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***"LET ANYONE WITH EARS LISTEN" (MATTHEW 13:9): MATTHEW'S  
PRESENTATION OF JESUS' MINISTRY SHOWS THE WAY TO  
MAKE PEOPLE HEAR***

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to identify a biblical listening process. It addresses the issue of hearing in the reception of God's Word. The paper identifies the biblical elements of hearing which are utilised in establishing a proposed hearing process.

Special attention is given to the Book of Matthew as a model to demonstrate this hearing process.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to provide a hearing process that is biblically sound to enhance hearing and to guide preachers in the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) in their task of teaching and preaching God's Word.

## INTRODUCTION

Good communication is important in the relationship between the minister and church members. Communication is a process of sharing information.<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Kraft writes,

*"To live is to communicate. Everything we say and do, every mannerism, every facial expression, the way we sit and stand, the way we dress, everything about us that is interpretable by others communicate something."*<sup>2</sup>

We communicate in words and deeds. It involves two people or more. We communicate on a certain subject or message. According to J. I. Packer, speaking is the revelation of the speaker.<sup>3</sup> The minister as a representative of God is called to reveal God's Word. The expectation is that he should lead by example in practising it. This is one way to make church members understand the message. In our experience we find that not all people want to hear. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a biblical interpretation that helps guide the enhancement of hearing in CCCS. In doing so, it discusses Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry as a way to make a person hear with special attention on the parable of the sower. The discussion signifies Jesus as the authoritative speaker and the disciples as the hearers. It identifies also the subject of their communication.

The following questions guide our discussion:

1. What authority does the speaker have to deliver God's message?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. What is the message and its consequences?
4. How is the message delivered to enable the hearer to understand and continue to listen?
5. What should be the response from the hearer?
6. What is the long-term goal of the communication process?

<sup>1</sup> Lucinda Coventry and Martin Nixon (eds), *The Oxford English Minidictionary*, (Oxford: University Press, 1999) page 96

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983) pages 9-10

<sup>3</sup> J. I. Packer, *God's Words: Key Bible Themes You Need To Know*, (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1998) page 18



This paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter one begins with a brief explanation of the significance of hearing in the Bible. It also defines the concept 'listen' according to Matthew 13:9 and explains Jesus' claim to authority in relation to the history of Israel in the Bible. This chapter aims to identify the key elements of the hearing process in the Bible. Chapter two discusses Matthew's intended audiences, purpose and structure. It attempts to adapt the key elements of hearing to Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry. Chapter three explains and interprets our proposed structure of Matthew's Gospel that is revised and adapted from C. H. Lohr's chiasmic/concentric structural model of Matthew.<sup>4</sup> Chapter four discusses the 'parable of the sower' (Mt 13:1-17) as the climax of this structure. In conclusion, we will be reminded of one of God's ways that makes people hear. (The biblical translations used in this paper were taken from the New Revised Standard Version)

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<sup>4</sup> Joel B. Green, et. al., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992) page 529



## CHAPTER ONE

### HEARING IN THE BIBLE AND THE CONCEPT ἀκούεω IN MATTHEW 13:9.

This chapter begins with the discussion of the significance of hearing in the Bible. Secondly it defines the concept, 'listen!' from the command, "Let anyone with ears listen!" in the parable of the Sower. (Mt 13:9). Thirdly it discusses the significance of Jesus' authority. The chapter attempts to find the key elements in the hearing process.

#### I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HEARING IN THE BIBLE

The Bible is the historical witness to God's work of salvation.<sup>5</sup> J. I. Packer explains its nature.

*"...its essential nature...is quite simply God communicating, God talking, God teaching, God preaching: God telling you – yes, you, with me and all other Bible-readers and Bible-hearers everywhere – things about himself...."*<sup>6</sup>

These things are God's revelation. For example, the creation story reveals God as Creator. Another example is the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that reveals God as Saviour. If God is Creator and Saviour the implication is, when God speaks our response is that we must hear because His message must be heard.

#### A. Hearing in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the Hebrew translation of the verb 'to hear' is 'שמע'. Its basic meaning is to perceive a message or a sound.<sup>7</sup> Its profound meaning is to demand, "acceptance, listening (Genesis 4:23), understanding (Gen 11:7), and attention to the thing heard (...Gen 3:17...)." <sup>8</sup> This definition suggests that the speaker seeks response. God's commissioning of His messengers shows it. For example, God commanded Moses to lead His people out of Egypt

<sup>5</sup> J. I. Packer, 1998, page 13

<sup>6</sup> J. I. Packer, 1998, page 14

<sup>7</sup> R. Laird Harris et. al., (ed), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (vol. 2), (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) page 938

<sup>8</sup> Colin Brown (ed), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (vol. 2), (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) page 173

and Moses responded (Exodus 3:1 ff.). The purpose of commissioning messengers was to demand hearing from God's people (Jeremiah 2:2a).

The following phrases show the significance of hearing in the Old Testament: '*Thus says the Lord*', '*the word of the Lord came*', and '*Hear, O Israel*'.<sup>9</sup> These phrases imply that God speaks with authority. They give the impression that when the intended audience do not hear, they will be punished. C. H. Dodd suggests that those activities show the active relationship of God towards humankind.<sup>10</sup> Their purpose was to ensure that man and woman lived according to certain obligations set by the covenants between God and humanity; an example is the covenant at Horeb (Deuteronomy 5). It was not a negotiated covenant but freely offered by God.<sup>11</sup> This implies that God speaks in order for humanity 'to hear.' It is God's appeal to give life.

## B. Hearing in the New Testament

In the New Testament the verb, '*to hear*', is translated, *ἀκούω* in Greek. It shares the same meaning as the Hebrew verb, which is sense perception.<sup>12</sup> It appears nearly 430 times in the New Testament.<sup>13</sup> According to Colin Brown, the meaning of, *ἀκούω* (to hear), becomes clear when we enquire about the message.<sup>14</sup> This proposition suggests two things. Firstly is to understand the message, and secondly how to enquire about it. C. H. Dodd suggests that the New Testament message is described by two covenants (the old and new covenant).<sup>15</sup> The old covenant is the law revealed on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:1-25). This is God's calling of Israel to be His chosen people. The condition of the covenant is that Israel should obey and worship God. Israel did not keep this covenant. They continuously rebelled. Eventually God revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. His life, work, death and resurrection are the revelations of the new covenant.<sup>16</sup> In Matthew 5:17, Jesus declared that He came not to abolish the law but to

<sup>9</sup> Colin Brown (ed), 1986, page 173

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Dodd, *New Testament Studies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953) page 129

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Dodd, 1953, page 129

<sup>12</sup> Colin Brown (ed), 1986, page 173

<sup>13</sup> Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (vol. 1)*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) page 52.

<sup>14</sup> Colin Brown (ed), 1986, page 176

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Dodd, 1953, page 129

<sup>16</sup> C. H. Dodd, 1953, pages 129-130

ds, Jesus as the new covenant came to fulfill the old covenant. That is to give humanity. This is the message in the New Testament. How should the this message? Jesus said in the parable of the sower, "Let anyone with invitation to obtain the understanding about God's revelation in Jesus the meaning of the word revelation ("to lay open"<sup>17</sup>), this command is the divine truth. In other words, God brings the things that were hidden

aring in the New Testament is significant. According to Gerhard Kittel, *represents correspondence to the Revelation of the Word, and in biblical essential form in which this divine revelation is appropriated.*"<sup>19</sup>

significant for it is vital not only to receive the revelation of the word but one generation to another. In other words, God's revelation can only exist ough hearing.

#### CEPT, 'LISTEN' IN GREEK (ἀκούετω) MATTHEW 13:9

ἀκούετω is the Greek translation of the word 'listen or hear.' It is derived from ἀκούω means 'I listen or hear.' Ἀκούετω is 'present imperative active, 3<sup>rd</sup> person translated 'let him or her listen'. Imperative expresses a command or present tense in Greek closely corresponds to the English present continuous s considered to be linear tenses and they are single continuous actions or thus the word ἀκούετω in the Gospel of Matthew simply means 'let him/her

emphatic forms of ὑπακούω and ὑπακοή which mean 'to obey' and term 'obedience' signifies the "practical submission to an authority of a

yer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999)

17

gical Dictionary of the New Testament, (vol. ii ), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) page

lements of New Testament Greek, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) page

page 54.

1986) page 172



concrete or provisional character."<sup>23</sup> The definition indicates that two parties interact in the process of speaking and hearing to construct obedience. One party has authority gives direction, and the other namely, the listener, is expected to obey. There is a key element of the hearing process that is vital in achieving this expectation, i.e. understanding. The listener would not respond in obedience if he/she had not received the understanding of the direction.

Hence it is important to study the word understanding. The word, 'understanding', is a noun. It is translated, *συνεσις*, in Greek. It means, "an ability to judge."<sup>24</sup> It derives from the verb *συνιμι* which means, "to understand."<sup>25</sup> In the New Testament it means, "to perceive or to accept something by hearing and following."<sup>26</sup> The definition suggests that 'understanding' makes a person hear and follow. It gives the opportunity to decide.

The imperative, *ἀκούετω*, is delivered in the knowledge that the hearer begins to understand the content of the message. It indicates that the primary role of the speaker is to make the hearer understand. It implies that he/she must be a model hearer.

As mentioned, the verb, 'to listen', in Greek is derived from the noun 'obedience'. So the aim for the command, 'listen', in the Gospel of Matthew is to obey. A redaction of Matthew's writing puts this command in the third discourse.<sup>27</sup> Its place in this part of the gospel is significant. The Gospel of Matthew shows Jesus' attempts to make His disciples understand His work and message.<sup>28</sup> When Jesus says the command, "Let anyone with ears listen" it is to state that the one who has ears is the one who has observed as well as understood the message of God. This is the hearer who should follow and practise what Jesus taught and did. But how can he/she obtain that understanding? Karl Rahner suggests,

"...God brings about the readiness for listening as a condition for hearing God's own word...."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> James Hastings (ed), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (vol. vii), (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1928) page 438

<sup>24</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol. vii), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) page 888

<sup>25</sup> Joseph H. Thayer, 1999, page 605

<sup>26</sup> Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 1976, page 888

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Carl Eiselen et, al., (eds), *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957) page 953

<sup>28</sup> The revised and adapted structure in chapter two (page 15) of this paper explains this presentation by Matthew clearly.

<sup>29</sup> Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, (New York: Continuum, 1994) page 151



God prepares us to listen by giving the gift of understanding. We can recognise it through believing and having faith in God. It is God's initiative to give the hearer understanding of His revelation. What is required of the hearer is an appropriate response.

### III. JESUS' AUTHORITY IN COMMUNICATING GOD'S REVELATION

The concept of hearing assumes that the person who gives the direction has authority. It is important to reveal Jesus' claim to authority. The four Gospels continually stress Jesus' authority as the King and the Son of God. Some disciples recognise it and decide to follow Him. The purpose of this section is to discuss these two portraits of Jesus to prove this claim in relation to the history of Israel in the Bible. The Gospel of Matthew is significant because Jesus' Sonship and Kingship are important features of the gospel.

#### A. Jesus as Son of God

God identified Himself as Father of His people in the Old Testament (Ex 4: 22f.; Malachi 1: 6).<sup>30</sup> Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew often refers to God as His Father. e.g. Mt 11: 25-27. It is common for a son or a daughter in a family to refer to the authority of the father when work has to be done. Jesus claims His authority the same way but in a different sense. He is elected for a special mission.<sup>31</sup> He is to represent the divinity of His Father.<sup>32</sup> In other words, Jesus has the sovereignty or power of His father to carry out any supernatural task in the world such as miracles.

God blessed Abram with many descendants that will become a great nation (Gen 12:1-3) It indicates that He will be the Father to this nation. God as Father to Israel shows God's right as a parent to inform Israel of His purposes. He has nurtured Israel from the beginning to

<sup>30</sup> J. I. Packer, 1998, page 22

<sup>31</sup> Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1967) page 273

<sup>32</sup> Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God: Church Dogmatics*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960) page 443

become a good and prosperous nation.<sup>33</sup> His fatherly love remained although Israel continually abandoned Him. Covenants (e.g. the covenant on Mount Sinai Ex 19:1-25) were established to ensure stability within this relationship. They required obedience to God.

The fatherhood of God is part of Jewish piety where God is often referred to as, 'Father in heaven'.<sup>34</sup> In Mt 6: 9; 11: 25-27 Jesus calls God His Father to make all hearers aware that God is His authority and He is God's Son. The people who receive God's only Son are named the brothers of Jesus (John 1: 12f.; 20; 17; Gal 4: 4-7).<sup>35</sup> Apparently Jesus as the only Son of God has that same authority as His Father.

## B. Jesus, The King

Jesus' Kingship is God given. It is manifested in His relationship with Israel.

*"The Kingship of Jehovah is independent of his special relation to Israel and the fall of Israel leaves his essential sovereignty untouched."*<sup>36</sup>

God's sovereignty cannot be challenged. He is the King of justice and mercy<sup>37</sup> therefore people must listen and obey him. The Book of Judges shows the many wars Israel won when God gave the enemies into their hands. When they failed to recognise God, He gave them to the enemies. This was the time when Israel was unable to make peace with itself. It was a time of confusion and crisis among the tribes. They did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Israel witnessed prosperity in their neighbouring nations that were ruled by kings and wished to experience the same wealth. Thus they asked God for a king (1 Samuel 8:5). This shows that Israel had abandoned God as their King. But His continuous love responded in commanding Samuel to anoint Saul as king (1 Sam 9:26-27) who became the first earthly king of Israel. This kingship line failed God again. Eventually God entered the world in Jesus Christ. He came as King representing the presence of the eternal sovereignty of God in the world (Mt 1:1-17). His task is to proclaim the message of repentance for the Kingdom of Heaven is near (Mt 4:17).

<sup>33</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of its Form and Content*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (Cambridge: University Press, 1935) page 91

<sup>34</sup> T. W. Manson, 1935, page 92.

<sup>35</sup> J. I. Packer, 1998, page 22

<sup>36</sup> T. W. Manson, 1935, page 142.

<sup>37</sup> T. W. Manson, 1935, page 147

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Hearing in the Bible is very important for it is the main response to God's revelation. It has key elements, which are important.

##### 1. Recognition of the authority of the speaker

We find that certain people such as Moses were chosen by God in the Old Testament to be His messengers. God's commissioning of these people gives authority to speak on His behalf. It implies that God is the authoritative speaker. In the New Testament, Jesus as the Son of God and King shows the same authority.

##### 2. The intended audience

It is apparent in the Old Testament that the intended audience was Israel. God set certain obligations for them but they often failed to follow. In the New Testament the intended audience was humanity.

##### 3. The subject of communication

Israel's continuous rebellion made God send messengers to appeal hearing from them. The purpose was to obey the old covenant. Jesus proclaimed that He is fulfillment of this covenant.

##### 4. How the subject is delivered

The elected messengers deliver the message in words and deeds. For example in words the prophets used oracles such as, '*Thus says the Lord*', and in deeds, Moses obeyed God's command to lead Israel out of Egypt. Jesus revealed God's purpose in the same way.

##### 5. The expected response

We find that the response is to hear and obey.

##### 6. Long-term goal of the hearing process

It is to continue proclaiming God's salvation for it brings life to humanity.

The concept, *ἀκούετω*, shows that the authority of the speaker is important. In this regard, he/she should lead by example by being a model hearer. The concept, *ἀκούετω*, also describes that the absolute response of the hearer is obedience. This is achieved when the listener understands the message. It suggests that in order to make a person hear and obey he/she must be shown and taught the understanding of a given command or message. The key elements of the hearing process will be shown clearly in our revised and adapted structure of Matthew's Gospel in the following chapter



## CHAPTER TWO

### HEARING IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry illustrates the key elements of the hearing process. Placing the parable of the sower in the third discourse states the significance of hearing. This placement has a significant purpose. It implies an audience in which hearing was a demand.

Mark Allan Powell writes that the meaning of Matthew's Gospel should be understood in terms of the messages that were aimed for its original audience.<sup>38</sup> This chapter begins with the discussion of Matthew's intended audience and purpose. Secondly it states our proposed hearing structure.

#### I. MATTHEW'S AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Richard Bauckham raises the question whether the Gospels were written for Jewish audience or Gentile.<sup>39</sup> He suggests that the Gospels were intended to reach a Christian audience firstly and then to a Gentile audience.<sup>40</sup> The Book of Matthew contains customs and beliefs that only Jews would understand. These things assume Matthew's intended audience.

##### A. Jewish Audience

The Gospel of Matthew has been traditionally regarded as the Jewish Gospel.<sup>41</sup> It places importance in the Jewish Law, Sabbath, and Temple.<sup>42</sup> They are presented in formula-quotations to reveal that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecies in the Old Testament.<sup>43</sup>

Matthew's Jewish audience is evident when Jesus commanded His disciples to restrict the ministry to Israel (Mt10:5-6). Donald A. Hagner writes that this command is peculiar to

<sup>38</sup> Mark Allan Powell, "Towards a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew," *Interpretation: The Gospel of Matthew - A Journal Of Bible and Theology*, vol. Xlvi. No. 4, (1992), page 343

<sup>39</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Gospels for All Christians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) page 9.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Bauckham, 1998, page 10.

<sup>41</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Matthew: The New Interpreter's Bible*, (vol. viii), (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) page 97.

<sup>42</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 97.

<sup>43</sup> David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New Century Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) page 39.



Matthew.<sup>44</sup> Jesus' reply to the Canaanite woman who sought mercy for her daughter showed this restriction as well. "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Mt 15:24). Jesus refers to the lost Jewish community who did not believe in His messianic claim. This message applied to the Jewish Christian community for they faced rejection by Israel.<sup>45</sup> The concern raised in the separation of Jewish Christians from Israel, resulted in persecution (Mt 10:17; 23:34).<sup>46</sup> The author often uses the phrases, '*their scribes*' (7:29), '*their synagogues*' (9:35), '*your synagogues*' (23:34), when referring to Judaism. The uses of the second and third plural pronouns show the author separating himself from Judaism. It was a necessary message for the Jewish Christians for they were apparently a minority group. It was to encourage the Jewish Christians who returned to Judaism to stay for they had a special mission similar to the disciples. That is to proclaim the Gospel to Israel. If this was the intended community then it was practicable for Matthew to use the Jewish Law and practices to present clearly his message.

## B. Gentile Audience

The restriction of Jesus and His disciples' ministry to Israel is in contrast with the Gospel's mission to Gentiles.<sup>47</sup>

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* (Mt 28:19).

Deciding which of the Gentiles and the Jewish Christians is the true Matthew's audience puzzles us. But it is impossible for the Gospel to reach Gentiles unless the primary foundation is strong and firm. If Jesus' ministry was originally aimed at the Jews then the expectation was that the Jews should be the first one to understand Jesus as the Messiah. Stephenson H. Brooks suggests that the Jewish Christians eventually brought the mission activities to the Gentiles following the persecution of the Christians by Israel.<sup>48</sup> Udo Schnelle writes,

<sup>44</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew: Word Biblical Commentary* (vol. 33A), (Texas: Word, 1993) page lxvi

<sup>45</sup> Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writing*, (London: SCM Press, 1998) page 223

<sup>46</sup> Udo Schnelle, 1998 page 223

<sup>47</sup> Donald A. Hagner, 1993, page lxvi.

<sup>48</sup> Stephenson H. Brooks, *Matthew's Community: The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987) page 118

*"Israel's rejection has been a reality for the Matthean community for a long time ... and the Gentile mission is its self-evident practice ..."*<sup>49</sup>

Thus the Gentile mission was a later practice. The first Christians effort made it happen. Hence the Jewish Christian community is Matthew's intended audience. He reminded them of the challenges Jesus and His disciples faced. It was an appeal to retain their community. David Hill writes,

*"Matthew's purpose is to provide a church with a distinctly Jewish Christian ethos a work from which to teach and preach, which declares that Jesus is Messiah and Son of Man and supremely Lord of the Church, in relation to whom, as the fulfillment of the purpose of Judaism, the believer's understanding of and attitude to Law, ethics, mission and service must be formed."*<sup>50</sup>

This community had a special task because their understanding of Jesus as the Messiah was not to be contained within their own boundaries. Matthew's goal was to spread that knowledge and understanding beyond their community. According to David J. Bosch,

*"The link between Jesus' own time and the time of Matthew's community is, in fact, given in the command 'Make disciples!' (28:19). In other words, the followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples."*<sup>51</sup>

Matthew's purpose was not intended only to the first Christians but also to the ensuing believers.

## II. STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW

Matthew has many structural features by which to make sense of his emphases.<sup>52</sup> This section states our revised and adapted structure for the Gospel of Matthew. It shows how Jesus communicated God's revelation.

<sup>49</sup> Udo Schnelle, 1998, page 223

<sup>50</sup> David Hill, 1972, pages 43

<sup>51</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis, 1997) page 75

<sup>52</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, et. al., *Introducing The New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) page 91

### A. Widely Accepted Structural Models of Matthew

Joel B. Green writes that there are four widely popular structural models of Matthew.<sup>53</sup>

(i) *"Geographical-Biographical Model"*

This model is attributed to W. C. Allen. It is written in his commentary on Matthew (1921). It is considered the oldest and the simplest model, which organises Matthew into a structure of the life and ministry of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

(ii) *"Fivefold Discourse Model"*

W. Bacon proposed this model to alternate between narrative and discourse. He composed the use of the five discourses as the five books of the Law.

(iii) *"Chiastic/Concentric Model"*

This model is attributed to C. H. Lohr, who arranged the content of Matthew chiastically.

(iv) *"Biographical and Theological Model"*

N. B. Stonehouse proposed this model which acknowledges the biographical and theological aspects for the story of Jesus.

The four models are significant in accordance with their own purposes. I have adapted model three in a triangular form to identify a structure for this discussion. It is used not as a chiastic structure but as a story outline. It emphasises the middle section where the parable of the sower is placed. The proposed-structure is called *'The Hearing Structure'*. Before we continue, we look first at the third model.

<sup>53</sup> Joel B. Green, et. al., 1992, pages 529-530



## The chiastic Structure by C. H. Lohr

<i>"A 1-4 Birth and beginnings</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>B 5-7 Blessings, entering the kingdom</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
<i>C 8-9 Authority and invitation</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>D 10 Mission Discourse</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
<i>E 11-12 Rejection by this generation</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>F 13 Parables of the kingdom</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
<i>E' 14-17 Acknowledgement by disciples</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>D' 18 Community discourse</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
<i>C' 19-22 Authority and invitation</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>B' 23-25 Woes, coming of the kingdom</i>	<i>Discourse</i>
<i>A' 26-28 Death and rebirth</i>	<i>Narrative</i> <sup>54</sup>

The above chiastic structure is easily understood by putting together the (A/A') letters, the (B/B') letters and so forth and finding in each pair any significant similarity or difference. It is planned toward a central point. Letter 'F' (the parables of the kingdom) is regarded as the centre. We look at the (A/A') letters as an example. The (A) and (A') show a difference and a similarity. The difference is indicated by Jesus' birth in (A) and Jesus' death in (A'). The similarity is shown by a theological comparison of (A) to (A'). In (A) Jesus' birth signifies the arrival of the Messiah. In (A') the death of Jesus the Messiah signifies rebirth for a man who repents and returns to God. All letters beginning from (A, A') are interpreted towards the middle. In that way, the middle part has the significant purpose of the chiastic structure.

The middle section of C. H. Lohr's model is considered the climax of our structure. At this point Jesus gives the disciples the understanding of God's revelation.<sup>55</sup> It is the peak point of their first journey of learning before they begin the next stage where they head to Jerusalem to witness the final time of their Lord.

<sup>54</sup> This structure is quoted from M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 113.

<sup>55</sup> See the interpretation on the parable of the sower (page 39) for more details



### B. Revised and Adapted Structure: *'The Hearing Structure'*

The following table shows the adaptation of Matthew's Gospel to the key elements of the hearing process.

**Table 1**

OUR REVISED AND ADAPTED STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW	EXPLANATION OF THE STRUCTURE ACCORDING TO THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE HEARING PROCESS
I. Claim of Jesus' Authority (1:1-4:11)	Recognition of Jesus' authority as the speaker
II. First Stage of revealing God's revelation to the disciples (4:12-12:50)  a. Promise of understanding: Beginning of the first stage (4:12-23) b. Sermon on the Mount: Understanding given in words (5-7) c. Miracles: Understanding given in deeds (8-9) d. Mission: First disciples' practice of the given understanding (10) e. Understanding of rejection (11-12)	Subject of Communication is God's revelation  The first intended audience is the disciples  The subject is delivered in words and deeds. E.g. The Sermon on the Mount and miracles
III. The Affirmation of the Promise of understanding given to the disciples	Jesus affirms that the disciples have the expected response.
IV. The Second Stage of revealing God's revelation to the disciples a. Beginning of Stage Two (14: 1 – 22) b. Miracles: More Understanding given in deeds.(14: 23-17: 27) c. Community discourse: Understanding of being a member of God's listening community (18) d. More Understanding of Authority and Invitation (19-22) e. More Understanding of Rejection (23-25)	The second stage continues to deliver the message in words and deeds.
V. Long Term Process of the Hearing Process (26-28)	The disciples are given the long-term goal of the communication process that is to make disciples to all nations.

The Roman numbers 'I', 'III' and 'V' form the triangular shape. Number 'I' states the claim of Jesus' authority. The activities that occur between number 'I' and number 'III' are the first stage of Jesus' nurturing of His disciples. At number 'III,' Jesus affirms that the disciples are given the understanding. The activities that occur between number 'III' and number 'V' explain the second stage of learning.

The beginning of the two stages are easily recognised when we follow the following verses stated in the table below.

**Table 2**

<b>Beginning:</b> (Mt 1: 1) Jesus' Authority	<b>End:</b> (Mt 28: 18,19) Disciples' Authority
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Middle/Climax</b> Confirmation of the understanding given to the disciples (Mt 13)</p>	
<i>Stage One of giving the disciples the Understanding of God's revelation</i>	<i>Stage Two of Giving the disciples more understanding</i>
1. Jesus withdrew when John was Arrested (Mt 4: 12)	1. Jesus withdrew when John was killed (Mt 14: 13)
2. Jesus called the first disciples to follow (Mt 4: 19)	2. Jesus made the disciples to go ahead (Mt 14: 22)

### C. Disciples as Hearers

I suggest that the first intended hearers of Jesus were His own disciples. From the crowds that gathered to see and hear Jesus, He chose His disciples to be the people to grasp the understanding of His teaching, preaching, and practice (Mt 4:19).<sup>56</sup> Why the disciples? They were specially called for a special task. Jesus had to make sure that they understand

<sup>56</sup> For more details on Jesus' choosing of His disciples see chapter 3 (page 21 ) on the interpretation of Mt 4:19

God's revelation so that when the time comes, they should be well equipped to continue His work. The calling and nurturing of the twelve disciples is one of the aims of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>57</sup> They show clearly the nature and expectations of discipleship.<sup>58</sup> It has to be initiated by Jesus (Mt 9:9). It requires immediate submission to the authority of Jesus (4:20, 22). It involves commitment (8:18). It is the call to the mission (4: 19). And it forms the community that Christ leads (5: 17-16). These expectations show discipleship as a mission full of struggle and challenges.

### III. CONCLUSION

The parable of the sower is also mentioned in Mark and Luke. Mark placed this parable in the beginning of his Book and Luke placed it towards the middle. Matthew put it at the centre of his writing. This placement is for an important purpose. The discussion suggests that it was appropriate for Matthew to structure his Book in this way because the situation that his intended audience (Jewish Christians) faced shows that they needed to understand the significance of hearing. Some members of this community were in the stage of fear for their own lives because of rejection and persecution by Israel. Hence, Matthew had to present Jesus' ministry in a way to encourage the Jewish Christians that the circumstances they are facing were the same experiences Jesus and His disciples encountered in their ministry. The following chapter will interpret our revised and adapted structure.

<sup>57</sup> David R. Bauer, "The Major Characters of Matthew's Story: Their Function and Significance", *Interpretation: The Gospel of Matthew - A Journal of Bible and Theology*, vol. Xlvi. No. 4, (1992), page 361

<sup>58</sup> David R. Bauer, (1992), page 361



### CHAPTER THREE

#### EXPLANATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE HEARING STRUCTURE

This chapter explains and interprets our revised and adapted structure. Section 'A', (Mt 1:1-4:11), interprets the claim and recognition of Jesus' authority. Section 'B', (Mt 4:12-12:50), states the first stage of the disciples' learning. It contains some of the elements of the hearing process listed below.

1. The subject of Jesus' ministry
2. Jesus' first intended audience
3. Jesus' methods of delivering His message

Section 'C', (Mt 13), states the affirmation of the disciples' response. Section 'D', (Mt 14:1-25:46), indicates the beginning of the second stage of the disciples' learning and presents the elements mentioned in the first stage. Section 'E', (Mt 26:1-28:20), reveals the final part of Jesus' ministry and the commissioning of His disciples. This event indicates the long-term goal of the hearing process. It is important to note that passages are selected from each section of our revised and adapted structure to show the significance of hearing.

#### **I. CLAIM AND RECOGNITION OF JESUS' AUTHORITY (1: 1 – 4: 11)**

Matthew begins the hearing process by claiming and recognising Jesus' authority. In doing so, he states firstly the royal genealogy of Israel and secondly the early events of Jesus' birth and ministry.

The genealogy (1:1-17) describes the line of Abraham to King David, and according to Douglas R. A. Hare, Jesus as a descendant of David affirms His authority as Messiah and King.<sup>59</sup> The genealogy shows the fulfillment of the Messiahship prophecy in the Old Testament in accordance with the Jewish Law (the Messiah should come from the line of David).<sup>60</sup> Identifying Jesus as King of the Jews at this early stage of Matthew's book provides the basis for understanding His ministry. It implies that Jesus has God's authority to command God's people.

<sup>59</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew: Interpretation*, (Louisville: John Knox, 1993) page 6.

<sup>60</sup> Sherman E. Johnson, *Exegesis for the Gospel According to ST. Matthew: The Interpreter's Bible* (vol. vii), (Nashville: Abingdon, 1951) page 250.

The account of Jesus' birth (1:18-25) states recognition of Jesus' divinity. For example, Jesus was born from a virgin mother. He was from the Spirit and named Emmanuel, which means the presence of God in the midst of His people (Is 7:14).<sup>61</sup> According to David Hill, Jesus' unique birth shows the creative nature of God in making a new creation in Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup> In human nature this type of birth is unnatural but it shows that God has the sole authority to change His own creation in accordance with His own will.

In considering the roles of Mary and Joseph in this event, Douglas R. A. Hare suggests that the main feature of this account is not Mary but Joseph.<sup>63</sup> Joseph listened and obeyed the angel's instruction to take Mary as his wife for the baby she was carrying has a special role in God's purpose. Joseph's response is an example of the recognition of God's authority.

The magi from the east (2:1-12) states another recognition of Jesus' authority. Their response suggests that this narrative is a story of acceptance and King Herod's pretentious response makes it a rejection.<sup>64</sup> The magi's journey is considered as the Gentile recognition or acknowledgement of Jesus' authority.<sup>65</sup> This response shows that Matthew has clearly shown one of his intentions of Jesus' ministry at this stage of his Book, which is to indicate the Gentiles as the eventual hearers of Jesus' ministry.

Eventually, John the Baptist (3:1-17) also recognised Jesus' authority. At baptism John declared his unworthiness to baptise Jesus. Jesus replied that He should be baptised in order to fulfill all righteousness (vv. 13-15). This dialogue is peculiar to Matthew.<sup>66</sup> It suggests that Jesus who is sinless wants to be identified with the sinners. It shows Jesus' approach in fulfilling the purpose of His ministry; that is to be a Saviour and a Servant. This event also states Jesus' anointing by the Spirit, which declares the Son's authority from the Father.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, Jesus' temptation (4:1-11) states the devil and the angels' recognition of Jesus' authority of which the devil tried to destroy. But all his attempts were in vain and of no success. This failure of the devil indicates the superiority of Jesus' authority. Hence, the angels'

<sup>61</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 80

<sup>62</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 78

<sup>63</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare 1993, page 8

<sup>64</sup> Donald A. Hagner, 1993, page 24

<sup>65</sup> D. A. Carson et. al., *New Bible Commentary: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition*, (USA: Intervarsity, 1994) page 908

<sup>66</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, 1993, page 20

<sup>67</sup> David R. Bauer, (1992), page 359

act as they came and waited on Jesus is the clear indication of their acknowledgement of Jesus' victory and authority.

Matthew has organised his Book to provide a better understanding of Jesus as the One who has authority to reveal God's purpose. In other words, Jesus as the Son of God and King has the right to speak and act on God's behalf.

## **II. FIRST STAGE OF TEACHING THE DISCIPLES (4: 12-12: 50)**

Following the claim and recognition of Jesus' authority Matthew now attempts to establish Jesus' ministry indicating the elements of the hearing process. God's purpose should be heard and therefore Matthew has organised this section in a communicable way to ensure this message is received. It states the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Jesus' first intended audience and message. As mentioned in the previous chapters, any intended audience needs understanding of the message in order to hear. The following sections identify and interpret Matthew's presentation of Jesus' approach in teaching this understanding.

### **A. Beginning of the First Stage: Promise of God Given Understanding (4: 12-23)**

The following verses that are mentioned in table 2 indicate the beginning of the first stage of Jesus' ministry. Knowing Matthew's indication of the commencement of Jesus' ministry is important in order to understand our structure. It leads Jesus' teaching of His disciples towards the middle stage where He delivered the parable of the sower. Following this part is the beginning of stage two.

#### *1. "Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee." (Mt 4: 12)*

Why did Jesus withdraw? Jesus had to leave to proclaim the message of repentance and more so to reveal the Kingdom of Heaven (4:17). In the Old Testament God always appealed to His nation to remember the covenants but they often disobeyed. Jesus as the new covenant has proclaimed the same message. Therefore, to enable people to believe His message, Jesus had to reveal first the hidden things of the Kingdom of Heaven. He had to convince people that He is



the Messiah: the secret of God's Kingdom that is revealed in His life, work, death and resurrection.

Jesus' withdrawal was relevant because John's arrest indicates rejection of His ministry. The Greek word ἀναχωρεω (withdraw) means, "...the rejection of God's word in one place leads to the proclamation of it in another...."<sup>68</sup> This definition suggests the motive behind Jesus' decision, which is to seek a new place to work when the mission is rejected in the first place. It does not mean that the mission fails but it implies that rejection should not prevent the continuation of God's purpose. Hence Jesus chose to withdraw to the Sea of Galilee.

2. "As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers.... And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (Mt 4: 18, 19)

I consider the command, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people" (Mt 4:19) as a promise to the disciples in the understanding of God's revelation. The disciples' role was to follow and Jesus had to make them successful fishermen.<sup>69</sup> 'Follow me' is a call to learn God's purpose in saving those who were in need.<sup>70</sup> From the word, 'follow' to the words 'I will make' is the transition from imperative to indicative. It is a command to act. According to J. W. Wenham, the indicative mood is defined, "...the verb which indicates the mode or manner in which the action is to be regarded."<sup>71</sup> The definition suggests that indicative means action is to be made. So the statement, 'I will make you', is certainly Jesus' promise of what He himself will fulfill. Thus, this means that the disciples were called with the promise that the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven will be revealed to them.

Matthew's hearing structure at this stage has shown three elements of the hearing process: recognition of Jesus' authority, the disciples as the first intended audience and the revelation of God's Kingdom as the subject. The disciples had a special task and to carry out this work Jesus should instil into them the understanding of God's revelation. It was to provide direction, knowledge, skills and sense of personal worth in their unique task. The following

<sup>68</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 103

<sup>69</sup> William Macdonald, *Believers' Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) page 1214.

<sup>70</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, *Exposition for the Gospel According to St. Matthew: The Interpreter's Bible* (vol. vii), (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978) page 276.

<sup>71</sup> J. W. Wenham, 1965, page 11

sections of Matthew's presentation state two basic ways of delivery of God's revelation. One is, 'in Words', and the other is, 'in Deeds'.

#### B. Sermon on the Mount: Understanding Given in Words (5-7)

Jesus firstly revealed God's revelation in words in this part of Matthew's Gospel. The Sermon on the Mount is the first discourse in Matthew in which Jesus affirms the truth concerning the Kingdom of God.<sup>72</sup> Chapter 5:1-2 states the disciples as the main listeners with the addition of a crowd that was also listening but stood in a distance.<sup>73</sup> It suggests the significance of hearing in the nurturing of the disciples.

Verses 3-12 speak of Jesus' revelation of the secrets of blessings. In this passage each statement begins with the word, 'Blessed'. Blessedness in the Old Testament is having trust in God and obeying His will.<sup>74</sup> David Hill suggests that one of the characteristics of blessedness is a promise made by Jesus for those who have faith and obey him.<sup>75</sup> In Hellenistic culture the blessed person is one who recognises his/her worth in life and society.<sup>76</sup> Thus blessedness is a reward for those who hear. It is a confirmation of the obedient people that they have places in the Kingdom of Heaven. The disciples were in the beginning of their learning and Matthew's placement of the Sermon on the Mount in this part was a wise redaction. It was to show that Jesus had to make His disciples understand the rewards of being a member of God's Kingdom to give assurance to the disciples that following Jesus was the wise decision.

Following the teaching of blessings Jesus now gives the understanding of how a person should hear and obey in order to receive those rewards. Verses 17-43 speak of the understanding about law and righteousness, "...righteousness means faithfulness and obedience

<sup>72</sup> D. A. Carson et. al., 1994, page 911

<sup>73</sup> Ulrich Luz, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1995) page 43

<sup>74</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 109.

<sup>75</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 110.

<sup>76</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 109



to the law of God".<sup>77</sup> In verse 20, Jesus speaks of the demand of righteousness, that is to surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees. The Judaism's leaders are righteous but not good enough because of the way they practise the law. They were more concerned with the correct behavior, which they thought was appropriate to the law. Jesus taught that true obedience to the law is one's submission to the love of God. It should be practised in loving and caring for others. One part of this commitment is forgiveness. For example,

Jesus said,

*You have heard it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;* (Mt 5: 38, 39).

Jesus' use of the statement, *You have heard that it was said*, (Mt 5: 21, 27, 33, 38, 43.) demands the disciples' hearing to the change of the description of the law. 'You have heard', affirms that the disciples have understood the traditional meaning of the law.<sup>78</sup> The words, '...it was said...' (Mt 5: 33) mean the disciples were taught in tradition of the law.<sup>79</sup> Hence Jesus is not introducing anything new. He is developing His teaching of forgiveness from the tradition that the disciples have known. The disciples who will practise this new understanding of the law will exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Chapter 6:1-18 speaks of three specific areas of practical righteousness; giving money, prayer and fasting. Jesus taught His disciples that the Pharisees carried out these practices in order to attract people's attention to their status. In other words the Pharisees' obedience to these practices was for their own personal gains and satisfaction. D. A. Carson called this response, '*self-realisation or self-righteousness*'.<sup>80</sup> This is another barrier to obtaining the understanding about God. It is the result of hypocrisy and ignorance. Jesus reminded the disciples that the right manner of piety is more important than the obligations.<sup>81</sup> The rewards and success of the disciples' work should not be their own, but should be attributed to God. Thus righteousness in Jesus' teaching is basically one's submission to hear and obey God.

<sup>77</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 119

<sup>78</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 125

<sup>79</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 125

<sup>80</sup> D. A. Carson et. al., 1994, page 913

<sup>81</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, 1993, page 63



Chapter 7:1-12 describes the understanding of two types of judgement: the right judgement and the wrong judgement. Verses 2-3 speak of the wrong judgement. This is when we harshly criticise the behavior of another person. Jesus taught His disciples that if they do likewise other people would judge them the same way. Jesus has voiced one of the ways of God's judgement that is operated through other people.<sup>82</sup> The right judgement, which is shown in verse 6, is giving the holy and valuable things to those who will appreciate them.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Jesus gives this warning against judging others. If they are being ignored, rejected and judged, it is not their duty to judge, but God's. The important thing is to know who to give the holy and valuable things to.

In verses 13-23, Jesus warns His disciples that the gate of Christian discipleship is narrow. It has abundant life and only the faithful people can enter.<sup>84</sup> Taking the other gate leads to destruction. Here, Jesus proclaims that He is the door to life and following Him is walking along a difficult way, which requires faith, discipline and endurance.

Verses 24-29 sum up this discourse. The understanding given to the disciples in the sermon cannot be obtained unless they hear and obey. A person who hears is like the wise man who built his house on the rock. It is a strong house that could not be destroyed even by bad weather. This analogy pictures a faithful person whose response to God is obedience regardless of the many challenges in life. William Macdonald writes, such a person is called a fool by the world but to Jesus, he is wise.<sup>85</sup>

Matthew has stated other aspects of God's Kingdom that Jesus revealed to the disciples. Such aspects are the blessings as rewards for the disciples who hear and obey and Jesus' interpretation of the law emphasising the act and quality of obedience. They highlight the meaning of righteousness that makes a disciple wise.

### **C. Miracles: Understandings Given in Deeds (8-9)**

We know what the disciples have learned from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and the significance of making people hear. Now we come to the other approach Jesus used to reveal

<sup>82</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, 1993, page 77

<sup>83</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 913.

<sup>84</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1229

<sup>85</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1230

the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven; that is, understanding given in deeds (miracles). Matthew indicates in this part that Jesus made His disciples hear by practising what He taught.

Chapter 8:1-17 consists of the first three miracles that manifest the divine power of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>86</sup> Here Jesus is manifested not only as a healer but God's Son. His obedience to His Father has granted Him all the power and authority to heal and save.

The three miracles (the cleansing of the leper (vv.1-4), healing of the centurion's servant (vv.5-13), healing at Peter's house (vv.14-17)), are grouped together to identify the poor and the marginalised people of society.<sup>87</sup> The leper is seen as the unclean, the centurion's servant is seen as the abandoned Gentile and Peter's mother in law is seen as the abandoned woman. The healing of these people had brought a new people of God into recognition.<sup>88</sup> This means that Jesus came to save the ostracised people of society.

Chapter 8:18-9:8 state other three miracles that teach the disciples to be followers of Jesus. They needed faith and understanding of Jesus' authority as Son of God. The first miracle which is the stilling of the storm (8:23-27) is an example of the disciples' lack of faith despite Jesus' presence in the boat. The second miracle, which is the healing of the Gadarene Demoniacs (28-34), speaks of the demons' recognition of Jesus as Son of God. The third one is the healing of the paralytic where Jesus declared that He is the Son of Man. These miracles reminded the disciples that they should not have fear and doubt because the Son of God was in their midst. They were to give the disciples confidence and understanding that their highest priority was to follow. The disciples have shown that they have not totally understood the purpose of Jesus' mission but decided to continue following Jesus.

Chapter 9:18-34 contains the final three miracles in this section. They are the healing of the blind, the deaf, and the raising of the dead. These are grouped together to present again the significance of faith. They reveal Jesus as, "*new life, new insight, and new speech*".<sup>89</sup> This is giving the blind the opportunity to see life, the deaf the opportunity to hear the sound of life and the dead another opportunity to live life again. These miracles suggest that Jesus is life and hope beyond death and hopelessness.

<sup>86</sup> Douglas A. R. Hare, 1993, page 87

<sup>87</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 914

<sup>88</sup> Douglas A. R. Hare, 1990, page 88

<sup>89</sup> Douglas A. R. Hare, 1993, page 105



Verses 35-38 conclude this part. It indicates the transition of this section to the following mission discourse. Jesus voiced the need of followers to help Him because His teachings and work were in demand. He had compassion for the harassed and helpless crowd and raised the challenge for His disciples that it was the time to practise discipleship.<sup>90</sup> After Jesus' first attempts of revealing the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, the call on His disciples to practise the mission was appropriate.

#### **D. Mission: Disciples' First Practice of the Given Understanding (10)**

Chapter 10, the second discourse<sup>91</sup> explains clearly the demand for disciples as stated in the conclusion of chapter 9. Jesus sent the disciples on their own to practise the ministry. This event is peculiar to Matthew and it claims that Jesus has granted the disciples the authority to do the activities that He did.<sup>92</sup> The first requirement of the disciples' practice is to be at the right location. They must first go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This restriction is only temporary and urgent.<sup>93</sup> The urgency implies that the understanding of God's revelation need to be taken beyond the boundaries of Israel. This mission also suggests that one of the purposes of Jesus' teaching of His disciples is to share with them His mission.

#### **E. Understanding of Rejection (11-12)**

Matthew shows in this part that one of the barriers in making people to hear is rejection. Rejection has many causes and one of them is lack of understanding. Chapter 11 speaks of John the Baptist' disappointment when he heard of Jesus' work as different from his expectation.<sup>94</sup> He sent his disciples to Jesus asking if He is the one to come. This question indicates that John the Baptist had a different opinion about Jesus' Messiahship. I suggest that John the Baptist thought of Jesus as a man with military power who was supposed to save him. Instead Jesus had a different role. He had to heal the sick, raise the dead and preach the Gospel to the poor.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, 1978, page 361

<sup>91</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 916

<sup>92</sup> William Macdonald 1990, page 1238

<sup>93</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 917

<sup>94</sup> Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, (London: SPCK, 2002) page 125

<sup>95</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1243



Jesus replied to John the Baptist's disciples to return and tell him what they had seen and heard to give John the Baptist the understanding of Jesus' Messiahship. David Bosch writes that this passage sums up Jesus' ministry with the words, '*what the Messiah was doing*' (11:2).<sup>96</sup> '*The deeds of Jesus*', is the key missionary concept and it presents emphatically Matthew's understanding of the disciples' mission.<sup>97</sup> The disciples had to hear and observe for their task was to practise what Jesus was doing.

In chapter 12 the disciples have experienced the Pharisees' opposition on the issue of Sabbath. Jesus argued that the Old Testament indeed bears witness to His practices.<sup>98</sup> He claimed His personal authority as equal to David and greater than the temple to reveal that He is the Lord of the Sabbath (vv3-6).<sup>99</sup> He healed the withered man on the Sabbath, which made the Pharisees angrier. Jesus did not mean to treat the Sabbath like any other day.<sup>100</sup> He did respect the Sabbath law but His main concern was to help those who were in need. This part speaks of the consequence of revealing the message. It warns the disciples to beware of opposition in their mission. It is a challenge. Hence they need faith, patience and endurance.

## II. AFFIRMATION OF THE PROMISE OF UNDERSTANDING GIVEN TO THE DISCIPLES (13)

This part is the climax of our proposed structure and is specially dealt with in chapter four of this paper. Reflecting on the discussion so far, by this stage the disciples have obtained various understandings of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew at this point of his presentation states Jesus' command, "*Let anyone with ears listen!*" (Mt 13: 9). It was delivered with the expectation that the disciples would open their ears to listen for they were given the understanding of God's Kingdom. This is evident when the disciples ask the question, "*Why do you speak to them in parables?*" (Mt 13: 10) and Jesus answered, "*To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*" (Mt 13: 11).

<sup>96</sup> David J. Bosch, 1991, page 68

<sup>97</sup> Frankemolle 1974 cited in David J. Bosch, 1991, page 68

<sup>98</sup> J. C. Fenton, *The Gospel of Saint Matthew*, (Australia: Penguin, 1971) page 188

<sup>99</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 919

<sup>100</sup> Douglas A. R. Hare, page 134

This reply is the affirmation of the promise Jesus made in the beginning of His ministry, *"Follow me and I will make you fish for people."* (Mt 4:19).

I suggest that in this part of Matthew's book, despite of the weaknesses the disciples have shown, eventually they have completed the first stage of their learning. This is affirmed when Jesus announced that they were given the understanding of God's Kingdom. Now they have to move on to stage two that began in the Gentile area, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This was their way to Jerusalem.

#### IV. SECOND STAGE OF TEACHING THE DISCIPLES (14:1-25:46)

##### A. Beginning of Stage Two (14: 1 – 22)

The beginning of this stage is similar to the first one. We easily understand their comparison when we look at table 2.

1. *Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.* (Mt 14:13)
2. *Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.* (Mt 14:22)

At the beginning when Jesus heard that John the Baptist was arrested He withdrew near the Sea of Galilee (4:12). Jesus sought another place to continue His ministry when He heard of John the Baptist's death (14:13). These situations indicate the beginning of the first and the second stages of Jesus' ministry. Following the first withdrawal, Jesus called His first disciples to follow. He did likewise after the second withdrawal (14:22) but instead of commanding them to follow He ordered them to go on ahead. It was His intention to do so, for the disciples had the understanding of God's Kingdom (13:11). This time they crossed the river. The places they entered such as Gennesaret (14:34), Tyre and Sidon (15:21) on the other side of the river suggest that the mission was taken to the Gentiles. This shift of mission is significant, which indicates that the Gospel is a moving Gospel that must be heard and obeyed, leaving behind the areas, which do not accept it.



## B. Miracles: More Understanding Given in Deeds (14: 23-17: 27)

Reflecting on the first calling of the disciples (4:19), Jesus called them while casting their nets and they immediately followed. At the beginning of the second stage (14:22), Jesus urged the disciples to get into the boat. The first call suggests that the disciples had to respond immediately because they had not received the understanding of God's revelation. In the second stage, the disciples now have some understanding of God's Kingdom therefore Jesus hurried them to cross the river by themselves (vv. 23-33). The urgency implies that the Gentiles must hear the mission immediately. But the waves and the wind battered the disciples' boat. This bad weather condition illustrates the difficult situations of their ministry ahead. How the disciples handle the situation on the river indicates their approach in the coming events. Tom Wright suggests this story as the life of faith.<sup>101</sup> It shows that fear and doubt challenge the disciples' faith. David Hill writes that the same story is also mentioned in Mark 6:45-52 reflecting the disciples' lack of understanding but in Matthew it reflects their fear and lack of faith though at the end they confessed that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>102</sup> Despite fear and doubt the disciples keep to their understanding of Jesus.

Verses 34-36 state Jesus' healing of a large crowd. This is different from His previous healing of the individuals. The words, '*all who touched it were healed*', in verse 36 implies that all who heard and believed in Jesus' teaching would be healed and revealed the hidden things of God's Kingdom. It suggests again that Jesus' task were for everyone.

Chapter 15:21-28 speaks of the healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter. The mother recognised Jesus as the Son of David when she met Him on His entrance into Tyre and Sidon. This is Gentile area therefore the Canaanite woman is regarded as a Gentile.<sup>103</sup> This means, a Gentile woman recognised Jesus as the Messiah. When this mother asked for her daughter, Jesus replied that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. However she continued to ask Him and eventually Jesus recognised her faith and healed her daughter. This miracle suggests two things. Firstly, the woman's daughter was healed because of her mother's faith. Secondly, despite Jesus' eagerness to take the mission to the lost sheep of Israel, He still had time for the

<sup>101</sup> Tom Wright, 2002, page 189

<sup>102</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 247

<sup>103</sup> David Hill 1972, page 253



woman regardless of her nationality and religion. In other words Jesus has shown that a good disciple is the person who has time to hear everyone's needs.

Verses 29-31 continue to stress Matthew's emphasis on healing large numbers of people.<sup>104</sup> Jesus passing along the Sea of Galilee is another indication of Jesus' mission reaching Gentile areas. After this healing the healed group praised God of Israel (v. 31). This shows that more Gentiles heard and accepted God of Israel in accordance with Jesus' teaching.

Verses 32-38 speak of the miracle of feeding the four thousands. This miracle raised some questions such as whether it has any distinction to feeding the five thousands (14:14-20). Lohmeyer argues that the feeding of the four thousands aimed at the Gentiles. He added that the occurrence of this occasion in a Gentile area and a reference to the seven baskets to the seven deacons (Acts 6) support His view.<sup>105</sup> The feeding of the five thousands mentioned twelve baskets in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel. This is a relevant argument because the feeding of the five thousands took place before He let the disciples cross the river. I suggest that this miracle was the last deed Jesus made for the people of Israel before He entered the second stage of teaching His disciples. The feeding of the four thousand occurred in the Gentile area suggests that His compassion is not restricted to Israel but also to the Gentiles. This distinction shows that God's love and mercy is for all.

### C. Community Discourse: More Understanding Given in Words (18)

This passage stresses the significance of being a member of God's community. Jesus taught His disciples the way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, which is humility as illustrated in the figure of a, 'little child'.<sup>106</sup> Jesus spoke about the inward reality of a person. He stressed the significance of self-emptying by neglecting high-mindedness and personal greatness and to be innocent like a little child. This way provides flexibility and openness to hear and accept others.

<sup>104</sup> G. C. D. Cowley, et. al., *The Pickering Bible Commentary for Today*, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1984), page 1204

<sup>105</sup> cited in David Hill, 1972, page 255

<sup>106</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1272

Verses 10-20 speak of the Shepherd's concern for the one lost sheep and these verses teach the disciples to recognise the lost ones.<sup>107</sup> It is a pastoral concern by which the disciples must not undermine others but to care for all through loving and sharing with one another. Such concern reveals discipleship as an act of respect and care, which helps build communal life and mutual fellowship.

Verses 21-35 speak of unlimited forgiveness. The expectation is that the disciples and members of the church must forgive one another as God had forgiven them.<sup>108</sup> The servant who was forgiven for his debt did not do likewise to his friend who owed him money. Hence, he was sent to jail. This servant illustrates the person who pretends that he has forgiven his friend. But Jesus speaks of true forgiveness from the heart, which makes a person listen, not seven times but seventy seven times.

#### **D. Road to Jerusalem: More Understanding Given in Words (19-22)**

This section is called, 'The Way to Jerusalem.' Jesus left Galilee and entered Judea on His way to Jerusalem (19:1). The disciples continue to be the hearers at this stage of Jesus' ministry as verses 10 and 11 state:

*His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom is given."*

'To whom is given', refers to His disciples. Chapter 13:11 explains the affirmation of God given understanding and here Jesus reminds the disciples that they are the chosen hearers.

Verses 3-12 speak of the Pharisees testing Jesus. They questioned Jesus concerning the law of marriage. They were anticipating that His response would bring him disfavor with Jews.<sup>109</sup> However, it did not prevent Jesus from responding that divorce was not God's intention. The concern was to deal with the result of sin.<sup>110</sup> Jesus' renewal of the law of marriage gives an opportunity for the unfaithful husband or wife to be forgiven if he/she repents. Jesus has shown that anticipation and criticisms should not prevent the disciples from showing and teaching the will of God.

<sup>107</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1273

<sup>108</sup> George A. Buttrick, 1978, page 476

<sup>109</sup> Douglas A. R. Hare, 1993, page 220

<sup>110</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 929

Chapters 21-22 speak of the reception of the King in Jerusalem. The long journey has now reached Jerusalem (21:1-11). The spreading of the disciples' clothes on the back of the donkey and the pilgrim's cloaks on the road show their recognition of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem as King.<sup>111</sup> But the arrival of the Messiah stirred the whole city. The disciples' long road of learning to understand Jesus' ministry finally arrived at the beginning of the real test of their hearing.

Chapter 22 begins with the parable of the banquet. This parable is similar to the parable of the vineyard.<sup>112</sup> In both, the people to whom servants were sent refused to hear and obey and consequently were destroyed. This is the picture of Jesus' ministry. Jesus with His disciples proclaimed God's word to Israel but they did not want to hear. The punishment that these people received implies that the disciples' task is to make people hear and God will deal with their responses.

Verses 15-40 describe three challenges initiated by Jesus' opponents to trap Jesus.<sup>113</sup> One of the challenges is that they tested Jesus with the question concerning the paying of taxes. According to William Macdonald, Jesus' response shows two responsibilities of citizenship. One is obedience to the state and the other to God.<sup>114</sup> Yet, Jesus' response here, if it is taken into account by those who have ears, strictly portrays that everything must be rendered to God for everything is God's, including the image, denarii and even Caesar.

#### E. Understanding To Be Aware of What to Come (23-25)

This section represents the fifth discourse.<sup>115</sup> Chapter 23 speaks of Jesus' denouncing the scribes and Pharisees. J. C. Fenton suggests that Matthew put the, '*woes*', in this part to balance the, '*blessings*', at the beginning of the first stage of disciples' learning.<sup>116</sup> Reflecting on Jesus' ministry, the leaders of Judaism were the main opposition. Near the end of Matthew's book, it was relevant to use the Pharisees and scribes as examples to illustrate the kinds of attitudes that are not accepted in the Kingdom of Heaven. By this time, the disciples should

<sup>111</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 931

<sup>112</sup> J. C. Fenton, 1971, page 347

<sup>113</sup> D. A. Carson, et. al., 1994, page 933

<sup>114</sup> William Macdonald, 1990, page 1287.

<sup>115</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 308

<sup>116</sup> J. C. Fenton, 1971, page 368



understand these leaders' boasting. In comparison to the time of the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples were in the early stage of their learning therefore Jesus had to begin by giving them first the understanding of the rewards of God's Kingdom. For this reason we take J. C. Fenton's suggestion.

Jesus was not challenging the Pharisees and scribes' teachings but rather their ignorance and hypocrisy.<sup>117</sup> This is evident in vv. 2-3,

*"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach."*

Jesus reminds the disciples the right manners of revealing God's will, and that must be practised in what they preach. He warns His disciples against pride of status and power.

Chapters 24 and 25 speak of the glorious coming of the Messiah.<sup>118</sup> In chapter 24 Jesus is approached again by His disciples who asked for the sign of His coming and the end of age (vv. 3). Jesus warns them to beware of the messianic pretenders. He also warns them that there will be wars, hunger and earthquakes and that many nations will not want to hear of their message. For this reason they will suffer and be killed. But beyond suffering there is glory when the Son of Man will come with His angels to gather all the people who listened and obeyed. Jesus speaks of God's glory in discipleship. It is no easy task making people to hear and obey the will of God but beyond pain and suffering there is joy.

Chapter 25 speaks of watchfulness for God and God's judgement.<sup>119</sup> Watchfulness is explained by the parables of the ten bridesmaids and the talents. The parable of the ten bridesmaids suggests that the disciples must prepare and wait for the time the bridegroom will arrive. The parable of the talents suggests readiness, not in passive waiting, but in continuing the work and using wisely the given opportunity. These parables stress the significance of preparing the whole person in faith and in action to hear and obey.

Matthew completes this section with God's judgement. This is the reason why readiness is important. The disciples are reminded that they have to make use of the opportunity by working continuously. This implies that the disciples must prepare to hear more and to continue hearing. It is not their role to judge how people hear but to continue helping them to hear. This

<sup>117</sup> G. C. D. Cowley, et. al., (eds), 1984, page 1211

<sup>118</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, 1993, page 273

<sup>119</sup> Frederick Carl Eiselen, et. al., (eds), 1957 pages 991-992

judgement discourse should give confidence to the disciples' ability to listen as they enter the passion and resurrection of Jesus.

## V. THE LONG-TERM GOAL OF THE HEARING PROCESS (26-28)

Jesus' nurturing of His disciples aimed for this moment. Everything they have seen and heard would eventually come to reality in the death and resurrection of Jesus. This part is the third point of the triangular shape of our structure, which is called, '*Long-term goal of the hearing process.*'

At the beginning of chapter 26, Matthew writes, *When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples,....*

These words indicate that the learning sessions are completed and the disciples now will have to enter the real test of their hearing. After all the hard and the good times Jesus had gone through with His disciples, the disciples' actions show that they were lost in the hearing process such as Judah and Peter. Matthew did not explain why Judah acted the way he did but the apparent reason is that Judah needed money. He asked the chief priests for how much money they could offer and was given thirty pieces of silver. In the end he declared his wrongdoing and took his own life. Peter seemed the most faithful and brave disciple of the twelve. However, in times of danger and uncertainty he failed. David Hill writes that Peter's denial has historical inaccuracy.<sup>120</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare suggests likewise and adds that we should look into this account from Matthew's intended audience perspective.<sup>121</sup> In this regard, when we look at it from the Jewish-Christian perspective, Peter's denials illustrate the uncertainty amongst some members of the Jewish Christian community; those who abandoned Christianity and returned to Judaism because of the threats of persecution. I suggest that Judah and Peter represent the nature of human's hearing. They have shown that human desires closed their ears to God's will and fear and doubt in times of challenge weakened their faith and as a result they denied the truth.

<sup>120</sup> David Hill 1972, page 347

<sup>121</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, 1993, page 311

Despite the failure of Peter's hearing, yet he joined the ten who went to Galilee to await the last appearance of Jesus after His resurrection. There, Jesus announced the long-term goal of their participation in the hearing process from the beginning of His ministry.

*"Go therefore and make disciples to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Mt 28:19-20)

It is time to reveal to the world that they are good listeners. Despite the mixed responses from the disciples during their time with Jesus, Jesus trusted and gave them authority to continue His work. To understand clearly this great commission, David J. Bosch suggests that there are three important terms that summarise the essence of this commission: *"make disciples, baptise, teach."*<sup>122</sup> He further writes that Matthew often used the word teaching. Moreover, Frankmolle defines Jesus' teaching in the first Gospel,

*"...is an appeal to his listener's will, not primarily to their intellect; it is a call for a concrete decision to follow and to submit to God's will."*<sup>123</sup>

The term, *'make disciples'*, means,

*"...the followers of the earthly Jesus have to make others into what they themselves are: disciples."*<sup>124</sup>

The term, *'baptising'*, is described by Gerhard Friedrich,

*"...it is no human act or decision, but a gift of grace."*<sup>125</sup>

The great commission stresses the true responsibility of Jesus' disciples. They had to lead by example, to teach the listeners into making the right decision to follow and to submit to God's will. Baptising them is the offering of God's grace. All in all, the true essence of discipleship is to teach the listener to obey.

<sup>122</sup> David J. Bosch, 1997, page 66

<sup>123</sup> Frankmolle cited in David J. Bosch, 1997, page 66

<sup>124</sup> David J. Bosch, 1997, page 74

<sup>125</sup> Gerhard Friedrich cited in David Bosch, 1997, page 79



## VI. CONCLUSION

Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry enables us to identify the key elements of hearing. He began by claiming Jesus' authority to communicate God's revelation. When John was arrested Jesus withdrew to Galilee to begin His ministry. Knowing the demand of His task, He chose His first disciples. His goal was to make these people as fishers of men. The choice of the disciples as the first intended audience is evidently shown in many occasions. For example, He specially taught them the Sermon on the Mount while the crowd stood at a distance.

Following the calling of His first disciples, He began revealing the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven in words and deeds. For example, in words He revealed the understandings of blessings, the areas of practical righteousness, judgement, the importance of hearing, rejection, and so forth. The miracles, His death and resurrection revealed His divine power as the Messiah.

The significant part of Matthew's model is stated in the parable of the sower. Jesus in this part of His ministry declared that the disciples were given the understanding of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. This implies that the disciples had shown good listening. It is important to note that Jesus revealed this understanding in the first stage of the disciples' learning in teaching and practice. This means that there is work that should be done first before demanding listening from the listeners.

Our revised and adapted structure suggests a system of making people hear. That is to, '*teach the listener to hear and obey.*' It is not the system that is seen in discipleship today, which is, '*force the listener to hear and obey then teach.*'

## CHAPTER FOUR

**THE CLIMAX OF THE STRUCTURE: HEARING IN THE PARABLE OF THE  
SOWER (Mt 13:1-17)**

This chapter affirms the point that we raised in the preceding chapter. That is the understanding of God's revelation must be instilled first into the listener before demanding listening from others. Matthew's placement of the parable of the sower in this part of his Book shows the significance of hearing in the nurturing of the disciples. In order to understand this significance, it is important to discuss first the meaning and the function of parables.

### **I. WHAT IS A PARABLE?**

In the Bible, the Hebrew word for parable is 'מָשָׁל'.<sup>126</sup> It has a variety of meanings such as, "figure, proverb, aphorism, riddle, lesson, allegory,"<sup>127</sup> and so forth. The main idea of 'מָשָׁל' is, "to be similar", or, "to be comparable."<sup>128</sup> In the LXX the Greek words, παραβολή, and, παροιμία, translate the word 'מָשָׁל'.<sup>129</sup> Both terms mean comparison. The former is used mainly by the Synoptics and the latter is almost peculiar to the Fourth Gospel.<sup>130</sup>

For years the parables were studied only as allegories but Adolf Julicher's work opposed this notion and it has a huge impact on the interpretation of the parables.<sup>131</sup> An allegory means giving different implications to a parable.<sup>132</sup> C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias supported the claim that parables only have a single point to make and can only be found in its historical setting.<sup>133</sup> C. H. Dodd looked at each parable as a presentation of Jesus' realised eschatology (i.e., the presence of the Kingdom). Jeremias added that each parable presents an understanding of the kingdom as both, 'already', and, 'not yet.'<sup>134</sup> According to

<sup>126</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 298

<sup>127</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 298

<sup>128</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, et. al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, (Nashville: Abingdon, reprinted 1991) page 649

<sup>129</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, et. al., reprinted 1991, page 649

<sup>130</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) page 12

<sup>131</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 298

<sup>132</sup> Dr. Bullinger cited in Herbert Lockyer, 1963, page 16

<sup>133</sup> Cited in M Eugene Boring, 1995, page 299

<sup>134</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 299

George A. Buttrick the parables of Jesus are not interested in planning future events but the activities of God that are happening in the present.<sup>135</sup> His claim emphasises the significance of interpreting the parable as a preparation of the individual believer for the imminent coming of the kingdom. Although C. H. Dodd emphasises one meaning, his definition is basically flexible.

*"At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."*<sup>136</sup>

This definition shows the beauty of the parable. It is a metaphor ("One object is equated with another").<sup>137</sup> It is also a simile ("...means like or resembling...").<sup>138</sup> The definition shows that the parable invites a hearer to think for it brings life to a mind. Scholars like Blomberg and Boucher opposed the view by Julicher, Dodd and Jeremias.<sup>139</sup> They believed that allegorical elements of parables couldn't be avoided. Hagner writes,

*"...the parables interpret us as much as we interpret the parables... As the parables grabbed their initial hearers and readers, so must contemporary readers experience their power, understanding with the heart as well as the head, responding not so much to historical information but to the call of God upon their lives."*<sup>140</sup>

It is important to find the single meaning of a parable, but it should not ignore the importance of the allegorical elements. The parables of Jesus always give an understanding of the Kingdom of God and it is the starting point of interpreting parables. Although we have different ways of interpreting parables, they are all attempts to understand God.

## II. PURPOSE OF PARABLES

Parabolic teaching was the rabbis' common-practice to exegete the Torah.<sup>141</sup> Jesus

<sup>135</sup> George A. Buttrick, et. al., 1991, page 653

<sup>136</sup> Cited in M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 299

<sup>137</sup> Herbert Lockyer, 1963, page 15

<sup>138</sup> Herbert Lockyer, 1963, page 14

<sup>139</sup> Donald A. Hagner, 1993, page 364

<sup>140</sup> Donald A. Hagner, 1993, page 365

<sup>141</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, page 299



adopted this method to win men to His kingdom.<sup>142</sup> It was a method used to communicate an understanding of God's will. In presenting the truth concerning the Kingdom of God,<sup>143</sup> parables are disturbing stories that challenge the hearer to make assumptions and different ways of interpretations.<sup>144</sup> The parables are used differently in accordance with each individual's purpose. Yet, Jesus uses it for a single reason; that is, to illustrate a message about the Kingdom of God. It reveals the literary information that He needed the hearers to know.<sup>145</sup> The aim was to win the attention of the hearers.

### III. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The question that needs to be asked at this stage is, 'What is the significance of the placement of this parable in Matthew's Gospel?' The parable indicates that hearing is important in the reception of God's revelation. It is utilised as an illustration of Jesus' ministry, and a form of teaching to present the reality of His present Kingdom. As the parable showed different types of hearers in Jesus' ministry, mixed responses to His teaching were also evident. For example, the Pharisees rejected Him for doing the unlawful activities on the Sabbath.

The parable is not so much about the seed as it is about the soil of human understanding.<sup>146</sup> It should be called the Parable of the Soils because these soils represent different states of heart and their responses to the Gospel.<sup>147</sup> Therefore it is the responsibility of good hearing and it is all that is needed to make a good soil to grow the seed of the Gospel.

#### A. Analysis: Parable of the Sower (13: 1-17)

The following structure is made in accordance with the context of Jesus' ministry that begins from the calling of His first disciples (chapter 4:19) to their commission (chapter 28:19-20).

<sup>142</sup> George A. Buttrick, et. al., 1978, page 169

<sup>143</sup> Carl A. Glover, *Messages From The Parables*, (London: Independent, 1956) pages xii- xiii

<sup>144</sup> M. Eugene Boring, 1995, pages 299-300

<sup>145</sup> George A. Buttrick, et. al., 1978, page 408

<sup>146</sup> George A. Buttrick, 1928, page 42

<sup>147</sup> Herbert Lockyer, 1963, page 177

### Structure

1. Vv1-2 Conjunction to the first stage of learning for the disciples
2. Vv3-8 The parable of the soil
3. V9 The command or invitation of disciples' hearing
4. Vv10-17 The affirmation of the promise '*I will make you fish for men.*'

#### (1) Vv1-2 Conjunction to the disciples' first stage of learning

1. *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.*

'*That same day*', points to the day Jesus taught in the synagogue in the previous chapter. This was the house he went out from and moved to sit near the sea.<sup>148</sup> The words, '*great crowds*', suggested that not one crowd participated on this day but many. These words illustrate the kinds of people Jesus met in the first stage of His ministry. They followed him for different reasons and are the hearers that the following parable explains.

'*he got into a boat*', shows that Jesus set Himself into a good teaching position to ensure that the crowd could hear and see Him.

#### (2) Vv3-8 The soil

*3. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. 5. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. 6. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. 7. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth again, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

In verse one Jesus is mentioned going out of the house to continue proclaiming God's word. Jesus is talking about himself going out to sow the seed of the Gospel to the crowd who gathered to Him including His disciples.

The path is the first type of soil on which the seeds fell and the birds can easily see them lying on the road surface as they came and devoured them. The next type of soil is the rocky

<sup>148</sup> Daniel J. Harrington S. J., *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical, 1991) page 194

ground, which has little soil for the seed to grow. The seed eventually dies when the sun comes up. The third ground is where the thorns grow. They dominated and choked the growth of the seeds. The fourth type is the good soil, which produces grain in manifold.

The parable simply indicates that the growth of the seed depends on the type of soil it falls upon. The concern in the process of sowing is not the sower or the seed but the different soils or the different hearers.

These questions guide our discussion at this stage.

1. How does Jesus sow the seeds according to Matthew? or How does Jesus reveal the Word of God?
2. What soils upon which Jesus sows the seeds? or What hearers to whom Jesus reveals the Word of God?
3. What is the expected response?

To answer these questions we need to reflect on the interpretation we have made in the preceding chapter. Matthew identifies Jesus as the sower in the beginning. He is the King and the Son of God. His authority was recognised to reveal the Word of God. Near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus chose the first soils (the first disciples) and began sowing the seed of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. The disciples and the hearers who gathered to witness His teachings and miracles are the hearers illustrated in the parable of the sower.

The imperative *ἀκούετω* indicates that the expected response is obedience. The command is an invitation to hear and obey. It indicates the purpose of the parable. Every sower sows the seeds in order to have a good harvest. In other words the preacher proclaims God's word seeking obedience. The people who responded positively are considered participants of God's kingdom. It is a call to make the right decision. Hence, it is not a parable to frighten the people who may not hear but rather to guide them in their hearing in order to be fruitful. Making the right decision depends on how much understanding the listener may have. The disciples at this stage should have some understanding of Jesus' ministry. Jesus knew that the disciples had this understanding and so invited them to hear as in verse 9.



### (3) The command or invitation of the disciples to listen

#### *9. Let anyone with ears listen!*

The reference to this concept ἀκούετω is a command. It is an invitation for those who have ears. In other words it is addressed to the people who have some understanding of God's revelation. The disciples had this understanding for they were specially called by Jesus to follow. The call to listen indicates that the message is important.<sup>149</sup> It is a formula that states the importance of the meaning of the parable.<sup>150</sup> That is, the Kingdom of Heaven will arrive to harvest the different responses from the soils. If the response is negative the sower and the seed should not be blamed but the soil, who is the hearer.

### (4) The Purpose of the Parable

*10. Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11. He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 13. The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.' 14. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: 'You indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look but, never perceive. 15. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them.' 16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear, but did not hear it.*

Verse 10 states the disciples' question of why Jesus spoke to the crowd in parables. The disciples did not ask for the meaning of the parable but why it was spoken to the crowd. Jesus replied (v11),

*"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."*

The given knowledge is the understanding of the secrets of God's Kingdom. This understanding differentiates the disciples from the crowd. It shows that the disciples are specially chosen. They are the people who see and perceive, listen and understand as they

<sup>149</sup> Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen is Babylon: The Revelation of John*, (Pennsylvania: Trinity, 1998) page 102

<sup>150</sup> David Hill, 1972, page 225

follow Jesus. Therefore, Jesus' answer is the affirmation of His promise made in the beginning of His ministry.

*"Follow me, I will make you fishers of men". (Mt 4:19)*

In this affirmation, Jesus assured His disciples the understanding of God's Kingdom that other people such as the righteous and prophets of the Old Testament did not have. The distinctiveness is grounded in their seeing and hearing Jesus Christ the Messiah not only He Himself the heavenly secret but also the Revealer of the heavenly secrets. According to Gerhard Barth, seeing and hearing in this parable do not mean physical hearing, they mean understanding.<sup>151</sup> However Matthew here strongly emphasises both physical seeing and hearing and that of understanding for they both highlight Jesus' position and the distinctiveness of the disciples. So to know how the disciples know and understand these secrets, it was because they have seen and heard the One who has revealed to them the secrets of heaven. They bear witness to Jesus' works, miracles and teachings. They have seen patience, endurance, humility, honesty and love in the works of Jesus. In their task of following Jesus they have gained all the knowledge and understanding which distinguish them from people of the world. They know the secrets of God's Kingdom therefore they are entrusted by Jesus to reveal the same truth and secrets to the crowd or people who do not know.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The parable of the sower has shown the significance of hearing. Matthew's redaction of his Book indicates that the way to make a person listen is when he/she has the understanding of the message. Jesus' use of parables shows this point as well. The function of the parable is to attract the hearer. Jesus presented this parable knowing that the crowd did not understand it but the disciples. It was not to separate the crowd from the disciples but to give the message that the disciples deserved to understand for they followed, listened and obeyed. The different soils illustrate the different hearers. Those who are understood as bad soils, representing those who do not have ears, or not listen, yet still had a chance if they decided to become good soil. The

<sup>151</sup> Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth & Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, (London: SCM Press, 1972) page 107



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parable suggests the reality of people Jesus and His disciples met. It indicates that the expected response to receive God's revelation is hearing and obedience.

## V. RECOMMENDATION

J. C. Ryle suggests that, "...the work of the preacher resembles that of the sower."<sup>152</sup> I agree on the sense that the work of the CCCS minister should resemble the work of the sower. The members of the CCCS consider the ministers as chosen people of God. This paper suggests that the chosen person of God have a special duty in life. That is to practise the will of God in words and deeds. This is the way of giving people the understanding of God's purpose. By the time the minister demands hearing, the expectation of a good response is a certainty when the first task is made. The following recommendations should guide the preachers in order to help enhance hearing in CCCS.

1. It is important not to assume that the church members understand the message or the command. Assumptions cause uncertainty. It is not a good way of communicating.
2. It is important for the preacher to know his audience and their needs. This way will help develop teaching and preaching methods to make them hear.
3. Revealing God's will is a sharing mission. Jesus has entrusted His disciples to practice the ministry although he knew that they were not fully equipped. Giving such opportunity of trusting church members renders confidence on their part to help and most importantly to continue listening. The minister cannot do everything by himself but sharing the task with the intended audience would make the burden lighter.
4. It is important to have time to answer the people's questions. Jesus always had time to answer His disciples' question. He took them to a private space and explained His teachings again. This is an indication that education is a never-ending process for all people including the sower pointing to the preachers and soil pointing to the audience.
5. Jesus' message was new to Israel therefore He began His ministry by targeting a small group of people first. He focused primarily on His disciples for He knew that it was easier in small groups to understand His message. This is an effective way of teaching the understanding of God's Word. We cannot provide the learning needs of all members of a

<sup>152</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995) page 141

large group at once. Our discussion suggests that we concentrate on the listeners who seem to appreciate our teaching. When this group successfully receive our teaching, it will be a great help in spreading God's Word to others.

6. Jesus use of simple methods such as the use of parables to convey the secrets of God's Kingdom recommends another significant way to enhance hearing. That is, the message or teaching should be presented in simple ways for easy understanding; the simpler we give, the easier the message will be received.
7. The minister's authority as the speaker is very important. It should be shown through good teaching, preaching and practice.

## VI. SUMMARY

We are now able to provide a biblical interpretation that helps enhance hearing in the CCCS. Firstly, there are five elements of the hearing process in the Bible.

1. God is the Speaker
2. The people are the hearers whether he/she is a Jew or a Gentile
3. The subject is God's revelation
4. The messengers have authority for they are considered as chosen by God
5. The expected response is to hear and obey

These elements are shown in our discussion of the significance of hearing in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Hebrew verb 'שמע' which means 'to hear,' indicates that the purpose of hearing is obedience. It is also the purpose of the term ἀκούω in Greek. The Greek term takes the meaning of the Hebrew term, which is sense perception. It means to apprehend something not by a particular sense but the whole person. It suggests that when the whole person hears the absolute response should be obedience. No doubt this is the response the chosen messengers of God expected from Israel for they had often witnessed God's mercy and judgement. It was an appeal for repentance. This was the same purpose of Jesus and His disciples' ministry.

Secondly, this paper suggested certain characters and elements that form the hearing process.

1. Recognition of the speaker's authority

2. Intended audience
3. The subject of communication
4. How the subject is delivered
5. The expected response
6. The long-term goal of this process

Thirdly, this paper adapted this process to a revised structure of the Gospel of Matthew. It is found that Jesus as the Son of God and King has the authority as the speaker of God's Word. His choice of first intended audience were His disciples for they had a special responsibility in the continuation of the ministry. The subject of their communication was to reveal the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus taught in words and deeds. The disciples were equipped with many understandings of the Kingdom of Heaven such as law, blessings and so forth. Jesus affirmed this in the parable of the sower. Eventually Jesus bestowed authority unto His disciples to take the Good News to all nations (Mt 28: 19-20). This was the long-term goal of the hearing process.

Fourthly, the structure of the Gospel of Matthew suggested significant approaches to enhance hearing. It is important to know who is the intended audience and plan a communication approach that meets their needs. Jesus targeted a small group and worked His way towards a larger audience. The most important feature of Matthew's hearing process is that listening should be demanded when the hearer is given the understanding of the message or the command. This approach brings certainty, trust and respect to a relationship.

Finally, the paper strongly emphasises the significance of '*teaching to hear and obey*'. This way has a sense of demanding or force behind it to seek obedience from the listener and this was clearly indicated by the command *ἀκούετε*. It shows that Jesus has authority and it is power and force to let the hearers enter His blessings. This authority was carried out when the disciples had the understanding of God's revelation, which implies that Jesus did not impose His authority on His disciples to achieve the purpose of His ministry. His use of authority was to encourage the listeners and to invite them into learning more about God's Kingdom. This suggests that the true essence of the minister's use of authority in the hearing process is to encourage and invite the listener to continue hearing God's Word so that he/she can enter God's blessings.



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