

When Will Israel's God Judge His People?

In order to better understand how the theme of divine judgment is developed in Matthew's narrative, it is of some importance to address the issue of *when* the God of Israel will judge his people. Such considerations will, as we shall see, shed light on the eschatological nature of the Gospel, which, contrary to claims made by some Matthean scholars, does not exclude a retained notion of judgment as implemented also in the present world. Since the scholarly discussion of the timing of divine judgment in Matthew has been made dependent on the idea that our Gospel proposes a new covenant replacing an old abolished covenant, we shall begin this chapter with some comments on Matthew's "when" in relation to Israel's covenant with God. Then we shall move on to outline three basic times of judgment, giving examples of passages that will be discussed throughout Part I. As we shall see, the criteria of judgment, of what is at stake, will differ based on which judgment we are considering. For example, while a positive outcome in the final judgment does presume obedience to the law of Moses, as Jesus interprets it, salvation ultimately depends on a covenant based on a genealogy going back to the patriarchs; it can only be inherited. Rewards and punishments in this world and in the world

to come, however, are dependent entirely on what has traditionally been called works of law.

With regard to judgment and covenant, Blaine Charette has argued that Matthew's emphasis on the threat of judgment should be understood as the author's way of stressing that his people must take seriously the requirements of the law within the covenant. For Charette, however, the covenant in Matthew is a new covenant, which replaces the failed Sinai covenant. While the new covenant "operates on the same level as the old in respect of the requirement of obedience for the continuing maintenance of the covenant relationship," there is no ethnic component to the new as there was in the old: both Jews and non-Jews are now included in the covenant.¹ I agree with Charette that Matthew displays a form of covenantal nomism, based on E. P. Sanders's definition.² However, in terms of the relationship between covenant and law, there is, in my opinion, no support for his claim that this covenant would abolish the distinction between Jews and non-Jews. Matthew does not speak of a "new" covenant,³ nor does he contrast "new" and "old" in such a way that "new" replaces "old."⁴ Instead, as we shall see, the Matthean Jesus's task is, indeed, to make sure that the Sinaitic covenant is restored after the defilement of the temple and before the coming final judgment.

The new-old covenant distinction leads Charette to a further contrast. In the "old covenant," he argues, punishment was executed in history, whereas in the "new covenant" punishment is implemented at the end of the present age.⁵ Similarly, Charette shapes his argument regarding rewards as if such will be delivered only on the day of the final judgment. He further defines reward to mean the receiving of an

1. Charette, *Recompense*, 166.

2. See discussion below, chapter 2.8.

3. It is Paul (1 Cor 11:25) and Luke (22:20) who identify the covenant related to Jesus as a new covenant. In addition, Luke speaks of John the Baptist's birth as related to God's faithfulness based on the covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:72). Mark speaks about "the blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:24) and Matthew does the same, adding the explicit reference that his blood effects atonement for the many (Matt 26:28).

4. Cf. Matt 13:52.

5. Charette, *Recompense*, 160. There seems to be a contradiction in his argument here, since he also claims that "Israel" is being replaced by Matthew's group for not heeding the call to repent, a punishment that is, in fact, taking place in history according to his own theory.

inheritance (i.e., the kingdom).⁶ While there certainly is an emphasis on the eschatological judgment in Matthew's Gospel, such a focus does not completely exclude or replace God's intervention in this world in terms of rewards and punishments. In light of Charette's arguments, and in order to contextualize Matthew's approach to judgment, let us consider briefly passages from the Hebrew Bible before we move on to categorize the relevant Matthean passages.

In most of the texts included in the Hebrew Bible, rewards and punishments are directly related to the law and executed primarily in this world. This combination of law and continual judgment in history seems to serve the purpose of shaping Israel in the image of God:⁷ as God is holy, so shall the people be holy.⁸ Some prophets also relate the status of Israel to the world beyond this religio-ethnic group in the sense that the people should be a light among the nations.⁹ Experiences of unremitting evil, both within Israel and as directed against Israel by the nations, lead to the development of the notion that God (and the oppressed) will ultimately triumph over the oppressor, even if that does not seem likely in the current situation. This day of final judgment often goes under the name "the day of the Lord," or simply, "that day."¹⁰ To this notion was later attached the idea of a final judgment at the end of time,¹¹ and resurrection—an idea that we find among the Pharisees as well as in the Jesus movement. Neither the idea of a final judgment removing oppressors, or the notion of a final judgment following after a general resurrection, meant, however, that the idea of reward and punishment in history vanished altogether.¹²

6. Charette, *Recompense*, 117–18, 160. See also Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, who argues along similar lines.

7. Cf. 2 Macc 6:12–16, where punishment in history is regarded as an expression of mercy, since it will keep the people safe on the day of the final judgment. For this author, God has a different strategy in mind for the nations: he does not punish them in history, in order that their sins may fill up their measure and result in their destruction at the final judgment.

8. Cf., e.g., Lev 11:44–45; cf. Matt 5:48.

9. See, e.g., Isa 42:6; cf. Matt 5:14.

10. E.g., Isa 10:1–4; Mica 2–3; Isa 13; Obad 15; Isa 61; Jer 23:1–4; Zech 8:12–13; Zeph 1:7; Ezek 7:7. Cf. Tobit 13:9; Ps 10:17–18 (LXX 9:38–39). See further Runesson, "Judgment," 459.

11. Dan 12; cf. Isa 65.

12. On the diverse notions of divine judgment in Jewish tradition (and in the New Testament), see also Egon Brandenburger, "Gerichtskonzeptionen im Urchristentum und ihre Voraussetzungen. Eine Problemstudie," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des Urchristentums* (edited by Egon

In the Gospel of Matthew, we can discern three different types of judgment, which may be categorized as follows: a) Punishment and reward as distributed in this world; b) Punishment and reward to be paid in the world to come; c) The final judgment. Beginning with the last of these types the final judgment will take place “chronologically” between the other two; it prepares the way for coming punishments and “payments,”¹³ which will be implemented in the world to come, based on how life was lived in the present world. The main outcome of the final judgment, though, is either what we call salvation, which refers to inclusion in the world to come, or condemnation, which refers to exclusion from life in the coming kingdom. The vast majority of judgment texts in Matthew refer to the final judgment, a fact that indicates clearly the eschatological emphasis of the text.

The idea of punishment and reward in the world to come, the second category of judgment discourse in the Gospel, makes statements about how people, through the way they live in this world, prepare for their treatment after the final judgment, i.e., in the kingdom.¹⁴ This category is distinguished from the final judgment in that all are judged on the last day, but of the ones that are allowed into the kingdom, some will be

Brandenburger; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993) 289–338; Konrad, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 10–19.

13. As Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, 68, has pointed out, terms such as “reward” can be misleading, since there is a direct relationship in Matthew between what a person has done and the outcome of the judgment; wages would thus be a better word than “reward.” Indeed, Matthew’s text employs a vocabulary distinctly related to economic discourses when dealing with divine judgment, although “payment” may be conceptualized as not proportionate to the work done (e.g., Matt 19:29; 20:1-16; 25:21, 23, 29). In this study, I will, for convenience, use “reward” and “recompense” as synonymous terms, both giving voice to the same type of idea of (abundant/disproportionate) payment for work done, or compensation for suffering.
14. Cf. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 141, who notes that rewards will be paid in the world to come. However, Sim seems not to take into account that negative aspects will also materialize in the world to come, but understands the category of punishment to mean only eternal torture in Gehenna. While it is correct that such an outcome of judgment exists in Matthew (but see Matt 10:28, which indicates annihilation of both body and soul as a result of unfavorable judgment), it seems better to use a different term for it, in order to clarify its relationship to its opposite, which is salvation. Thus, punishment and reward should be treated separately from condemnation and salvation; the two word pairs indicate different types of phenomena. With regard to the pair reward and punishment in the world to come (the kingdom of heaven), this may refer to shifts in hierarchies depending on behavior (cf. Matt 5:19). Both groups of people have, however, passed the final judgment and have thus experienced salvation as opposed to those who have been condemned. See further below.

in a better position than others; roles will be reversed and hierarchies rearranged.

Finally, Matthew includes a few references to judgment that is executed in this world. This type of judgment is focused on punishment rather than reward. It seems Matthew generally prefers, like later Rabbinic Judaism,¹⁵ to transfer this type of judgment to the world to come, as can be seen in the programmatic statement in parable form in Matt 13:24–30, 36–43, as well as in Matt 19:29. Beginning with the latter text, a comparison with the parallel texts in Mark and Luke is instructive. In Mark 10:29–30, those who have left the good things in life to follow Jesus will receive reward “now in this age” (*nyn en tō kairō toutō*) as well as in the world to come (*en tō aioni tō erchomenō*). The reward in relation to the world to come is defined specifically as “eternal life”/“life in the new age” (*zōēn aiōnion*).

Luke 18:29–30 has the same perspective as Mark, saying that people will be receiving already in this world “much more” than what they have given up for the sake of the kingdom; in the world to come, the reward will be eternal life. Matthew’s version of this saying differs significantly from the other two with regard to two important themes. First, Matthew sets the scene by introducing an eschatological context. This is done through the claim that when the world is re-born (*en tē paliggenesia*), the twelve disciples will judge/rule¹⁶ the twelve tribes

15. This was noted already by C. G. Montefiore and H. M. J. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London: Macmillan, 1938) 202. The evidence in the Rabbinic corpus is not, however, unambiguous. In Tannaitic literature reward and punishment are distributed both in this world and in the world to come, and the balance between these outcomes of judgment are obscure. Texts of interest include *m. Shabb.* 2:6; *m. Kidd.* 1:10; *m. Sotah* 1:7 (this text outlines the principle of “measure for measure” regarding this-worldly retribution); *m. Peah* 1:1 (cf. *t. Peah* 1:2–3); *m. Avot* 1:3; 2:7; 2:14–16; 4:2. I am grateful to Eva Maria Jansson for drawing my attention to this. Saul Lieberman, “Some Aspects of Afterlife in Early Rabbinic Literature” (reprinted in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green [eds.], *Origins of Judaism: Normative Judaism*, vol. 1 part 2 [New York: Garland, 1990] 103–40) surveys the evidence from the first five centuries. In the first section, he deals with posthumous divine retribution and notes some (for most scholars unknown) aspects of Rabbinic thought, such as human incarnation in animals as punishment for certain sins (110). Another interesting issue is time-limited retribution in hell, *m. Eduyoth* 2:10. A. Melinek, “The Doctrine of Reward and Punishment in Biblical and Early Rabbinic Writings” (reprinted in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green [eds.], *Origins of Judaism: Normative Judaism*, vol. 1 part 2, [New York: Garland, 1990] 297–312) shows how the Rabbis developed biblical teaching on judgment to “make it suit the experience of their own times” (304–305). For our purposes here it is of interest to note with Melinek that the Rabbis interpreted the fall of the temple in terms of this-worldly punishment (307–308). We shall have reason to return to this below.

of Israel. It is at this time, when the world is being re-born, that (abundant) rewards will be given to those who have left houses, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, or children for Jesus's name's sake; they will receive "hundredfold," but what exactly is to be received is, contrary to Mark, left unspecified. What in Mark and Luke is a saying about judgment resulting in this-worldly rewards is, in Matthew, a reassurance that recompense will be given in the world to come.

There is a further detail in Matthew's version of the saying, one which we shall return to, but which needs a brief comment here. While Mark and Luke seem to define eternal life as a reward, Matthew is careful to use the word "inherit" (*klēronomeō*) when he describes what is to take place. In fact, Matthew consistently applies this term when speaking about eternal life in judgment contexts; such a distinction between reward/recompense and inheritance is not present in Mark and Luke. It would seem that, for Matthew, eternal life cannot be "earned" as a reward, but has to be given to an individual as an

16. The meaning of *krinō* has been the subject of some disagreement among scholars, as Charette notes (*Recompense*, 113–14). Charette prefers the translation "to judge" rather than "to govern." This is also Luz's opinion (*Matthew*, 2.517). Gundry, *Matthew*, 392–93, argues that Matthew is referring to "govern," noting that if the meaning were "to judge," this would result in punishment only. The translation "to govern" implies that "Matthew does not regard God's rejection of Israel (21:43) as permanent." Cf. the discussion by Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013) 259–63. Konradt suggests that the verse may be understood as "an expression of the sovereign rank of the twelve in the kingdom of God," and links this to the restitution of the twelve tribes (261). He also notes, however, that even if the reference were to the disciples taking active part in the final judgment of Israel, this does not in any way indicate that the judgment would be negative (261–62). Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3.55–58, argue at some length for the same view as Gundry, suggesting that Matthew's use of *krinō* should be understood against the background of the Hebrew *šapat*, which refers to the act of ruling with authority. Just as the twelve tribes were once governed by twelve tribal leaders, the twelve disciples will govern Israel in the kingdom (under the ultimate authority of the Messiah). Perhaps the best approach would be to acknowledge the fact that governing may involve judicial procedures, and that in this specific passage we are dealing with a saying which establishes the disciples as future rulers, whose rule will begin as they judge Israel. This means that, for Matthew, Israel, as a nation, has a continuous existence beyond the final judgment, something which Luz does not accept based on other types of arguments elsewhere in his commentary. We shall return to this discussion below. In any case, it seems to me simply incorrect to state in absolute terms, as Luz does (*Matthew*, 2.517), that *krinō* cannot carry the meaning of governing; see, e.g., Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 [1901]), ad loc.: "Hebraistically i.q. to rule, govern; to preside over with the power of giving judicial decisions." Cf. the examples given by Thayer and note, e.g., Ps. 2:10 LXX; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:29–30, Wis. 1:1; 1 Macc 9:73, and Josephus, *A.J.* 5.184. Perhaps Luz's assumption that there is just one final judgment, which includes both Jews and non-Jews in Matthew, is what complicates matters in his analysis, as he seems to conflate the scenes in Matt 19:28 and 25:31 as if they were one and the same. As we have discussed here, however, Matthew's Gospel works with the idea that there will be two such judgments: one for Israel and one for the nations.

inheritance in accordance with God's covenantal promises to the patriarchs.¹⁷ As will be shown below, salvation is thus to be understood in Matthew as related to, or entangled with, genealogy, although this is conceptualized in ways that move beyond the world of ideas present in some other Jewish texts contemporary with the Gospel.

Now if Matt 19:29 was, unlike its parallel passages in other Gospels, transferring “wages” to the world to come, Matt 13:24–30, 36–43, i.e., the parable about the weeds and the wheat, seems to do the same with regard to punishment. Some scholars have argued that the purpose of this parable is to restrain the impatience resulting from the fact that no immediate division between good and evil had come with the first signs of the arrival of the kingdom; humans (and angels; 13:28, 38) must not get ahead of the coming judgment, but must wait patiently for God to execute judgment through his agents.¹⁸ While this may be true, the issue of impatience is not mentioned or dealt with in the parable itself, nor in its explanation. The parable seems, rather, to contain material addressing more generally what is often referred to as the problem of evil, or theodicy. In other words, the text answers the classic question, dealt with frequently in the Psalter too,¹⁹ why the wicked are not punished in this world if God is righteous in his judgment. Matthew's solution is to claim that God is indeed righteous, and “those who break the law” (*tous poiountas tēn anomian*) will be gathered and destroyed (Matt 13:41–42). The parable and its explanation thus respond to concerns that may arise among people socialized in a setting in which the judgment theme is defined by the writings of the Hebrew Bible; in the majority of these texts, judgment takes place in history. The parable solves what appears to be a lack of justice despite the fact that the Messiah has arrived.²⁰

17. Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing*, 70–71, argues against such an understanding of *klēronomeō*, but as we shall see when we discuss Matt 25:31–46, I believe his arguments, in this case, miss the point. See below, chapter 7.3.

18. See, e.g., France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 533; Bornkamm, “End-expectation,” 44n1.

19. See, e.g., Ps 73:3–14; 82:2. See also Isa 57:1; Qoh 8:14, and note 4 Macc 3:20, which gives voice to the opposite perspective that law observance leads to prosperity. Cf. the prophecy of horror in Ezek 21:3, in which both righteous and unrighteous are struck down as punishment for the sins of, as it turns out in Ezek 22:23–31, the leaders of the nation.

These two texts, Matt 13:24–30/36–43 and 19:29, may suffice to show that there is a general tendency in Matthew’s narrative to portray Jesus as postponing divine reward and punishment to the world to come. The Rabbis would eventually do the same, following a similar interpretive development of this aspect of Jewish theology. But, as mentioned, Matthew is not exclusively focused on the eschatological realization of divine judgment, and we find some texts promising reward and threatening punishment in history. All of this, it should be noted, concerns judgment related to the Jewish people. As we argued in the Introduction, Matthew’s preoccupation with the people with which Jesus identifies requires us to analyze separately passages concerned with Jews and non-Jews, respectively; we shall consider the time when Israel’s God will judge the nations below in Part II.

It may be helpful to list here some of the more important judgment texts relating to the Jewish people in Matthew, categorized according to the three-fold approach to judgment mentioned. Synoptic parallels will be given within brackets when applicable. (Brief preliminary comments are given in footnotes in order to contextualize the passages; full discussion will follow throughout Part I in relation to the relevant topics.)

20. There has been some debate regarding whom this parable deals with: the community of Jesus’s followers or the world as a whole. Gundry (*Matthew*, 272) states: “‘world’ emphasises the widespread extension of the kingdom through evangelism (cf. 5:14; 26:13; 28:19). Matthew does not mean that all the inhabitants of the world have or will become disciples.” However, the passages in Matthew that he refers to for support do not belong within the same “category.” In 5:14, Jesus is exhorting the people of Israel (the crowds and the disciples) to be the light of the world. This task does not include an active proselytizing mission, however; such a perspective is not present in Matthew until 28:19–20. It is of some importance to consider the question of whether non-Jews are included in the judgment referred to by the parable. Birger Gerhardsson, “De sju liknelserna i Matteus 13,” *SEÁ* 34 (1969) 77–106, here 83, has argued that the judgment in Matt 13:24–30 is on the “people of God,” noting specifically the question why the “hopeless cases” are allowed to remain within the people before the final judgment. This understanding of who is being judged seems, in my view, correct. Matthew is exclusively focused on the Jewish people in the narrative at this point; Jesus (cf. 13:37: “the son of man”) is said to be the sower, and he is addressing his message exclusively to Jews (cf. 15:24). Further, there has recently been a prohibition of mission outside the people (10:5-6), and the law is indicated as a criterion of judgment (13:41). Finally, as Gerhardsson points out, the parable in question is one of seven parables, all of which follow the basic pattern of the first one (13:3-9); as 13:2 indicates, these parables are spoken to Jewish crowds gathering around him by the lake. The in-group addressed here is thus best understood as the people of Israel. Consequently, the parable in 13:24–30 about divine justice and punishment may be added to other evidence in the narrative that Matthew is not replacing “Israel” with the “Church”; the people of God remains the people of God and is judged accordingly at the end of times.

Judgment, Reward, and Punishment in this World

5:22²¹; 6:33 (Luke 12:31); 7:1-2²² (Luke 6:37); 11:23²³ (Luke 10:13-15); 12:31-32²⁴ (Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10); 21:18-19²⁵ (Mark 11:12-14, 20);

21. To be noted here is that punishment by the Sanhedrin in this verse is paralleled by punishment in Gehenna, which has led some scholars to assume that the passage describes an increase in intensity of judgment. According to Luz, *Matthew*, 1.235, however, the verse displays “a qualitative shift from human-earthly to divine-eschatological judgment.” Important for our purposes is the fact that the Sanhedrin in itself functions as God’s tool when judging this world, just as the courts in the Hebrew Bible. It is an expression of God’s righteousness that human courts execute judgment since the law was given by God. See Runesson, “Judgment,” 458–60. Cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (2nd ed.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965) 147–58, where he notes that the law was given by God within the covenant, and it was the people’s responsibility to make sure that justice prevailed through establishing effective courts. If, after examination, a court could not reach a decision the case was to be solved by the drawing of lots. In all cases, God is understood to be the judge and human beings were seen only as the performers of the necessary rituals. This verse is thus an example of the idea that the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem implements God’s judgment in this world. (The fact that the example given by the Matthean Jesus as a basis for judgment by the Sanhedrin does not ring realistic due to the frequency with which such insults must have happened is beside the point; in the narrative world, this is how the [ideal?] Sanhedrin is said to be functioning.) This does not, of course, exclude an eschatological judgment, the outcome of which may be considerably grimmer.
22. It is difficult to determine whether these verses belong here or should be interpreted as referring to the outcome of judgment in the world to come. The reasons for understanding these verses as applicable to this world are as follows. First, the context seems to indicate concerns with life in this world. Matt 7:1-2 is placed between two themes dealing with peoples’ everyday life: 6:25-34 (v. 33 mentioning positive outcomes as a result of seeking the kingdom), and the following verses in chapter 7, especially vv. 7-12. It may be, therefore, that these verses are intended to make clear that the relationship between human beings is inextricably connected with the relationship between the people and their God (cf. Matt 5:23-24; 6:14-15); God would then be imposing punishment in this world in accordance with how man is judging others. Second, the principle of measure for measure, which Matthew applies here, usually refers to judgment in this world. (As we see in Matt 19:29; 20:1-16, Matthew does not make use of this principle when dealing with the world to come.) This is also the case in Tannaitic literature (cf., e.g., *m. Sotah* 1:7, 8. In mishnah 7, the priests are carrying out the punishment [cf. the comment on 5:22 above], but in the following mishnah, the direct involvement of God is more obvious). Cf. Melinek, “Reward and Punishment,” 386. While these considerations make a reference to judgment in this world possible, this is by no means certain. It may well be that Matthew wants to communicate a measure for measure correlation between life in this world and the next.
23. For the Matthean Jesus, Sodom’s destruction is God’s judgment based on the sinfulness of the city. The same fate, to take place in this world, is predicted for Capernaum. Such punishment does not mean that a final judgment will not take place.
24. Forgiveness is explicitly rejected for both this world and the world to come. The passage is therefore listed also in the category of the final judgment.
25. This pericope is often interpreted as a prophetic “parable-in-action,” a symbol for the rejection of “Israel” (see, e.g., John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980) 237. The event occurs the day after the entry into Jerusalem and the temple incident. Gundry, *Matthew*, 416, has argued that Matthew has redacted his material so that it becomes clear that it is Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders that are in focus: “Thus, with the Jewish leaders in mind, a mere wish turns into a terrifying prediction of judgment.” The fig-tree incident is a prophesy first and foremost of the downfall of Jerusalem and the temple, the catastrophe being described as a consequence of the neglect of the law by, as we shall see, especially the Pharisees (cf. Matt 23:1-24:2). Thus, the pericope reveals a belief in divine judgment in history.

21:33–46²⁶ (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19); 23:35–36²⁷ (Luke 11:50–51);
23:37–24:2²⁸ (Luke 13:34–35; 21:5–6; Mark 13:1–2); 26:52²⁹; 27:25.³⁰

Reward and Punishment in the World to Come

5:12 (Luke 6:23); 5:19; 6:1–6³¹; 6:16–18; 6:20 (Luke 12:34); 10:41–42³²

26. This parable seems to be dealing with the final judgment, but could also refer to judgment in this world. While I have previously understood the parable as related to the final judgment and the change of leadership in the kingdom, as a consequence of the wickedness of the “chief priest, the elders, and the Pharisees” (Matt 21:41, 45; Runesson, “Judging Gentiles,” 141 n.25), I am now considering the second option as a plausible alternative. The key to this interpretation would be v. 43, where the reason for the change of leadership is based on a concern for the production of “fruit.” In Matthew, bearing fruit is elsewhere related to life in this world, leading up to the final judgment and the rebirth of the world (7:19; on rebirth, see Matt 19:28). The overshadowing concern in Matthew is, further, that especially the Pharisees are not helping, but rather hindering the people from reaching the goal of a life worthy of the kingdom (3:8; 9:36; 23:4, 13). Since this will lead to the predicted catastrophe of the temple destruction, Jesus’s and his disciples’ task is to save as many as possible in face of the coming doom (1:21; 9:37–10:42). Thus, leadership will need to be changed before the final judgment, to a group (*ethnos*) “that produces the fruits of the kingdom.” (For the meaning of *ethnos* here, see John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006] 191–93.) The judgment resulting in the rejection of current leaders in favor of new leaders is thus thought of, if this argument is correct, as taking place in this world; indeed, the disciples have already been given the power to rule through correct interpretation of halakhah in Matt 16:19 (cf. 18:18–19). The full implementation of the disciples’ rule over Israel will take place, however, at the rebirth of the world (Matt 19:28).
27. The context of these verses makes it clear that the outcome of divine judgment is the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus, the Matthean Jesus’s attack on the “Scribes and the Pharisees” (Matt 23:1–36) comes to a climax in this prophecy about punishment in this world.
28. As we have had occasion to note above, rabbinic literature also gives expression to the view that the fall of the temple was God’s punishment. Melinek, “Reward and Punishment,” 285, notes that the Rabbis saw this punishment as “the liquidation of Israel’s sins and left them free to look forward to restoration in the future.” Referring to *b. Yom. 9b*, Melinek adds details about the cause of the punishment: “the downfall of the Jewish state is attributed specifically to the three sins of bloodshed, overbearing behaviour, and neglect of the study of the law.” Interestingly, the Matthean Jesus is similarly concerned with the lack of obedience to the law (cf., e.g., Matt 23:23), bloodshed is explicitly mentioned (23:31, 35), and overbearing, or oppressive, behavior is also noted (23:4) as the narrative leads up to the destruction of the temple in 23:38, 24:1–2.
29. Cf. Gen 9:6; Isa 50:11 (in the Targum, the “kindling of fire” of Isa 50:11 is interpreted as taking up the sword. See France, *Matthew*, 1013 n.22). Note also, Matt 5:39.
30. As we shall argue below, this verse is likely intended to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem.
31. *Para tō patri* (6:1) indicates that the rewards for kingdom-behavior in this world will be paid in the world to come. This is true also for 6:16–18, and confirmed by 6:20.
32. These important verses should probably be understood as referring to abundant recompense in the world to come rather than as a claim that rewards will be paid in the current age. The rewards are related to acts of hospitality and compassion, seemingly following the pattern of measure for measure, which could indicate rewards in this world (see the comment above on 7:1–2). However, the rewards, or wages, are disproportionate compared to what has been done and by whom, so that this cannot be understood as a matter of measure for measure in the strict sense, although there is some level of correspondence in kind between deed and reward. Further, the immediate context makes it likely that Matthew is here speaking of heavenly rewards; see 10:32, 40. Indeed, Matt 10:40–42 corresponds to Matt 25:31–46 in terms of the hermeneutics applied, and the latter passage is explicitly describing an eschatological setting. The measure for measure principle,

(Mark 9:41); 16:27; 18:4; 19:21³³ (Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22); 19:29 (Mark 10:29–30; Luke 18:29–30); 20:1–16; 23:12

The Final Judgment

3:7–8 (Luke 3:7–8); 3:10 (Luke 3:9); 3:12 (Luke 3:17); 5:20; 5:22; 5:27–30 (Mark 9:43); 6:14–15³⁴ (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:14); 7:19; 7:21; 7:24–27 (Luke 6:47–49); 8:11–12³⁵ (Luke 13:28–29); 10:15; 10:22; 10:28 (Luke 12:4–5); 10:32–33 (Luke 12:8–9); 10:39 (Luke 17:33); 11:22–24 (Luke 10:14–15); 12:27 (Luke 11:19); 12:31–32 (Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10); 12:36–37; 12:41–42 (Luke 11:31–32); 13:24–30, 36–43; 13:47–50; 15:13;³⁶ 16:25 (Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24); 18:3; 18:6³⁷ (Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2); 18:8–9 (Mark 9:43–47); 18:23–35; 19:16–17³⁸ (Mark 10:17–19; Luke 18:18–20); 19:28–29 (Mark

however, should not be understood as the basis for inclusion in or exclusion from the world to come (such a principle is clearly unsuitable for such purposes), but rather, as the criterion for how things will eventually be, once the world has been reborn.

33. As the history of interpretation indicates, this verse is difficult to interpret, especially with regard to the question of judgment (for discussion, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3.47–48; Luz, *Matthew*, 2.512–14, 518–23; cf. Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010] 236–37). For our purposes here, the crux lies in determining whether the status of *teleios* (completeness/perfection; cf. Matt 5:48) is related to rewards in the world to come, or if it should rather be understood as a requirement for entering the kingdom at all when the world is reborn after the final judgment has taken place. The question in Matt 19:16 is about entering the world to come, i.e., living according to principles which will allow for eternal life. These principles are for Jesus the same as they have always been: the law (19:17–19; cf. 5:17–20). But the law itself is not the full answer, since it is embedded within a covenant, in which for God that which is impossible for human beings is possible, namely, salvation (Matt 19:26). The question is whether to sell everything and follow Jesus is an expression referring to the law. I have argued elsewhere that it is, and that the problem for the rich man is that his refusal to give to the poor means that he breaks the law as it is stated in Matt 19:19: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” according to the means that have been given to you (Matt 25:14–30; Runesson, “Purity and Holiness”). Had the rich man obeyed, he would have earned a treasure in heaven (Matt 19:21), which should be understood as referring to the rewards in the world to come mentioned in Matt 19:29. Thus, radically obeying the law according to one’s full ability will result in recompense in the world to come.
34. The context reveals that God’s forgiveness is related to the eschatological judgment, although it is dependent on the willingness of people to forgive others in the present age.
35. As with most other judgment texts involving non-Jews, this text is primarily directed to Jews; pointing to commendable characteristics displayed by a non-Jew, non-Jews being generally regarded by Matthew’s Jesus as examples of how *not* to behave, is intended to shame members of God’s people who should know better (cf. Matt 10:15; 11:22–24; 12:41–42). Still, however, there is information to be deduced from this text regarding the judgment on non-Jews, an issue to which we shall return in Part II.
36. The terminology of “uprooting” (*ekrizōō*) is elsewhere in Matthew related to the final judgment; see Matt 3:10; cf. 7:19. This makes it likely that what is intended here is not a shift of leadership positions in this world, although this cannot be excluded (cf. the comment on Matt 21:33–46 above).
37. Cf. Rev 18:21. See also comment below on Matt 26:24.

10:29; Luke 18:29–30); 22:1–14; 23:33; 24:13 (Mark 13:13; Luke 21:18–19); 24:22 (Mark 13:20); 24:31 (Mark 13:27); 24:37–44 (Mark 13:22–37; Luke 17:26–36); 24:45–51; 25:1–13; 25:14–30 (Luke 19:11–27); 26:24³⁹ (Mark 14:21).

With this basic overview of judgment texts relating to the Jewish people, including Jesus's own disciples, we can now proceed to explore if and how all of this forms a pattern in which the core elements of Matthean judgment theology are revealed. We shall begin by exploring the criteria of judgment, all of which relate quite closely to concerns present in other near contemporary Jewish texts. Based on these criteria, we shall then ask which individuals and/or groups in the narrative are excluded from or included in salvation, as it is construed in the narrative.

38. See the comment on this pericope above, note 33.

39. Cf. the expression "It would have been better for them not to have been born" in 1 Enoch 38:2, and the eschatological context in which these words refer to sinners there. Cf. Matt 18:6.