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ for being “full of hypocrisy and lawlessness on the inside” (23:28).

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261 This woe (Mt 23:23) is from Q || Lk 11:42, although Matthew has included ‘scribes’ with ‘the Pharisees.’ The attendant saying (Mt 23:24) is unique to Matthew.

262 ‘Self-indulgence’ (ἀκρασίας) (23:25) has the strong support of early and reliable witnesses. The Committee gives it an A rating, indicating that its presence is certain in the text. Hence the textual variants ἀδυνάτι ἀκαθαρσίας or πονηρίας are most probably scribal glosses. See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 89; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 50. See also comment in Gundry, Matthew, 465. In any case the basic thrust of the saying is not affected.

263 Mt 23:25 is taken from Q || Lk 11:39. However, Matthew includes ‘scribes’ with ‘the Pharisees.’

264 This saying is possibly derived from Q || Lk 11:44 but clearly reflects Matthew’s own concerns. Also, the Lucan version of this saying is given to the Pharisees alone; Matthew includes the scribes.
The seventh woe condemns the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ for continuing the murderous tradition of opposing the prophets (23:29-32). Jesus is scathing: “Snakes, offspring of vipers, how can you escape from the judgement of Gehenna?” (23:33). Here Jesus echoes ‘John the Baptist’s’ words when he decried the lack of repentance of many of ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees (3:7-8). The implication is clear: the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ are not bearing ‘fruit.’

Jesus describes his initiatives, the response from the scribes and ‘Pharisees,’ and their subsequent fate (23:34-36). Then he laments over Jerusalem (23:37). In this devastating attack on the scribes and ‘Pharisees,’ Jesus' words fulfill the first part of his declaration at 21:43. ‘The Kingdom’ is taken from Israel’s leaders: “Behold, your house is left to you, desolate” (23:38). Since Jesus’ identity is so closely linked with ‘the Kingdom,’ ‘the Kingdom’s’ removal is synonymous with his own departure (23:39).

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265 23:29, 31 is taken from Q || Lk 11:47-48. However, whereas Luke’s version of this saying is addressed to ‘lawyers,’ Matthew’s version addresses the scribes and Pharisees.

266 This saying is unique to Matthew.

267 The overwhelming majority of witnesses include ‘desolate’ (ἐρημωτάτη) here. Some manuscripts have deleted it, thinking that the word was redundant. Nonetheless the Committee give this word a B rating, indicating that its inclusion is almost certain. See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 91; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 50-51; Gundry, Matthew, 473.

268 So too Kynes, A Christology of Solidarity, 134. Hare also notes the tone of judgement here, not hope: Hare, Matthew, 271-272.
Throughout this narrative section, 21:46-23:39, the reader has also been aware of Matthew’s literary techniques. The narrator has repeatedly revealed that Jesus’ opponents are not genuine. ‘The Pharisees’ plot to entrap Jesus (22:15). Hence the issue raised by ‘their disciples’ and the Herodians concerning taxes is sinister (22:16). Their address, ‘Teacher’ is ironic (22:16). Their affirmation of Jesus is insincere (22:16). The narrator notes that Jesus “knows their evil” (22:18a) and addresses them in terms of the Devil: “Why do you tempt me, hypocrites?” (22:18b). The label ‘hypocrites’ recalls Jesus’ encounter with “Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem” (15:1, 7).

At other times Matthew’s literary technique is more subtle. The narrator declares up front that the Sadducees believe there is no resurrection (22:23). The reader appreciates the irony that they then proceed to ask Jesus (22:24ff) concerning what will happen “in the resurrection” (22:28).269

The follow-up question concerning the ‘great commandment’ is described as coming from ‘a lawyer, [who was] tempting him’ (22:35). Clearly every single issue presented to Jesus by his opponents throughout 22:15-40 has patently evil intent.

269 The reading taken here is: “Sadducees, saying [to Jesus]...”(Σαδδουκαίοι, λέγοντες). This reading is given a B rating by the Committee, indicating that it is almost certain. Alternate readings are variations of: “Sadducees, who say...” (Σαδδουκαίοι, οί λέγοντες). See Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament, 85; Metzger, Textual Commentary, 48; Gundry, Matthew, 444. In either case the inconsistency of the Sadducees is plain.
Yet the reader is aware of a literary strategy which has been repeatedly used throughout the narrative: ‘the Pharisees’ are the one group singled out as Jesus’ main opponents. This point is especially poignant. Here the reader’s alignment with the perspective of the narrator, and with Jesus and ‘John the Baptist’ is confirmed more than ever.

‘The Pharisees’ initiate the aforementioned series of questions put to Jesus (22:15).²⁷⁰ ‘The Pharisees’ engage in two separate attempts to entrap him (22:15-22, 34-40), more than any other group. Jesus addresses his unanswerable question to ‘the Pharisees’ alone (22:41-45). The series of questions is ended, for every would-be questioner, when Jesus silences ‘the Pharisees’ (22:46).

Moreover, ‘the Pharisees’ are singled out for special condemnation in Jesus’ subsequent attack (23:1-39). Indeed, seven times the scribes are included along with ‘the Pharisees’ in Jesus’ denunciations (23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). Yet when Jesus elaborates on one of his criticisms he singles out ‘the Pharisaic’ type (23:26).

Hence repeatedly the reader is alerted to the special role of ‘the Pharisees’ as enemies of Jesus. By now the reader is fully aware

²⁷⁰ As Hill notes, this is “a further sign of the anti-Pharisaic bias in the first Gospel”. See Hill, Matthew, 303.
that ‘the Pharisees’ are utterly resistant to Jesus and ‘the Kingdom.’ Jesus' blistering attack does not receive even a single reply. No wonder ‘the Kingdom’ will be taken from them and the nation of Israel (21:43).271 No wonder Jesus concludes his speech with the solemn declaration that they will not see him again until they respond to the King who ushers in his ‘Kingdom’ (23:39).272

3.3.5 ‘The Kingdom of God’ in Mt 21:23-23:39

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ appears four times throughout Mt 21:23-23:39. Yet in this section, more than anywhere else in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus expounds on the nature of ‘the Kingdom’ to Israel’s leaders. First, they are told that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are ‘going ahead’ of them into 'the Kingdom' (21:31). Second, ‘the Kingdom’ will be ‘taken from’ the religious leaders and “given to a nation producing its fruits” (21:43). Third, ‘the

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271 See also R Pregeant, “The Wisdom Passages in Matthew’s Story,” in D R Bauer & M A Powell (Eds), Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies, (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 228.
272 Jones understands 23:39 to be a promise so that Jesus’ speech ends not with a threat; Jones, Matthew, 144. In view of the devastating nature of Jesus’ attack this perspective is too positive.
1 Goulder argues that 23:39 refers to Jesus’ ‘ultimate [eschatological?] Triumph’; see Goulder, Midrash and Lection, 430. However, a pall of judgement pervades the lack of ‘fruitfulness’ of ‘the Pharisees’ in responding to ‘the Kingdom’ in the Matthaean narrative.
2 Hence it is more fitting to see Jesus’ final words here as a lament. See also Meier, The Vision of Matthew, 166. van Tilborg aptly describes 23:37-39 as “a retrospective view on the past.” See van Tilborg, Jewish Leaders, 70.
Kingdom’ involves God’s incredible grace which gives all, yet demands an appropriate response (22:1-14). Fourth, the scribes and ‘Pharisees’ ‘shut’ ‘the Kingdom’ in front of people. They do not enter themselves and prevent others from doing so (23:13).

While all these occurrences deal with the theme of ‘the Kingdom,’ it is highly significant that two of these sayings involve the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (21:31, 43). The following observations can be made.

The third and fourth occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative are found in 21:31, 43. After such infrequent use of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the narrative so far, this expression is used twice in successive exchanges. The reader is aware that important issues are being raised here.\(^{273}\)

This ‘Kingdom’-saying is once again given only by Jesus. It is given to the chief priests and elders of the people (21:31, 43; see 21:23) yet claimed by the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ as applying to themselves (21:45).\(^{274}\)

\(^{273}\) *Contra Menninger, Israel and the Church*, 165.

\(^{274}\) Throughout this discussion of Mt 21:23-23:39 it has been noted that even though Matthew maintains much in common with his Marcan source, he repeatedly inserts extra references to ‘the Pharisees’ and heightens their opposition to Jesus. See also Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5,1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants,” 22. J Riches notes that ‘the Pharisees’ are often added into Mark’s account throughout the whole Matthaean narrative; see J Riches, *Matthew*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 45. In terms of this study it is significant that ‘the Pharisees’ are added at 12:24 and here at 21:45. The *inclusio* is clear in the narrative: ‘the Kingdom’ arrives upon ‘the Pharisees’ and it will be taken from them.
The scope of this startling ‘Kingdom’ proclamation is reconceived again. In 19:24 ‘the Kingdom of God’ saying was given to the disciples. In 21:31, 43 Israel’s leaders, especially the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’, accept these devastating ‘Kingdom of God’ sayings as applying to themselves (21:45).

‘The Kingdom’ will be removed from the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43).275 ‘The Kingdom’ has a present dimension which can arrive or depart according to Jesus’ determination.276 The reader recalls that Jesus announced that “the Kingdom of God came upon you” (12:28). Now ‘the Kingdom of God’ “will be taken from” them (21:43). The reader is aware of a dramatic reversal.

This reference to ‘the Kingdom of God’ implies God’s judgement.277 That ‘the Pharisees’ have no argument against Jesus’ scathing attack (21:23-45) indicates that they are utterly outside the realm of God. Their only response is to try to arrest him (21:46).

‘The Kingdom of God’ is associated with the theme of ‘producing good fruit.’ This theme is implied in the vineyard

275 By implication ‘the Kingdom’ is also removed from the people of Israel. The actions of Israel’s leaders implicate the whole nation; see D R A Hare, The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St Matthew, (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), 151.

276 See also Mowery, “Matthean References,” 402.

277 Contra Hare’s distinction between the ‘eschatological’ ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ and the ‘temporal’ ‘Kingdom of God’; see Hare, Jewish Persecution, 153. For Matthew the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ serves a literary purpose of underlining the theme of judgement against ‘the Pharisees.’
imagery (21:28) and is also explicitly mentioned in the parable of the evil tenant farmers (21:34, 41, 43).

‘The Kingdom of God’ recalls the ministry of ‘John the Baptist’ (21:25, 26, 32). The imagery of ‘fruit’ is related to this theme.

The reader also reviews the earlier passage, 19:15b-20:16. Here ‘the Kingdom of God’ saying (19:24) was unaccompanied by the themes of ‘Pharisees’ and ‘fruit/fruits.’ Yet the accompanying parable (20:1-16) concerns a vineyard. In view of the repetition of the vineyard imagery in 21:23-23:39 the reader recalls the parable concerning the vineyard in 20:1-16. ‘The Kingdom of God’/‘the Pharisees’/’fruit’ imagery throughout 21:23-45 might allow for the themes of ‘the Pharisees’ and ‘fruit’ to be suggested in 19:15b-20:16.\(^{278}\)

Moreover, while ‘the Kingdom of God’ reference in 19:24 seemed unrelated to 12:28, it returns in sharp focus in 21:23-23:39. The arrival of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28), and its removal from the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43, 45) forms an *inclusio* for the reader.

This section, which includes the final ‘Kingdom of God’ saying also makes reference to the prophet Isaiah. The parable of

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\(^{278}\)Senior raises the possibility of this association in his comment on 20:1-16; see Senior, *Matthew*, 149. It is important to note, however, that this association is suggestive, at best.
the vineyard (21:33-46) draws on the imagery in Isaiah 5. The Isaianic parable describes the ‘unfruitfulness’ of the vineyard and the subsequently devastating consequences (Isa 5:2-7). \(^{279}\) The Matthaean parable describes the ‘unfruitfulness’ of the tenant farmers, who fail to produce the ‘fruits’ of the vineyard in their seasons (21:34-43). \(^{280}\) There are likewise devastating consequences for them: these evil tenant farmers are replaced with a new people.

These observations relating to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in 21:23-23:39 are complemented by Matthew’s literary technique, which includes privileged information given to the reader and the grammatical expression “Therefore I tell you (Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν) . . .” (21:43).

These themes and literary devices together comprise and inform the *inclusio*, which brackets the narrative from 12:15-23:39. The two sections which frame this overall narrative are 12:15-50 and 21:23-23:39. The common theological and literary elements of these two sections, allow the reader to interpret the arrival and removal of ‘the Kingdom,’ with respect to ‘the Pharisees’ and Israel.


\(^{280}\) The implication of the religious leaders also finds a basis in Isaiah: Israel’s leaders “devoured” this vineyard (Isa 3:14). See B S Childs, *Isaiah*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 46.
The related theme of ‘fruit’ is also understood in context: those who would not produce the appropriate response to ‘the Kingdom’ will have it transferred to others. This new ‘nation’ will produce the required ‘fruit.’

It was noted that the arrival of ‘the Kingdom of God’ upon ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28) is a powerful moment in the unfolding of Matthew’s Gospel. Likewise the forthcoming removal of ‘the Kingdom of God’ from ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43, 45), with all its implications for Israel, is another powerful moment in the unfolding of Matthew’s Gospel.

From the imagery concerning the murder of the son (21:37-39) the reader anticipates that the remainder of the narrative will detail the death of Jesus at the instigation of ‘the Pharisees.’ Thus the parable of the evil tenant farmers will be lived out. The removal of Jesus by ‘the Pharisees’ will also entail the removal of ‘the Kingdom’ from them.
3.4 The Aftermath: Mt 24:1-28:20

3.4.1 The Theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in Mt 24:1-28:20

“The prediction of the forsakenness of the house of Israel (23.38) is fulfilled for Matthew when Jesus departs from the Temple (24.1).” Jesus subsequently predicts the Temple’s utter destruction and gives an extended discourse concerning eschatological events (24:2-26:1a).

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ arises at different points throughout this discourse. Jesus refers to ‘this gospel of the Kingdom’ (24:14), emphasising that it is the same gospel which he has been preaching (4:23; 9:35). Jesus’ disciples will continue what he has begun. It will be preached “in all the world as a witness to all the nations” before the end will come (24:14b,c).

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ is expounded further in the final three parables of the eschatological discourse (25:1-46). Unprepared followers of Jesus are regarded as ‘ones working lawlessness’ (25:11; cf. 7:23). None of these people will enter ‘the

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281 Howell, Matthew’s Inclusive Story, 153.
282 Matthew has added significantly to Mk 13:10 here. Matthew alone adds the reference to ‘gospel of the Kingdom,’ specifically, ‘this gospel of the Kingdom’ (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας).
Kingdom of Heaven’ (25:1-13). A similar lesson is given in the next parable concerning the man who entrusts talents to his slaves (25:14-30).

The eschatological discourse ends with the parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31-46). In this parable various Matthaean ‘Kingdom’-related themes come together: the image of Jesus as King and Lord, doing what Jesus’ teaching requires, and explicit reference to ‘the Kingdom’ itself (25:34).

The final reference to ‘the Kingdom’ is when Jesus declares to his disciples: “‘And I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now until that day when I drink it with you new, in my Father’s Kingdom’ ” (26:29). Thus the last time ‘the Kingdom’ is mentioned explicitly in the Matthaean narrative, it is placed in the eschatological future.

Hence throughout Mt 24:1-28:20 the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ is found in a handful of places. There are various ‘Kingdom’-expressions: ‘this gospel of the Kingdom’ (24:14); ‘the Kingdom of Heaven,’ (25:1); ‘the Kingdom’ (25:34); and ‘my [Jesus’] Father’s

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284 This parable is unique to Matthew.
285 This parable derives from Q||Lk 19:12-27. The Lucan introduction concerning ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Lk 19:11), however, is not shared by Matthew. Likewise two references to receiving a ‘kingdom’ (Lk 19:12, 15) do not appear in Matthew.
286 Again, this parable is unique to Matthew.
287 This is Matthew’s alteration of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ (Mk 14:25).
288 Mark has one more reference, when Joseph of Arimathea is removing the body of Jesus (Mk 15:43). Matthew deletes this reference in his account of the Passion (Mt 27:57).
Kingdom’ (26:29). However, the expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ does not feature.

**3.4.2 The Theme of ‘the Pharisees’ in Mt 24:1-28:20**

After Jesus’ castigation of ‘the Pharisees’ (and scribes) throughout Matthew 23 they are mentioned only once more in the narrative. While the religious leaders capture, place on trial before the High Priest, and then deliver Jesus to the Romans (26:47-27:25), ‘the Pharisees’ are not specifically mentioned. They may be presumed to be one of the groups complicit in the injustice of Jesus’ fate but they are not singled out as they have been throughout the narrative to date.

Strikingly, ‘the Pharisees’ appear after Jesus has been buried: “But on the next day, which is after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together before Pilate . . .” (27:62).

They ask that Jesus’ tomb be secured so that there is no possibility of a ‘resurrection’ occurring (27:63-64). The reference to the chief priests here is maintained in the follow-up episode (28:11-15). While explicit mention of ‘the Pharisees’ drops out at the end,

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289 Neither are ‘the Pharisees’ mentioned in the Marcan Passion narrative (Mark 14-15).

290 This reference to ‘the Pharisees’ is unique to Matthew.
the association has been made. ‘The Pharisees’ are depicted as part of the force which is overcome by Jesus’ resurrection.

3.4.3 The Theme of ‘Fruit’ in Mt 24:1-28:20

The last time the theme of ‘fruit’ is mentioned in the narrative in the context of repentance, is when Jesus declares that a ‘new nation’ will ‘produce the fruits’ of ‘the Kingdom’ (21:43). However, there is one further indirect reference to this theme in Jesus’ eschatological discourse.

As Jesus discusses the end times and the accompanying signs he says: “‘Now from the fig tree learn the parable: when its branch has already become tender and it sprouts leaves, you know that Summer is near. Thus also when you see all these things you know that it is near, at the doors’” (24:32-3).

Here Jesus’ disciples are warned to ‘learn the parable’ (24:32). They are to ‘produce fruit,’ unlike Israel’s leaders. Moreover, ‘the Kingdom’ ‘drawing near’ this time is the ultimate manifestation.

In the remainder of the narrative the last reference to ‘fruit’ occurs at the supper before Jesus’ arrest. Jesus declares:
“But I say to you, I will never drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom” (26:29).291 Here the reference is to the literal ‘fruit’ of the vine, the wine.

Thus the theme of ‘fruit/fruits’ in Mt 24:1-28:20 does not continue to evoke the concern for repentance as it did in the preceding narrative. Along with this observation it can also be noted that explicit mention of ‘the Pharisees’ is similarly lacking.

3.4.4 ‘The Kingdom,’ ‘Pharisees’ and ‘Fruit’ in Mt 24:1-28:20

By Mt 28:20 the reader realises that the last time the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ appeared in the narrative was in Jesus’ announcement of its transfer (21:43). After denoting the devastating judgement upon Israel’s leaders, especially ‘the Pharisees,’ ‘the Kingdom of God’ ceases to function as a ‘Kingdom’-expression in the narrative.

Similarly, the reader notes that ‘the Pharisees’ only appear once more. The idea of repentance indicated by the theme of ‘fruit/fruits’ drops out.

291 This saying is taken from Mk 14:25. However, the Marcan term, ‘the Kingdom of God’ has become ‘my Father’s Kingdom’ in Matthew.
There are no references to 'John the Baptist' or 'Isaiah.' The only mention of baptism does not recall the ministry of 'John the Baptist.' Jesus' charge to the disciples to baptise (28:19) reconceives the nature of baptism itself: it is Christocentric now. The people who receive ‘the Kingdom’ (21:43) are not required to enter into Israel’s identity first. This new people of ‘the Kingdom’ will certainly be a new ‘nation.’

Consequently, the reader reviews what has happened to the ‘Kingdom’-expression, ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the narrative. The reader is aware that ‘the Kingdom of God’ came upon ‘the Pharisees’ earlier in the narrative (12:28). Likewise ‘the Kingdom of God’ ‘will be taken from’ the chief priests and ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43, 45).

While the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ pervades the Matthaean narrative, the expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ is specific. In its arrival and removal, it is intimately linked with ‘the Pharisees’ and their refusal to produce the appropriate ‘fruits.’
4.0 Conclusion

In light of the foregoing study the following conclusions are made. The term ‘the Kingdom of God’ functions within an *inclusio* in the Matthaean narrative. The infrequent, yet intentional use of this ‘Kingdom’-expression serves to underline how Israel’s leaders lost their claim to their rightful inheritance, along with dire implications for the nation itself. Inherent in this portrayal is the implication that Matthew’s community is now the legitimate people of ‘the Kingdom.’

Moreover, Matthew’s Gospel dramatically warns its community that in order to remain people of this ‘Kingdom,’ they must not emulate contemporary Pharisaic expressions of faith. Matthew promotes a more humble, less rigid community, which faithfully interprets Israel’s traditions from a (Matthaean) Christological perspective.

Matthew’s main struggle seems to be with members of his own church community who, for some reason, seek to orient

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293 Although Pharisaic Judaism is the most dominant expression of Judaism and is surviving in Matthew’s own era, it is still to be resisted as a model for Matthew’s church. See Hare, *Matthew*, 264-265; J A Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 144-147, 160.
discipleship of Jesus within a contemporary Pharisaic Jewish framework. This could arise from a concern for survival, the desire for acceptance within the wider Jewish culture, or even defaulting to their prior (Pharisaic Jewish) faith expression. In any case, Matthew exhorts a faith expression which subordinates any prior tradition to his uniquely Christocentric understanding.

4.1 'The Kingdom of God' in the Matthaean Narrative

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ permeates Matthew’s narrative as a tensive symbol with an implied set of meanings. This set of meanings is reflected in the various ‘Kingdom’-expressions used throughout the narrative. In the Matthaean narrative the reader encounters references to: ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) thirty two times; ‘the Kingdom of God’ (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) four times; ‘the Kingdom’ (ἡ βασιλεία) four times; ‘gospel of the Kingdom’ (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) three times; ‘the Father’s Kingdom’ [implied] (ὁ πατὴρ...τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ) twice; ‘the Kingdom of their Father’ (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν) once; ‘my [Jesus’ Father’s Kingdom’ (τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου) once; ‘the Son of Man’s Kingdom’ (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ... τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ) twice; and ‘Jesus’

294 Overman, Matthew’s Gospel, 156.
These 'Kingdom'-expressions are interwoven throughout the narrative and appear in different contexts.

As a 'Kingdom'-expression, 'the Kingdom of Heaven' is dominant in the Matthaean narrative. Kingsbury rightly says that it is the "single most comprehensive concept in the First Gospel." This 'Kingdom'-expression dominates in such a way as to subsume the expression 'the Kingdom of God.'

However, the expression 'the Kingdom of God' arrests the reader of Matthew's Gospel. It appears only a handful of times in the narrative (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). While the tense symbol of 'the Kingdom' is evoked, the 'Kingdom'-expression used is specific, with a specific cluster of associated themes.

This observation is underlined by redaction analysis. Fourteen of the fifteen references to the divine realm of 'the Kingdom' in Mark's Gospel are in terms of 'the Kingdom of God' (τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ) (Mk 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23, 24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43). Matthew extensively develops the theme of 'the Kingdom' and repeatedly changes the expression

\[295\] See Table 1 on page 4 for all references.
\[297\] E.g. Ibid.; Farmer, "Kingdom of God," 120; Crosby, *House of Disciples*, 216, are representative of this position among most scholars. L E Keck notes that 'the Kingdom of Heaven' serves as a 'master image' in Matthew's Gospel; see reference in Ibid., 218-219.
\[298\] The other reference, which implies the divine realm, is to 'the Kingdom of our father David' (βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Δαυίδ) (Mk 11:10).
to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven.’ Hence the infrequent, yet intentional occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ have a striking effect on the reader.

More significant than the four occurrences of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s Gospel, however, is the wider narrative context in which they appear. The reader notes that ‘the Kingdom of God’ ‘arrives’ (12:28) and its ‘removal’ is announced (21:43). The remaining two references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ occur within these two narrative markers. Thus the reader experiences an inclusio comprised of 12:28-21:43. Further, the recurring themes and literary devices associated with 12:28 and 21:43 highlight the inclusio for the reader in a powerful way.

Essentially the significance of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s Gospel is understood in light of this inclusio.

Throughout, the concerns of the First Evangelist with respect to the Sitz im Leben of his community become apparent.
4.2 The *Inclusio* of ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s Narrative

The first time the expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ appears in the narrative is when Jesus announces its arrival upon ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28). After so many references to ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’ and other ‘Kingdom’-expressions, this new formulation stands out. Further, ‘the Kingdom of God’ is jarring for the reader in its context (12:15-50).

The last time the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ appears in the narrative is when Jesus announces its removal from the religious leaders (21:43). Hence the reader recognises an *inclusio* formed by 12:28 and 21:43. This *inclusio* is emphasised and made complete when ‘the Pharisees’ are explicitly mentioned as applying this saying to include themselves (21:45).

The theme of ‘the Kingdom’ recurs in the remainder of the narrative of Matthew, 24:1-28:20. ‘Gospel of the Kingdom’ (εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας) is mentioned twice (24:7, 14). ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) is mentioned once (25:1). ‘The Kingdom’ (τὴν \``\ βασιλείαν) is also mentioned once (25:34). Finally, ‘my [Jesus’] Father’s Kingdom’ is likewise mentioned once (26:29).
However, by the end of the Matthaean narrative the reader realises that the last time the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ appeared was in Jesus’ announcement of its transfer (21:43). After foreshadowing the devastating judgement upon Israel’s leaders, especially ‘the Pharisees,’ ‘the Kingdom of God’ ceases to function as a ‘Kingdom’-expression in the rest of the narrative.

While the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ pervades the Matthaean narrative, the expression ‘the Kingdom of God’ is specific. In its arrival and removal, it is intimately linked with ‘the Pharisees’ and their refusal to produce the appropriate ‘fruits.’

‘The Kingdom of God’ is the only ‘Kingdom’ proclamation which originates with Jesus. In the narrative, the proclamation of ‘the Kingdom’ originates with ‘John the Baptist’ (3:2). Jesus subsequently takes over this proclamation (4:17; 10:7). However, in Mt 12:28, Jesus uses his authority with respect to ‘the Kingdom,’ declared in the Sermon on the Mount (7:21-27). He does not repeat ‘John the Baptist’s' message, nor does he expound on the nature of this new ‘Kingdom’-expression. Jesus continues to be the only one to use the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ throughout the narrative (19:24; 21:31, 43).

Three times within this *inclusio* ‘the Kingdom of God’ is proclaimed to ‘the Pharisees’ and each time it is in a scene of
confrontation. It is not proclaimed to everyone in general (3:2; 4:17), nor is it focused only on Israel (10:7).

In the face of total opposition from ‘the Pharisees’ (12:14), who ascribe Jesus’ exorcism ministry to Beelzebul (9:34; 12:24), Jesus declares that ‘the Kingdom of God’ “came upon you” (12:28). Then later in the temple when Jesus is challenged by “the chief priests and the elders of the people” (21:23ff), Jesus declares that “the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going ahead of” these leaders into ‘the Kingdom’ (21:31). The ‘Kingdom’-expression used is 'the Kingdom of God.' Then Jesus goes on to declare that ‘the Kingdom’ “will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits” (21:43). Again, the ‘Kingdom’-expression used is ‘the Kingdom of God.’

The reader notes that the narrator intrudes at the end of this section. He explicitly includes ‘the Pharisees’ among those who applied these teachings to themselves (21:45).

The religious leaders, particularly ‘the Pharisees,’ do not have ‘the Kingdom of God’ expounded to them in 12:15-50 and 21:23-23:39. Jesus uses this specific ‘Kingdom’-expression against ‘the Pharisees’ in a dramatic way to indicate where they stand in relation to God’s realm.

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299 Mowery observes: “Matthew virtually limited the term ‘kingdom of God’ to Jesus’ confrontations with the religious leaders ...” See Mowery, “Matthean References,” 403.
Three times ‘the Kingdom of God’ implies God’s judgement upon Israel’s leaders, especially ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28; 21:31, 43). As such Jesus implies ‘the Kingdom’ has a present dimension which can be given and taken, according to how people respond to him.

That ‘the Pharisees’ are deserving of this depiction is seen in their willingness to include themselves as targets of the Matthaean Jesus’ final ‘Kingdom of God’-saying (21:45). Moreover, the final reference to ‘the Pharisees’ in the Matthaean narrative occurs some time later, when Jesus has been killed and buried. Once again they are suddenly mentioned, along with the chief priests, as wanting to ensure that Jesus stays entombed (27:62-66). With respect to Jesus and ‘the Kingdom’ it unfolds that the religious leaders, especially ‘the Pharisees,’ experience crushing failure (21:44); the stone (li,qon) is rolled away (28:2).

The first and last references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ are associated with the theme of ‘producing good fruit,’ which indicates repentance. After the startling announcement that ‘the Kingdom of God’ ‘came upon’ ‘the Pharisees’ (12:28), Jesus distinguishes between good trees and bad trees and their respective ‘fruit’ (12:33). Repentance is highlighted in the

300See also Pamment, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 230, 231, 232.
subsequent teaching (12:41) and in the echoing of ‘John the Baptist’s' call to these same leaders to repent (12:34).  

Leading up to the dire announcement that ‘the Kingdom of God’ will be taken from Israel’s leaders (21:43), Jesus teaches about a son who repents (21:28-31), tax collectors and prostitutes who repent (21:32), and ‘evil tenant farmers’ who fail to repent (21:33-42). In each case the theme of the vineyard implies ‘fruit.’ Indeed in the parable of the evil tenant farmers the image of producing appropriate ‘fruits’ (καρποί) is explicit.

The first and last references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ recall the ministry of ‘John the Baptist.’ After the first ‘Kingdom of God’ proclamation (12:28) and the theme of ‘producing good fruit’ (12:33), Jesus repeats ‘John the Baptist’s' offensive words to ‘the Pharisees’ and Sadducees: “You offspring of snakes!” (12:34; cf. 3:7). In the section containing the final two references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ in Matthew’s narrative (21:23-23:39), ‘John the Baptist’ is explicitly mentioned (21:24-27, 32; a reprisal of themes found in 3:8-12). All these explicit references to ‘John the Baptist’ highlight the association of ‘fruit/fruit’ with repentance.

The contexts of the first and last references to ‘the Kingdom of God’ make reference to the prophet Isaiah. The wider context of

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301 See also Anderson, Matthew’s Narrative Web, 106-107.
12:28 begins with a generous quotation from Isaiah 42 (Mt 12:17-21). The role of the Spirit with respect to Jesus’ ministry is called into question in 12:15-50. The one upon whom the Spirit rests (12:18) is the one who is intimately linked with ‘the Kingdom’ in his ministry and in his person (12:28).

The relevant reference to ‘Isaiah’ in 21:23-23:39 is an allusion to Isaiah 5, which underpins the imagery of the parable of the evil tenant farmers (21:33-46). While this reference is taken over from Mk 12:1-9, Matthew “greatly strengthened the relation between the parable and Isa 5,1-7.”

The original reference point in Isa 5:7 (the vineyard = Israel) is dramatically altered in Mt 21:33-46 (the vineyard = ‘the Kingdom’). If ‘fruits’ are withheld from the householder (21:33-39) then the vineyard will be taken away (21:41). Similarly, if response to Jesus is inappropriate (21:38-39, 42), then ‘the Kingdom’ will be taken away and given to others (21:43).

In addition to the repetition of themes which comprise the inclusio, Matthew employs two further literary strategies. A key

302 It is noteworthy that this reference to Isaiah 42 is the only reference to ‘Isaiah’ in this section, Mt 12:15-50. This sole reference is indirectly linked with ‘the Kingdom of God’ (12:28).
303 See also related comment in France, Matthew, 470.
304 It is noteworthy that this allusion to Isaiah 5 is the only reference to ‘Isaiah’ in this section, 21:23-23:39. This sole reference is directly linked with ‘the Kingdom of God’ (21:43).
305 See Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5,1-7 in the Parable of the Tenants,” 21.
phrase introduces Jesus’ teaching and the narrator provides privileged information for the reader.

The phrase: “Therefore I tell you (Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν) . . .” is used in the *inclusio* when Jesus first addresses ‘the Pharisees’ concerning their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31). Likewise, when Jesus gives the devastating pronouncement concerning the removal of ‘the Kingdom’ from the religious leaders, it is introduced by these words: “Therefore I tell you (Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν) . . .” (21:43). To underline the second part of this *inclusio*, ‘the Pharisees’ deliberately apply this saying to themselves (21:45).

In both sections of ‘the Kingdom of God’ *inclusio*, the narrator provides privileged information for the reader. In the first part of the *inclusio*, the reader is told: when Jesus is aware of the plotting of ‘the Pharisees’ (12:15); that Jesus fulfils ‘Isaiah’ (12:17-21); and that Jesus knows the thoughts of ‘the Pharisees’ (12:25). In the second part of the *inclusio*, the reader is told: the reasoning among ‘the chief priests and the elders of the people’ (21:25-26); the perception of ‘the chief priests and the Pharisees’ (21:45); the intentions and fear of ‘the chief priests and the Pharisees’ (21:46); the intention of ‘the Pharisees’ and instigating their disciples to entrap Jesus (22:15-16); of Jesus’ awareness of ‘their malice’
the duplicity of ‘the Sadducees’ (22:23); of ‘a lawyer’s’ motivation ‘to test’ Jesus (22:22:35); and of the future, concerning the questioners’ behaviour (22:46). In being privy to all these matters, the reader is more readily aligned with the perspective of the narrator and Jesus. Moreover, the reader is attuned to the bracketing effect of the inclusio, comprised of the sections 12:15-50 and 21:23-23:39.

Regarding the second occurrence of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative, there appears to be no satisfying explanation as to why it is used in 19:24. Various attempts have been made by scholars, as discussed in this study, but none have proven entirely convincing. Further investigations might yield an interpretive key which accounts for this occurrence of ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Matthaean narrative.

In any case, the narrative-based approach taken in this study allows the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ to be experienced as a sudden arrival upon, and dramatic removal from, ‘the Pharisees’ in Matthew’s narrative. As these discoveries occur chronologically through the narrative, it may well be intentionally perplexing for the reader that ‘the Kingdom of God’ occurs in 19:24. Thus the reader is as disoriented and confounded as the disciples (19:25f). In this way at least Jesus’ teaching on the dangers of wealth (19:23-
24, 26, 28-20:16) is emphasised to great effect. As Thomas says:

4.3 Insights Into the *Sitz im Leben* of Matthew’s Community

A detailed study of Matthew’s *Sitz im Leben* would incorporate sociological, historical, political and cultural insights, making reference to a range of issues within and beyond the text at hand. For a holistic understanding, it is also essential not only to make reference to the narrative of Matthew’s Gospel, but to interact with the flow of this narrative.

Kingsbury critiques scholarly “reconstructions of the social situation of Matthew’s community based on a random selection of passages . . .” He goes on to advocate a dialogue between social history and “the sweep of Matthew’s story” in order to provide consistent insights into the *Sitz im Leben* of the Matthaean

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306 Thomas, “Kingdom of God,” 144.  
308 Kingsbury, “Conclusion,” 269.
community.\textsuperscript{309} The narrative-critical approach, with reference to
historical-critical insights utilised throughout this study has sought
to achieve this goal, with respect to Matthew’s use of the term ‘the
Kingdom of God.’

The following insights make use of the \textit{inclusio} formed by
the two sections, Mt 12:15-50 and Mt 21:23-23:39. In the first
section, ‘the Kingdom of God’ first appears, as it “came upon” ‘the
Pharisees’ (12:28). In the second section, ‘the Kingdom of God’
appears for the last time, as it will be “taken from” the religious
leaders, especially ‘the Pharisees’ (21:43, 45).

In the first part of the \textit{inclusio}, 12:15-50, there is clearly a
history behind Matthew’s attitude toward ‘the Pharisees.’\textsuperscript{310}
Matthew’s community may well have been part of a local
synagogue.\textsuperscript{311} Malina & Neyrey discuss Matthew 12 in terms of
labelling and deviance theory, and note the significance of Jesus
being labelled as Satanic.\textsuperscript{312}

In Matthew 12 the ‘Pharisaic’ opposition to Jesus comes to
the fore. It would appear to reach a climax with the plotting of ‘the

\textsuperscript{309}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{310}See van Tilborg, \textit{Jewish Leaders}, 37. See also Y Anno, \textit{The Mission to Israel in
Matthew: The Intention of Matthew 10:5B-6 Considered in the Light of the Religio-
Political Background}, [1984 ThD Thesis] (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms
International: 1987), 42, in which he lists other scholars who understand Matthew’s
church as confronting Pharisaic Judaism.
\textsuperscript{311}See Doyle, “Pharisees in Matthew 12,” 18.
\textsuperscript{312}See Malina & Neyrey, \textit{Calling Jesus Names}, 33-67.
Pharisees’ to destroy Jesus (12:14). Yet the narrative continues, with ‘the Pharisees’ accusing Jesus of colluding with Satan. This issue reflects the more immediate concern of the Evangelist: the threatened destruction of the risen Jesus' (Matthaean) community. Garland suggests that

The entire section [Mt 12:1-45] serves to provide further legitimation of Jesus’ new community, his household (10:25), over against its parent which has now become a rival.³¹³

Throughout Mt 12:15-50 the issue of boundaries permeates. The request for a sign from ‘the Pharisees’ (12:38) reflects such insider/outsider mentality.³¹⁴ Pamment raises the question as to whether Matthew himself has fallen into the sectarian trap (12:43ff).³¹⁵ To some extent this is true. However, Matthew appears to feel the tension so acutely that, for him, two alternatives exist. Only one side is on the side of God. The other side must be on the side of Satan. There does not seem to be room for co-existence between Matthew's community and Pharisaic Judaism.³¹⁶ Patte notes,

Following one’s convictions, being driven by them, is nothing else than ‘being oneself,’ implementing one’s true identity. Conversely, when one’s convictions are threatened in any way,

³¹³Garland, Reading Matthew, 142. See also Saldañini, Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community, 45.
³¹⁵Ibid.
³¹⁶So too Ibid., 106. See also Overman, Formative Judaism, 149, which takes into account the entire narrative.
one will do whatever is necessary to protect them. It is one’s true identity, one’s meaning in life, which is threatened.  

With Matthew’s emphasis on reconciliation and forgiveness to this point in the narrative (e.g. 5:21-26; 6:14-15), it is incongruous to include such devastating condemnation as found in Mt 12:25-37 without good reason. So it would appear that Matthew’s community is engaged in a struggle with Pharisaic Judaism for the hearts and minds of disciples. The battle lines are drawn so sharply between the way of Pharisaic Judaism and the way of the Matthaean community that only one group is on the side of God. Hence the implication is that the other group must be on the side of Satan. What is at stake (at least in the mind of the First Evangelist) is the very survival of the Matthaean community.

Thus Thomas’ suggestion that 12:28 reflects a concern about exorcism in the Matthaean community does not go far enough. Matthew is taking a more lateral approach to exorcism: he implies that in dispelling ‘the Pharisees’ and their influence, ‘demons’ are being exorcised.

This idea is developed later in Matthew 12. The unclean spirit (12:43-45) is possibly referring to Pharisaic Judaism,

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317 Patte, Matthew: A Structural Commentary, 5.
318 See also Saldarini, “Reading Matthew,” 168.
319 Thomas, “Kingdom of God,” 142-144.
“. . . renewed at Jamnia, and returning more intransigent - as far as the Matthean community is concerned - than before.”

The passage concludes with the continuation of the insider/outsider attitude, seen in the concern with who constitutes Jesus’ family (12:46-50). Ultimately, however, Matthew is not only concerned with the survival of his community in the face of Pharisaic opposition. He is concerned that the Pharisaic way is not emulated within his community.

In the second part of the inclusio, 21:23-23:39, the separation of Matthew’s community from normative Judaism continues. Stanton makes a compelling argument that the Matthaean community has recently parted company with Judaism. Yet Matthew’s purposes in 23:1-39, for example, serve not only as a critique of Israel’s leaders (especially ‘the Pharisees’), but also define the distinctive identity and values of the Matthaean community.

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323 Stanton, A Gospel For A New People, 156-168. Carter asserts that “the conventional focus on synagogue relations ... is too limited.” See W Carter, Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 1. While Carter’s detailed discussion of Matthew in dialogue with the prevailing Roman culture is illuminating, it would seem that Matthew’s primary concern is his own church community in the context of the first century Roman empire.
324 See Senior, Matthew, 160.
The presence of the disciples in Jesus’ concluding teaching in this section (23:1ff) indicates “that Matthew conceived the discourse to be a warning to the disciple leaders of his own church.” This is important, for while such a break from contemporary Judaism may have occurred for the Matthean community, it does not necessarily mean that Matthew is merely engaging in polemic against rival Pharisaic Jews.

D C Duling suggests that the *ethnos* in Matthew 21 “is an alternative leadership association within the Matthean group. If so, it pits one *ethnos* association of leaders against another.” Thus Matthew is not merely legitimating his expression of Judaism over and against contemporary synagogues; he is legitimating it in contradistinction from those in his own community who seek to emulate Pharisaic Judaism.

Stanton’s comment is pertinent, that for Matthew: “. . . the ‘synagogue’ has almost become an alien institution.” Further, for Matthew, the Pharisaic way of the synagogue is not to be emulated. One way in which Matthew underlines his appeal is to portray the removal of ‘the Kingdom’ from Pharisaic Judaism (21:43). Matthew

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wants nothing less than the complete removal of Pharisaic Judaism’s influence on his community.

Thus in Matthew’s Gospel the ‘Pharisaic’ way of faith and lifestyle is presented in a negative manner. This hostile portrait of ‘the Pharisees’ in the Matthaean narrative is seen in the fact that the twenty eight references to ‘Pharisees’ (3:7; 5:20; 9:11, 14, 34; 12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1, 12; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34, 41; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; 27:62) and sole reference to ‘Pharisee’ (23:26) are all negative.

The First Evangelist goes further, however, to highlight ‘the Pharisees’ in an unfavourable manner. Mention has been made in this study of the portrayal of Jesus and ‘John the Baptist’ before him, antagonising ‘the Pharisees.’ This is an inventive strategy, which seeks to define (Matthew’s) opponents first. If Jesus is portrayed as responding to attacks and so forced into a situation of having to justify himself, then the identity of Jesus’ community is defensive. Alternatively, the First Evangelist constructs a world-view which shows the Matthaean ethos as mainstream or normative.

Thus ‘the Pharisees’ are those who are required to justify themselves to Jesus. They do not do this however. In fact, they show that Jesus and ‘John the Baptist’s’ attacks, as well as the

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329 See also Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 257.
perspective of the narrator, have been justified all along: the way of the religious leaders and the way of Matthew’s community is diametrically opposed. As van Tilborg notes: “In the eyes of Mt the πονηρία ['evil'] of the Jewish leaders is not a thesis which has to be proved, but it is a presupposition underlying all his thoughts.”

Moreover the exclusive, inflammatory language used against those in power indicates that Matthew’s community is most likely a minority group.331 Overman suggests that: “Matthew freely adopts this language and employs it in his struggle to legitimate the position of his community in the face of the influence and impact of formative Judaism.”332 This Matthaean presentation uniquely serves his own context to provide an explanation and a warning for his community.

4.4 Concluding Thoughts

Without appreciating Matthew’s narrative strategies, the First Gospel’s presentation of ‘the Kingdom,’ Israel and its leaders, can be tragically misapplied and taken out of context. In no way is the Matthaean narrative to be understood as anti-Semitic or providing

330 See van Tilborg, Jewish Leaders, 37.
331 Overman, Formative Judaism, 19.
332 Ibid.
the definitive word on Israel and ‘the Kingdom’; it is Matthew’s narrative with its own inherent logic.

Matthew’s community can now understand itself as the faithful people of God, who continue Christ’s mission until the end of the age (28:20). In so doing, the Matthaean community can live out its expression of Judaism in its own unique way. The Gospel of Matthew provides more than mere permission for this: Matthew clearly prohibits discipleship of Jesus being expressed, or influenced by, the framework of contemporary Pharisaic Judaism.

An important theme Matthew utilises to distance his community from contemporary Pharisaic Judaism is that of ‘the Kingdom.’ Therefore it is essential to interpret Matthew’s ‘Kingdom’-expressions in the context of his narrative. Unless this context is appreciated, misinterpretation is inevitable. To see the significance of the term ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew allows for a richer understanding of the theme of ‘the Kingdom’ in this narrative. The inclusio proposed in this study is a helpful tool in this quest.

In the context of the early 21st Century, in which the Christian Church is declining in the West, the theme of ‘the Kingdom of God’ in the Gospel of Matthew is pertinent. In order to survive, many churches and denominational structures seek to
emulate what ‘works’ in the world around them. Corporatist models of leadership, decision-making, use of finances, concentration of power and self-protecting conservatism, are some of the ways in which the Church can be attracted and dazzled. As long as it continues institutionally in some form, the Church can be tempted to do and become whatever it takes.

The Gospel of Matthew speaks into our situation even now. Matthew’s concern was that ‘Pharisaic’ expressions of Judaism did not inform the way of his church. Today Matthew still reminds us that an inappropriate framework for church expression, community life and mission will constrain and even crush attempts to follow Christ.

The Church is to be a people (e;qnoj) of the Kingdom, producing appropriate fruits (21:43b). The oppressive ways of the world “shall not be so among us” (20:26). Not only is the integrity and outworking of Matthew’s Gospel at issue; the authenticity of the Church is at stake.
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