

THE MATTHEAN PETER: PETER AS ARCHETYPE AND ANTOTYPE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

CHARLES NATHAN RIDLEHOOVER*

Abstract: *Descriptions of the Matthean Peter often conclude that Peter is either a “supreme Rabbi,” a representative but banal example for future disciples, or even a false disciple and apostate. This essay argues that Peter is the archetype and antitype of a Sermon on the Mount disciple, a claim consistent with but more precise than previous scholarship. The verbal, thematic, and structural cues between Matthew’s Petrine narratives and the Sermon on the Mount paint a depiction of the disciple as embodying all the highs and lows of the Matthean Sermon with a particular emphasis on the Two Ways discourse (Matt 7:13–27). It examines the Matthean depiction of Peter through the use of his name (Matt 4–10) and the distinctive Matthean narratives that discuss his relationship with Jesus (Matt 14:28–31; 15:15–20; 16:13–23; 17:24–27; and 18:21–22).*

Key words: *Gospel of Matthew, Peter, Sermon on the Mount, Two Ways discourse, narrative criticism, discipleship*

Matthew’s Gospel provides an engaging and distinctive description of Jesus’s first disciple—the fisherman turned apostle, Simon Peter. Interest in the figure of Peter has grown significantly since 1962, with two major interpretive options gaining traction.¹ Scholars have proposed that the Matthean Peter is either a “supreme Rabbi” or very “typical” disciple.² In the first case, Peter is cast as a hero of Matthew’s Gospel and Christianity in general. Advocates for the first option include Reinhart Hummel,³ Günther Bornkamm,⁴ and most recently, Christoph Kähler. Kähler’s comments are representative: “Petrus ist Garant und Tradent der neuen Halacha.”⁵ Peter is the “rock” on which the church is built and the quintessential medium through which post-resurrection teaching will commence (Matt 16:13–20).

* Charles Nathan Ridlehoover holds a PhD in NT from the University of Bristol, Trinity College, and resides in North Carolina. He may be contacted at cnridlehoover@gmail.com.

¹ This phenomenon was noted nearly forty years ago by Jack D. Kingsbury, “The Figure of Peter in Matthew’s Gospel as a Theological Problem,” *JBL* 98.1 (1979): 67. The trend has not slowed down.

² In what follows, I am listing the traditional approaches because of their groundbreaking work on Peter’s characterization. More recent studies have analyzed aspects of these initial characterizations. For the most recent survey of literature and his own view, see Finn Damgaard, *Rewriting Peter as an Intertextual Character in the Canonical Gospels* (London: Routledge, 2015), 37–56.

³ Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium*, BEvT 33 (Munich: Kaiser, 1963), 59–64.

⁴ Günther Bornkamm, “The Authority to ‘Bind’ and ‘Loose’ in the Church in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton, IRT 3 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 83–97.

⁵ Christoph Kähler, “Zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte von Matth. xvi. 17–19,” *NTS* 23.1 (1974): 40.

In the second case, Peter represents a relatively normal exemplar for those who would follow Jesus. The second option was initially proposed by Georg Strecker.⁶ Outside of these two major options lies a dissenting third view. Robert Gundry has argued that Peter is depicted as a false disciple and apostate in Matthew's Gospel.⁷ Despite these varied and descriptive proposals, it is my conviction that the discussion of the Matthean Peter has not run its course and that important observations remain.

In what follows, I argue that Peter is the archetype and antitype of a Sermon on the Mount disciple. That is, Peter models the Matthean Sermon both positively and negatively. This claim is consistent with but more precise than previous scholarship.⁸ This thesis pushes beyond the "spokesperson/representative/typical" discipleship models used to describe Peter's role within Matthew's Gospel and attempts to tie Peter's depiction to Jesus's prescription for kingdom disciples. Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of his Gospel structure to serve as foundational teaching for what follows. In previous proposals, emphasis is typically put on the negative or positive evidence at the expense of the total picture. The connections to the Sermon on the Mount are mentioned at times, but without exploring the extent to which Peter's depiction is tied to Jesus's first sermon. The verbal, thematic, and structural cues between Matthew's Petrine narratives and the Sermon on the Mount paint a picture of Peter as embodying all the highs and lows of the Matthean Sermon, especially the Two Ways discourse (Matt 7:13–27).⁹ Like the Two Ways discourse, the Matthean Peter's devotion to Jesus (or lack thereof) serves as both a motivation and a warning for future disciples. I examine the Matthean depiction of Peter through the use of his name (Matt 4–10) and the narratives that depict Peter with Jesus after chapter 10, limiting discussion to those passages which are distinctive to Matthew (14:28–31; 15:15–20; 16:13–23; 17:24–27; and 18:21–22).¹⁰

⁶ Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, FRLANT 82 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 198.

⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate according to Saint Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). For another mostly negative portrayal, see Augustine Stock, "Is Matthew's Presentation of Peter Ironic?," *BTB* 17.2 (1987): 64–69.

⁸ "Archetype" is used here in the sense of being a "first form." I am implementing a wordplay on Matthew's designation of Peter as the "first" (Matt 10:2) and therefore as the prototypical example of discipleship formed by the Sermon. "Antitype" refers to the symbolic opposite of the "archetype." The Sermon presents two contrasting ways of life and gives descriptions of one who heeds and one who disobeys its teachings. These two terms are meant to reflect both the positive and negative depictions within the Sermon's prescribed ways of life. The terms also evoke the symbolic relationship that Peter's narrative arc has with the Sermon's word pictures.

⁹ This statement is not intended to suggest that Matthew wrote the Sermon on the Mount. I am suggesting Matthew had a hand in shaping the Sermon on the Mount as he had in shaping the depiction of Peter.

¹⁰ My use of "distinctive" refers to narratives that are found only in Matthew or that evidence significant shaping in their Matthean presentation. The following approach will be a literary/narrative-critical approach to Matthew. For the most up-to-date treatment of this approach, see Jeannine K. Brown, *The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020). As is consistent with a literary/narrative-critical approach, I will follow the order of the Petrine

I. PRESUPPOSITIONS

In the following argument, I assume Markan priority. Given this assumption, I have isolated those episodes in Matthew which appear only in the first Gospel or have been shaped to reflect significant wording and themes found only in Matthew. I acknowledge the shortcomings of this approach but do not think these cautions eliminate the value of studying the similarities and differences between the Synoptic Gospels.¹¹ In addition to this exploration of the Evangelist's redactional tendencies, I will examine the intratextual links within Matthew. Studies in Matthew are becoming increasingly aware that Matthew has motifs that move through his writing and are signaled by shared lexical, thematic, and structural cues.¹²

Second, the following proposal assumes that Matthew's memory of Peter is historical in nature. Samuel Byrskog and Markus Bockmuehl have argued persuasively that Matthew's recounting of Peter is not fiction or post-Easter *memoriam*, but rather a genuine presentation of the person of Peter that has been shaped for particular purposes.¹³ Matthew's shaping of the picture of Peter (i.e., Matthean Peter) does not preclude or negate the historical Peter. The following proposal emphasizes Peter's words and actions throughout Matthew's Gospel as indicators of his depiction.¹⁴

Third, I assume that the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are paradigmatic and possible for Jesus's disciples. While some commentators would argue that the Sermon poses impossible ideals, the narrative of Matthew's Gospel argues against this conclusion. The disciples enact the teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount (see below) and Jesus imparts grace and the means to do just that.¹⁵

appearances in Matthew's narrative. For a similar methodology but broader scope, see the work of Timothy Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels: Pattern, Personality and Relationship*, WUNT 2/127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). Wiarda's conclusions are consistent with the following argument as he points out that Peter's interactions with Jesus are those of a disciple with his teacher (see 179–80).

¹¹ In regard to shortcomings, I am referring to the Synoptic problem and the direction of borrowing, as well as the difficulties of historical Jesus research. For an interesting take on the problem, see Joel Willitts, "Presuppositions and Procedures in the Study of the 'Historical Jesus': Or, Why I Decided Not to be a 'Historical Jesus' Scholar," *JSHJ* 3.1 (2005): 61–108.

¹² For one such example, see the recent Roland Deines, "The Description of Faith in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Treasures New and Old: Essays in Honor of Donald A. Hagner*, ed. Carl S. Sweatman and Clifford B. Kvidahl (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2017), 125–64.

¹³ Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

¹⁴ W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1991), 469–70, rightly caution: "An overlap in function does not entail an identify [*sic*, read "identity?"] of status or office." The following proposal will not address Peter and the papacy. These ecclesial concerns are important in their own right but are outside the aims of defining Matthean discipleship in general and Peter in particular.

¹⁵ On grace as foundational in the Sermon, see David Wenham, "The Rock on Which to Build: Some Mainly Pauline Observations about the Sermon on the Mount," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 187–206.

II. THE NAME

In Matthew's Gospel, Peter's name is used in distinctive and important ways.¹⁶ The name "Peter" or "Simon" occurs twenty-five times in Matthew's Gospel, a frequency similar to its occurrence in the other synoptic Gospels.¹⁷ With thirty-six uses, John has a somewhat greater number of references, though with little consequence in comparison with the Synoptics.¹⁸ In referring to this apostle, Matthew typically uses "Peter," with the exceptions of 4:18; 10:2; 16:16–17; and 17:25. Matthew 4:18 ("Simon, who is called Peter") and 10:2 ("Simon, also known as Peter") both include "Peter" in a remark clarifying "Simon." Matthew 16:16–17 gives the double name, "Simon Peter" in verse 16 and "Simon son of Jonah" in verse 17. Matthew 17:25 simply refers to "Simon." In the case of both Matthew 16:17 and 17:25, the association of "Simon" with "Peter" is through the context, as "Peter" is mentioned specifically in the previous verse. The other Gospels tend to favor the name "Simon" until the disciple is called by Jesus; they use "Peter" from that point forward (Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14).¹⁹ In summary, Matthew uses "Peter" with more consistency throughout his Gospel, whereas the other Gospel writers use Peter's name to signify Peter's change in status (i.e., fisherman to disciple).

Peter is mentioned in fourteen passages throughout Matthew (4:18–22; 8:14–15; 10:1–4; 14:28–31; 15:15–16; 16:13–20; 16:21–23; 17:1–9; 17:24–27; 18:21–22; 19:27–30; 26:31–35; 26:36–46; 26:58, 69–75), which are parallel in twelve cases to Mark and Luke. These parallel passages each bear their own distinctive features when examined more closely. Mark and Luke have eleven Petrine passages not found in Matthew's Gospel. Seven of these instances present parallel passages, but Matthew does not mention Peter by name. Those passages which are most distinctive by virtue of their individual elements or presence in Matthew include 16:18–19, 17:24–27, and 18:21–22. Matthew 16:18–19 recounts Jesus's intention to build his church on Peter the rock; 17:24–27 concerns Jesus, Peter, and the temple tax; and 18:21–22 records Jesus instructing Peter on the number of times to forgive someone. I discuss these in more detail below, along with 14:28–31 and 15:15–20.

One distinctive feature of Matthew's description of Peter is that he is said to be "first" in Matthew 10:2. This notation is not found in the Synoptic parallels and becomes even more interesting when read alongside the initial call of the disciples

¹⁶ Much of this material is adapted from Kingsbury, "Figure of Peter," 69–76, and Yong-Eui Yang, "Picture of Peter in Matthew's Gospel: The Rock and Stumbling Stone," *Korean Evangelical New Testament Studies* 9.1 (2010): 3–5. See also Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1973), 58–64, for a thorough explanation of Mark's mentions.

¹⁷ Mark has "Peter" or "Simon" 24 times (1:16, 17–18, 29–31, 35–38; 3:14–16; 5:37; 8:27–33; 9:2–13; 10:28–30; 11:12–14, 20–22; 13:3; 14:27–42, 54, 66–72; 16:17) and Luke has the names 29 times (4:38[2]; 5:3–5, 8; 6:14[2], 15; 7:40, 43–44; 8:45, 51; 9:20, 28, 32–33; 12:41; 18:28; 22:8, 31[2], 34, 54, 60, 61[2]; 23:26; 24:12, 34).

¹⁸ Peter is the only disciple whom Jesus addresses by name in each of the four Gospels.

¹⁹ The exception to this rule is Mark's use of "Simon" when he recounts Jesus addressing a question to Peter (14:37) and Luke's use of "Peter" before his call (5:8) and "Simon" after his calling (22:31; 24:34).

in Matthew 4:18–22. In the initial bidding to the disciples, only Peter, Andrew, James, and John are called. It is not until Matthew 10 that all twelve disciples are called. In both chapters 4 and 10, the text begins, “Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother [...] two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.” The Markan parallel shows interesting differences from the Matthean ordering. Mark 1:16–20 (see Matt 4:18–22) has the four disciples being called in the order Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Although this is similar to Matthew, mention of the name “Peter” is omitted. In the later and fuller calling (Mark 3:16–19), Mark begins with the calling of Simon Peter, James, John, and then Andrew. The ordering here is also different from the Matthean ordering. In this sense, it appears that Matthew is heightening Peter’s primacy in his depiction of the disciples by making editorial decisions with his sources. In the calling of the disciples in chapters 4 and 10, Peter is the first to be called, and in both Matthean narratives, Peter is mentioned by name. This priority is then reinforced in Matthew 10:2 as Peter’s name is juxtaposed with the word “first.” Upon closer inspection, these two references (Matt 4:10; 10:2) also appear to draw an *inclusio* around chapters 5–9. Chapters 5–7 form a word/deed motif in Matthew’s narrative in which the Sermon on the Mount is given as Jesus’s instruction to the disciples, and chapters 8–9 depict Jesus performing his own teaching in conjunction with the will of God. The specific verses that form the *inclusio* around chapters 5–9 are Matthew 4:23–25 and 9:35–38. The passages immediately preceding (4:18–22) and following (10:1–4) the references in chapters 4 and 9 respectively are where we find these references to Peter. As becomes more apparent below, these literary clues, which suggest parallels between the Matthean Peter and the Sermon on the Mount, are reinforced by examining the narratives that depict Peter.

III. THE NARRATIVES

In what follows, I examine the narratives in which Peter is featured. I briefly discuss Matthew 4:18–22, as this is Peter’s first mention and a pivotal starting point for seeing Peter’s relationship to the Sermon on the Mount. From then on, I have chosen to follow a sequential ordering because the ordering is initially important. Matthew uses implicit clues in the progression of the narrative to draw parallels between Peter and the Sermon on the Mount. These parallels are found not only in the naming of Peter (up to chapter 10), but also in the fuller episodes concerning Peter (after chapter 10).²⁰ As the narratives progress throughout the Gospel, the

²⁰ Matthew 8:14–15 also mentions Peter by name, but the emphasis is clearly on his mother-in-law following Jesus. The passage does have significance for the present argument, a significance tied to its location in Matthew’s narrative. In Mark, the narrative is featured prominently at the front of the book (1:29–34). In Luke, the story (4:38–41) actually precedes the call of Peter (5:1–11). But, in Matthew, the story appears several chapters after Peter’s call (4:18–22), immediately following the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) and before Jesus addresses some would-be followers (8:18–22). The logical flow of the passages when read in Matthew’s ordering has Peter’s call to discipleship (4:18–22), the prescription of proper discipleship (i.e., the Sermon on the Mount), the pericope of Peter’s family and miracle (8:14–15), and Jesus’s challenge to would-be followers. A key to understanding the specifics of Matthew 8:14–

implicit evidence (the use of Peter's name) is supplemented by distinctive and explicit parallels found in later episodes. Matthew presents five episodes concerning Peter that are not found in the other Gospels (Matt 14:28–31; 15:15–20; 16:13–23; 17:24–27; and 18:21–22), and these episodes have strong ties to the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the Two Ways discourse (7:13–27).

1. *Matthew 4:18–22*. In Matthew 4, Peter is summoned to be a “fisher of men.” As Bockmuehl notes, this citation most likely alludes to Jeremiah’s prophetic vision of divine fishers or hunters sent to gather Israel back to the Land in the last days (Jer 16:15–16)—a notion that has interesting echoes with the Matthean Jesus’s concern to seek out the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:6; 15:24).²¹ This calling is part of the ongoing narrative in which the disciples are instructed to display the words and deeds of Jesus (Matt 5–9). More specifically, the placement of this narrative is important because it places Peter, Andrew, James, and John as the immediate hearers of the Sermon on the Mount. The calling of the disciples is preceded by the beginning of Jesus’s ministry in Galilee (4:12–17). This ministry is defined by Jesus’s proclamation: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (v. 17). A cursory reading of the Sermon on the Mount highlights the “kingdom of heaven” as one of its primary concerns.²² In addition to the disciples, Jesus explains that his ministry is to crowds that have gathered and are following him (4:23–25). These groups—the disciples and crowds—are the first recipients of the Sermon on the Mount (5:1; 7:28–8:1). In our analysis, it is significant to note that Peter is among the “first” disciples to hear this message.

2. *Matthew 10:1–4*. As mentioned above, Matthew identifies Peter by name in chapter 10 in the context of calling the remaining disciples to model the mission and message of Jesus (see also 4:17, 23–25; 9:35–38).²³ Although this calling is for the disciples in general, it pertains to Peter as well. To this point, the picture of the Matthean Peter has been marked by narrative progression and literary devices. In

15 may lie chapters later when Jesus reveals that familial ties are temporary compared with one’s spiritual family (10:37–39; also 12:46–50). Jesus replies to the presence of his biological mother and brothers, that “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” These words echo the familial language throughout the Sermon on the Mount and the emphasis on doing the will of God (6:10, “Your will be done”; see also 7:21–23). This healing of Peter’s family member in chapter 8 is a harbinger of Peter’s lesson in true discipleship, in which he truly understands familial relationships and the will of God. At this point, Peter’s mother-in-law is healed and begins to follow Jesus, but Peter is in the process of learning the true will of God and the reason for his calling. This narrative also looks forward to Matthew 19:27–30, where Peter admits and asks, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” On Peter’s family and the significance of this narrative, see Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 103–10. Origen similarly connects this narrative in Matthew 8 with the discipleship motif of Matthew 19, observing that Peter is called not only to leave his nets but also his family. See *Comm. Matt.* 15.21.

²¹ Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 23.

²² On this point, see Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 37–39.

²³ See the helpful chart by Dale C. Allison, “Structure, Biographical Impulse, and the *Imitatio Christi*,” in *Studies in Matthew: Interpretations Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 151, which shows the parallels between Jesus’s ministry (chaps. 8–9) and the disciples’ ministry (chap. 10).

what follows, Matthew extends into specific test cases in which Peter is the main character.

3. *Matthew 14:28–31*. In Matthew 14:28–31, Peter embodies both faith and doubt as he walks on water and then falters in his faith. This show of faith on Peter's behalf is unique to Matthew and disrupts the relatively neutral portrayal of Peter in previous mentions. The consistent picture up to chapter 10 is Peter as "first" among the disciples. It is also interesting that Peter is the only disciple to attempt the walk on water. The connections of this passage to the Sermon on the Mount are marked by the distinctive vocabulary. First, Peter cries to the "Lord" (vv. 28, 30).²⁴ This Christological title echoes Jesus's instruction in the conclusion of the Sermon (7:21–23) that not everyone who calls him by this title is a true follower. Peter's use of the title is followed by Peter's first major failure. When Peter begins to fear, he begins to sink under the water. This failure leads to Jesus's response and the second connection.

Jesus describes Peter as one of "little faith" (14:31). This designation (ὀλιγόπιστος) is used elsewhere in 6:30, 8:26, 16:8, and 17:20.²⁵ Matthew 14 is the only example of "little faith" being used in reference to an individual; Matthew 8:26, 16:8, and 17:20 refer to the disciples collectively.²⁶ The usage in 6:30 is within Jesus's Sermon teaching on worry. Jesus uses the argumentative technique of "minors to majors" to insinuate that those who worry about food, drink, and clothing (i.e., minors) will miss the greater issues concerning the kingdom of God and righteousness (6:33). In Peter's walking on water, he begins "to doubt" (διστάζω) and misses Jesus's power to calm even the wind and waves (14:31).²⁷ Peter begins to worry about his own position and to doubt God's power, which displays the "little faith" that Jesus has previously warned against in the Sermon.

4. *Matthew 15:15–20*. Matthew 15:15–20 contains a mention of Peter which is relatively quick, but important nonetheless. The text is taken from Mark 7:18–23 but with Peter being singled out among the disciples in the Matthean iteration. Peter asks Jesus for an explanation to a parable. Jesus responds with a question that

²⁴ On this passage and use of "Lord," see Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew's Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son*, WUNT 2/402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 125–65.

²⁵ See Arlo Nau, *Peter in Matthew: Discipleship, Diplomacy, and Dispraise—With an Assessment of Power and Privilege in the Petrine Office*, GNS 36 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 102.

²⁶ On the use of this term to refer to the whole of the disciples, see Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 52–57. Bornkamm argues that Matthew's redaction signals a generally positive view of the disciples, in which these disciples are paradigms for "the danger and glory of discipleship." Against this view, see Paul F. Feiler, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew: A Response to Günther Bornkamm," *JETS* 26.4 (1983): 399–406. Feiler argues that "Matthew's concern is Christological—that is, that the story primarily attempts to define who Jesus is before would-be followers, whose misconceptions about him have led to false notions concerning what it might mean to follow" (400).

²⁷ The verb διστάζω is used only in Matthew—here and in 28:17. Matthew 28:17 describes the reaction of the disciples to Jesus's presence. Jesus follows with the instruction to "make disciples ... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (vv. 19–20). As I have argued above, these verses are part of Matthew's overall depiction of discipleship, which includes the Sermon on the Mount.

implies a rebuke: “Are you also still without understanding?”²⁸ In the previous section (15:1–12), the Pharisees’ knowledge is put on trial, but they at least understand Jesus’s teaching enough to be offended by his answer. In the current passage, Peter’s lack of knowledge is heightened with the use of ἀκμήν (“still”; compare Mark’s οὕτως [“thus”]). The implication is that his ignorance is perpetual. After noting Peter’s lack of understanding, Jesus explains that what comes from a person’s mouth is sourced from the heart, and the heart is home for a variety of vices (v. 19, “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders”). As France notes, four of the six items are taken directly from the Decalogue and follow the same ordering (murder [φόνος], adultery [μοιχεία], theft [κλοπή], and false witness [ψευδομαρτυρία]).²⁹ The remaining two, fornication (πορνεία) and slander (βλασφημία), most likely refer to the vices which they follow, adultery and false witness, respectively.³⁰

The parallels between Matthew 15:15–20 and the Sermon on the Mount are both lexical and thematic. The lexical connections between the passages include the explicit references to murder (5:21–26) and adultery/fornication (5:27–30), and thematic parallels to falsehoods (5:37; 7:15) and slander (5:38–47). There is also a shared emphasis on the relationship between one’s actions and heart. The Sermon details this relationship throughout, but two instances warrant discussion. First, like Matthew 15:15–20 and its broader context of verses 1–20, Matthew 5:17–48 details Jesus’s relationship to the law of Moses. The emphasis throughout this section of the Sermon is on the importance of the interior state of the disciple with the concluding note to be “perfect” as the heavenly Father is perfect (5:48). Matthew 15:15–20 gives the conceptual opposite—one who is not perfect. The resulting picture is clear—choose the life of virtue (i.e., kingdom righteousness) or the life of vice (i.e., evil), but the heart can have only one master (see also 7:22–24). The second instance is found in the conclusion of the Sermon. In 7:15–23, Jesus condemns false prophets. He describes these false prophets as ravenous wolves and uses trees and their fruit to explain the origins of their falsehoods—a “bad tree bears bad fruit” (7:17). Jesus continues that there will be those who cry out his name (“Lord, Lord”) and do miraculous works (7:22) but are “evildoers.” While some modern translations (NIV, ISV, NRSV) render this final word as “evildoers,” it is more technically “workers of lawlessness” (οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν). The phrasing is significant because it relates the work of lawlessness to the heart of the individual. Matthew 15:15–20 makes this even more explicit with its linking of the heart to breaking the Decalogue and subsequent vices.

²⁸ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 382.

²⁹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 586.

³⁰ The decision to translate βλασφημία as “slander” is due to its close association with ψευδομαρτυρία, as opposed to “blasphemy” (against the Spirit) as in 9:3 and 12:31. See also 26:57–67, where the two terms are used together and with similar connotations. The Markan parallel (7:21–22) gives a much more extensive list of vices that includes fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, and folly.

5. *Matthew 16:13–20*. The rise and fall of Peter in the following narrative and the next (16:21–23) are well-known. For various ecclesial traditions, Matthew 16:13–20 forms the high point of Peter’s ministry. In response to Jesus’s question, “Who do they say that I am?,” it is Peter who stands out from the other disciples to proclaim, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Jesus’s response is to bless Peter (v. 17, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven”), promising him a foundational role in his mission to build the church (v. 18), and giving him the keys to bind and loose on earth and in heaven (v. 19). All these references (i.e., the blessing, rock, keys, heaven/earth) form significant parallels to the Sermon on the Mount. First, the “blessing” of Peter is an echo of the Beatitudes, which similarly speaks “blessings” on those who follow the Sermon on the Mount (5:3–12).³¹ These blessings are also tied to the kingdom and the “Father in heaven” in both passages. In the Sermon (7:21), the “kingdom of heaven” is given only to those who do the will of “my Father in heaven.” The current passage associates the “Father in heaven,” “kingdom of heaven,” and Peter symbolically as the bearer of God’s will.

Second, the characterization of Peter as the “rock” echoes the teaching of the two foundations in Matthew 7:24–27.³² Although Peter is said to be the rock, it is Jesus who is doing the building and choosing the foundation. Therefore, in our parallel, Jesus is the wise builder who chooses his foundation wisely. As Luz comments: “With a rock foundation the church is promised stability and permanence. A house built on rock remains standing.”³³ In 7:24–27, the opposing builder sets his house on sand and the result is a great fall (v. 27). If the proposed parallel is correct, then we have an interesting foreshadowing here. In the passage that follows (16:21–23), Peter takes Jesus aside to rebuke him for speaking of his forthcoming death. Peter goes from the “rock” of importance to being an agent of Satan (16:23). In v. 23, Jesus returns Peter’s rebuke with his own: “You are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.” It is precisely this juxtaposition of divine and human things that is being depicted in the contrasting foundations (7:24–27) and now subsequently in Peter’s depiction as two very different foundations.

Third, the image of keys is significant for parallels. In the current passage, the keys to the kingdom of heaven are given to Peter. Yet, in chapter 23, Matthew notes that the Pharisees believe they have the keys to the kingdom (23:13).³⁴ The implication is that Peter is the true bearer of the keys to the kingdom, and, by implication, the Pharisees actually have the keys to Hades. If this contrast is accepted, a parallel with the Sermon emerges concerning the contrasting gates (7:13–14). In

³¹ On the complexity and nuances of the Beatitudes, see most recently Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 41–68.

³² See also Stock, “Is Matthew’s Presentation of Peter Ironic?” 68. Also, Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2001), 362.

³³ Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 362.

³⁴ This comparison is also suggested by Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 75.

the Sermon teaching, Jesus explains that the narrow gate is to be preferred over and against the wide gate, which leads to destruction, and now Peter has the keys to that gate. Davies and Allison draw attention to the parallel of the gates of Hades in 1QH 14 to Matthew 7:13–14. In 1QH 14, the psalmist approaches the “gates of death” but finds shelter by leaning on the truth of God.³⁵ The psalmist continues that the truth of God is that “you [God] place the foundation upon rock” in a city that is fortified against enemies. If one reads the contrasting gates (Matt 7:13–14) alongside the contrasting foundations (7:24–27) already evoked in Peter’s name, then the “foundation” provides an additional parallel as both images are being echoed in this Petrine memory. An additional layer of parallels is the juxtaposition of keys and their owners with the language of heaven and earth. As Jonathan Pennington has convincingly argued, Matthew uses a heaven and earth motif throughout his Gospel.³⁶ Pennington argues that this motif appears in certain “hot spots” throughout Matthew’s Gospel. The first major hot spot is the Sermon on the Mount and the next is chapter 16.³⁷ It seems fitting to read these in conjunction with one another. Peter has heavenly keys and the Pharisees have earthly keys. These lead to the narrow gate of heaven and the wide gate of hell.

Fourth, the language of binding and loosing provides one final parallel. Keener lists the relevant Jewish parallels and argues convincingly that the reference to binding and loosing in Matthew 16:13–20 generally refers to the authority to evaluate interpretations of the law.³⁸ For some interpreters, this casts Peter as the “supreme Rabbi.”³⁹ Yet, in this particular narration, binding and loosing is linked to the giving of the keys. When read alongside one another, the binding and loosing becomes the means through which one considers who can enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is making it clear that only those who confess that “Jesus is the Messiah” are worthy to enter the church.⁴⁰ In other words, the role given to Peter is less about teaching authority and more about entrance to the church (see also Matt 18). Moreover, Peter’s role is as gatekeeper and he is the rock on which the church is built. But, beware! The other foundation is about to be depicted in Peter’s unfolding characterization, and “great will be his fall” (7:27).

³⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 630–33.

³⁶ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). See also Kari Syreeni, “Between Heaven and Earth: On the Structure of Matthew’s Symbolic Universe,” *JSNNT* 40 (1990): 3–13.

³⁷ Within Matthew’s narrative/discourse structure, the Sermon on the Mount mentions “heaven(s)” twenty-two times, chapter 16 mentions the term(s) eight times (ten total instances in chapters 14–17). “Heaven and earth” pairs appear eight times in the Sermon on the Mount, and five times in chapter 16 (six total instances in chapters 14–17). Comparatively, chapters 5–7 and 16 are the “hottest” places in Matthew where “heaven(s)”/“heaven and earth” are mentioned most often. The exception to this is the mention of “heaven(s)” in chapter 18 (eleven times).

³⁸ For example, m. Git. 9:1; t. Sanh. 7:2; b. ‘Abod. Zar. 7a, bar.; ‘Erub. 17a. For more parallels, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8–18*, 623–41, and Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 455n25.

³⁹ B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 515.

⁴⁰ Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 430. Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 76, also sees parallels with Matthew 7:15–20 here.

6. *Matthew 16:21–23*. Although Matthew 16:21–23 is paralleled in the other Gospels (see Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:22), it is distinctive in its contrastive function when read alongside the preceding verses. After the crowning of Peter with the benefits of the kingdom in Matthew 16:13–20, Jesus follows up with a devastating rebuke. Jesus begins to tell his disciples about his forthcoming suffering, death, and resurrection, and Peter responds with disfavor (v. 21). The specific wording is as follows: “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you” (v. 22), to which Jesus responds, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things” (v. 23). This entire encounter is foreshadowed in the walking-on-water narrative (14:28–31). Peter similarly refers to Jesus as “Lord” in both passages and has a great moment of faith alongside a great loss of faith. In the current passage, Peter as Jesus’s rock (16:13–20) now becomes Jesus’s stumbling block (v. 23, *σκάνδαλον*). There is a play on words as the foundation becomes a source of scorn. The rebuke functions both spatially and in terms of Peter’s identity. Peter is calling Jesus “Lord” and operating in his newfound authority to bind and loose, but Jesus suddenly puts him in his proper place (“behind me”) and declares him an agent of Satan. Jesus also firmly declares that Peter is focused on human things instead of divine things. In the verses that follow this narrative, Jesus properly defines discipleship as involving those who deny themselves and take up their cross (16:24–26).

Several aspects of this narrative draw parallels with the Sermon on the Mount. As with the previous narrative, the most obvious parallels are thematic and related to the Two Ways discourse. The mention of Jesus as “Lord” echoes Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 7:21–23. In the Sermon, Jesus has already warned that there will be those who say, “Lord, Lord” but do not know him. As previously mentioned, in 7:23, Jesus calls these individuals “workers of lawlessness.” Closely related is the work of Satan and evildoers in the Parable of the Sower (13:18–23). Jesus teaches that there will be those who do not understand the words of the kingdom, and Satan will come and snatch the word from their hearts (13:19). Here, Peter appears to be the one who does not understand the words of the kingdom and is therefore condemned as a worker of Satan and lawlessness (see also 4:10).

Another aspect of this narrative that parallels the Sermon on the Mount is the imagery of persecution. In the Beatitudes, Jesus pronounces happiness upon those persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for they will receive the kingdom of heaven (5:10). Jesus continues, “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Jesus is explaining the ways of heaven, but Peter is a worker of Satan and one uttering a false account (16:23). Finally, this passage shares vocabulary with the Sermon on the Mount. Peter is called an impediment (*σκάνδαλον*), which echoes Jesus’s teaching in 5:27–30 concerning temptation and the negative foundation of sand (7:24–27). Jesus’s instruction in 5:27–30 is that if something causes you to stumble (*σκανδαλίζω*), you cut it off. Interestingly, the teaching in Matthew 5:27–30 forms the backbone of church discipline described in Matthew 18. In chapter 18, Peter is being instructed on forgiveness and this teach-

ing is preceded by the exact teaching in 5:27–30 (see 18:8–9). Matthew 18 appears to indicate that these teachings should be read together and validates my implied parallel in chapter 16.

7. *Matthew 17:24–27*. Among the narratives analyzed, this story is the most difficult in which to discern a clear meaning and subsequent parallels to the Sermon on the Mount. M'Neile goes as far as to say the passage is irrational.⁴¹ In it, Peter is asked by some tax collectors concerning Jesus's obligation to pay taxes. After Peter answers in the affirmative to his inquisitors, Jesus explains in the next verses that Peter is not to offend others by neglecting to pay the tax. Jesus further instructs Peter to go fishing and find a coin in a fish's mouth. Bockmuehl helpfully summarizes three essential features of the narrative. First, the story is a private conversation between Peter and Jesus. Second, the teaching on the temple tax is in keeping with Jesus's constant critiques of Pharisaic law-keeping. These critiques restate the constant message of Jesus that God is Father and the true king. Third, this story reinforces Jesus's instruction to Peter to take an "attitude of critical detachment but practical cooperation."⁴² In so doing, Jesus is careful to instruct his followers to pay their taxes but not at the expense of becoming "earthly."⁴³

In terms of parallels, it is important at the outset to establish the function of these verses. The narrative appears to form a bridge between the previous depictions of Peter (chap. 16) and what is to come (chap. 18). Picking up on the language of Peter's role of stumbling block in chapter 16 (*σκάνδαλον*) and the dual depictions of Peter as both good and evil (16:13–23; 17:1–9), Matthew 17:24–27 discusses a topic that could be considered a stumbling block for those observing Jesus's followers. These themes will continue into chapter 18. Matthew 18:7 states, "Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks!" Matthew 18:8–9 gives further teaching on stumbling by reiterating the teaching on cutting off body parts and plucking out eyes, but without specific reference to adultery (see 5:27–30). Chapter 18 also continues the depiction of Peter as both exemplar and failure (18:21–22). These themes will be discussed in more detail below.

One parallel between 17:24–27 and the Sermon on the Mount is the suggestion that Peter follows the laws of Moses. This instruction is in keeping with Jesus's own mission to fulfill the law of Moses (5:17–20), but this parallel is loose at best. It is also clear that Matthew 17:24–27 concerns Jesus's fulfillment of the Mosaic law and not Peter's. In terms of Peter's role, he hears Jesus's words and does them, but again, this is only loosely connected to the Sermon on the Mount (see 7:24). The enigma in the story concerns the coin in the fish's mouth. Luz offers some general comments: "Certainly the memory of the poverty of Jesus and of the circle of disciples plays a role. And certainly, the fisherman Peter provides an appropriate occasion for a fish story. Important also was the confidence that God or the Lord

⁴¹ A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 259.

⁴² Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter*, 79–80.

⁴³ See also France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 665–71.

provides for the church's material needs, even if it is in a quite unexpected way."⁴⁴ If Luz's comments are correct, other loose connections can be drawn to the Sermon on the Mount. First, Peter, like Jesus, chooses treasures in heaven over treasures on earth (6:19–21). Second, Peter and the disciples' vow of poverty is in keeping with their decision to serve God over mammon (6:24). Third, Peter trusts God for his daily provisions (6:11, 25–34; 7:11). Last, the reference to a fish may echo the Father's provisions for his children (7:7–11). When teaching on persistent prayer, Jesus compares the request of a child for fish with the abundance that the Father provides for his own children. Even among these proposed parallels, this passage is the weakest piece of my argument. Yet, if one considers its role as a linking passage to arguably the most parallel passages to the Sermon (16:13–23; 18:21–22), then the argument as a whole still stands.

8. *Matthew 18:21–22*. Among the passages being examined, Matthew 18 bears some of the clearest parallels to the Sermon on the Mount. To properly understand the Petrine section, it is important to consider the fuller context. The chapter begins with a discussion among the disciples about who is the greatest in the kingdom (vv. 1–6). Apparently, they were not ready to accept that Peter was the rock, or perhaps they knew of his great fall and were vying for the newly renovated vacancy. As in other places in Matthew's Gospel (19:30; 20:16; cf. also 23:11–12), Jesus puts an end to the discussion by asserting that the first shall be last and the last shall be first (v. 4, "become humble like this child").⁴⁵ The next set of verses (vv. 6–7) discuss being a "stumbling block" (σκανδαλίζω) for a little one. The passage addresses more generally those things that cause us to sin (vv. 8–9). Next, Jesus gives the parable concerning the lost sheep (vv. 10–14). He begins again with a reference to the little ones (v. 10) and then equates their care with the love a shepherd shows for one sheep who has gone astray from a flock of one hundred. The analogy continues into the next passage (vv. 15–20). Here, Jesus addresses the dynamics of a member of the church straying. Verses 15–20 give the steps to admonish the "sheep who has strayed" and to bring him back to the fold. The language of binding and loosing is repeated from chapter 16 but now in reference to the abilities of the whole church. This widening of roles brings us to the current passage.

In 18:21–22, Peter inquires about the nature of his responsibility to forgive. Peter asks Jesus about the frequency of extending forgiveness. Peter reiterates a common sentiment among first-century Jews that forgiveness be given but only in limited amounts ("How often should I forgive? As many as seven times?").⁴⁶ Jesus corrects Peter with the instruction to forgive always and totally ("seventy-seven times"). This teaching on forgiveness is further expounded in the next passage, in which Jesus gives the parable of the unforgiving servant (vv. 23–35). Overall, this

⁴⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 418–19.

⁴⁵ This statement may be an echo of Jesus's calling of Peter to be his "first" disciple (Matt 4:18; 10:1). The narrations of Peter certainly mimic the reordering of assumptions and status which Jesus insinuates.

⁴⁶ See b. Yoma 86b; 87a on restricted forgiveness.

chapter is linked together by catchwords and thematic parallels, namely, “little ones,” sheep, *σκανδαλίζω*, and forgiveness.

The two verses in which Peter is explicitly mentioned are surrounded by passages that have strong parallels to the Sermon on the Mount. As mentioned earlier, the teaching on adultery in the Sermon (5:27–30) is broadened in chapter 18 to include any sin that may cause one to stumble (18:6–9). Key Sermon themes concerning the “kingdom of heaven,” “heaven and earth,” the “Father in heaven,” and the will of God are scattered throughout chapter 18.⁴⁷ It is almost universally agreed that the parable of the unforgiving servant, which follows the instruction to Peter (18:23–35), explains the forgiveness clause (6:12) and postscript (6:14–15) to the Lord’s Prayer (see also 5:7).⁴⁸ In the passage immediately preceding the Peter narrative, the language of chapter 16 is reiterated. The church is now given the ability to “bind and loose” on heaven and earth. In the two verses where Peter is mentioned, the instruction to forgive is consistent with the Sermon’s emphasis on mercy/forgiveness. Examples in the Sermon include blessings to the merciful (5:7), teaching on anger/murder (5:21–26), instructions on retaliation (5:38–42), love for enemies (5:43–47), the postscript to the Lord’s Prayer (6:14–15), and rightly judging (7:1–5).⁴⁹ Another parallel with the Sermon is the shared linkage of the will of God with forgiveness. In the current passage, Peter prefaces his question with the title “Lord” and then inquires about forgiveness. This parallel is consistent with the whole of chapter 18, in which forgiveness (18:25–35) is extended to a “lost sheep” (18:10–20). The parable of the lost sheep concludes with these words: “So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost” (18:14). Peter’s title echoes the instruction in the conclusion of the Sermon that the one who calls on the “Lord” must do his will (7:21). The evidence for including forgiveness as part of the will of God can be found in the teaching of the Lord’s Prayer (6:9–13). The Lord’s Prayer concentrically arranges the third and fifth petitions to be thematically paired. Thus, forgiveness becomes an active part of the will of God.

One final suggestion comes from the observations of Arlo Nau. Nau believes that this passage should be paired with 17:24–27. In Matthew 17:24–27, Peter has a positive moment in which he follows Jesus’s teachings successfully (i.e., paying the temple tax). Here, Peter fumbles with the requirements of forgiveness. If this pairing is justifiable (see above for argument), it continues the Matthean depiction of Peter as representative of the Two Ways.

Before moving to the conclusion, it is important to consider one final issue. One puzzling feature of the Matthean picture of Peter is that Peter is not singled

⁴⁷ The “kingdom of heaven” is referred to in 18:1, 3, 4, 23. References to “heaven and earth” are found in 18:1, 18(2x). The “Father in heaven” is listed in 18:10, 14, 19, 35, and the “will of the Father” is mentioned in 18:14.

⁴⁸ See Hans Dieter Betz, *Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain: Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 402n488.

⁴⁹ The teaching on rightly judging is also consistent with Peter and the church’s responsibility to “bind and loose” (16:13–20; 18:15–20).

out as a resurrection witness (cf. Matt 28:7) as in the other Synoptics.⁵⁰ The text clearly affirms that Peter would have been part of the final group (cf. 28:16, “the eleven” minus Judas) but leaves the reader with the residue of the denial narrative in Matthew 26:58, 69–75.⁵¹ Although Matthew 26:58, 69–75 is featured in the other Gospels, several questions ensue from the omission of Peter’s name in Matthew’s final allusion to the “first” disciple. Should Matthew’s omission impress the reader finally to see Peter in a negative light? Does Matthew see Peter as an apostate? In the preceding argument, I have attempted to point out parallels between Peter’s depiction in Matthew’s Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount. I have argued that Peter is the archetype and antitype of Sermon discipleship. As these parallels have suggested, Peter is often linked to the Sermon’s conclusion. Peter’s presentation throughout the Gospel has been both positive and negative and typically the positive is immediately followed by the negative. This motion throughout Peter’s depiction is similar to the back-and-forth throughout 7:13–27. If Peter is being linked to the content of the Sermon’s conclusion, it follows that the Matthean Peter parallels the rhetorical functional of the Sermon as well. The Two Ways discourse (7:13–27) functions as a “rhetorical conclusion” to the Sermon that depicts hypothetical and contrasting ways of life and motivation/warnings to take appropriate action.⁵² If my proposed parallels are defensible, Peter’s final narrative serves as a final warning to avoid the “great fall” (7:27). In some senses, Peter’s denial should be juxtaposed to Judas’s betrayal. Both depictions feature a disciple who turned against his Lord, but only in the case of Judas is that decision final. Peter denies association with Jesus whereas Judas’s betrayal stands in the way of God’s will. By eliminating Peter’s name, the narrative decenters from Peter and leaves Judas as the one who ultimately falls away. The final notes of Peter’s characterization in Matthew seem to indicate that Peter does not deny the Sermon’s teachings even if he parallels the Sermon’s warnings. Peter, like the other disciples, hears Jesus’s final instructions to go and teach all that he has heard (28:20a).

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have attempted to show that the depiction of Peter in Matthew’s Gospel is lexically, thematically, and structurally tied to the Sermon on the Mount. I have tried to push beyond the spokesperson/representative/typical Peter to a more specific representation. In so doing, I have argued that Peter is primarily depicted as embodying the opposing visions in the Two Ways discourse (7:13–27). If the preceding argument is accepted, it has implications for how we engage not only the Sermon on the Mount, but also the person of Peter. First, the connection between the Sermon and Peter shows discipleship in action. It may be that Jesus is

⁵⁰ Davies and Allison note that $\tau\alpha\chi\acute{\upsilon}$ is redactional and may echo Matthew 5:25. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19–28*, 667.

⁵¹ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1250, acknowledges the tension: “[Matthew] probably drops ‘and to Peter’ in light of his focus in v. 16 on the eleven disciples as a body, but possibly the shadow of Peter’s denial is also involved.”

⁵² France, *Matthew*, 286.

the perfect embodiment of the Sermon on the Mount (5:48), but Peter is given his own moment in Matthew's narrative as one of the "first" Sermon disciples and serves as an exemplar for those choosing to follow Jesus's teaching. Second, this connection has consequences for how we understand Matthean soteriology. The Matthean Sermon describes discipleship in dichotomous terms that hinge on allegiances to the realms of heaven or earth. One is either "perfect" (5:48) or a worker of lawlessness (7:21–23). Given the stringency of these requirements, the depiction of Peter may provide some gradation between heaven and earth. At times, he assumes the mantle of authority that emulates his Teacher (5:1–2; 16:13–20; 23:1–8), and at other times, he falls (7:24–27; 16:21–23). Peter's example is a source of relief for those of us who do not quite reach "perfection."⁵³ Third, this interaction between Jesus's teaching and Peter's narrative may also provide some explanatory power for Matthew's juxtaposition of discourses and narratives. The discourses give the ideal, while the narratives provide pictures of the actual. Dale Allison has argued that the structure of Matthew's Gospel is biographical in nature and the alternating narratives and discourses are for converting the ideal reader to the *imitatio Christi*.⁵⁴ My argument would supplement Allison's suggestions with another possible thread that shows one man's development into the ideal disciple.

⁵³ See Matthew 11:28–30, where Jesus states, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

⁵⁴ Allison, "Structure, Biographical Impulse, and the *Imitatio Christi*," 135–54.