

# Jesus as the personification of God's wisdom in Matthew



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This article investigates the attribute of God's wisdom in Matthew's Gospel as personified in the ministry of his Son, Jesus. This Gospel identifies Jesus as 'Immanuel'. He is 'God with us'. The focus falls on several statements exhibiting wisdom motifs that are either uttered by or ascribed to Jesus. These statements are quite puzzling and continue to evoke scholarly discussion. The central theoretical argument of this article is that these statements cannot be fully understood without considering the echoes of the Jewish context exhibited in them. The objective of his investigation is to demonstrate how the recognition of similarities between the statements in Matthew and in Jewish literature contribute towards the understanding of wisdom statements in the Matthean Gospel. This article therefore begins by identifying key wisdom motifs within Jewish tradition, followed by an investigation of wisdom sayings in Matthew. Parallels in Luke are considered to sharpen peculiarities of Matthew's narration. From this investigation it became clear that the ministry of Jesus in Matthew is met with similar reactions as that of Wisdom in Jewish literature. The article accentuates a significant dimension of Matthew's Christology. Matthew vindicates Jesus against his opponents and justifies Jesus' acceptance within the Matthean community. For this community, he is not only recognised as wise teacher, but even the one who reveals and personifies wisdom. As 'Immanuel', he presents the attribute of God's wisdom.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussion of several puzzling and seemingly obscure statements echoing wisdom motifs, either attributed to or uttered by Jesus.

**Keywords:** wisdom; Lady Wisdom; attributes of God; Gospel of Matthew; wise; concealment; revelation; mystery; Sophia.

## Introduction

This article investigates the attribute of God's wisdom in the First Gospel. Though this Gospel has several references to wisdom in general (Mt 2:1, 7, 16; 7:24–25; 10:16; 24:45; 25:2, 4, 8),<sup>1</sup> they are not relevant to this study, as they deal primarily with the wisdom of people. Instead, the focus of this investigation falls on the wisdom of God. While numerous studies have been published on God's wisdom, this article takes a different approach by investigating how the wisdom of God is revealed in the ministry of Jesus. A biblical theological approach is followed, focusing on passages in the First Gospel where wisdom motifs are attached to Jesus. In this Gospel, Jesus is called Emmanuel, God with us (Mt 1:22). He is the *Deus Praesens*. The central argument is that Jesus, in his teachings and actions reveals God's wisdom. Matthew uses wisdom imagery uniquely and strikingly to describe Jesus as the personified wisdom of God. Some of this imagery also occurs in parallel passages in Luke's Gospel; yet, Matthew exhibits a unique perspective. The article therefore deals with these parallels, but then specifically highlights the uniqueness in Matthew.

Wisdom motifs have long been recognised in the New Testament, including the Synoptic Gospels (Johnson 1974:44; Suggs 1970:130); yet, their interpretation remains puzzling in many cases and evokes a lot of discussion. The original audience of the writings would probably have been

1. Matthew 2:1, 7 and 16 mentions the wise men (μάγοι) from the East who came to honour Jesus as a newborn baby. The term μάγοι probably refers to their learned status as astrologers.
  - In Matthew 7:24–25, Jesus defines that everyone who hears his words and does them, will be like a wise (φρόνιμος) man who built his house upon the rock.
  - In Matthew 10:16, Jesus admonishes his disciples whom he sends out to be wise (φρόνιμοι) as serpents and simple as doves. Φρόνιμοι in this context, refers to them as being cautious.
  - In Matthew 24:45, Jesus tells the parable of the faithful and wise (φρόνιμος) servant, whom his master has set over his household to give them their food at the proper time. In this case, wisdom refers to suitable choices about everyday life, but also discernment about spiritual values.
  - In the parable of the foolish and the wise (φρόνιμοι) virgins (Mt 25:2, 4, 8, 9), Jesus emphasises the point of foresight or preparedness.

**Note:** Special Collection: Biblical Theological investigations into the attribute of Gods wisdom.

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acquainted with these motifs, but the modern reader finds them obscure, full of difficulty, and even unfitting additions to the Gospel narratives.

In Matthew, wisdom motifs are found in aphoristic wisdom sayings by Jesus, as well as characteristics attributed to Jesus. These motifs occur in two sections of this Gospel. The first section comprises Matthew 11:2–13:58. In this section two wisdom sayings occur, namely in Matthew 11:19 and 11:25–30. The second section comprises Matthew 19:1–25:46 in which two more wisdom sayings occur, namely an oracle in Matthew 23:34–36 and a lament in Matthew 23:37–39. It is argued that these sayings are related to some wisdom figure from Jewish origin.

This article contributes to the ongoing discussion by investigating the probable Jewish origin of this statement and how it has been developed to fit the unique context of Matthew's narrative. The article begins with a brief investigation of the origin of wisdom motifs within Jewish writings, which provides background for the understanding of these motifs in this Gospel. This is followed by a semantic analysis of wisdom sayings in Matthew. In this analysis, similarities with parallel passages in Luke's Gospel are identified along with unique features in Matthew. Based on this analysis, conclusions are drawn to demonstrate how God's wisdom is exhibited by these motifs in Jesus' ministry.

## Wisdom in Jewish tradition

When Matthew deals with the theme of wisdom, he does not do this within a vacuum. He stands within a Jewish tradition in which wisdom has played a major role, as depicted in numerous Jewish writings of those times.

In Jewish writings, wisdom has a variety of meanings. When it refers to human wisdom, it speaks of truthfulness, righteousness, and fear of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> It speaks inter alia of kindness towards the oppressed and is a calling to repentance. Divine wisdom, on the other hand, was often personified in the Second Temple and Tannaitic literature<sup>3</sup> (Deutsch 1990:17).

Proverbs 1:20–33 speaks of *Lady Wisdom*. She preaches in the public places of the city streets, marketplace, and city walls. She acts as a prophet and teacher. She rebukes those who pass by and calls them to repentance. She warns that she would withdraw herself from those who refuse to listen to her. In contrast, she assures those who listen to her that they will live in safety and peace, with no fear or harm. In Proverbs 3:13–18, wisdom's value is lauded. In Proverbs 7:4, she is called 'sister' who should form part of the family of wise persons and keep them away from the seductive adulteress. In Proverbs 8, she is depicted as a preacher and teacher. God begot her and she pre-exists the created order (Pr 8:22–31).

2. The prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:6–14 offers a prime example of a human seeking wisdom from God.

3. When dealing with references to Tannaitic literature, which contains the rabbinic works, one obviously should be cautious of anachronistic reading of ideas into the New Testament, as these texts were written between 10 and 220 CE, and some therefore date later than the New Testament.

She calls her children to listen to her instructions. If they do so, they will find true life and the favour of the Lord. However, those who reject her teachings will meet destruction (Pr 8:32–36; Deutsch 1990:20).

From these passages, it seems that in pre-Christian Judaism a depiction of wisdom has developed into a metaphorical lady (Suggs 1970:43–44, 67–69). Accordingly, she existed before creation. She speaks wisdom and announces that she will send her messengers to spread her teachings of wisdom. However, there will be those who do not accept her words or that of her messengers. Those who reject her wisdom will persecute her messengers. This rejection results in her uttering oracles of doom (Pr 1:20–32). She seeks an abode on earth, but as she is not welcomed, she returns disappointed to heaven (1 En 42; 2 Esdr 5:9–10).<sup>4</sup> She nevertheless does find some home in Israel (Sir 24). She retains a special concern for the elect. She shares the wisdom that was hidden with those who welcomed her. Carrying such wisdom, she is also identified with the Torah (Sir 23:27; Wis 9:9; 6:4, 9<sup>5</sup>; 2 Apoc Bar 5:3–7; Bar 3:37–4:1).<sup>6</sup> However, her wisdom is hidden from worldly persons who consider themselves to be wise.

Suggs (1970) recognises the following three main points regarding wisdom motifs from Jewish literature in New Testament times:

- In late Judaism, wisdom is personified as a lady. She has existed from before the creation of the world. Sometimes she speaks through oracles. She sends her messengers to every generation; yet, they are time and again rejected. She nevertheless offers revelation and pleads to be accepted in the world. She is specifically concerned about the elect. She is identified with the Torah.
- Q was influenced by these Jewish ideas about wisdom in its depiction of Jesus and John the Baptist. Accordingly, Jesus and John are depicted as the last and greatest of the envoys of Wisdom. As was the case with previous envoys of Wisdom, they were rejected too. They were persecuted and killed, with the result that the final doom would fall on 'this generation'.
- Matthew identifies Jesus with *Wisdom*. Jesus is not merely the messenger of Wisdom, but the personified Wisdom itself.

4. The older sections of 1 Enoch (mainly in the Book of the Watchers) are estimated to date from about 300–200 BC, and the latest part (Book of Parables) is probably to 100 BC. Scholars date 2 Esdras between 70 and 218 CE.

5. The Book of Wisdom, also known as the Wisdom of Solomon, is generally dated to the mid-first century BC. The Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, dates from approximately 200 to 175 BC. Baruch is also known as the Apocalypse of Baruch, and it was written 1st century CE or early 2nd century CE, after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The Book of Baruch is sometimes referred to as 1 Baruch and was written in the 1st century BC during or shortly after the period of the Maccabees.

6. Based on fragmented motifs from Jewish literature, Rudolf Bultmann (1963:120–121) has composed this Wisdom myth: 'The pre-existent wisdom who was a companion to God at the creation, seeks dwelling on earth among men [sic]. This she does in vain, however, since her message is rejected. She comes to her own possession, but those who are hers do not receive her. She returns therefore into heaven and remains hidden there. Men [sic] seek her of course, but no one can find her. God alone knows the way to her'. It is, however, an open question if an intact version of this mythology ever existed, or at least existed before Christ. Conzelmann (1971:232) remarks, the myth is attested only in late texts. Though it is questionable whether an intact version of such a Wisdom Myth existed when the Gospel was written, it is undeniable that the elements thereof was common in Jewish literature of those days.

With a close reading of the First Gospel, several of these images of divine wisdom can be recognised in the words and actions of Jesus, when read within their wider textual context. Two textual units are considered, namely Matthew 11:2–13:58 and 19:1–25:46.

## Wisdom in unit 1 (Mt 11:2–13:58)

Matthew 11:2–13:58 can be regarded as a literary unit. Two wisdom sayings occur in the first unit, namely in Matthew 11:19 and 11:25–30. Motifs that are typically found in Jewish wisdom literature are also eminent in this section, namely rejections and acceptance, as well as concealment and revelation.

### Rejection and acceptance

#### Rejection

Opposition, misunderstanding, unbelief, and rejection form dominant motifs in Matthew 11:2–13:58. The Galilean cities among whom Jesus has done δυνάμεις [mighty works] have refused to repent (Mt 11:20–24). Opposing teachers challenge Jesus regarding Sabbath observance (Mt 12:1–8, 9–14). They accuse him of exorcising through demonic power (Mt 12:22–30). Jesus is met by scepticism, unbelief, and rejection by his fellow townsfolk, who ἐσκανδαλίζοντο ἐν αὐτῷ [are offended by him] (Mt 13:57).

#### Acceptance

Equally significant, however, are contrasting themes of acceptance, perception, and understanding. John and his disciples enquire in good faith about the identity of Jesus (Mt 11:2–6). Jesus responds positively. The νήπιοι [little ones] receive revelation (Mt 11:25). Jesus' disciples do the will of the Father (Mt 12:49–50). They have been given to know τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν [the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven] (Mt 13:11). Jesus told them κερυμμένα ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου [things hidden since the foundation of the world] (Mt 13:35). They 'see', 'hear' (Mt 13:17), and 'understand' (13:23, 51) what others do not.

### Concealment and revelation

Equally significant are the themes of concealment and revelation that are also found in this unit.

#### Concealment

The Father ἔκρυψε ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν [hides these things from the wise and learned] (Mt 11:25) and τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν [the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven] are not granted to the crowds (Mt 13:11).

#### Revelation

In contrast, Jesus reveals his identity through words and deeds (Mt 11:2–6; 12:15–21, 22–30; 13:53–58). The Father ἀπεκάλυψε αὐτὰ νηπίοις [reveals these things to the little ones] and ὃ ἂν βούληται ὁ Υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι [He reveals the Son to whom He wants] (Mt 11:25–27). Τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν [the mysteries of the kingdom of

heaven] are given to the disciples (Mt 13:11). Jesus tells parables to disclose hidden things κερυμμένα ἀπὸ καταβολῆς (κόσμου)<sup>7</sup> [things hidden since the foundation (of the world)] (Mt 13:35).

The content of this revelation is eschatological and apocalyptic. With the coming of the kingdom of heaven, a new order is inaugurated.

### Wisdom is justified by her deeds (Mt 11:19)

This brings us to Matthew's first wisdom saying: ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς [Wisdom is justified by her deeds] (Mt 11:19). The parallel in Luke 7:35 reads: ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς [Wisdom is justified by all her children].

This statement forms the conclusion to the preceding short parable of children playing in the marketplace (Mt 11:16–17; Lk 7:31–32).<sup>8</sup> This concluding statement has puzzled many scholars and led to a lot of discussion. Allen (1907:119) describes it as 'obscure' and 'full of difficulty'. Hill (1972:202) and Harrington (1991:158) likewise characterise it as 'obscure'. Ernst (1977:253) remarks 'ein auf ersten Blick rätselhaftes Wort'. Cotter (1987:294) opines that it probably was an addition taken from a well-known independent Jewish saying. Likewise, Beare (1981:262) and Hagner (1993:313) regard this final sentence as an independent proverb with no clear connection with the preceding parable.

It seems probable that this puzzling saying reflects Sirach 4:11 ('Wisdom teaches her children and takes hold of those who seek her'; New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]-translation)<sup>9</sup> and Proverbs 8:32 ('And now, oh sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways'; English Standard Version [ESV]-translation). The Gospel writers probably saw a connection between Jesus' preceding argumentation and these references. This connection has been observed in different ways. Versepūt's (1986:116) interpretation is that Wisdom's justification by her deeds refers to the fact that despite all opposition, the works of God 'prove the divine wisdom and purpose to be correct'. Linton (1976:177–178) offers an alternative interpretation, namely that Wisdom is not justified by her deeds or children, but rather despite them. In such case, ἀπὸ should be interpreted as 'before' or 'over against'. However, if this statement indeed reflects Sirach 4:11 and Proverbs 8:32, the interpretation of Linton seems improbable, as it would be odd to identify the 'children of wisdom' with unfaithful Israel. In Sirach and Proverbs, the contrary is the case.

The context in which this statement (Mt 11:19; Lk 7:35) is positioned, should therefore be accounted for in this interpretation. A closer look at the preceding parable of the children sitting in the marketplaces (Mt 11:16–17; Lk 7:31–32) and Jesus' application of the parables (Mt 11:18; Lk 7:33–34) is

7. More reliable manuscripts do not have κόσμου.

8. Zeller (1977:252–257) presents an overview of literal and conceptual difficulties in the interpretation of this parable.

9. The Book of Sirach, also known as Ecclesiasticus, consists of ethical teachings. It dates from approximately 200 to 175 BCE.

TABLE 1: Wisdom justified by deeds.

Matthew 11:16–19	Luke 7:31–35
<b>Parable (Mt 11:16–17)</b> Τίτι δὲ ὁμοιώσω τὴν γενεάν ταύτην; ὁμοία ἐστὶν παιδίσι καθημένοις ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ἢ προσφωνοῦντα τοῖς ἐτέροις λέγουσιν <b>Ἡύλησαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὤρχησασθε ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκόψασθε.</b> <b>Application (Mt 11:18)</b> ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης μῆτε ἐσθίων μῆτε πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν Δαιμόνιον ἔχει ἦλθεν ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν Ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν. <b>Wisdom statement (Mt 11:19)</b> καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς.	<b>Parable (Lk 7:31–32)</b> Τίτι οὖν ὁμοιώσω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης, καὶ τίτι εἰσὶν ὅμοιοι; ὅμοιοι εἰσὶν παιδίσι τοῖς ἐν ἀγορᾷ καθημένοις καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις ἢ λέγει <b>Ἡύλησαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὤρχησασθε ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκλαύσατε.</b> <b>Application (Lk 7:33–34)</b> ἐλήλυθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης ὁ Βαπτιστῆς μῆ ἐσθίων ἄρτον μῆτε πίνων οἶνον, καὶ λέγετε Δαιμόνιον ἔχει. ἐλήλυθεν ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγετε Ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης, φίλος τελωνῶν καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν. <b>Wisdom statement (Lk 7:35)</b> καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.
<b>Parable (Mt 11:16–17)</b> ‘But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, ‘We played the flute’ for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ <b>Application (Mt 11:18)</b> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ <b>Wisdom statement (Mt 11:19)</b> Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.	<b>Parable (Lk 7:31–32)</b> ‘To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute’ for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’ <b>Application (Lk 7:33–34)</b> For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon’. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ <b>Wisdom statement (Lk 7:35)</b> Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.

therefore appropriate. Parallels between Matthew’s and Luke’s versions are indicated with markers in Tabel 1 and subsequent Tables. Considering these parallels exhibits Matthew’s peculiarities which sharpens the interpretation of Matthew’s version.<sup>10</sup>

The parable is introduced with Τίτι δὲ ὁμοιώσω τὴν γενεάν ταύτην; [‘But to what shall I compare (the people of) this generation?’] (Mt 11:16; Lk 7:31). Jesus confronts his audience with their view of John and himself, respectively. In contrasting parallels, the parable that follows, depicts how Jesus’ contemporaries, ‘this generation’, responded to him and John. ‘This generation’ is a technical term with roots in the Old Testament. It refers to the faithless, sinful, and perverse generation in the wilderness (Dt 1:35; 32:5, 20). In the wilderness, ‘this generation’ responded with grumbling and rebellion against God’s mighty acts. ‘This generation’ does the same with the acts of Jesus and John. The term therefore does not have a chronological meaning as such, but a connotation of an evil character (Davies & Allison 2004a:260–261). The children in the parable complain that other children would not join their games. When they played the flute as at a wedding feast, the other children would not dance, and when they wailed as at a funeral, they

10. The English translations are from the ESV.

likewise would not join in. In Luke 7:35, the playing children are explicitly identified as the ‘children of wisdom’, and ‘this generation’ with the children who would not join them.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus then applies the parable to the way the Pharisees reacted to the conduct of John and himself<sup>12</sup> (Mt 11:18–19a; Lk 7:33–34). John called them to mourn and repent, while Jesus announced the joy of the coming of the Kingdom. ‘This generation’ criticises the conduct of both John and Jesus and rejects their invitations. Instead of repenting or rejoicing, they say that John is possessed, and that Jesus is a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners.<sup>13</sup> John and Jesus have both suffered the fate of the messengers of Wisdom (Wisd 2:12–20).<sup>14</sup> In wisdom tradition, Wisdom sent messengers as her representatives (Wisd 7:27).<sup>15</sup> Thus, the deeds of Wisdom are made known through her representatives.

Jesus then declares, that despite this generation’s rejection of John and himself, truth will prevail. Both are messengers of God’s σοφία [wisdom]. God’s wisdom will be shown to be right after all. God sends his prophets to act out his wisdom. In this immediate context, the ἔργα [deeds] of σοφία [wisdom] refers to the ministries of John and Jesus [Gathercole 2003:482].<sup>16</sup> God, in his wisdom, has sent both, but this generation has refused to accept them. Hagner (1993:311) pointedly remarks: ‘Jesus, like Wisdom, is rejected, but Jesus’ deeds, like the deeds of Wisdom, are right and good and will ultimately vindicate him.’

Looking at the wider context, the argument becomes even clearer. While Luke 7:35 states that Wisdom will be justified ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς [by all her children], Matthew 11:19 states that Wisdom will be justified ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς [by her deeds]. This difference demonstrates a peculiarity in Matthew’s perspective. It seems that Matthew identifies Jesus with Wisdom by creating a parallel between τὰ ἔργα (the deeds) of wisdom in verse 19b and τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (the deeds of the Christ) in verse 2 (Davies & Allison 2004a:264; Lillie n.d.:131). Matthew 11:2–3 reads: ‘Now when John heard in prison about τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ [the deeds of Christ], he

11. Davies and Allison (2004a:262) interpret this differently. They identify the playing children with ‘this generation’ who are like disagreeable children who complain that others would not act according to their desires and expectation. As mentioned before, this interpretation seems less likely.

12. Jesus refers to himself as the ‘Son of Man’. In Matthew, this term is used as a Christological title, for example Matthew 20:28 (Davies & Allison 2004a:264).

13. This probably refers to Jesus’ custom to hold festive table fellowship with such outcasts.

14. Wisdom (2) reads: ‘Let us lie in wait for the righteous one, because he is annoying to us; he opposes our actions. Reproaches us for transgressions of the law. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the LORD. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; and charges us with violations of our training ... With violence and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him’. (pp. 12–20)

15. Wisdom 7:27 reads: ‘Passing into holy souls from age to age, she produces friends of God and prophets.’

16. Mussner (1959:610) fittingly remarks: ‘Aber in der Schlussentz sind nicht mehr bloss die “Taten” des Messias Jesus gemeint, sondern auch die “Taten” des Täufers.’

sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you he who is to come or shall we look for another?” Jesus responds (Mt 11; Lk 7):

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the poor have the good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me. (pp. 4–6; 18–23)

Jesus’ answer alludes to his teachings and miracles depicted in Matthew 5–10 (Cotter 1987:293). The deeds of σοφία (Mt 11:19) are the deeds of Christ (Mt 11:2). Matthew identifies Jesus not only as the child of Wisdom as Luke does, but as σοφία itself. This implies that despite the disappointing response of ‘this generation’, the works of Jesus demonstrate his identity. This generation should have responded positively to Jesus’ deeds. If these people still do not believe, it is not the fault of Jesus who personifies wisdom, but their own.

In this passage, Matthew identifies Jesus as the personified wisdom itself.

### Wisdom mediated by Jesus (Mt 11:25–30)

The next wisdom passage follows immediately the woes on the Galilean cities (Mt 11:20–24; Lk 10:13–15). It forms part of a longer section dominated by themes of acceptance–rejection, and revelation–concealment as previously discussed.

While Jesus was identified as Wisdom in Matthew 11:19, he implicitly identifies himself as Wisdom in Matthew 11:25–30 and Luke 10:21–22. The connection with the preceding passages in which John and Jesus are rejected (Mt 11:16–19; Lk 7:31–35) and the judgement of the unrepentant Galilean cities (Mt 11:20–24; Lk 10:13–15) is clear. These cities were supposed to accept Jesus and his message. The positive tone of Matthew 11:25–30 and Luke 10:21–22 forms a sharp contrast to the growing opposition Jesus has received from Israel in the preceding passage (Mt 11:2–24). The theme of failure to favourable response continues, yet ‘little children’ perceive what is going on (Mt 11:25–30).

Matthew 11:25–30 consists of three sayings with parallels of the first two in Luke 10:21–22 as demonstrated in Table 2. Each of these sayings reveals something about Jesus while echoing motifs from Jewish wisdom literature.

In the first part (Mt 11:25–26; Lk 10:21), Jesus exultantly thanks God that he has hidden knowledge ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν [from the wise and the learned],<sup>17</sup> while revealing it νηπίοις [to the little ones].<sup>18</sup> Those designated as ‘wise and learned’ are likely the scribes, while the ‘little ones’ are likely the disciples. Jesus acknowledges the sovereignty, wisdom, and grace of the hidden God. Several Jewish echoes can be identified: ‘Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of

17. Already in the Old Testament the ‘wise and understanding’ is used in a negative sense, as being proud and arrogant, and clever in their own sight, yet far from real wisdom (e.g. Job 5:13; Is 5:21; Jr 8:8; 9:23–24; 49:7).

18. In the Septuagint (LXX) ‘little children’ is often used of those who are weak in the eyes of the world but are the righteous ones (Ps 18:7; 114:6; 118:30).

TABLE 2: Wisdom mediated by Jesus.

Matthew 11:25–30	Luke 10:21–22
<p>Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν</p> <p><b>Thanks to the Father (Mt 11:25–26)</b></p> <p>Ἐξομολογούμεθα σοι, Πάτερ, Κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐκρύψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις· ναί, ὁ Πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἔμπροσθέν σου.</p> <p><b>Knowledge residing in Jesus (Mt 11:27)</b></p> <p>Πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν Υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατήρ, οὐδὲ τὸν Πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει εἰ μὴ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ ὁ ἐάν βούληται ὁ Υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι.</p> <p><b>Invitation to knowledge (Mt 11:28–30)</b></p> <p>Δεῦτε πρός με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς. ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πραΰς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· ὁ γὰρ ζυγὸς μου χρηστός καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἕλαφρόν ἐστιν.</p>	<p>Ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἠγαλλίασατο τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ Ἁγίῳ καὶ εἶπεν</p> <p><b>Thanks to the Father (Lk 10:21)</b></p> <p>Ἐξομολογούμεθα σοι, Πάτερ, Κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἀπέκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν, καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις· ναί, ὁ Πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἔμπροσθέν σου.</p> <p><b>Knowledge residing in Jesus (Lk 10:22)</b></p> <p>πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς γινώσκει τίς ἐστιν ὁ Υἱὸς εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ Πατήρ εἰ μὴ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ ὁ ἐάν βούληται ὁ Υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψαι.</p> <p><b>Invitation to knowledge (Lk 10:28–30)</b></p> <p>Δεῦτε πρός με πάντες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι, κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς. ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πραΰς εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν· ὁ γὰρ ζυγὸς μου χρηστός καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἕλαφρόν ἐστιν.</p>
<p>At that time Jesus declared,</p> <p><b>Thanks to the Father (Mt 11:25–26)</b></p> <p>‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.</p> <p><b>Knowledge residing in Jesus (Mt 11:27)</b></p> <p>All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.</p> <p><b>Invitation to knowledge (Mt 11:28–30)</b></p> <p>Come to me, all who labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light’.</p>	<p>In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said,</p> <p><b>Thanks to the Father (Lk 10:21)</b></p> <p>‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will’.</p> <p><b>Knowledge residing in Jesus (Lk 10:22)</b></p> <p>All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’.</p>

Israel, the Saviour’ (Is 45:15); ‘The Lord has made wise the simple’ (Ps 19:7); ‘Wisdom has opened the mouths of the dumb, and made the tongues of the little ones speak clearly’ (Wisdom 10:21); ‘Many are lofty and renowned, but to the meek he reveals his secrets’ (Ec 3:19)<sup>19</sup>; and ‘the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden’ (Is 29:14). Jesus’ words also correlate with Jewish eschatological expectations (Davies & Allison 2004a:277). According to these expectations, the end times would bring exceptional knowledge and wisdom for the elect (Jr 31:34; Hab 2:14). Yet, other than Jewish apocalyptic texts where revelation often comes through angels, the revelation, in this case, comes through Jesus to the ‘little ones’.<sup>20</sup> Eschatological knowledge can already be found in Jesus. He reveals end-time secrets (cf. Mt 13:16–17).

This is followed by a second part in which Jesus declares that knowledge resides in him (Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22). Jesus describes his special relationship with the Father in terms of divine mutuality. Not only does the Son know the Father, but the Son has also received all things from the Father. The Father hands all apocalyptic mysteries over to the Son to reveal

19. The Book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus contains Jewish ethical teachings, written by the Judahite scribe Ben Sira of Jerusalem, approximately between 200 and 175 BC.

20. In Jewish apocalyptic texts, revelation often comes through angels (e.g. Zch 5; Dn 8:15–26; 9:22–27; 10:18–12:4; Ac 7:53; R. 17:7–18) (Davies & Allison 2004a:279).

them in his earthly ministry. The remarkable aspect of all this is that the Son is willing and eager to share that entire relationship and all it implies with others. Without Jesus, God's divinity is not conceivable. Without the Father, there is no way to Jesus. Both belong together. God becomes perceivable only as the gift of the Son, and only by revelation. Jesus graciously reveals all he knows about the Father to those who are open to him and accept him in faith. One cannot comprehend God apart from Jesus (Hensell 2018:12).

Motifs from Jewish wisdom literature can once again be noticed (Viljoen 2018:216). Only God knows wisdom (Job 28:12–27) and so does only the Father know the Son. Only Wisdom knows God (Wisd 8:4; 9:1–18), and so does only the Son know the Father.<sup>21</sup> Wisdom reveals divine secrets which have been entrusted by God (Wisd 9:1–18; 10:10) and so does the Son reveal the Father. As Wisdom knows the hidden things of God and mediates that knowledge to the wise, so too does Jesus alone know the Father and mediates that knowledge to those whom he chooses. It seems that the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father also echoes the relationship between the Lord and Moses. As Jesus knows the Father, Moses prays that he might know the Lord (Ex 33:12–13). Jesus promises rest, as the Lord promises rest for Moses (Ex 33:14). Deuteronomy 34:10 states reciprocal knowledge between the Lord and Moses: 'There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face'. The Lord knows Moses and Moses knows the Lord, and this knowledge is exclusive. Furthermore, Jesus defines himself as meek which was considered as the outstanding characteristic of Moses (Davies & Allison 2004a:272, 284, 286).

In the third part of Matthew's version, the connection between Christ and Wisdom is intensified. This passage is unique among the Gospels. Jesus extends his invitation: δεῦτε πρὸς με ['Come to me'], followed by a promise κἀγὼ ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς ['and I will give you rest'] and then gives instruction ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ ['take up my yoke and learn from me'] (Mt 11:28–30). Jesus implicitly identifies himself with Wisdom. In Proverbs 1:20–23 and 8:1–36, Wisdom calls hearers to her, to learn from her with the promise that they will find rest. In Ben Sirach, Wisdom is personified and the student is advised to take on her yoke (Sir 6:30–31) to find rest (Sir 6:28). Jesus' invitation to come to him, stands in parallel to his instruction to take up his yoke and learn from him, as a similar promise of rest is attached to each (Davies & Allison 2004a:289). While Jesus invites his hearers to take up his 'yoke', he uses a term that was often used to refer to the Torah that was given to Moses.<sup>22</sup> In Jewish teachings, the 'yoke' often refers to the Torah (Sir 6:37; 15:1 and 24:1–34; cf. Viljoen 2018:217). However, Jewish teachers would not call the followers to take up their yoke, but rather the yoke of the Torah. Jesus therefore does not only identify himself with

21. The resistance and insults that Jesus must endure, is remarkably similar to those that Wisdom must endure from the ungodly men in Wisdom 2.

22. Juce (2011) argues that Matthew intensifies the parallels between Jesus and Moses (Torah), Jesus and Elijah (Prophets), and Jesus and Solomon/Wisdom (Writings) to demonstrate that Jesus has fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures by superseding these representative figures of the tripartite of the Scriptures.

Wisdom, but also with the Torah.<sup>23</sup> As personification of both Wisdom and Torah, Jesus reveals God's wisdom and perfect Torah. The paradox of an easy yoke and a light burden is striking.<sup>24</sup> As is obvious from the wider context of Matthew, Jesus is described as placing his interpretation of the Torah over that of scribes and Pharisees (Viljoen 2018:218). While their interpretation of the Torah is tiring and burdensome, Jesus' interpretation works the opposite.

In identifying Jesus as Wisdom, Matthew portrays Jesus as the one who mediates and reveals the hidden things of God's apocalyptic reign and his perfect will. Matthew 11:25–30 authenticates Jesus' teaching, both apocalyptic and halachic. He can reveal hidden things and his *halachah* is authoritative. His teaching is legitimated against the opposing teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus affirms the continuing validity of the Torah (Mt 5:17–20), followed by his distinctive interpretation in the form of six halachic arguments (Mt 5:21–47; Viljoen 2018:68–169). The Sermon concludes with a remark by the author: 'The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes' (Mt 7:28–29).

Later in the text, these very same Jewish leaders challenge Jesus and request a sign to validate his authority (Mt 12:38). Jesus responds that one greater than Jonah, and one greater in wisdom (σοφία) than even Solomon is among them (Mt 12:40–42). His wisdom is acclaimed with amazement by the people in the synagogue, Πόθεν τούτῳ ἡ σοφία αὕτη καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις (Mt 13:54), though some might have been deeply offended.<sup>25</sup>

## Wisdom in unit 2 (Mt 19:1–25:46)

Two more wisdom sayings connected to with Jesus are found in Matthew 23:34–36; Luke 11:49 and Matthew 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35. They once again occur within the wider context of conflict between Jesus and opposing leaders (Mt 19:1–25:46).

### Rejection and opposition

Jesus is opposed by Herodians (Mt 22:16), Sadducees (Mt 22:23), chief priests (Mt 20:18; 21:23, 45), and elders (Mt 21:23), but most frequently by Pharisees (Mt 19:3; 21:45; 22:15, 34, 41) and scribes (Mt 20:18; 21:15). Points of conflict include concerns about *halachah* (Mt 19:3–9; 22:15–22, 23–33, 34–40), and Jesus' authority to teach, heal, and perform 'wonderful things' (Mt 21:15).

23. That Jesus' yoke is a reference to the Torah, specifically Jesus' interpretation of the Torah, is confirmed in the halachic controversy about Sabbath observance which follows in the subsequent scenes (Mt 12:1–8 and 9–14).

24. Rabbis also referred to the yoke of the Law with reverence and praise (Abot 3:5–6). Taking on the yoke of Torah was not necessarily seen as a burden, but as a symbol of devotion and obedience.

25. See Viljoen (2016:1–7) on the underlying conflict and struggle for authority in the Matthean Gospel. This struggle signifies part of the debate about the trustworthy keepers of the Torah. Matthew pictures several scenes in which these groups oppose Jesus by trying to discredit his authority and knowledge to interpret the Torah. Matthew time and again exposes their malice, while he demonstrates the authority and wisdom of Jesus to contrast them.

TABLE 3: Wisdom oracle.

Matthew 23:34–36	Luke 11:49
<p>διὰ τοῦτο ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφῆτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς· ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενεῖτε καὶ σταυρώσετε, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν μαστιγώσετε ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν καὶ διώξετε ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν· ὅπως ἔλθῃ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυνόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος Ἄβελ τοῦ δικαίου ἕως τοῦ αἵματος Ζαχαρίου υἱοῦ Βαραχίου, ὃν ἐφονεύσατε μεταξύ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ θουιαστηρίου.</p> <p>ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἡξεῖ ταῦτα πάντα ἐπὶ τὴν γενεάν ταύτην.</p> <p>Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town</p> <p>so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.</p> <p>Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.</p>	<p>ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶπεν Ἀποστελῶ εἰς αὐτοὺς προφῆτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενοῦσιν καὶ διώξουσιν</p> <p>Therefore, the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute'.</p>

Jesus' response to this rejection and opposition reaches its climax in Matthew 23. In Matthew 23:1–12, Jesus contrasts the manner of leadership exercised by scribes and Pharisees with that required of the leaders of Matthew's community. Scribes and Pharisees are 'blind' (Mt 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26) because they do not perceive the inner meaning of *halachah* and they fail to give their people proper leadership. In a series of woe sayings, Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites (Mt 23:13–33).

This woe discourse in Matthew is concluded with two wisdom sayings; an oracle in verse 34–36, and a lament in verse 37–39.<sup>26</sup> While the Matthean version implicitly identifies Jesus with personified wisdom, the Lukan version does it explicitly.

### Wisdom oracle (Mt 23:34–36)

The first of these sayings occurs in Matthew 23:34–36 paralleled by Luke 11:49 as demonstrated in Table 3.

The Matthean version of the saying begins with ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω [I send] while the Lukan version reads ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶπεν [the Wisdom of God said]. Matthew places the words of Wisdom on Jesus' lips. This substitution of 'I' (in Matthew) for 'the Wisdom of God' (in Luke) makes explicit the depiction of Jesus as personified wisdom. While Wisdom had the prerogative to send prophets, Jesus does it now.

Matthew 23:34 ascribes Jesus (the Wisdom of God in Luke) as the one who is sending his envoys, namely προφῆται, σοφοὶ and γραμματεῖς (parallel to προφῆται and ἀπόστολοι in Luke). The three types of professionals seem to represent the three parts of Hebrew scripture, namely the Ketubim, Nebiim, and

26. These words of Jesus echo the warning of Jeremiah 7:25–29: 'I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers... the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.' In both cases the refusal to listen and the punishment is mentioned.

the Torah (Juce 2011:136).<sup>27</sup> These envoys are not primarily the prophets of old, but rather the disciples of Jesus and the messengers of the Matthean community.<sup>28</sup> The fate of Jesus' envoys and those of Matthew's day, experienced similar resistance as Israel's prophets of old.<sup>29</sup> The disciples of Jesus share the same fate as the disciples of Wisdom as described in Wisdom 2.<sup>30</sup> Matthew places Jesus and the teachers of his community over against the opposing scribes and Pharisees, the teachers of the broader Jewish community.<sup>31</sup> Though these offices cannot be clearly distinguished, some nuances in meaning can be defined. As envoys of Jesus, the προφῆται exercised prophetic and teaching functions both in Jesus' time and in that of the Matthean community.<sup>32</sup> The addition of σοφοὶ in Matthew is significant. The pun of words between σοφοὶ and σοφία is meaningful. Σοφοὶ was a common term for 'teacher' in the 1st century.<sup>33</sup> These σοφοὶ teach the wisdom of σοφία. The γραμματεῖς since the pre-Tannaitic times had the function of interpreting and transmitting the traditions of faith.<sup>34</sup> It could be that these three terms did correspond with offices in Matthew's community. In the First Gospel, it reflects the transmission and interpretation of the principles of faith and wisdom as exercised in their community.

Matthew thus legitimates the teaching and leadership of his community who experience opposition from the broader Jewish leadership. They are the true teachers and interpreters of the truthful tradition because they are the envoys of Jesus, whom Matthew identifies as the Wisdom of God.

### Wisdom's Lament (Mt 23:37–39)

Jesus' woe discourse in Matthew 23:37–39 concludes with a lament addressed to Jerusalem. Luke 13:34–35 offers a similar lament as a conclusion of Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem (cf. Table 4).

In Luke 11:49<sup>35</sup>, almost identical words as in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 were spoken by the wisdom of God (ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ). This similarity once again demonstrates the connection between Jesus and the wisdom of God. Jerusalem rejected the messengers of Jesus, as it has rejected the

27. This once again demonstrates Matthew's emphasis that Jewish Scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus.

28. Deutsch (1996:118) suggests that the invitation 'reflects a context of competition for disciples between the teachers of Matthew's community and those of the opposition'.

29. This passage seemingly reflects the sapiential and deuteronomistic belief that Israel has been rebellious and has rejected God's prophets and Wisdom herself (Pr 1:20–33).

30. Jesus has previously instructed his disciples to be as shrewd as serpents (Mt 10:16), but now they will suffer from serpents.

31. Jesus sends prophets to those who honour only dead prophets (Mt 23:29), and wise men to those who only assume to be wise (Mt 11:25) and scribes to those who do not practise what they preach (Mt 23:3; Davies & Allison 2004b:315).

32. Louw (ed. 1989:553) defines a προφῆτης as 'one who proclaims inspired utterances on behalf of God'.

33. Louw (ed. 1989:385) defines a σοφός as 'a person of professional or semi-professional status who is regarded as particularly capable in understanding the philosophical aspects of knowledge and experience'.

34. Louw (ed. 1989:545) defines a γραμματεὺς as 'a recognized expert in Jewish law (including both canonical and traditional laws and regulations)'.

35. Luke 11:49 reads: 'διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶπεν Ἀποστελῶ εἰς αὐτοὺς προφῆτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενοῦσιν καὶ διώξουσιν'.

TABLE 4: Wisdom's lament.

Matthew 23:37–39	Luke 13:34–35
Ἐρουσαλήμ Ἐρουσαλήμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν, ποσάκις ἠθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου, ὃν τρόπον ὄρνις ἐπισυνάγει τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τὰς πτέρυγας, καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησατε;	Ἐρουσαλήμ Ἐρουσαλήμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν, ποσάκις ἠθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου, ὃν τρόπον ὄρνις τῆν ἑαυτῆς νοσσίαν ὑπὸ τὰς πτέρυγας, καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησατε.
<b>Ἴδου ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν.</b> λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ με ἴδητε ἀπ' ἄρτι ἕως ἂν εὐπῆτε Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου.	<b>Ἴδου ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν.</b> λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἴδητέ με ἕως ἤξει ὅτε εὐπῆτε Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου.
'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!	O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!
<u>How often would I have gathered your children together</u> as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!	<u>How often would I have gathered your children together</u> as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
<b>See, your house is left to you desolate.</b> For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"	<b>Behold, your house is forsaken.</b> And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

messengers of the wisdom of God. As Wisdom repeatedly had called the people of Jerusalem to God, Jesus did the same. As was the case with Wisdom, Jesus is also rejected by them. Due to their negative reaction to these invitations, Jesus laments that its house is forsaken and desolate (Mt 23:38; Lk 13:35). Matthew 24:1 then begins with Jesus leaving the Temple, followed by predictions about the end-time as well as references to the destruction of the Temple (Mt 24:15).

These statements echo motifs from Jewish wisdom literature. In Sirach 24:8–12, Wisdom-Torah came to dwell in the Temple<sup>36</sup> and Wisdom in Proverbs 1:24–28<sup>37</sup> threatened to abandon those who rejected her. Similar statements about Wisdom's withdrawal from the world in which she found no obedience occur in 1 Enoch 42:2–3,<sup>38</sup> 93:8;<sup>39</sup> 94:5;<sup>40</sup> 4 Ezra 5:9–12,<sup>41</sup> and 2 Baruch 48:36.<sup>42</sup>

Likewise, Jesus in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 expresses his desire to dwell among his people; yet, he was rejected, as were his envoys. It seems obvious that the rejection of Wisdom formed the imagery for the rejection of Jesus and his

36. Sirach 24:11–12: 'Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage' (NRSV).

37. Proverbs 1:24–28: 'Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.'

38. 1 Enoch 42:2–3: 'Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men and found no dwelling-place: Wisdom returned to her place and took her seat among the angels. And unrighteousness went forth from her chambers: Whom she sought not she found, and dwelt with them, as rain in a desert and dew on a thirsty land' (transl. R.H. Charles).

39. 1 Enoch 93:8: '... And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly forsake wisdom ...'

40. 1 Enoch 94:5 'For I know that sinners will tempt men to evilly-entreat wisdom, so that no place may be found for her, and no manner of temptation may diminish.'

41. 4 Ezra 5:9–12: 'And salt waters shall be found in the sweet, and all friends shall destroy one another; then shall wit hide itself, and understanding withdraw itself into his secret chamber, and shall be sought of many, and yet not be found: then shall unrighteousness and incontinency be multiplied upon earth. One land also shall ask another, and say, is righteousness that maketh a man righteous gone through thee? And it shall say, No. At the same time shall men hope, but nothing obtain: they shall labour, but their ways shall not prosper' (KJV).

42. Baruch 48:36: 'And many will say to many in that time, "Where did the multitude of intelligence hide itself and where did the multitude of wisdom depart?"'

disciples.<sup>43</sup> Though Matthew 23:34–29 does not explicitly identify Jesus as the divine Wisdom, the echoes from Jewish wisdom literature and the parallel with Luke make it highly probable that Matthew presents Jesus as the personified wisdom of God.

## Conclusion

From this investigation, it became clear that multiple wisdom motifs existed in Jewish literature in the time of the New Testament. Such motifs are found inter alia in the books of Proverbs, Sirach, Wisdom (also known as the Wisdom of Solomon), 2 Apocalypse of Baruch 5:3–7, Baruch 3:37–4:1, 1 Enoch 42, and 2 Esdras 5:9–10. Based on a close reading of the wisdom pronouncements in the First Gospel, it is demonstrated that Matthew echoes some of these Jewish wisdom motifs. By comparing these pronouncements in Matthew with their parallels in Luke, it appears that the echoes in Matthew are even more explicit. More than in Luke, Matthew employs the Jewish imagery of Wisdom uniquely and strikingly by identifying Jesus as the personified wisdom of God. Matthew presents Jesus as the personified teacher of wisdom. He is the fulfilment and perfection of wisdom.

Matthew ascribes to Jesus' qualities and roles attributed to Lady Wisdom. Like Wisdom in Jewish literature, Jesus is hidden, revealed, and rejected but also accepted. The evangelist legitimises Jesus' conduct and teaching as divine revelation against opposing teachers.

As Immanuel, God with us, Jesus personifies the attribute of God's wisdom. Jesus' wisdom is linked to his identification with the Torah (Mt 11:28–23) and his *halakhic* teachings. He interprets the Torah authoritatively because he is Wisdom. He announces judgement because, as Wisdom, he is a prophet.

Matthew legitimates the teaching authority of Jesus' envoys. This probably relates to the teaching authority of the teachers in Matthew's community, over against the opposing teachers of the broader Jewish community. Matthew thus vindicates Jesus against his opponents and his role in the Matthean community.

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The author has declared that no competing interest exists.

### Author's contribution

The author has declared sole authorship of this research article.

### Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human participants.

43. Luz (2005:160) and Davies and Allison (2004b:322), however, argue that it is not Wisdom, but God who sent his envoys and his *Shekinah* that leaves the temple. They therefore dismiss the stance that Matthew offers a Wisdom Christology. This might be the case, but the correspondence between these statements and the explicit reference to Wisdom in Luke, rather tips the balance to the opposite.

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