

Messianic Rule and the Resurrected Israel

(Matthew 16:13-20)

I. SYNOPSIS

Peter, as the beneficiary of revelation *from heaven*, is enabled to see who Jesus really is, by contrast with the scribes and Pharisees who, in their implacable opposition to Jesus, demand a sign *from heaven*. Peter appreciates that Jesus is not merely the last in a series of prophets, but is none other than the Messianic Son of God. As disciples recognise and obey Jesus as their king, he exercises that very rule, in fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, to build the gathered community of the renewed, true Israel so securely that not even death can overpower it. Indeed, the very formation of this resurrected Israel under Davidic rule necessitates that all who belong to it experience deliverance from the realm of death. This begins with the Messiah himself, as the one who supremely represents and embodies this Israel, entering the realm of death. The sign of Jonah indicates that death will not be able to overpower its victim and hold Jesus within its gates. In similar vein death is unable to prevail over those within its gates who, as is true of all followers of Jesus, necessarily lose their lives for Jesus' sake day after day.

Consequently, the understanding of Jesus as the Messianic King is foundational to discipleship and, in realising this, Peter, as representative therefore of all true disciples, stands in contrast with the scribes and Pharisees. Their very rejection of Jesus makes their teaching a dangerous yeast, because they thereby cut themselves off from that understanding of the law and the way of righteousness that utterly depends on seeing Jesus as the Messiah and, therefore, as the one who is the ultimate authority for its proper interpretation and the setting forth of the way of true righteousness. Inevitably, then, their spurning of Jesus' authority undermines their attempt to interpret the law and determine to what God's will applies ("binds") and to what it does not apply ("looses"). Jesus himself is the locus of "the kingdom of heaven", God's dynamic rule. By grasping that Jesus is the Messianic King, together with all that this implies with respect to the fulfilment of the law, Peter, along with all who share this conviction, possesses the very interpretive key that opens the kingdom of heaven - the Christological key that will enable him to discern God's will both with respect to what it positively promotes and to what it negatively opposes. However, prior to Jesus' resurrection Peter is not ready to operate this key because, as Jesus' rebuke demonstrates, he has not as yet grasped the most

central implication of Jesus' identity as Messiah – the necessity that he enter the realm of death and then rise from it. Accordingly, he is not yet in tune with God's revelation in Christ. Following Jesus' resurrection and exaltation as the ultimate ruler who possesses all authority in heaven and earth, it will be especially in and through the teaching of all that Jesus commands that the dynamic power of God's rule will be opened up.

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

In approaching Matt 16:13-20 it is crucial to bear in mind the outer frame of the Gospel. It begins by introducing the entire book (βίβλος), and not merely the genealogy, as being concerned with “the history (γένεσις) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”¹ As the opening genealogy makes apparent, it is all very well to understand Jesus as the Davidic ruler, as the Messiah, but as the reference to “Uriah's wife” clearly intimates, the morally compromised Davidic roots do not constitute a good starting point for understanding Jesus and his mission.² To really understand the nature of Jesus' rule, Davidic as it certainly is, one has to go back to Abraham.³ Jesus' Messianic rule is actually Abrahamic rule. That is, Jesus exercises his rule to fulfil all that God had promised to Abraham.⁴ Further, as the Abrahamic Messiah Jesus represents Israel and encapsulates in himself all that God intended Israel to be.⁵

In keeping with this, the outer frame of the book is an inclusio,⁶ for, although by the time we reach 28:16-20 Christology has been enriched (e.g. Son of God, Immanuel, Danielic Son of Man), nevertheless, the Great Commission is describing the absolute rule of Jesus, including especially his Messianic rule, as that which is exercised, through his disciples, to mediate the Abrahamic blessings to all peoples.⁷ Further, as people from all nations are brought to be Jesus' disciples they are implicitly engrafted into the true Israel, for, as disciples, they are taught to obey everything Jesus has commanded, language that plainly is drawn from the book of Deuteronomy where Yahweh tells Moses to ensure that all Israel is taught to obey everything he commands.⁸

At significant points in the Gospel we see an identification of the true Israel with either Jesus himself or the disciples he calls and gathers.⁹ John the Baptist links the Coming One for whom he is preparing with the rejection of false children of Abraham and the miraculous raising up of true children of Abraham, the gathering of wheat as opposed to chaff (3:8-12). Jesus identifies with Israel in his baptism (3:15).¹⁰ As his citations from Deuteronomy 6 and 8 make clear,

Jesus identifies himself with Israel, God's son, as he undergoes testing in the wilderness.¹¹

From the very moment Jesus calls his disciples to himself, he distinguishes them from the Jewish crowds and effectively identifies them as the true Israel.¹² Jesus' disciples *are* characterised by the attributes described in the beatitudes, it being fundamental to Jesus' ethics, as it is to New Testament ethics, that God's people be what they already are by virtue of their union with Christ.¹³ It is the distinguishing presence of these attributes that explains why Jesus' disciples *are* the salt of the earth and the light of the world.¹⁴ But, significantly, the notion of the disciples as the light of the world is drawn from Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 and points to their identity as the true Israel (Isa 49:3), the servant people of God, called to be a light to the nations (cf. Acts 13:47).

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus is the starting point for the formation of a renewed, true Israel. This will only be developed by building on Jesus himself, the true Israelite, the embodiment of all that Israel is supposed to be.¹⁵ All who obey Jesus' commands (hear his teaching and put it into practice) – and recognise here the anticipation of 28:19 – are like those who build on the rock (7:24-27). Floods and the strongest of winds are incapable of sweeping away such followers of Christ. It is not hard to see here already a close analogy to what we will encounter in Matt 16:13-20. This is especially the case when we recognise that the identification and treatment of the disciples as the true Israel is central to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

The prospect of Gentiles becoming part of the true Israel, with which the Gospel ends, is anticipated at various points in the Gospel. For example, in Matthew 8, following the healing of the centurion's servant and Jesus' expressed delight in the great faith expressed by this Gentile, Jesus declares: "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (v11). From time to time we see Jesus' encounter with various Gentiles. But prior to his death and resurrection, the predominant stress is on Jesus being sent to the lost sheep of Israel (10:5-6; 15:24).¹⁶

III. THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING CONTEXT

This Passion-preceding preoccupation with mission to the Jewish people is of major importance to the interpretation of 16:13-20. One key way in which the Abrahamic dimension to Jesus' identity (1:1) has been developed to this point has been via Matthew's persistently expressed interest in the formation

of a true Israel. Somewhat arbitrarily, let's take up the context from 15:21, Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman. Notably, she, as another exemplar, like the centurion, of "great faith", has extraordinary insight into Jesus' identity, addressing him as the Son of David. In what follows, we see yet again the fleshing out of 1:1, that Jesus' Messianic rule is Abrahamic in so far as it does reach out to Gentiles, even if prior to Jesus' death and resurrection the focus is on mission to "the lost sheep of Israel."¹⁷ For the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises presupposes the formation *from Jewish people* of the Abrahamic "nation", though certainly not a theocracy, through which God will mediate blessing to Gentiles.¹⁸

Having just been told of Jesus' commitment to form a true Israel from among Jewish people like himself, we are taken back into wilderness traditions. The description of Jesus' healing of the mute, the crippled, the lame and the blind recalls Isaiah 35:5-6, the time of the New Exodus, when joy and life comes to the wilderness. The context is of people seeing "the glory of Yahweh, the majesty of our God" (Isa 35:2) who has come to save his people (v4), with the glorious prospect of "the ransomed of Yahweh" returning and coming to Zion with singing.

We see Jesus, like God not Moses, miraculously feeding the people of Israel in the wilderness (15:32-38).¹⁹ Immediately following this we have yet another echo of the wilderness period. Just as the rebellious Israelites, notwithstanding such miraculous signs and demonstrations of God's commitment to his people, tested God by demanding that he prove himself to them (Ps 95:9), so now the scribes and Pharisees, as representative of a "wicked and adulterous generation" (Matt 16:4 cf. Ps 95:10), similarly test Jesus by demanding from him conclusive proof, despite the sign that has just been provided (cf. Ps 95:9b).²⁰ That is, we have here a description of the state of the nation. The current generation of Israelites is not the true Israel. Just as that initial Mosaic generation was excluded from the promised land (Ps 95:11) so these Israelites are excluded from entering the kingdom of heaven, with the exception of those Jews whom Jesus calls to himself and fashions into a true Israel, the Abrahamic nation. The true Israel is to be found with Jesus' disciples. Jesus does not find a ready-made Israel. Instead he has to form or "build" the true Israel.

Following his confrontation with the religious leaders, Jesus warns his disciples about the yeast of the scribes and Pharisees, namely their teaching (16:5-12). This must be nuanced, since at 23:1-4 we read: "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not

do what they do, for they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.'"

So what is the problem with their teaching, which makes it defiling yeast? As Chapter 15 has indicated, their hearts are far from God (v8) and Chapter 16 has begun with them testing God, demonstrating this very reality and with it the uncleanness that excludes them from participating in the New Exodus (Isa 35:8).

When the religious leaders demand a sign from heaven, Jesus responds by telling them they will have no other sign than the sign of Jonah (16:4). Matthew 16 presupposes the prior reference to this sign in Chapter 12 where it points to the resurrection of Christ (12:39-40). The sign from heaven, then, is one that demonstrates that, though Jesus will enter the realm of death, death will not be able to hold him.

IV. ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 16:13-20

1. The significance of Peter's confession

Following on from this, as we focus on Matt 16:13-20, it is significant that Jesus calls Peter Simon Bar-Jonah.²¹ Given the context this cannot be accidental and must presuppose a connection with the sign of Jonah.²² The scribes and Pharisees' insistence on some sort of conclusive proof is an expression of their continuing hostility. They don't want Jesus to be the Messiah. Here we are reminded of Matthew 2 with the 'sign from heaven' it involved (v2). When the magi come and speak of the king of the Jews being born – note the motif of Gentile-blessing Abrahamic rule again - it is not merely Herod but all Jerusalem that is disturbed (2:3). The religious leaders didn't want a Messiah and were complicit with Herod's murderous actions.

So now in Matt 16:13-20 we have an ironic contrast with the way the chapter began. The scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign *from heaven* and now we do have God revealing something *from heaven*.

Jesus initiates the interchange which follows by asking, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Given that Jesus commonly referred to himself as the Son of Man it is possible that the disciples simply heard Jesus to be asking, "Who do people say I am?" However, given Jesus' own understanding of the Son of Man, now shared by Matthew as well, we can sense that Jesus is asking the disciples to comment on his eschatological significance, of which he had given prior indications in earlier uses of "Son of Man".²³ Peter perceives that popular

views that Jesus is “one of the prophets”, whether John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or another (v14), are inadequate. Indeed, Peter, as the beneficiary of heavenly revelation, declares: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (v16).²⁴ Often in Scripture the phrase “the living God” is expressive of the need to treat God with great awe.²⁵ So at 26:63 we read: “But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the *living God*: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’” The soon-to-follow Mount of Transfiguration experience will deepen Peter’s sense of awe yet further, when he, along with James and John, will compare and contrast Jesus with Elijah and Moses, thus well and truly confirming Peter’s realisation that Jesus is greater than any prophet.²⁶ He is indeed the eschatological figure for whom the prophets prepared.²⁷

In the Old Testament, of course, “son of God” is predicated of both Israel (Exod 4:22; cf. Hos 11:1) and of the Davidic ruler (Ps 2:7 cf. 2 Sam 7:14). Our passage will conclude with Jesus strictly charging his disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah (v20). So it is evident from this that Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Son of the Living God” amounts to no more than recognising this fact, even though Jesus’ uniquely personal and intimate way of speaking of “my Father in heaven” (v17), hints that he is much more than just a humanly conceived Messiah – something the Mount of Transfiguration experience, with added stress on Jesus’ unique Sonship, will further indicate (17:1-13).²⁸

When Peter addresses Jesus as “the Son of the Living God” (v16) he may not have been aware of the fact - though Matthew quite possibly was - that the closest correspondent to this mode of description is the reference to “the sons of the living God” at Hosea 1:10.²⁹ There the concern is with the formation of a people of God, an Israel, where there is not an Israel.³⁰ Therefore, it may well be Matthew’s intent that we would see, in the confession “the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus as the embodiment of the renewed Israel.³¹

2. Ekklēsia and the prospect of a renewed Israel

It is crucial to recognise that in 16:13-20 we are dealing with the formation of the renewed Israel. As Via rightly observes: “While he [sc. Jesus] was being rejected by the old Israel he was taking steps to raise up a new one. Surely Jesus had no less insight than the prophets who knew that hope rested only with the remnant, the Israel within Israel.”³² Peter’s very recognition of Jesus as Messiah naturally raises the question of over whom the Messiah will reign.³³ Messiah and Messianic community go hand-in-hand.

The formation of this Israel within Israel, the renewed true Israel, is integral to the understanding of what Jesus is saying when he declares that he will build his *ekklēsia* on the rock (ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν). We are well-advised to avoid using the word “church” at this point and to seek to recover Jesus’ original meaning.³⁴ Grammarians have rightly insisted that usage rather than etymology is foundational to this enterprise. The classical meaning is that of “assembly” or “gathering”, with the *ekklēsia* only existing when it is actually assembled, and in the Graeco-Roman world the primary manifestations of this were non-religious, an example of which is found at Acts 19:32, 39, 41.³⁵ In Athens the *ekklēsia* was the popular assembly of the full citizens of the *polis*, summoned by a specially appointed council, the *Boule*. As Ward observes: “[I]n ordinary usage, *ekklesia* meant the assembly, and not the body of people involved. The *Boule* existed even when it was not actually in session, but there was a new *ekklesia* every time they assembled. The *demos* (people) assembled in an *ekklesia*, but when they acted, it was said to be the action of the *demos*, not the *ekklesia*.”³⁶

Among the hundreds of pesher texts found at Qumran we find the following pesher on Psalm 37: “the priest, the Teacher of [Righteousness,... whom God] established to build for himself the congregation...” (4QpPs 37.III.16).³⁷ As I. Howard Marshall points out, this striking parallel to Matt 16:18 involves the use of *edah* for “congregation.”³⁸ Given this, we should not be over-hasty in assuming, as many have done, that *ekklēsia* as used at 16:18 and in the New Testament generally represents a translation of *qahal*, one of the two terms used in the Old Testament to denote the assembly of God’s people.³⁹

The word *edah* is the other major word used in the Hebrew Old Testament to denote the gathered people of God, but in the LXX this is normally rendered by *synagōgē* (συναγωγή) and never by *ekklēsia*.⁴⁰ Further, the LXX usually uses *ekklēsia* - but sometimes *synagōgē* - to render the Hebrew *qahal*.⁴¹ So it is understandable why many have presupposed that *qahal* rather than *edah* lies behind New Testament usage of *ekklēsia*.

However, a one-to-one correspondence of *ekklēsia* with *qahal* contravenes New Testament evidence. For while “the primary use of the word *ekklēsia* as gathering predominates overwhelmingly in the NT”, there are occasions in the New Testament when this word is used in an extended manner “to designate the persons who compose that gathering, whether they are assembled or not.”⁴² In addition to Matt 16:18, there are a significant number of references which arguably bear such an extended sense: Acts 8:3 (cf. v1), 9:31; 20:17, 28; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32; Philippians 3:6; Colossians 1:18, 24; 1 Timothy 3:5,

15; and James 5:14. Contra O'Brien, it is misleading to say that "no theological constructs are made on the basis" of such extended uses.⁴³ Matt 16:18 itself is heavily theological in its deliberate employment of *ekklēsia* and this is also particularly the case in Ephesians and Colossians.

O'Brien argues that in Ephesians and Colossians *ekklēsia* does not refer to the universal church but presupposes a heavenly assembly.⁴⁴ This position is somewhat circular, since O'Brien presupposes that the notion of an actual gathering is necessarily integral to every use of *ekklēsia*. O'Brien rightly observes that in both these epistles believers are depicted as being raised with Christ and therefore as already being situated in the heavenly places. O'Brien reasons that Christ's *ekklēsia* is therefore not merely an earthly but also a heavenly reality. The plain fact of the matter, however, is that there is no text using *ekklēsia* in Ephesians or Colossians or anywhere else in Paul's writings or the New Testament, apart from Hebrews 12:23, which either explicitly refers to a heavenly gathering or even uses imagery suggestive of this.⁴⁵ It must further be noted that in Ephesians every use of *ekklēsia* is associated with two connected conceptions – the lordship of Christ (fullness of divine rule) and his united people (1:22 cf. "his body"; "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way"; 3:10 cf. v6, 11 and 2:11-22; 3:21 cf. vv14-20; 5:23-33 [6x], cf. stress on headship of Christ and note the all-important "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"). Consequently, if we accept O'Brien's reasonable assumption that "gathering" is integral to all New Testament uses of *ekklēsia*, then with respect to these extended uses the focus is not on the gathering per se, whether earthly or heavenly, but on *the people* the Lord has gathered together and united.

As Clowney expresses it, "This is the church which is the people of God and the body of Christ without qualification (Mt. 16:18; 1 Pt. 2:9; Eph. 1:22, 23). It is the church as God alone can see it, the whole company of those who have been, are now, or ever will be gathered to God in Christ."⁴⁶ David Peterson proposes that as early Christians used *ekklēsia* "the theological reference is primarily to 'those whom the Lord Jesus has gathered to himself', rather than to 'those who gather in his name'."⁴⁷ As Peterson also reasons, given that Matt 16:18 speaks of "my *ekklēsia*" and that the formation of this presupposes Jesus' resurrection and exaltation, there are solid grounds for finding the locus of the people whom Jesus gathers in heaven.⁴⁸

The extended sense of *ekklēsia* we have found above cannot be explained either by classical Greek usage of this term, nor by its use in the LXX to render either *qahal* or *edah*.⁴⁹ Nor do we find such an extended use in Greek-speaking Judaism of the first century. Of Josephus' 48 uses of this word, 18 are LXX

citations. All of his uses describe a gathering, whether religious, political or spontaneous. Philo's uses involve 25 quotes from the LXX and five which follow the classical Greek meaning of *ekklēsia*.⁵⁰ Both Philo and Josephus used *ekklēsia* quite differently from the term *synagōgē*, which was used to refer to a building and occasionally for a local group of Jews.⁵¹

Matthew's Gospel is chronologically late compared to many New Testament writings that use *ekklēsia*. Given such evidence as the Qumran parallel cited above and assuming the authenticity of the saying at Matt 16:18 and its influence on early Christian understandings of *ekklēsia*, then the extended sense of *ekklēsia* found in the New Testament is readily explicable. For at 16:18 'gathering' is not a state but a process, the process of gathering a Messianic people.

Arguably, in using *ekklēsia* at 16:18, Matthew is providing a Greek translation for the Aramaic word uttered by Jesus, which perhaps, as Schmidt proposed, was *kenishta*, a word not only able to render either *qahal* or *edah*, but one that could also carry either the sense of a local gathering or of the community in its totality.⁵² Whatever Aramaic term Jesus used, Matthew's use of *ekklēsia*, as with New Testament usage of this word in general, is unlikely to have taken overly much notice of the LXX use of *ekklēsia* to render *qahal*, given the substantial overlap in meaning and application of the *qahal* and *edah*.⁵³ Indeed, as Hort recognised, at Acts 20:28, where we read "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood", we have an appropriation of Psalm 74:2: "Remember *the people* you purchased of old, the tribe of your inheritance, whom you redeemed." Significantly, here *ekklēsia* is used for *edah* in preference to *synagōgē* which is used in the LXX to translate it.⁵⁴

Use of the term *ekklēsia* rather than *synagōgē* does not constitute an out-and-out rejection of the latter term, nor of Jewish worship, since James 2:2 uses this very term to denote the Christian congregation. However, we have already noted how Greek-speaking Judaism tended to confine this term to refer to the Jewish meeting place, the place for Jewish worship. This building orientation, along with a Jewish law orientation, added to the much stronger people orientation of *ekklēsia* in Greek-speaking Judaism seems to provide a reasonable explanation for the New Testament's preference for *ekklēsia*, while the Jews themselves may have rejected *ekklēsia* in order to distinguish Jewish from secular assemblies.⁵⁵

At Matt 18:17 *ekklēsia* carries the normal connotation of gathering, in this case the assembly of Jesus' disciples. Also, at 16:18, though the focus is on the

community of people Jesus will gather, rather than a meeting or gathering *per se*, the association with gathering remains.⁵⁶ Clowney comments:

When Jesus spoke of his 'assembly', the associations evoked by *ἐκκλησία* or *qāhāl* were 'the great day of the assembly' at Sinai, the feast-day assemblies at the temple, and national assemblies of covenant renewal. They were not the associations of a modern interpreter who might think of an assembly as a New England town meeting, or as a gathering of students at a secondary school to hear the principal's announcements.⁵⁷

Gathering is associated with the eschatological community Jesus will develop at an earlier, telling point in Matthew's Gospel. John the Baptist lambasted the Pharisees and Sadducees and told them they were not entitled to regard themselves as true Israelites, as children of Abraham (3:9). Using apocalyptic harvesting imagery descriptive of ultimate judgment, John foretold how the Messiah would develop a true Israel, an Israel within Israel; that he would *gather* (συνάγω) 'his wheat into the barn' (3:12). Jesus picks up this very imagery in his Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30). We read:

The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?"

"An enemy did this," he replied.

The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up/gather them (συνάγω)?"

"No," he answered, "because while you are pulling up/gathering (συνάγω) the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect/gather (συνάγω) the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather (συνάγω) the wheat and bring it into my barn" (vv27-30).

Jesus explains:

The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels/messengers.⁵⁸ As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels/messengers, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin, and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear" (13:39-43).

Parallel to this stands 24:30-31: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels/messengers with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather (ἐπισυνάγω) his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

When Jesus first calls his disciples he uses a thoroughly compatible image, when he tells them that he will make them “fishers of men” (4:19), the meaning of which he elaborates in the Parable of the Net (13:47-50). When Jesus declares, “The harvest is great!” (9:37) he is indicating to his disciples that this is the time to gather in the eschatological community. The same inaugurated eschatology is in effect when the resurrected Jesus sends out his disciples to do the very thing it is said angels/messengers will do in 24:31, to gather Jesus’ elect from one end of the heavens to the other, to gather the wheat into the barn (28:18-20).

Given this wider contextual input it is plain that when Jesus speaks of building his *ekklēsia* he is speaking about the development of the eschatological community he will gather as Messiah, a universal entity, and in the first instance this is an Israel within Israel into which, as the Great Commission implies, disciples from the nations will be engrafted.⁵⁹ The *ekklēsia* of 16:18 is therefore universal in nature, though as 18:17 evidences, Jesus’ disciples are to expect local manifestations of this eschatological community. Howard Marshall points out that, whereas at Qumran it is God who creates a congregation for himself, here it is Jesus, “apparently himself taking the place of God.” This eschatological community, as Howard Marshall recognises, corresponds to the concept of the remnant and the “saints of the Most High” so intimately associated with the Son of Man in Daniel 7.⁶⁰

Clowney maintains, “Jesus promised that he would build his assembly by his death and resurrection.”⁶¹ Indeed, Matthew 16 indicates that Jesus’ *ekklēsia* is made up of all whom death (“the gates of Hades”) has unsuccessfully sought to overcome.⁶² Physical death cannot deny any disciple participation in the *ekklēsia* Jesus is envisaging, for indeed they are the true children of Abraham, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is God not of the dead but of the living (22:32). But, as Matt 16:24-25 indicate, all true disciples of Jesus are called upon to ‘die’/lose their lives’ every day of their lives. Their experience of the presence of the risen Lord with them (cf. 28:20) explains why death cannot get the better of them. So they, too, are very much part of the *ekklēsia* Jesus is building, remembering, as the end-of-the-Age-ingathering texts above demonstrate, that the primary face of this eschatological Messianic community, is that which is to be found and gathered on earth.⁶³

In Matthew’s account, as distinct from those of Mark and Luke, the addition of “son of the living God”, whatever side-allusion to Hosea 1:10 might be involved, does serve to anchor Jesus’ Messianic identity in the Davidic covenant where the son promised to David is described as God’s son (2 Sam 7:14). It is significant that immediately before this, Yahweh declares that it is this

son who “will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” This is of added significance as the only Old Testament reference that speaks of the Messiah *building* anything.⁶⁴ Consequently, there are excellent reasons for seeing in the Messiah’s building of the *ekklēsia* on the rock an analogy with the building of the temple on mount Zion.

The association of Messiah and building, given Matthew’s particular stress on Jesus as “son of the living God”, quite definitely recalls 2 Samuel 7 and implies that *ekklēsia* is the temple. Removing all doubt is the presence of precisely the same association of terms at 26:63, after the charge is brought against Jesus that he said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (26:61), the high priest directly challenges Jesus, “I charge you under oath by *the living God*: Tell us if you are *the Christ, the Son of God*.”⁶⁵ Further, as Robinson observes, “The most plausible interpretation of the logion is that Jesus was writing off Herod’s temple (whether or not he saw himself as its destroyer) and was speaking of an eschatological community soon to be established (even before, maybe, the temple of Herod disappeared).”⁶⁶

Here Robinson draws a parallel with the Qumran covenanters who saw their community as superseding the Jerusalem temple.

The appropriateness of stressing that the *ekklēsia* is the eschatological temple is supported by probable allusions to Jonah 2 where Jonah, while trapped in the realm of death, stresses his longing for the temple (Jon 2:4, 7).⁶⁷ Remembering that the sign of Jonah points to resurrection, and returning to the 2 Samuel 7 background we also should not miss the language of verse 12 where Yahweh promises, “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you”, language which Paul evidently takes up in Romans 1:3-4 and applies to the actual physical resurrection of Jesus. The contextual stress on Jesus’ resurrection is very pronounced and we will need to bear this in mind as we look more closely at the intent of the imagery of Matt 16:18.

The association of temple-building with conquest is well-established in both ancient Near Eastern and Biblical thought. It is apparent also in 16:18. But temples are built typically by kings who honour the deity for having enabled them to conquer their enemies. Jesus promises to build his temple as he looks ahead to his resurrection. This event is the ultimate act of conquest. Building a temple – the *ekklēsia* – is a fitting response. But many temples, including the Jerusalem temple, have been built only later to be destroyed. By contrast, so utterly conclusive is resurrection victory that there is no force, not even death itself, that will be able to destroy this temple.

One other crucial linkage is that of the *ekklēsia* of 16:18 with revelation, the Word of God. It is of great significance that Jesus' declaration at 16:18 is an immediate response to the imparting of revelation by God to Peter and that the giving of the keys of the kingdom to Peter (see below) is concerned with the proper discerning use and application of the law, as fulfilled in the teaching of Christ. Indeed, O'Brien points out in his survey of LXX uses of *ekklēsia*, that of particular importance are those occasions when Israel assembles to hear God's Word.⁶⁸ The very fact that Jesus builds his *ekklēsia* "on" or "before" a mass of rock – possibly with the disciples eyeing Mount Hermon as he speaks – leads to natural associations with the pivotal assemblies at Mount Sinai and the later three times a year assemblies on Mount Zion.⁶⁹

3. *Peter and the rock*

What is the "rock" upon which Jesus builds his *ekklēsia*? The structure of 16:17-19, as recognised by Robinson, emphasises the central role of Peter⁷⁰:

Jesus replied,

- (a) *'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah,*
 - b) *for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood,*
 - c) *but by my Father in heaven.*
- (a) *And I tell you that you are Peter,*
 - b) *and on this rock I will build my church,*
 - c) *and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*
- (a) *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven;*
 - b) *whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,*
 - d) *and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'*

Added to this, the obvious wordplay between this formidable mass of rock, *petra*, and the naming of Simon as *Petros*, a single stone or rock, strongly points to Peter himself being identified with the *petra* on which the *ekklēsia* is constructed. Indeed, Maier observes that today there is a broad consensus shared by liberal and conservative theologians the promise of Matt 16:18 does apply to Peter as a person.⁷¹

The combined presence of four key elements – revelation, divine blessing, the giving of a name and a promise concerning the future of God's people – is also to be found in the naming of Abram as Abraham (Gen 17:1-5). It would be rash, however, to elevate Peter to the ranks of being a new Abraham. Rather, we are to understand that what happens at Caesarea Philippi is a salvation-historical event of commensurate importance and one which implicitly coordinates Messianic rule with Abrahamic realities and expectations.

It is fascinating to compare and contrast the Peter of Matt 16:16 with the way in which Matthew presents him in the rest of his Gospel. Aside from mentioning his own calling to follow Jesus (9:9), Matthew only accords individual attention to two disciples: Judas Iscariot and Peter. But in every context in which the spotlight falls on Peter, with the exception of the reference to the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (8:14), *Peter is especially characterised by his lack of discernment*. It is precisely the discernment Peter displays at 16:16 which is so out of character and which draws from Jesus the recognition that this is not Peter himself who is speaking but Peter as the recipient of divine revelation (v17).⁷² At 14:33 the disciples worshiped Jesus as the Son of God, following Jesus' walking on water and the events associated with that.⁷³ But what makes Peter's confession such a turning point is that, in making it, he is sharply discriminating between other options for understanding who Jesus is (vv13-15). Contrast this with Peter's otherwise constant failure to properly appreciate the significance of Jesus for the situation or issue Peter finds himself confronting (17:4, 25; 19:27; 26:70, 72, 74) and which typically elicits either gentle or stern reproof from Jesus (14:31; 15:16; 16:23; 17:25bf; 18:22f; 26:34 [cf. v75]).

Perhaps this retrospective Matthean focus on Peter presupposes his later prominence among Jesus' disciples. However, Matthew's Peter is primarily a skilful teaching device for drawing readers into that which was experienced by the disciples, enabling them to sense, through their identification with the very human Peter, their own lack of discernment and their need, as disciples, to depend utterly upon Jesus as their Lord and teacher (cf. 28:18-20). For everything Jesus says to undiscerning Peter seems to be just as applicable to all disciples till "the end of the Age."⁷⁴ On this basis there is a reasonable presumption in approaching 16:18-19 that what Jesus says to Peter is also applicable to all disciples.

Quite apart from the above considerations there are additional factors to bear in mind in assessing the relative importance of Peter:

1. The earliest historical interpretation identified all regenerate Christians as the *petra*. Mantey finds that the fathers of the second and third centuries repeatedly expressed their view that in calling Peter 'Rock' (*Petros*) Jesus was indicating that all genuine Christians are 'living rocks' like Peter built on the foundation of Christ himself.⁷⁵ So Origen (185-254) remarks in his commentary on Matthew:

For a rock is every disciple of Christ... but if you suppose that upon that one Peter only the whole Church is built by God, what would you say about John, the son of thunder, or each one of the Apostles?...Were the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by the Lord to Peter only, and will no other of the

blessed receive them... For all bear the surname of 'rock' (petros) who are imitators of Christ... But also as members of Christ, deriving their surname from him, they are called Christians.⁷⁶

2. Patristic writers expressed variant understandings of Matt 16:18-19.⁷⁷ Peter is the rock for Ambrose, Ambrosiaster, Asterius, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Cyprian, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great.⁷⁸ For Chrysostom, Basil of Seleucia and Cyril of Jerusalem it is Peter's confession.⁷⁹ For John Cassian, Hilary of Poitiers and Cyril of Alexandria it is Peter's faith. In the minds of Augustine and Theodoret to identify the rock with Peter's confession is to identify it with Jesus himself. For Cassiodorus, Jerome, John of Damascus and Eusebius it is Jesus and this view would seem to be very early, being implicit in the Shepherd of Hermas.⁸⁰
3. Jesus consistently calls Peter "Simon."⁸¹ Paul calls Peter *Cephas* ("Rock") on a number of occasions (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14) which is the Greek form of an underlying Aramaic word translated as *Petros* (John 1:42). Significantly, Paul groups Peter with James and John as one of those reputed to be pillars of the church (Gal 2:9). Aside from whatever Matt 16:18-19 might indicate, the fact is that there is no text anywhere else in the New Testament in which it is conclusively stated or even indicated that either Peter himself or Peter as representative of the disciples is to be considered the foundation on which the church is built. The closest the New Testament comes to this is in stating that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:19-20).
4. Some speculate that Jesus originally said these words in Aramaic and that he would have used the same word *ke'pha* (Cephas) for both Simon's name and the rock on which he would build his church.⁸² If it had been essential for Greek readers to understand that Peter and the rock are identical then we might reasonably have expected further elucidation to this effect. This is not the case. In the extant Greek text the terms *petros* and *petra* are not equivalents. The word *petra* denotes that upon which Jesus builds his *ekklēsia* and whereas *Petros* consistently describes a small rock or stone, especially projectiles thrown at enemies, *petra* consistently refers to "a mass or cluster of rocks such as a cliff", "a huge boulder or bedrock."⁸³ For those who still see an identity relation between Peter and the rock there is still recourse to the argument that *petra* is a feminine noun and therefore requiring modification to the masculine *Petros* as the appellation for the man Peter.

Given that the Caesarea Philippi incident is such a clear turning point in all the Synoptic Gospels, it is plain that Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah is of

immense significance in salvation-history. Given what we have already observed above, insofar as Peter himself is to be thought of as being foundational to the formation of the *ekklēsia*, this cannot involve any institutionalisation of a Petrine office nor the according to Peter of a unique role denied to other disciples.⁸⁴ So, for example, it is mistaken to construe verse 19 as indicating that the *ekklēsia* is built on Peter as “the guarantor and authorized interpreter of Jesus’ teachings.”⁸⁵

Rather, what Jesus says to Peter in verses 18-19 apply to him as representative of the other disciples and/or as the first in salvation-history to clearly discriminate Jesus’ identity as Messiah from other prevalent views.

There are those who take the “rock” of our passage as being Jesus, though Jesus’ role as builder seems to speak against this view.⁸⁶ But, assuming the rock is identifiable with Peter at some level, this still allows for a number of possible nuances: (1) Peter alone; (2) Peter as representative of the disciples; (3) Peter as having a primacy in salvation-history; (4) the truth confessed by Peter (that Jesus is the Messiah); or (5) Peter’s faith.

There seems to be no compelling exegetical consideration that would allow us to definitively determine which of these nuances was in fact intended. But does it matter? At the end of the day, whether directly or indirectly, the connection of Peter with the rock is only by way of underscoring the salvation-historical importance of his discriminating declaration that Jesus is the Messiah.⁸⁷ This is so whether Peter in some sense stands alone as the first to voice this or whether he speaks as representative of the disciples or whether our immediate focus should be on his faith or confession to Jesus’ identity as Messiah.⁸⁸

Now, bearing in mind the way Jesus associates Peter as Simon Bar-Jonah with the sign of Jonah, observe that the sign of Jonah already conveys the idea that death cannot prevail against Jesus (cf. 12:38-40). Arguably, in Jonah 2:1b, 5-6 we have strikingly similar imagery to that employed at Matt 16:18: “In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry... The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God.”

When Jesus calls Peter “Simon Bar-Jonah” he probably has in mind that Peter’s confession marks him as a member of the true Israel ruled by its Messiah and, as such, this means that though Peter, like Jonah, will enter the realm of

death, he also, like Jesus, will find that death is not able to prevail and will rise victorious.⁸⁹ Immediately after this revelation from heaven at Caesarea Philippi, the site of the seemingly bottomless Cave of Pan, part of Mount Hermon, popularly thought to be the gates of Hades, Jesus warns his disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Christ.⁹⁰ His next words make it plain why this must be so. A correct understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah is contrary to popular perspectives. As Jesus explains, it is necessary for the Messiah to suffer and be executed, that is, to enter the realm of death. It is implicit that Jesus is the Messianic Suffering Servant of Yahweh, the embodiment of the true Israel.

Then Jesus goes on to say that what is true of himself is also true of his followers, the true Israel, which he builds on the truth of his identity as the Messiah. Like the Messiah his followers too must enter the realm of death.

4. The inability of the gates of Hades to prevail

It is with this in mind that we are able to appreciate what Jesus is saying when he says “the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”⁹¹ There are some commentators who have not understood how the gates of Hades can be thought of as attacking the church, as “it” is normally understood. The logic is that “gates” don’t move.⁹² Some have sought to justify the notion of an assault by the gates of Hades by proposing that Hades is not merely the realm of the dead but also a realm ruled by demonic powers.⁹³ According to this logic, to speak of the gates of Hades attacking the church is to presuppose an assault launched on it by hellish demonic forces.⁹⁴

There is Biblical warrant for treating “gates of Hades” as an instance of metonymy.⁹⁵ In Genesis 22:17 Yahweh promises Abraham: “your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.” This promise is repeated at Genesis 24:60: “And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, ‘May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.’” The desire expressed here is not that the Abrahamic offspring be able to seize the gates and the gates alone. The thought is of vanquishing their enemies, with “the gates of their foes” serving as a metonym for “their foes.” In the same way, when David calls upon Yahweh as the one who lifts him up “from the gates of death (*maveth*)” (Ps 9:13) he has in mind the realm of death and not merely the gates as such. Similar imagery is employed at Job 17:16 where we read: “Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into the dust?” Here

“bars of Sheol” is basically the same image as “gates of Sheol” and the parallelism with “the dust” indicates that it is a metonym for the realm of death.

At Isaiah 3:26 we read of Zion that “her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she [Zion] shall sit on the ground.” The parallelism of ‘gates’ and ‘Zion’ indicates what is self-evident, that the mourning to be experienced is not something only applicable at the point of entrance to Jerusalem. This reference is additionally significant because of the way it personifies the gates of the city, something that Jesus also effectively does. At Nahum 3:13 Nineveh is prophesied against with the dire words: “The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has devoured your bars.” While the visualisation of open gates is integral to the power of this image, the intent is to indicate that the whole land is at the mercy of the Assyrian enemies.

In the Qumranic *Temple Scroll* the phrase “all your gates” denotes the whole community (41:11; 42:14; 45:15; 50:12).⁹⁶ Also, in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* found at Qumran one text likens coming to the “gates of death” to coming to a fortified city (6:24).⁹⁷

If “gates of Hades” is taken to be an instance of metonymy this may get around the problem of visualising mobile gates but this attempt does not succeed because in Biblical thought the “gates of Hades” simply refers to the realm of death and there is no solid justification for seeing it as the sphere of demonic power.⁹⁸

Lewis summarises various relevant traditions concerning the gates of Hades in both Greek and Roman thought⁹⁹:

1. Homer describes dying as passing the gates of Hades.
2. Homer speaks of the conduct of some as being more hateful to him than the gates of Hades.
3. Tartarus is described as having gates of iron and a threshold of bronze.
4. Plato wrote of a monumental gateway (*propylea*, modelled on the Propylea to the Acropolis of Athens) with iron bars and a key which led to Pluto, the god of the underworld.
5. A pseudonymous Orphic poem speaks of the unbroken gates of Hades.
6. Aristotle is said to have likened beans to the gates of Hades.
7. Aeschylus describes the experience of death as the gates of Hades.
8. Euripides describes a phantom coming from the gates of darkness where Hades dwells.
9. Euripides describes a dying person beholding the gates of death.
10. Theocritus addressed Artemas as one who moves the adamantine at the door of Hades.

11. The Roman poet Virgil depicts a triple-walled castle that is fronted by a huge gate and pillars of adamantine incapable of being uprooted by humans. The never-sleeping Tisiphone guards this gate day and night.
12. Ovid spoke of closed doors of adamantine standing before the accursed Place.
13. Propertius states that prayers are incapable of opening the gates of darkness once the dead have passed under the rule of hell. The ways are blocked with bars of adamantine.
14. Sirach speaks of a cry coming “from the gates of the world of the dead.” (Sir 51:9).

Lewis (350) makes the point that in all these instances “gates are means of entry and exit. In none of them do they equal militant powers.” All other New Testament references to “gates” (*pylē*) are of the same nature (Matt 7:13-14//Luke 13:24; Matt 7:12; Acts 3:10; 9:24; 12:10; Heb 13:12). Similarly, in the Old Testament, “gates” are also typically merely means of entrance and exit.

As the above indicates, there are sizeable problems with the view that conceives of the church as the aggressor, assaulting Hades, bursting through its gates, invading the territory of Hades and rescuing people from the realm of death.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the immediately preceding imagery employed at Matt 16:18 poses a further problem for this popular position. For in the very same breath Jesus has just spoken of building his church on a rock. So if we continue with the imagery of the church as a building then it is also very strange to think of a building moving to attack Hades.¹⁰¹ But this position is also problematic for the verb used (*κατισχύω*) does not favour a passive sense but an active one.¹⁰²

We find this verb used on two other occasions in the New Testament. Jesus warns his disciples, “But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength (*καταξιωθῆτε*) to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36; NIV; similarly NRSV; cf. Living Translation: “that you may be strong enough.”). The same verb appears again at Luke 23:23 where we read: “But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed (*κατίσχυον*).

The idea is of an overpowering strength and this is the most common way this verb is used in the LXX where it occurs more than 80 times.

The thought is not of the gates of Hades unable to resist an attack, but of them not being able to overpower those of whom it seeks to get the better. It is possible that an allusion to Isaiah 28:16 is involved, buttressing the certain grounding of Matt 16:18 in 2 Samuel 7.¹⁰³ But, if so, in Matthew 16 there is no obvious effort to engage with the context of Isaiah 28:16, other than to invoke the basic ideas of a foundation stone, with possible temple connotations, and

the threat posed by the realm of death.¹⁰⁴ Rather, it is the context of Matt 16:18 itself which provides the basis for understanding how “the gates of Hades” can be thought of as threatening to overpower the true Israel (*ekklēsia*) while remaining immobile. For, in the context, we see that Jesus’ entrance into the realm of death and the entering of his followers into the same realm, taking up their crosses daily and losing their lives for his sake, is precisely the point of what Jesus is saying. Though they enter the realm of death, death is not able to overpower them, not able to hold them.¹⁰⁵ As Lewis rightly concludes from his analysis, “In keeping with the linguistic data, ‘gates of Hades’ is to be considered a figure of speech for death, which cannot keep the Christ imprisoned.”¹⁰⁶ Jesus will rise and those who lose their lives for Jesus’ sake will save them.

So far I have assumed that it is the church which is being attacked by the gates of Hades. But there is some ambiguity concerning the antecedent of the pronoun αὐτῆς. “It” can refer to either the “rock” or “the church.”¹⁰⁷ The notion of death not being able to prevail against “it”, involving as it does immortality or resurrection, rightly indicates that “it”, whatever the antecedent, is personal.¹⁰⁸ The very image of Jesus *building* his *ekklēsia* on a rock in the face of the threat posed by the gates of Hades speaks strongly in favour of the *ekklēsia* being the antecedent. Jesus is focused on ensuring his *ekklēsia* will be so solid and so secure as to withstand this threat. Arguably, the context best supports this view, being concerned with the inability of death to prevail over Jesus, following his death, and over his disciples, following the loss of their lives as they take up their crosses daily to follow their Lord.

Evidently, then, Jesus envisages the church he is building, the true Israel, entering the realm of death. But, like himself, his true disciples will discover that death is not able to overpower them and that in the very losing of their lives they will experience the power of Jesus’ resurrection life.

In short, whether we understand the gates as the adamant barriers that are normally understood to destroy any hope of escape or think more broadly of the realm of death being a supposedly inescapable reality, Jesus’ promise is that those who make up the renewed Israel he is building, like himself, after entering the realm of death, will rise to new life.

5. *The keys and binding and loosing*

In verse 19 Jesus declares that he will give “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” to Peter. Given the prior stress on Jesus’ Messianic status, there is warrant in seeing an allusion to Isaiah 22:22, though there is no apparent

attempt to exploit the context of that text.¹⁰⁹ The basic point is that these keys open up complete access to the sphere of divine rule vested in Messiah Jesus.

In verses 18 and 19 there is an implicit contrast between the gates of hell and the gates of the kingdom of heaven. While the latter is not mentioned explicitly, the giving of “the keys” indicates the validity of this contrast.¹¹⁰ Jesus has already indicated that his Messianic rule, the very presence of the kingdom of heaven, will ensure that death is not able to snuff out the community of God’s people that he will build. That is, he controls the gates of Hades, and this image closely corresponds to that which we find in Revelation 1:8 where we see Jesus holding “the key of Death and Hades.” As the Messianic king, Jesus also possesses the key that will enable his people to experience the dynamic rule of God. Again, we are being plugged into basic New Testament theology, it being held in prospect that Jesus, as the risen Lord, will continue to exercise his rule through his irrepressible *ekklēsia*.¹¹¹ The logic of the passage requires us to see Peter, the immediately envisaged future key-holder, as representing Jesus’ *ekklēsia*, as confirmed by the parallel text at Matt 18:18. For here, assigned to the *ekklēsia* itself, is the right to exercise the power of binding and loosing that goes with the utilisation of these keys.

The operation of the keys that unlock God’s dynamic rule involves ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’. What does Jesus have in mind?

One idea is that Jesus is speaking about actions concerning demons,¹¹² but while the notion of binding demons is comprehensible, the idea of loosing demons seems absurd.

Another attempt to understand this idiom is by treating this language as equivalent to that used at John 20:23: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” According to this view, at Matt 16:19 Jesus is speaking about the authority to either retain or forgive sins.¹¹³

The best approach is to understand ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ against the background of rabbinic interpretation and application of the law. Many have explained that ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ for the rabbis amounted to ‘forbidding’ and ‘permitting.’¹¹⁴ Powell provides further clarification, explaining: “Jewish rabbis ‘bound’ the law when they determined that a commandment was applicable to a particular situation, and they ‘loosed’ the law when they determined that a word of scripture (while eternally valid) was not applicable under certain specific circumstances.”¹¹⁵

It is crucial to read 16:19 in line with Jesus' profound statement at 5:19: "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

The word rendered "breaks" in the NIV is λύω, the very word rendered "loose" at 16:19. But observe also these additional points of contact: (1) concern with the application of the law; (2) the phrase "kingdom of heaven"; and (3) a movement from earth to heaven with heaven acting in a corresponding fashion to what is done on earth. At first sight, it might appear that 5:19 is not relevant because it might otherwise involve a contradiction: Peter being given authority to 'break' a commandment. But here we must recall that, not long before 16:18, Jesus has confronted the Pharisees and teachers of the law over this very issue of halakah, the breaking of 'the law.' For in 15:1-20 Jesus himself breaks the religious leaders' 'law', which includes their veneration of oral tradition, precisely because of his commitment to 'bind' all of God's revealed commands in Scripture. Consequently, the authority Jesus gives to Peter to 'bind' and 'loose' is authority to discriminate between what is God's will, as revealed in Scripture, and what is not. It is understood that Peter must uphold and apply the former, but may, like his master, choose to break the latter, notwithstanding how venerated it might be in religious tradition. Similarly, the authority to 'loose' may involve opposing interpretations of Scripture that do not represent their true fulfilment in Christ (cf. 5:17-18).

Much of Matthew's Gospel has been devoted to contrasting the way Jesus applies ('binds') or does not apply ('looses') the law to particular circumstances and the way in which the religious leaders did this.¹¹⁶ The question raised by the Pharisees at Matt 19:3 is a case in point: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Here a clear contrast is forged between the way the Pharisees apply and don't apply the law and the way Jesus does it. Indeed, Powell's survey of Matthean texts highlights two truths which stand in tension with each other. If God's will is to be discerned and obeyed then the Scriptures must be properly bound and loosed. However, as the oft-highlighted contrast between Jesus and religious leaders demonstrates, "the scriptures are often bound when they should be loosed, and loosed when they should be bound, with the result that God's will is not discerned or obeyed."¹¹⁷

Powell, recognising that "the church's authority is grounded here in its acclamation of Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God'", astutely observes that it is as the church interprets God's will rightly that it "opens the door for God's will to be done", that is, enables "God's rule to become a lived reality."¹¹⁸

The inability of the gates of Hades to overcome the church, presupposes resurrection life, and it is precisely through the teaching of everything he has commanded (involving decisions as to applicability and non-applicability) that Jesus, as the Risen Lord, ever-present with his disciples, exercises his dynamic rule and builds the true Israel, into which all Gentile disciples are incorporated.

The language of binding and loosing is taken up almost verbatim in Matt 18:18.¹¹⁹ In that context, Marcus maintains that this language of binding and loosing “obviously refers to excluding from and accepting back into the community”, an idiom he finds occasionally attested in Jewish traditions.¹²⁰ However, he argues that the context of 16:19 is different and favours the halakic interpretation there, given the contextual stress on revelation in Matthew 16.¹²¹ Actually, there is no hiatus. In Matthew 18 the very instructions for dealing with the sin of a brother are circled by parables that counter any tendency to apply the principles of verses 15-20 in a harsh, legalistic or judgmental fashion, more typical of the ‘righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law’ (5:20).¹²² So it is implicit in the very authority assigned to the church to bind and loose that in any given situation it will decide what aspects of Jesus’ teaching are applicable or non-applicable.¹²³ This is not, contra Marcus, limited to the mere decision as to whether a brother should be excluded or accepted back, which is not definitional of ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’ but merely of contextual significance.¹²⁴

An illuminating cross-reference in the Gospel is provided by Matt 23:13: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.” It is as those who sit in the seat of Moses, yet fail to lift a finger to lift the burdens that they place on people through their strict, excluding interpretations of the law (cf. vv1-4), that they lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. By contrast, binding and loosing at 16:19 and 18:18 has to do with determining in a far more flexible and compassionate manner, while upholding everything Jesus’ commanded, what aspects of the law-fulfilling teaching of King Jesus apply to the lives of people in any given set of circumstances.

The use of future perfect passive tenses at 16:19 has led to the insistence of some that the only proper translation is along the following lines: “Whatever you bind upon earth *will have been bound* (ἔσται δεδεμένον) in heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth *will have been loosed* (ἔσται λελυμένον) in heaven” (Translation A).¹²⁵

According to this rendering, events in heaven precede events on earth. By contrast, the NIV, while acknowledging the validity of this translation in a footnote, presents the more standard translation: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Translation B).¹²⁶

Following Mantey’s argumentation against Cadbury, many have expressed their confidence that Translation A must be *the* correct view.¹²⁷ It is certainly a valid translation. Mantey notes the LXX for Genesis 30:33 employs the same construction and maintains this should be rendered: “Everyone that is not speckled or spotted among the goats...if found with me *will have been stolen* by me.”¹²⁸ Mantey does not hold back in stating the conclusion of his research:

With all the information that is now available—the witness of many recent translations, the views of an increasing number of scholarly commentators, the unanimous testimony of Greek grammarians, the findings of Dr. Dayton in his survey of Koine Greek sources—it should become apparent that the literal translation of the future perfect tense is the only accurate rendering. No longer are there grounds to claim that in general clauses the perfect may be translated as a future. No longer is it reasonable for any translator to fail to translate the future perfect passive in Matthew 16:19 as an English future perfect passive.

Oh, that it was so simple! Mantey begins his case by citing Burton, Gildersleeve and “every comprehensive Greek grammar” as his witnesses that the perfect tense must be understood to have two aspects: past action and present results.¹²⁹ It must be remembered Mantey made his arguments in 1973. In more recent times, the traditional approach to understanding Greek grammar has come under challenge, with scholars such as Porter and Fanning stressing the importance of what is dubbed “verbal aspect”, yet differing over its nature (e.g. the extent to which it displaces the dimension of time in the tenses), application and the terminology to employ. This is a complex matter and grammarians are still wrestling with the issues raised, though there has been wide acceptance of the verbal aspect approach.¹³⁰ As Naselli explains: “According to verbal aspect theory, the semantics of a tense-form indicates only the author’s or speaker’s subjective portrayal of an action (aspect), and the overall pragmatics indicates the action’s objective nature (*Aktionsart* and time).¹³¹ Aspect concerns how authors or speakers want their audiences to view an action, and *Aktionsart* concerns the actual type or quality of an action.”¹³²

Stanley Porter contends that the author’s choice of a particular tense form expresses how he wants to portray the action. This can be done in either of three ways: (1) using the aorist to view the action externally, simply or as a complete and undifferentiated process (“regardless of how in actual fact the

action occurs, that is, whether it is momentary or lasts a significant length of time"): the perfective aspect;¹³³ (2) using the present/imperfect tenses to view it as in progress, with its internal structure unfolding: the imperfective aspect; (3) using the perfect/pluperfect to view it as a given (often complex) state of being or state of affairs ("regardless of whether this state of affairs has come about as the result of some antecedent action or whether any continued duration is implied"), with the grammatical subject of the verb being the focus of the state of affairs: the stative aspect.¹³⁴ The future tense is not covered by these three depictions of the action because it is deemed to be "not fully aspectual."¹³⁵

Porter uses an oft-cited illustration to clarify these differences.¹³⁶ (1) A TV correspondent viewing a parade from a BBC helicopter might see the action or process "in its immediacy from a vantage outside the action... in its entirety as a single and complete whole": the perfective aspect; (2) a spectator, standing with others along the side of the road, watches the parade pass by him as one immersed within an event in progress: the imperfective aspect; and (3) the parade manager is considering all the conditions in existence at this parade. This includes all the arrangements that are being realised plus all the accompanying events that make it possible for the parade to happen at all. The parade manager who thinks this way is not viewing the parade in its particulars nor in its immediacy. We might think of him sitting in a control room with different cameras and status updates giving him the state of every different part of the parade all at once.¹³⁷ He is viewing the parade as a complex condition or state of affairs in existence: the stative aspect.¹³⁸

If we seek to apply the verbal aspect approach to understanding the use of the future perfect passive tenses in Matt 16:19 then, if Porter is correct, the timing of the binding and loosing that is done in heaven belongs to 'pragmatics' not 'semantics.'¹³⁹ That is, one cannot conclude, on the basis of the tense forms, as Mantey and others have done, that the binding and loosing in heaven was effected prior to the binding and loosing on earth. Such a conclusion, if correct, would have to be based on 'pragmatics', a consideration of the larger grammatical or conceptual unit.

Some dislike the standard translation (Translation B) because they believe that it implies that actions on earth will predetermine what happens in heaven, which they find to be theologically problematic.¹⁴⁰ But, against Translation A stands the obvious problem posed by the verses that immediately follow Matt 18:18: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (vv19-20).

Here the movement is plainly from earth to heaven and yet many would recognise the need for some careful theological reflection before too hastily concluding that this means that what is done on earth *predetermines* what is done in heaven. Indeed, the very presence of Jesus with those who pray in this way explains why they pray in a manner that is consistent with God's will and, as Bornkamm recognises, this very language "comes into close proximity to the last pericope of the whole Gospel: the commission of the Risen One to his disciples.." ¹⁴¹ As we have seen, the giving of the keys presupposes the resurrection of Jesus and his presence with his disciples to the end of the age. ¹⁴² So there is no necessary theological problem with adopting the standard rendering (Translation B) of verse 18.

Given all this, it is arguable that the future perfects employed in Matt 16:19 are not to be understood as presupposing a past event with continuing effects, that is, not as meaning that the binding and loosing had already occurred in heaven with current force. Porter contends

The perfect passive participle is best understood as aspectually designating the state or condition of being bound or loosed, without implicature of either the temporal construct that Mantey and many grammarians posit or the strictly adjectival sense that Turner, McKay and Moule suggest. ¹⁴³

Rather, the thought may be that what on earth is imperfectly experienced as an event in progress – the binding and loosing – will be viewed statically by God. As Porter translates: "Whatever you bind upon the earth is expected to be in a state of boundness in heaven, and whatever you might loose upon the earth is expected to be in a state of loosedness in heaven." ¹⁴⁴

Potentially, a future tense might be construed as either a logical future or a temporal future. Adopting the latter position Bornkamm supposed that the binding and loosing in heaven will occur on the Day of Judgment. ¹⁴⁵ But, in accord with Porter's rendering, it is better to construe the future tense as a logical rather than a temporal future. ¹⁴⁶ Jesus is thus emphasising that the binding and loosing that is carried out on earth enjoys the full backing of heaven. ¹⁴⁷

After Jesus' has explained the necessity of his suffering and death as integral to his Messianic role, he is opposed by Peter. The chapter has begun with scribes and Pharisees implicitly expressing their implacable refusal to accept any prior evidence of Jesus' identity. Jesus denounced such opposition as illustrative of "a wicked and adulterous generation." Peter's rejection of a concept of Messiah involving suffering and death shows that he has not heeded Jesus' warning about the leaven, the evil influence of the teaching of the scribes

and Pharisees, that classes him with such wicked or Satanic opposition and causes him to think the way people think, like those of that generation. Jesus not only says, “Get behind me, Satan!” but adds, “You are a stumbling block to me.” There is quite possibly a further play on the meaning of Peter’s name as “stone.”¹⁴⁸ Peter must get behind Jesus because if Jesus allows Peter’s false conception of Messiah to be that which he sets his face towards then he will have stumbled over “the stone.” Indeed, putting these two statements together it is plain that there is an additional allusion to the testing by Satan in the wilderness – also justifying the correspondence with the implicitly Satanic testing that began Matthew 16 – where Satan offered Jesus cross-free access to the possession of authority over all nations (4:9-10).

Until Peter comes to grips with the necessity for the Messiah’s suffering and death and the need for all disciples to likewise enter the realm of death, he is in no position to operate the keys which would enable him to handle his Lord’s teaching judiciously and to discern his will.¹⁴⁹ For fundamental to the proper interpretation and application of Scripture is this very identification with the Messiah in his suffering and death.

V. CONCLUSION

Having been acknowledged as Messiah through divine revelation, Jesus immediately speaks of the Messianic community over which he will rule. As the embodiment himself of all that Israel should be, and in fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, it is the very outworking of Jesus’ Messianic authority and power that will bring about the formation of this entity. Yet Jesus’ death and resurrection is intrinsic and foundational to this, his Messianic mission. For this community of people the Messiah will gather together is not merely a renewed Israel, but profoundly a resurrected Israel. This Israel within an Israel possesses an indestructible life, being God’s own temple, indwelt by the Indestructible One till the end of the Age. Like Jesus himself, all who follow him, and thus constitute this ingathered people, enter the realm of death and discover that not even death can hold them. As Jesus’ disciples, like Peter, embrace all that is implicit in Jesus’ identity as the Messianic Son of God, the power of God’s dynamic rule in Christ is set loose. But the accomplishment of the Messianic mission by Jesus, as the one who holds all authority in heaven and on earth, is effected through the teaching of all that Jesus has commanded. It is Jesus who fulfils the law and it is as disciples grasp Jesus’ identity and experience his presence that they are enabled, as they interact with Biblical law and law-related religious tradition, to

discriminate between that which applies and that which does not to the lives of those over whom Jesus rules.

¹ Apart from Matt 1:1 the phrase Βίβλος γενέσεως is only found at Gen 2:4; 5:1, where in both instances this serves not merely as a superscription to the genealogies that follow, but even more so as introducing historical narrative. See, for example, Herman C. Waetjen, *The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew*, *JBL* Vol 95/2 (1976) 213-4. Against this Hutchison, following Carson, regarding Matthew 1-2 as a literary unit takes the phrase to mean “a record of the origins”: John C. Hutchison, “Women, Gentiles, and the Messianic Mission in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *BSac* 158 (Apr-Jun., 2001) 152-64. This fails to grasp the huge and pervasive thematic importance of “son of David, son of Abraham.”

² As Davis appreciates, Matthew’s treatment of David in the genealogy casts a shadow over the future, with the sins of the fathers climaxing in the Exile: Charles Thomas Davis, “The Fulfillment of Creation. A Study of Matthew’s Genealogy,” *JAAR* 41/ 4 (Dec 1973) 528-530. But this does not undermine the validity of seeing Jesus as the Davidic Messiah because his rule is differentiated from that of David by virtue of being ultimately grounded in the Abrahamic covenant.

³ Immediately following the genealogy, the addressing of Joseph as “son of David” serves to accentuate this (Matt 1:20). Further, Matthew constructs his genealogy according to Jewish gematria, knowing the letters of the name David add to 14 and placing David’s name as the 14th in the genealogy: John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew. Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel* (Paulist Press, 1979) 4. John Mark Jones could hardly be wider of the mark when he contends: “The names ‘David’ and ‘Abraham’ recede into the background as the child’s relation to God and his divinely ordained purpose are brought into the foreground.” “Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism: Matthew’s Presentation of the Genealogy and the Davidic Title,” *CBQ* 56 (1994) 265. On the contrary, the Davidic and Abrahamic aspects of Jesus’ identity lie at the very heart of understanding that purpose. It is the Abrahamic dimension of Jesus’ rule that provides the counter to wrongly conceived Davidic messianism and not Matthew’s supposed subversion of the textuality of Davidic messianism, as Jones mistakenly proposes.

⁴ Kenton L. Sparks recognises that the inclusion of Gentile women in the genealogy when read in the light of 1:1 indicates that “(f)rom its very beginning, Matthew’s Gospel agenda has to do with God’s promise to bless

the Gentiles through Abraham's seed (see Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18)": "Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16-20," *CBQ* 68 (2006) 653.

⁵ On "Son of Abraham" Jack Dean Kingsbury observes: "He is the Son of Abraham because the entire history of Israel, which began with Abraham and bears promise also for the nations (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), reaches its culmination in him (1:17; 8:11)": "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 95/4 (1976) 594. True, but in Matthew's Gospel the Abrahamic orientation is much more forward-looking than retrospective. "The history of Jesus Christ" is a history that is concerned with fulfilling the Abraham promises and even more so with Jesus as the encapsulation of all that God intended the Abrahamic nation to be. See Kynes for consideration in the genealogy of Jesus' Abrahamic identity. William L. Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity. Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America) 12-15.

⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; ed., Leon Morris., Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press / Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987) 411.

⁷ Tasker observes how the Gospel begins with Jesus as son of David and being acknowledged as 'King of the Jews' by the magi and how the Gospel ends with Jesus, having been crucified as 'King of the Jews', now risen and glorified and claiming absolute authority. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963) 273-4. Sparks, recognising the correspondence between the way the Gospel begins and ends, comments: "...Matthew's genealogy in chap. 1 concentrates on the Abrahamic promises, whose blessings were conferred upon the nations *not instead of, but through, the Jewish people*" (op. cit. p655; Sparks emphasis).

⁸ See Sparks, op. cit. p660. Sparks draws attention to the parallels with the language of Deut 11:28; 31:5, 29. the notion of teaching what Yahweh commands with the expectation of Israel's obedience is also pronounced at 4:1, 5 and especially 6:1.

⁹ Consider a few examples. Regarding the citation of Hos 11:1 at Matt 2:15, Howard, identifying this as an example of analogical correspondence, comments: "As Matthew drew these correspondences he saw Jesus as the One who *actualizes* and *completes* all that God intended for the nation." He draws the broader conclusion: "...Matthew portrayed Jesus as the One who completes all that Israel as a nation was designed to perform. Jesus recapitulated in a positive sense the history of the nation. He is the obedient Son in whom God delights. For that reason Matthew saw Him as the One who would inaugurate a new exodus for the nation Israel." Tracy

L. Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: An Alternative Solution," *BSac* (Oct-Dec 1986) 322, 324.

Gibbs, who traces the motif of Jesus as Israel more extensively, also comments on the Hosea citation, following Hagner: "Matthew asserts that these events of Jesus' life are the 'recapitulation' of Israel's history, and that Jesus himself is in some sense 'the embodiment of Israel'": Jeffrey A. Gibbs, "Israel Standing with Israel: The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 3:13-17)," *CBQ* 64 (2002) 518. At 13:18-21 Jesus is identified with the servant of Yahweh as described in Isaiah 42:1-4. While there are allusions to Davidic kingship, Isaiah 49:3 explicitly identifies this same servant as Israel. This identification of Jesus with the servant of Isaiah 42 is also involved in what the voice from heaven declares about Jesus both at his baptism (3:17) and on the mount of transfiguration (17:5).

¹⁰ As R.T. France recognises John the Baptist is not attacking "reliance on race... but on status as members of the covenant community." *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; ed., Leon Morris., Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press / Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987) 92. Fenton, noting Matt 2:15; 2:20 (cf. Exod 4:19), continues: "Israel came out of Egypt to the Red Sea where, to quote Paul, they were all baptized in the cloud and in the sea (I Cor. 10²). Jesus coming now to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan fulfils the pattern of events foreshadowed in the history of Israel." J. C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew* (Pelican Gospel Commentaries; ed., D.E. Nineham; Penguin Books, 1969) 58-9. See too Kynes, op. cit. 26-28.

¹¹ "This is the key to the narrative: we have before us a haggadic tale which has issued forth from reflection on Deut 6-8. Jesus, the Son of God, is repeating the experience of Israel in the desert (cf. Tertullian, *De bapt.* 20). Having passed through the waters of a new exodus at his baptism (cf. 1 Cor 10.1-5), he enters the desert to suffer a time of testing, his forty days of fasting being analogous to Israel's forty years of wandering." Davies and Allison cited by Gibbs, op. cit. p518. As Tasker puts it: "In Jesus, the wholly-obedient Son of God, was to be seen in perfection all that Israel, called by God out of Egypt to be His Son, had been intended to be but through disobedience had never been", op.cit. p52.

¹² The beatitudes are not blessings that will be realised upon the meeting of conditions but declarations of the blessed reality into which the disciples have entered upon following Jesus. They *are* the blessed ones. They are called to be what they are – typical New Testament ethics - to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek, etc. Later we read that Jesus calls twelve as apostles (10:1ff), evidently representing the twelve tribes of Israel. We see the same distinction between the disciples and the crowds (for whom "He who has ears, let him hear" applies) expressed at 13:11-17.

¹³ As Tasker expresses it: "The beatitudes... are descriptions given in an exclamatory form of the qualities, all of which must be found, are in fact are found in varying degrees, in the lives of those who have come under the influence of the kingly rule of God", op.cit. p61.

¹⁴ To put their light under the bushel is to fail to be what they are as the true people of God, the true Israel, in Christ - to fail to be poor in spirit, fail to mourn, etc.

¹⁵ Brevard Childs' reflections on the association of Isaiah's servant of Yawheh with Israel also explains Matthew's repeated identification of Jesus with the servant of Yahweh: "...what is crucial to observe is that one, bearing all the marks of an individual historical figure, has been named servant, not to replace corporate Israel—the servant in Second Isaiah remains inseparable from Israel—but as a faithful embodiment of the nation Israel who has not performed its chosen role (48:1-2)." Cited by Christopher K. Seitz, "You are my Servant, You are the Israel in whom I will be glorified": The Servant Songs and the Effect of literary Context in Isaiah," *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004) 128-9.

¹⁶ As Fenton rightly perceives this emphasis serves to highlight the fact that Jesus is Messiah who takes seriously his mission to gather true Israelites and rule over them, op.cit. p157. In the Old Testament it is precisely such an Israel that will be used by God to bless the nations.

¹⁷ A number of commentators have seen this episode as pointing forward. So Meier remarks, "Matthew allows the Canaanite woman to approach Jesus by way of exception, to point forward to the dramatic change, to a universal mission which the death-resurrection of Jesus will make possible (28:16-20)." John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew. Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel* (Paulist Press, 1979) 104.

¹⁸ In John's Gospel the same essential Biblical theology is expressed in Jesus' declaration to the Samaritan woman that "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Cook, failing to see that Matthew has presented this very theology at 5:13-16 and that it is to a community of Jewish disciples that Jesus gives the Great Commission, erroneously supposes: "Mt. 10:5-6 and 15:24 are thus meant to demonstrate that Jesus had indeed originally had more appropriate intentions — but the Jewish rejection of him forced him to take a different direction." "Interpreting 'Pro-Jewish' Passages in Matthew," *HUCA* (Jan 1, 1983) 142.

¹⁹ Arguing against the view that the 4000 were Gentiles J. R. C. Cousland observes: "As we would expect from his omission of 'to Bethsaida,' Matthew takes what Jesus says very seriously. Thus, when he has Jesus say he was 'sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (15:24), he has Jesus act in a manner that accords with

Jesus' utterance." "The Feeding of the Four Thousand *Gentiles* in Matthew: Matthew 15:29-39 as a Test Case," *NovT* (Jan 1, 1999) 23.

²⁰ Burnette comments, "According to Jesus, the sinfulness of the present generation is *in itself* a sign, for many Jewish people believed that a sinful generation would precede the coming kingdom of the Lord (2 Bar 16:12; *m. Sota* 9:15; *b. San.* 97a)." Brittany C. Burnette, "*Upon This Rock*": an Exegetical and Patristic Examination of *Matthew 16:18* (Masters thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, February 2, 2009). Downloaded 10/10/13.

²¹ Chrysostom understood that Jesus was implying that just as Jonah generated Peter so he was generated from the Father and of the same substance: Tucker S. Ferda, "The Seventy Faces of Peter's Confession: Matt. 16:16-17 in the History of Interpretation," *BibInt* 20 (2012) 432. For Matthew, though presumably not for Peter at the time, "son of the living God" does connote divinity, that Jesus is God the Son (cf. 28:19), which he sees as latent in Jesus' Messianic identity, hence his immediate identification of Immanuel with Messiah (1:23). Despite this, it seems doubtful that "son of Jonah" carries this weight. Another ingenious, but unlikely proposal is that of Jerome, who noting Jonah means "dove", took Jesus to be implying that "Peter's confession, like the voice of God at the baptism, confirms Jesus' identity as God's 'Son.' The Spirit was active at the Jordan, and Peter is blessed because he became the mouthpiece for the same Spirit" (Ferda, op. cit. 451). Matthew Henry saw "son of Jonah" as accentuating Peter's "original state, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction" (Ferga, op. cit. 452).

²² As Jack Suggs comments: "surely a reminder of the revelatory 'sign of Jonah' in 16:4)": "Matthew 16:13-20," *Int* 39/3 (July 1985) 293. Henry Andrew Corcoran proposes that Matthew, "exploiting the ambiguity of transliteration from Aramaic into Greek, transforms 'son of John' (John 1:42; 21:15-17) into "son of Jonah"" and that this suggests the prophet role Peter will later assume. "Viewing Biblical Narratives Through a Literary Lens: Practicing Narrative Analysis on Matthew 16:16-20," *Christian Education Journal Series* 3, Vol 2/7 (2010) 307-8. Herbert M. Gale, ignoring clear prior identification of the "sign of Jonah" as referring to Jesus' resurrection, argues: "...the editor's meaning was this: no sign shall be given but the sign of Jonah; this sign of Jonah (now Bar-Jonah) is given, namely, the 'sign' or declaration of Jesus' messiahship." "A Suggestion Concerning Matthew 16," *JBL* 60/3 (1941) 255-260. Gale concludes from his dubious exegesis that "this 'sign' of messiahship, and not the person of Peter himself, was uppermost in the author's mind, and hence was regarded by him as the 'rock' upon which the church was to be established" (260).

²³ Take, as examples: “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (9:6); “When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (10:23); “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (12:8); “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (12:40); and “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil” (13:41).

²⁴ Dahlberg, noting that Matthew gives attention to Jeremiah at other points in his Gospel, argues unconvincingly that this passage involves a typological use of Jeremiah 1:4-19. This involves some dubious points of supposed correspondence: (1) the rock and the threat posed by the gates of Hades, cf. the description of Jeremiah as a “fortified city” and “a strong bronze wall” (Jer 1:18) which opposed forces will not be able to overcome (1:19) and which is at enmity with “the gates of Jerusalem” (1:15); (2) an admitted loose (I would say ‘very loose’) formal correspondence between the language of Matt 16:19 and Jer 1:10: “See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” There is a good deal of additional special pleading. See Bruce T. Dahlberg, “The Typological Use of Jeremiah 1:4-19 in Matthew 16:13-23,” *JBL* 94/1 (March 1975) 73-80.

²⁵ Consider the following examples: Deut 5:26: “For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived?”; 1 Sam 17:26b (cf. v36): “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”; 2 Ki 19:4: “It may be that the Lord your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the Lord your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives” (cf. v16; Isa 37:4, 17); Jer 10:10: “But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath”; Heb 10:31: “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (cf. 3:12; 9:14). See too Josh 3:10; Jer 23:36; Dan 6:26; Rev 7:2.

²⁶ In this episode the glorification of Jesus is *not* parallel to the way Moses’ face would radiate with the glory of God after being in the presence of God. Rather, we are to recall how Moses prayed, “...show me your glory” (Exod 33:18) as answered by Yahweh: Exodus 34:6-7. Jesus is the revelation of God’s glory. Elijah is added precisely because he received a similar revelation of God’s glory.

²⁷ Paul S. Berge, “Matthew 16:13-20,” *Int* 29/3 (July 1975) 285.

²⁸ There have been those who believe Peter's confession did involve recognition of Jesus' deity. So, for example, this was the conclusion of Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Hilary of Poitiers and Calvin, in a more restrained manner (Ferda, op.cit. 425, 427, 432-3, 444). Against this stands the clear counter-evidence of Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20 where in both instances Peter merely confesses Jesus to be Messiah. On Peter's lips, then, "son of the living God" only communicates more concerning what Peter understood by Messiah.

²⁹ For an extended consideration of the possibility of this background see Mark J. Goodwin, "Hosea and the 'Son of the Living God' in Matthew 16:16b," *CBQ* 67 (2005) 265-283. One particularly helpful observation is that the citation of Hos 11:1 at Matt 2:15 also concerns the identification of Jesus as the Son of God (274).

³⁰ Hosea 1:10 reads: "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

³¹ So Goodwin concludes from the allusion he finds to Hosea 1:10: "It suggests that the living God, through Jesus, fulfills the Hosean prophecy of establishing a future Israel. More specifically, Jesus, as the Son of the living God, is the representative or embodiment of that future Israel promised in Hosea" (op. cit. p266).

³² Dan O. Via Jr., "Jesus and His Church in Matthew 16:17-19," *RevExp* 55/1 (January 1958) 35.

³³ Similarly, Kynes, op. cit. 105: "...Jewish messianic hope depends upon this connection of Messiah and community, for God's righteous king is desired precisely because the establishment of his rule signifies the restoration of his people, Israel."

³⁴ Via observes that it was around the middle of the first century AD that the Hebrew terms *edah* and *qahal* were displaced by *keneseth*. Accordingly he argues that the Aramaic equivalent of this term, *kenishta*, was the most likely term for Jesus and the early church to use to denote the congregation of God and that it is this word that Matthew translates with *ekklēsia*. See note 10, p25.

³⁵ See P. T. O'Brien, "Church," *DPL* (eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne et al., Downers Grove, Illinois/Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 123. It particularly referred to an assembly of citizens gathered for political purposes. Ward maintains: "...we must note that *ekklesia* was never used in the Greek world as the title of a religious group. About the beginning of the first century, B.C., it is found used in connection with a society of Tyrian merchants and shipowners in Delos which worshipped Heracles. But here it is used only in its classical sense: the assembly or meeting of the society. It was fitting that the term should be used since these societies were modelled on that of the city-state." Roy Bowen Ward, "Ekklesia: A Word Study," *ResQ* 2/4 (1958) 165.

³⁶ Op. cit. 164.

³⁷ See *Teacher of Righteousness*.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0019_0_19666.html Viewed 22/10/13.

³⁸ "New Wine in Old Wine-Skins: V. The Biblical Use of the Word 'Ekklesia'," *ExpTim* 84/12 (1973) 361; "Church," *DJG* (eds. Joel B. Green et al., Downers Grove, Illinois/Leicester: England, 1992) 124.

³⁹ In the MT although *qahal* normally refers to the assembly of the Israelites it is also used to denote the gathering of an army in preparation for war (1 Sam 17:47; 2 Chron 28:14) and "the assembly of evildoers" (Ps 26:5).

⁴⁰ *Edah* most commonly denotes an assembly of the Israelites, though in Numbers 26:9 it not only refers to this but also to the countering rebellious assembly associated with Korah. At Psalm 68:30 it refers to an assembly of bulls.

⁴¹ In the LXX *ekklēsia* renders *qahal* on 73 occasions and *synagōgē* translates *qahal* 35 times.

⁴² Op. cit. 125.

⁴³ O'Brien sees only "very few *extended* uses", op. cit. 125.

⁴⁴ This position was argued very strongly by Donald Robinson and David Broughton Knox. For a summary of their views see Mark Thompson, "Knox/Robinson for today," *The Briefing* (20 December, 2011).

<http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2011/12/knoxrobinson-for-today/> Viewed 27/10/13.

⁴⁵ Robert Banks devotes an entire chapter to "Church as Heavenly Reality." Although, he is well able to demonstrate that Christians belong to a heavenly reality he does not present any evidence of that constituting a heavenly assembly. He merely assumes this conclusion is justified given the language of Colossians 3:1, 4 and Ephesians 2:5-6. But the language of being "with Christ" in heaven is *not* the language of assembly. *Paul's Idea of Community. The early house churches in their historical setting* (Lancer Books; Homebush West, Australia: Anzea Publishers, 1981) 55.

⁴⁶ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Biblical Theology of the Church* (Beginning with Moses. The Biblical Theology Briefings). www.beginningwithmoses.org/ Downloaded 10/10/13.

⁴⁷ *The 'Locus' of the Church: Heaven or Earth?* The Theologian.

<http://www.theologian.org.uk/church/locus.html> Viewed 15/10/13. O'Brien takes it for granted that when Paul writes to a 'church' or 'churches' he has in mind that his letter will be read in the context of an actual gathering (op. cit. 126). But it may be that the notion of 'people whom the Lord has gathered' is not confined

to the references we proposed above as having an extended sense. Arguably, given the very content of these letters and their stress on community relationships, even these uses of *ekklēsia* presuppose that Paul fully intends that his recipients will see themselves as part of Christ's *ekklēsia* even when it is not actually gathered. If this is the case then the underlying conception of a people gathered by the Lord, rather than that of the actual gathering of the Lord's people, may be more pervasive than many have been prepared to recognise.

⁴⁸ "For all the New Testament writers the Church is conditioned by the death and resurrection of Christ. Not until Jesus is risen from the dead do the first Christians speak of a 'Church.'" Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1978) 73. The reference at Matt 18:17 confirms this because, in parallel with 28:20, it presupposes the presence of the risen Christ with his disciples whenever they gather together (18:20). For the heavenly locus of *ekklēsia* see Peterson, op. cit. 204.

⁴⁹ We find the phrase *qahal YHWH* used on five occasions in the Old Testament (Num 16:3; 20:4; Deut 23:2-4,9; 1 Chron 28:8; Micah 2:5). The Numbers references are rendered by *synagōgē* in the LXX, whereas the Deuteronomy references are rendered by *ekklēsia kuriou*. Whether used alone or in conjunction with YHWH, the word *qahal* consistently denotes the assembly (the assembly of Israelites) and is not employed to refer to the community of those who belong to that assembly, even when it is not assembled. Acts 7:38 provides a clear example of *ekklēsia* being used to describe the Israelite assembly at Mount Sinai: "He [sc. Moses] was in the assembly (*ekklēsia*) in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai..." It is difficult to find any clearcut example in the Old Testament of either *qahal*, *edah* (in the MT) or *ekklēsia* (in the LXX) referring to the community of God's people when not assembled. One exception might be Psalm 74:2 where *edah* arguably denotes "people" and is rendered by *ekklēsia* at Acts 20:28.

⁵⁰ O'Brien, op. cit. 124.

⁵¹ Howard Marshall, op. cit. 360. See too J. G. F. Collision, "The Church in the Synoptics: The Gospel of Matthew," *Indian Journal of Theology* 28/3-4 (July-December 1979) 166-7.

⁵² Howard Marshall, op. cit. 361. That Jesus used *kenishta* is argued strongly by Ward, op. cit. 171-2.

⁵³ So Howard Marshall, op. cit. 362.

⁵⁴ See F. J. A. Hort, *Lecture 1. The Word Ecclesia*. Christian Ecclesia. A Course of Lectures on the Early History and Early Conceptions of the Ecclesia and One Sermon. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hort/ecclesia.iii.html> Viewed 22/10/13.

⁵⁵ For the Jewish law orientation see too Banks, op. cit. 43. For an extensive consideration of New Testament preference for *ekklēsia* see Paul Trebilco, "Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?" *NTS* 57 (2011) 440-460. For the possible use of this term to discriminate between Jewish and secular assemblies see too Jack P. Lewis, "The Jewish Background of the Church," *ResQ* 2/4 (1958) 154.

⁵⁶ Clowney ("Biblical Theology") explains: "...when Jesus said, 'I will build my church' (whether he spoke Greek, or used in Aramaic a word that could be so translated), he was not simply saying, 'I will bring together a gathering of people'. Rather, he was using a well-known term that described the people of God." John Murray comments, "But now we must also take account of the inclusive use of the word 'church' in the New Testament. No passage is more significant than Matt. 16:18. The generic use here is apparent, but is confirmed by the contextual considerations. One particular, localized assembly could not measure up to the role assigned to Peter, and the stewardship of the kingdom of heaven, in terms of which the administration of the affairs of the church is defined. When Jesus speaks of 'my church', he is thinking of those gathered and knit together after the pattern provided by the Old Testament as the people for his possession, as the community which he is to constitute, and which stands in a relation to him comparable to the congregation of the Lord in the Old Testament." *Collected Writings of John Murray. 2: Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977) 323.

⁵⁷ "Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church. A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church. Text and Context* (ed. D.A. Carson; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984) 85.

⁵⁸ The word ἄγγελος can be translated either as "angels" or "messengers."

⁵⁹ Merkle cites Cullmann: "Above all, the Jewish Messianic expectation includes the conception of a Messianic community and is inconceivable without it." Benjamin L. Merkle, "The Meaning of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17," *BSac* 167 (July-September 2010) 288. Hort (op. cit.) comments: "If we may venture for a moment to substitute the name Israel, and read the words as 'on this rock I will build my Israel,' we gain an impression which supplies at least an approximation to the probable sense. The Ecclesia of the ancient Israel was the Ecclesia of God; and now, having been confessed to be God's Messiah, nay His Son, He could to such hearers without risk of grave misunderstanding claim that Ecclesia as His own.

What He declared that He would build was in one sense old, in another new. It had a true continuity with the Ecclesia of the Old Covenant; the building of it would be a rebuilding. Christ's work in relation to it would be a completion of it, a bestowal on it of power to fulfil its as yet unfulfilled Divine purposes."

⁶⁰ For reflection on this background see Kynes, op. cit. 106-8.

⁶¹ "Biblical Theology," op. cit.

⁶² Margaret Hannan comments, "The idea expressed in Matthew 16.18c is that death, even that of Jesus himself or that of his disciples, cannot overcome or hold in check Jesus' *ekklēsia* and the task it has been commissioned to accomplish." *The Nature and Demands of the Sovereign Rule of God in the Gospel of Matthew* (London/New York: T & Clark, 2006) 143.

⁶³ John Murray reasons, "When Christ said to Peter: 'Upon this rock I will build my church', the investiture of the succeeding verse shows that the church is something to be administered upon earth. It is not an invisible entity but one in which ministry is exercised. And when in the execution of discipline, Jesus says: 'Tell it to the church' (Matt. 18:17), the church must be conceived of as the congregation to which information is to be conveyed." *Collected Writings of John Murray. 1: The Claims of Truth* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976) 232.

⁶⁴ In the Old Testament these other instances of building are worthy of comparison: (1) Abraham building a family (Gen 16:2; 30:3); (2) Yahweh building up Jerusalem (Ps 147:2); and (3) Yahweh bring back exiles from Babylon to the land and building them up (Jer 24:6; 31:4).

⁶⁵ Similarly, Robinson, op. cit. 90-1.

⁶⁶ Op. cit. 93.

⁶⁷ Arguably, and demonstration of this lies outside the parameters of this article, an analysis of Matt 17:1-13, in light of parallels with Exodus 24 and 34:29ff, indicates that we are to see the site of the transfiguration as a mountain-temple where the three disciples ascend into the holy of holies, into the glory-presence of God, that is, the glory-presence of Jesus who is presented not like Moses and Elijah but in sharp contrast to them. Unlike them he does not enter the glory-presence of God. He *is* the glory-presence of God. The supreme irony is that Jesus as Immanuel, "God with us", comes down the mountain with the disciples. So the *ekklēsia* Jesus will build will involve the reality of his glory-presence being with them when they gather (18:20), implying their identity as the temple he will build.

⁶⁸ Op. cit. 124.

⁶⁹ Davies, following Knox, proposes that ἐπὶ plus dative is more naturally translated as "before this rock" or "at this rock." The rendering "at" is indeed a frequent one for this construction. See Matt 24:33 and Acts 5:9 – "at the door"; John 4:6, "at the well." It does differ from the ἐπὶ plus accusative construction found at Matt 7:24,

where “on” is clearly the correct translation. Still, ἐν plus dative may also bear this sense. If, however, the Sinai background is in mind, which may well be the case, then, as Davies proposes, Exod 17:6 might be in mind: “I will stand before you *by* the rock of Horeb.” Glenn Davies, *A Theology of Church*.

www.anglican.org.au/docs/commissions/doctrine/Defining Church - Glenn Davies.pdf Downloaded 24/10/13.

Similarly, *The Ecclesiastical Posture of an Evangelical* (Melvin Tinker and Peter Sanlon).

<http://reform.org.uk/resources/media-downloads> Viewed 27/10/13.

⁷⁰ Bernard P. Robinson, “Peter and His Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19,” *JSNT* 21 (1984) 86.

⁷¹ Gerhard Maier, “The Church in the Gospel of Matthew. Hermeneutical Analysis of the Current Debate,” in *Biblical Interpretation*, 58.

⁷² Notably, the significance of this display of discernment is further heightened by the emphatic stress on the lack of discernment displayed by the disciples immediately prior to this (vv5-12).

⁷³ Hannan (op. cit. 140) sees 14:33 as indicating that Peter’s confession is made as representative of the disciples, but also as connecting this confession to Peter’s prior experience of a storm at sea. She sees this as the basis of the association of Peter with Jonah, for both of whom the storm experience is associated with revelation.

⁷⁴ See Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 172.

⁷⁵ Julius R. Mantey, “Distorted Translations in John 20:23; Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18,” *RevExp* 78/3 (Summer 1981) 412-3.

⁷⁶ Cited by Julius R. Mantey, “Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated,” *JETS* 16/3 (Summer 1973) 133-4.

⁷⁷ See especially *The Patristic Exegesis of the Rock of Matthew 16:18*. Compiled by William Webster.

<http://www.christiantruth.com/articles/fathersmt16.html> Viewed 10/10/13.

⁷⁸ Ambrose’s view is not a simple one. He discriminates between Peter and Paul declaring Peter to be “the foundation of the Church” and Paul “a wise architect” and yet also seeing Peter as an example for all disciples: “Make an effort...to be a rock!... Your rock is your faith, and faith is the foundation of the Church.”

Ambrosiaster treats Matt 16:18 as effectively presenting Peter as the apostle to the Jews: “Paul names Peter alone and compares him to himself since he had received the privilege of founding the Church; in like manner Paul had been chosen to have the privilege of founding the Churches of the Gentiles.” Cyprian does not see

Peter as rock in isolation from the other apostles: "Certainly the other Apostles also were what Peter was, endowed with an equal fellowship both of honour and power." Leo was among the first to identify Peter with *petra*, but he did not become pope until 440 CE. Mantey, "Distorted," 412.

⁷⁹ For Chrysostom's position see Homily 54 on Matthew. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200154.htm> Viewed 10/10/13. Basil states: "Now Christ called this confession a rock."

⁸⁰ See Oscar J. F. Seitz, "Upon this Rock: A Critical Re-examination of Matthew 16¹⁷⁻¹⁹," *JBL* 69/4 (December 1950) 332-3. The imagery is of the church, symbolised by a tower, being built on a rock which is explicitly identified with Jesus.

⁸¹ Cullman, who maintained Peter is the *petra* on which the church is built, admitted that Jesus' frequent use of Simon was a problem for his thesis. Cited by Mantey, "Distorted," 411.

⁸² The Peshitta Syriac translation of this text does use *ke'pha* to translate both *petros* and *petra*. However, this may either be interpretive or simply done to maintain the pun on words so obvious in the Greek, since on many occasions in the New Testament the Peshitta Syriac translation uses *shu'a* instead to render *petra*, which if used at Matt 16:18 would completely miss the play on words.

⁸³ Mantey, "Evidence," 134. Mantey maintains that only Josephus used *petra* to refer to a rock as small as a man when describing a large rock-throwing contrivance. Stearns locates one reference in Plato's Republic which does treat *petros* and *petra* as synonymous: Wallace N. Stearns, "Note on Matthew xvi.18," *JBL* 21/1 (1902) 115. But it would seem that the terms carry distinct meanings.

⁸⁴ In St. Peter's Basilica in Rome can be found the Latin inscription: *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam mean et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum*, that is, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church, to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

⁸⁵ So Günther Bornkamm, "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel," *Jesus and Man's Hope* (Vol 1; ed. D. G. Miller; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1970) 48. Bornkamm is correct to see the interpretation of Jesus' teachings as implicit in the giving of the keys to Peter but incorrect to see this as a peculiarly Petrine prerogative. See below.

⁸⁶ Some see an allusion to Psalm 118:22. So Vacher Burch, "The 'Stone' and the 'Keys'," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52/2-3 (1933) 150-1. There doesn't appear to be anything in the context of Matthew 16 to support this, excepting the tenuous correspondence between opening up "the gates of righteousness" at Ps 118:19 (through which the righteous enter) with the keys of the kingdom of heaven at Matt 16:19.

⁸⁷ “The identity of the Messiah leads quite naturally to the question, Who belongs to this community and who will share in the benefits of his rule? Jesus’ response to Peter indicates that the answer is clear: those who, like Peter, pledge their allegiance to Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.” Kynes, op. cit. 106.

⁸⁸ Verbrugge argues strongly for contextual indications that Peter is presented as representative of the disciples: “When Jesus asks ‘Who do men say that I am?’ the context (verses 13 and 15) makes it plain he is asking *all* the disciples, and Peter answers for them. Jesus accepts Peter’s reply as the response of all the disciples, for ‘he strictly charged *the disciples* to tell no one that he was the Christ’ (Matt. 16:20).

Consequently, when Jesus addresses Peter in Matthew 16:18, he is speaking not first of all to Peter as an individual but to Peter as the representative of all the disciples, and what Jesus says to Peter is addressed to the others as well” (op. cit. 16). Horton ventures, “The *ecclesia*, as we were reminded at the outset, is ‘the people of God’ in Christ. This *ecclesia* stands upon the Messiahship of her Master. The church begins and grows exactly to the extent that men confess this truth from the heart.” Howard Horton, “The Gates of Hades Shall Not Prevail Against It,” *ResQ* 5/1 (1961) 2.

⁸⁹ Robinson proposes that the deliberate redactional change from “son of John” to “son of Jonah” is appropriate because the church as new temple would rest on Peter as its rock-foundation. That is, just as the assault of the sea, the ‘bars of Sheol’ were not able to hold Jonah fast (Jonah 2:6) – who longed to see the temple (Jonah 2:4) – so Peter as the rock “would be proof against the powers of Sheol,” op. cit. 90. Again: “Simon Peter will in some sense enjoy protection against the destructive forces of Sheol, for, as the son of Jonah, he will, like Jesus his master, prevail over death” (91).

⁹⁰ Herod Philip renamed the city of Paneas (Arabic: Bania/Banyas) – named for the god Pan - after himself. The city stood at the foot of Mount Hermon (over 9,000 feet/2740 metres), named after Pan’s father, Hermes, son of Zeus. The Roman fertility god Pan, also the guardian of thresholds, was the main deity worshiped in Caesarea Philippi, a town that may have been particularly associated with gross expressions of immorality. A statue of Pan stood at the Cave of Pan. Some have wanted to make much of this background, but the text itself shows no interest in Caesarea Philippi as such. Jesus may well have chosen this site in order to make his comments about the gates of Hades even more memorable for his disciples. Hermes was understood to be the conductor of souls to Hades and the Cave of Pan, accordingly, was known as “the gateway of Hades.” Bert Gary, “Jesus and Pan,” *The Society for Biblical Studies* 10/2 (May 2011).

http://www.sbsedu.org/L3_e_newsletter15.5.11JesusPan.htm Viewed 27/9/13.

⁹¹ The word Hades means “the unseen” or “that which is out of sight.” This word is frequently used in the LXX where it serves as the usual equivalent for the Hebrew *Sheol*. When the word Hades is used in the New Testament it is often misleadingly translated as “hell”, a word which carries later historical baggage. At 1 Corinthians 15:55 we find the renderings “death” (ESV) or “grave” (KJV) and this in fact is the basic meaning of Hades: “the realm of the dead.” To add to the confusion Gehenna is also often translated as “hell.” But it has a meaning distinct from that of Hades, referring more particularly to the place of punishment for the wicked. See Lewis, “‘The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It’ (Matt 16:18): A Study of the History of Interpretation” in *JETS* 38/3 (September 1995) 351-2.

⁹² In Shakespeare’s great play as Malcolm moves to engage Macbeth in battle he orders his soldiers each to carry as large a branch as he can. When they move forward his army is concealed by these branches and it seems to Macbeth that the Wood itself is moving. His doom stares him in the face as he sees the witches’ prophecy being fulfilled - that he would be defeated after Birnam Wood moved to Dunsinane. Is Jesus envisaging something of a similar nature? Is he talking about gates themselves actually moving to attack the church – a strange notion indeed!

⁹³ Marcus points out, in the time of Jesus and the early Christians Hades was typically regarded not as the place of punishment but as the realm of the dead and sometimes also as the locale for demonic forces associated with death and destruction. Joel Marcus, “The Gates of Hades and the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt 16:18-19)” in *CBQ* 50 (1988) 443-444. In apocalyptic thought, as Marcus rightly appreciates (445), the anticipation is that in the end time the powers of chaos, restrained since creation, will burst forth to wreak unprecedented havoc in the world.

⁹⁴ Marcus contends: “The image in Matthew is of the rulers of the underworld bursting forward from the gates of their heavily guarded, walled city to attack God's people on earth” (op. cit. 445).

⁹⁵ Indeed, Marcus contends that this is an instance of metonymy where the phrase “gates of Hades” stands for the city of the dead and its inhabitants and especially its demonic rulers (op. cit. 445).

⁹⁶ Lewis, op. cit. 351.

⁹⁷ Lewis, op. cit. 351.

⁹⁸ One striking example of this is when Hezekiah laments: “I said, In the middle of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years. I said, I shall not see the LORD; the LORD in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world” (Isa 38:10-11 ESV). Horton (op. cit.

3) affirms the findings of Robertson and McNeile: "A. T. Robertson said, 'Hades is technically the unseen world, the Hebrew Sheol, the land of the departed, that is death.' McNeile agreed; 'In the Old Testament the "gates of Hades" (Sheol) never bears any other meaning . . . than death.'"

⁹⁹ "The Gates of Hell", 349-350, 351.

¹⁰⁰ This standard way of understanding the imagery goes back as far as 1596-97 with Maldonatus and is followed by many modern interpreters (Marcus, op.cit. 444).

¹⁰¹ Marcus, 444.

¹⁰² Marcus, op. cit. 444.

¹⁰³ Clowney, seeing this background at 16:18, observes that the Isaiah 28 image of the rushing flood of death and destruction issuing forth from the gates of Sheol was also drawn by Qumran writers from the Old Testament; "Interpreting," op. cit. 84.

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah 28:16 does speak of a stone being laid, though *lithos* not *petra* is used in the LXX. The immediate context does speak about the futility of making a covenant with death, that is, seeking impunity from God's judgment. The imagery is of God's judgment, like an overwhelming flood, thwarting the attempts of people to escape death. See Suggs, op. cit. 294; Robinson, op. cit. 91. Isaiah 28:16 may involve ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the cosmic rock from which creation is effected, against which the chaos waters are utterly powerless. See too Kynes, op. cit. 108. Kynes observes that this cosmic rock was believed to seal the underworld and provide a point of entry to the heavenly realm, while also constituting the foundation on which the eschatological temple would be built. Similarly see Brian N. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God. The Christology of Matthew 1-2 in the Setting of the Gospel* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 23; Göttingen: Éditions Universitaire Fribourg Suisse Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 192.

¹⁰⁵ The context does not favour Horton's overly restrictive interpretation: "Jesus Christ, not the church, entered the gates of Hades." Op. cit. 5. This is not to deny that the entrance of Jesus' into the realm of death has an utterly unique character. In offering his explanation of "the gates of Hades will not prevail against it", Horton is quite correct to stress the central significance of the resurrection of Jesus.

¹⁰⁶ Op. cit. 366-7. Similarly, McNeile: "The *ecclesia* is built upon the Messiahship of her master, and death, the gates of Hades, will not prevail against her by keeping him imprisoned." Cited by Horton, op. cit. 4.

¹⁰⁷ For "rock" see Robinson following Jeremias, op. cit. 91.

¹⁰⁸ Harnack, taking the view that Hades is merely the realm of the dead, understood Jesus to be saying in effect: “death shall not prevail against Peter.” In this way Harnack took the pronoun αὐτῆς to refer not to the church but to Peter. Harnack reasoned that only persons not institutions can be thought of as immortal. However, Schepens, while accepting the argument that immortality is implied by the notion of “the gates of Hades shall not prevail”, maintained that it is indeed the indefectibility of the Church that is in mind. See Louis E. Sullivan, “The Gates of Hell (Matt. 16:18),” *TS* 10/1 (March 1949) 62.

¹⁰⁹ Evidently with this background in mind Burton Scott Easton believes that in Matthew’s account: “St. Peter is the master steward, to whom his Lord entrusts the treasures of the entire house; the majordomo, to whom (presumably) the other servants are responsible.” “Critical Note: St. Matthew 16:17-19,” *ATR* 4/2 (October 1921) 156-7. However, Easton takes a very different view of the account in Mark 8:27-30: “Christ’s question was addressed to all the disciples. And St. Peter’s reply was on behalf of all; as all are charged to keep silent their agreement with what St. Peter has said is simply taken for granted. That is, in confessing Christ as Messiah, St. Peter had no special faith that was not equally shared by the others, so that any special reward for him alone would have been most out of place” (163).

¹¹⁰ Marcus, *op. cit.* 443. Marcus reasons that Jesus’ imagery of the gates of Hades involves the underlying notion of something being let out which will threaten, though unsuccessfully, to overcome the church and destroy it, namely demonic powers of death and destruction. But the context rather indicates that if anything is being let out it is rather Christ’s *ekklēsia*, given that all of his followers, like himself, as per the sign of Jonah, must enter the realm of death. Marcus sees the keys of the kingdom of heaven opening the gates of the heavenly kingdom to let something out (447). In tune with the great prayer, “Your kingdom come” (Matt 6:10), Marcus maintains that these gates open so as to effect the extension of God’s heavenly kingdom (his dynamic rule) on earth.

¹¹¹ Although often construed negatively, Loisy’s famous statement positively indicates the intimacy of the relation between kingdom and church: “Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, and what came was the Church.” Cited by Küng, *op. cit.* 43.

¹¹² Hiers takes this view though admits this is not the sense of these terms in Matthew’s Gospel. But he is proposing that this is their original application. Richard H. Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations,” *JBL* 104/2 (1985) 233-250. However, as Marcus points out Hiers uses the concepts of binding and loosing inconsistently in seeking to defend this argument (*op. cit.* 450).

¹¹³ Adopting this position Bassler interprets binding and loosing as setting in place and loosing the bonds of death (Marcus, op. cit. 450).

¹¹⁴ So, for example, Marcus, op. cit. 449; Berge, op. cit. 286; Suggs, op. cit. 295; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "The Power to Bind and Loose," *The Reformed Journal* (July 1980) 16. Cullmann, thinking especially of Peter's authority to bind and loose as primary leader, sees his actions with respect to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) as a major application of this power (Verbrugge, op. cit. 17).

¹¹⁵ Mark Allan Powell, "Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30:6 (December 2003) 438. Powell takes the law "Do not steal" and illustrates what binding and loosing meant for the rabbis with respect to how an Israelite should act if he found a bird belonging to another Israelite. If the bird was found close to where the likely owner resided then he was bound by the law to seek to return it to its owner. If the bird was a considerable distance from any likely owner then the law was loosed, that is, deemed inapplicable to this situation. Derrett's research serves to caution against an overly rigid construal of binding as forbidding and loosing as permitting. The essential need being addressed by this language of binding and loosing is that of discriminating between what is acceptable and what is not, what is consistent with righteousness and what is not. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing (Matt 16:19, Matt 18:18, John 20:23)," *JBL* 104/2 (June 1985) 297-300.

¹¹⁶ Powell stresses that 'loosing' "never meant dismissing scripture or countering its authority. The law was never wrong when it was rightly interpreted. The issue, rather, was discernment of the law's intent and of the sphere of its application" (op. cit. 439).

¹¹⁷ Op. cit. 442.

¹¹⁸ Op. cit. 443.

¹¹⁹ Verbrugge (op. cit. 17) finds a secondary meaning of 'binding' and 'loosing' in rabbinic usage: the authority to judge, to impose or lift the ban. He sees this as compatible with the usage at Matt 18:18 as a context that relates to discipline.

¹²⁰ Op. cit. 451. Easton cites from Targ. Cant. 8:13 where God says to the community of Israel: "let me hear the Law, the sound of thy words, when thou sittest to acquit and condemn; and I will consent to all that thou doest." "Critical Note: St. Matthew 16:17-19," *ATR* 5/2 (October 1922) 124.

¹²¹ Bornkamm also sharply distinguishes between these contexts contending that Matthew 16 concerns teaching authority and Matthew 18 disciplinary authority (op. cit. 40).

¹²² This should temper the inclination to dub this passage the 'Rule for the Congregation', as some scholars have done, e.g. Bornkamm, *op. cit.* 38. Bornkamm reads the wording of Matthew 18 as implying a legal proceeding. Contra Bornkamm, the emphasis of the passage is not on discipline but on grace and reconciliation. As R. T. France points out, "The declaration by the *ekklēsia* of what is right or wrong (which is what the 'binding' and 'loosing' is about) is the basis on which the individual disciple acts towards his brother, and no doubt other members of the *ekklēsia* may be expected to follow suit. But this is 'church discipline' only in a very informal and unstructured sense, very different from what that phrase is likely to conjure up in a modern ecclesiastical context. The whole focus of interest in vv 15-17 is not on the punishment of an offending brother, but on the attempt to 'gain' him, by a process involving the minimum public exposure necessary to achieve the positive end of his restoration to fellowship." *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1989) 249.

¹²³ This tells against Verbrugge's contention that binding and loosing in Matthew 16 pertains merely to apostolic authority. See "Power," *op. cit.* 16.

¹²⁴ Powell ventures, "...the text envisions a situation in which a number of church members confront a member of the community concerning behavior that they believe to be sinful but which he or she apparently does not believe to be sinful. Ultimately, the church as a whole is called upon to make a determination. Basically, they must either bind the law by deciding (with the accusers) that some scriptural injunction does apply to the person's behavior or loose the law by deciding (with the accused) that cited scripture does not apply to this person's behaviour" (*op. cit.* 444).

¹²⁵ For example, Marcus, *op. cit.* 448.

¹²⁶ It should be noted that Translation A is the translation to be found in the Latin Vulgate.

¹²⁷ See Mantey, "Evidence," 129-138; "Distorted," 409-416. For support of Mantey's position see Paul Elbert, "The Perfect Tense in Matthew 16:19 and Three Charismata," *JETS* 17/3 (Summer 1974) 149; cf. Verbrugge, *op. cit.* 17.

¹²⁸ "Evidence", 134. Alternatively, if we take the perfect tense as stative then Jacob is simply saying that such animals would be stolen property, that is, in a state or condition of being stolen.

¹²⁹ He cites Burton: "It implies a past action and affirms an existing result"; and Gildersleeve (via A.T. Robertson): "It expresses the continuance of completed action" ("Distorted," 409).

¹³⁰ See Robert E. Picirilli, "The Meaning of the Tenses in New Testament Greek: Where Are We?," *JETS* 48/3 (September 2005) 533-55. For a consideration of objections to and defence of Porter's approach see Rodney J. Decker, *Verbal Aspect in Recent Debate: Objections to Porter's Non-Temporal View of the Verb* (Paper presented at Evangelical Theological Society. Eastern Region Annual Meeting, March 30, 2001. Philadelphia Biblical University, PA). <http://ntresources.com/blog/documents/PorterObj.pdf> Downloaded 30/9/13.

¹³¹ Porter explains, "The semantic features (the 'meanings') of the different verbal aspects are attached to the tense-forms. The verbal aspects are therefore morphologically based (i.e. form and function are matched). Verbal aspect is a semantic function which attaches *directly* to use of a given tense-form in Greek." He is describing 'pragmatics' when he continues, "Other values – such as time – are established at the level of larger grammatical or conceptual units, such as the sentence, paragraph, proposition, or even discourse." Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Biblical Languages: Greek 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 21.

¹³² Andrew David Naselli, "A Brief Introduction to Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 12 (2007) 18.

¹³³ Porter, *Idioms*, 21.

¹³⁴ See Porter, *Idioms*, 22, 40.

¹³⁵ Picirilli, op. cit. 535. Porter (*Idioms*, 24) comments, "The future form in Greek does not constitute either a time-based tense-form or a verbal aspect in its full sense."

¹³⁶ *Idioms*, 24.

¹³⁷ Porter envisages him considering all these dimensions from corporate headquarters, *Idioms*, 24. For Andrew Hong's helpful elaboration of Porter's example. See "Verbal aspect theory." <http://andrewhong.net/2008/04/> Viewed 30/9/13.

¹³⁸ Similarly, see Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 47-49. Campbell favours Porter's understanding of stative aspect to that of McKay, agreeing it "refers to a general state of affairs" (48).

¹³⁹ Porter states, "The definition enshrined for centuries regarding continuance of completed action must now be replaced", *Idioms*, 40.

¹⁴⁰ Mantey cites Albright & Mann: "It is the Church on earth carrying out heaven's decisions, communicated by the Spirit, and not heaven ratifying the Church's decisions" ("Evidence", 132).

¹⁴¹ Op. cit. 45. See Aboth 3:2: “When two sit together and engage themselves with the words of the Torah, the Shekinah is in their midst.” Cited by Bornkamm, op. cit. 41.

¹⁴² So with respect to binding and loosing at Matt 18:18 Powell comments, “...the church possesses such authority not because Christians have shown themselves to be wiser or more faithful than Pharisees but because Christ dwells in their midst (18:20; cf. 28:20)”, op. cit. 443.

¹⁴³ *Studies in the Greek New Testament. Theory and Practice* (Vol 6; Studies in Biblical Greek; ed. D.A. Carson; Peter Lang, 1996) 109.

¹⁴⁴ *Studies*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ So Bornkamm, op. cit. 46.

¹⁴⁶ Porter comments, “Cadbury is correct in emphasizing the importance of the conditional or conditional-like statement for determining temporal implicature. The third class conditional – usually with the subjunctive and ἔάν or its equivalent in the protasis and almost any verb in the apodosis – posits a hypothetical situation and specifies its logical fulfilment. An internal logical order is all that can be posited for the conditional or conditional-like statement apart from temporal deictice indication” (*Studies*, 110).

¹⁴⁷ Porter maintains that ‘heaven’ is not a circumlocution for God, contra Jeremias. Rather, as indicated by 5:34-35; 6:10, 19-20, the stress is ‘earth’ and ‘heaven’ as distinct spheres of existence (*Studies*, 115).

¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Suggs, op. cit. 294.

¹⁴⁹ Berge comments, “Only in this pattern does the church properly exercise the office of the keys, as she is related to the life and suffering of the earthly Jesus.” He cites Günther Bornkamm: “The conception of the Church expressed in 16:17-19 finds its counterpart and basis in the Christology of the context of 16:13-28. From this suffering and rising Christ who in this aeon calls his disciples to an imitation of him which involves suffering, the Church is derived, is entrusted in the person of Peter with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and, as the church, is armed against the powers of death but in all her members still awaits the future judgment according to deeds.” Op. cit. 287.