

**JESUS IN MATTHEW 4:18-22; 8:23-27 AND
TAPAPA – TOKELAUAN MASTER
FISHERMAN**

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by

Maka Galuega

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ABSTRACT

We have read and heard of different titles, and names addressed to our Saviour Jesus Christ such as the shepherd, the carpenter, the teacher, and the healer. All these titles were given based on the works, duties and actions that Jesus had done, whilst he was with his disciples. It is an absolute truth that he is God incarnate, but we cannot remove the fact that he was born and raised in a family, society and brought up in the world of Judea, with its customs and traditions and the usual daily routine of life in their context. When putting it in the context of a Tokelauan and their world it can be thus said, that there should not be any concerns in calling Jesus a *Tapapa*, a title given to a Tokelauan Master Fisherman.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, miracles and healings were performed in places that were in the coastal areas near the Sea of Galilee, showing his prowess as a Tapapa. Hence, I have explored Matthew 4:18-22 and 8:23-27 whether the tasks performed by Jesus could be looked at as indicators of Jesus being the Tapapa.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my late grandfather Tufoua Maka. The humblest person I know, who woke up in prayer and sleep in prayer.

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Consent Form for the Retention and Use of the Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

The motivation to carry out this study is twofold. Firstly, I am interested in practicing the ‘Islander Criticism’ approach of reading the Bible. That approach recognizes the importance of bringing our island perspectives and experiences into the process of interpreting a text. Secondly, this study is an opportunity for me to use a life experience from my Tokelauan world in an interpretation of a Bible text. It is seeking in the Bible how our Tokelauan life experiences could be more meaningful in our living life in today’s world.

The continuous changing of cultures, lifestyles, thinking, and technologies in the world now comes with a challenge for us island readers of the Bible in how we seek in the Bible answers to questions that arise from those changes. The biblical interpretation approach of ‘Islander Criticism’, as an islander way of interpreting the Bible emerges from the current attempt to find ways to deal with that challenge, by the Pacific island biblical scholars. It is to make more sense of the meaning of the Gospel in today’s Pacific island world/s. This approach came out of the biblical gatherings and meetings held by some of the Pacific biblical scholars who called themselves islanders and who have used in their interpretations of the Bible their experience, understanding, and perspectives of their own island worlds. The islander criticism approach is now recognized by the world Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and is given a session for scholars who consider their papers, islander interpretations of the Bible, in the SBL annual and international meetings.¹ The Oceania biblical studies association made up of mostly Pacific island biblical scholars holds a meeting in every two years to share their

¹ Vaitusi Nofoaiga, a lecturer from Malua Theological College presented the paper, ‘A Samoan reading of service to land and sea in Matthew 14’, in the ‘Islander Reading of the Bible’ session in the Society of Biblical Literature International Conference held in Boston United States of America in 2017.

researches and interpretations of the Bible and most of their interpretations are called islander criticism of the Bible.² I will mention some of these interpretations in my brief review of the Islander Criticism approach in Chapter One.

As an islander and a Tokelauan Christian, this paper is merely a Tokelauan understanding that attempts to endeavour in applying an ‘Islander Criticism’ approach of the Bible, to explore whether Jesus as the Messiah in the Gospel of Matthew could be looked at as a *Tapapa* (the Master Fisherman). The Matthean presentation of Jesus’ ministry shows Jesus calling the fishermen in Galilee, to be his first disciples (Matt. 4:12-22). In this event, Jesus’ commanding of the four fishermen from Galilee to follow him for he will make them fishers of men implies that Jesus himself was a fisherman. In other words, the reason why Jesus commanded these fishermen to be fishers of men was because he was adept and knew how to fish. Thus, Jesus’ teaching of these fishermen from Galilee, to become better fishermen, makes Jesus a Master fisherman or *Tapapa*. It is the task of this paper to elaborate on this claim by an exegesis of the selected texts from the Gospel of Matthew studied in this thesis. This paper is divided into four chapters. Chapter One will give a brief overview of the islander approach of Islander Criticism that will be used in this paper as the interpretational method to explore the selected texts. Chapter Two is the exegesis of the selected texts. The scope of this paper will only allow me to focus on these texts: Matthew 4:18-22; 8:23-27. Chapter Three is the analysis of the exegesis with the *Tapapa* perspective. Finally, chapter four gives a conclusion to the thesis.

² Six biblical scholars from Malua Theological College, presented papers in the latest OBSA (Oceania Biblical Studies Association) conference held in Suva Fiji in 2019. They are Makesi Neemia, Arthur Wulf, Samasoni Moleli, Seumaninoa Puaina, Vaitusi Nofoaiga, Brian Kolia.

CHAPTER ONE:

Islander Criticism and *Tapapa*- Method of Reading

Introduction

This chapter will be divided into two sections. It will begin with an overview of what ‘Islander criticism’ is, followed by how I will use this islander approach from the Tokelauan understanding of a Master Fisherman called *Tapapa*.¹ It will be used with the interpretational tool of narrative-rhetorical criticism to explore Jesus as a Master Fisherman in the First Gospel.

1.1 The Islander Criticism Approach

Islander criticism is an interpretational approach that utilises and interprets a text using an islander experience, understanding, and perspective. I can refer to this approach as one of the approaches used for reading texts and was popularized in the postmodernism² era. The term ‘islander criticism’ emerged as a result of recent attempts by island readers to capture and use island perspectives in their reading of the Bible.

The Islander criticism approach is used in various ways by our Pacific Island biblical scholars to interpret the Bible. One is intercultural interpretation of the text. Intercultural reading of a text is a type of interpretation that utilizes a cultural value or aspect from the world of the text and/or the world in the text and fuses it with a cultural value or aspect from the world of the reader in the present such as an island reader in his/her own island to bring forth a resolution to a question, or an issue raised from life

¹ All other fishermen are called tautai, taumalo, mate – I will describe in Chapter One who these fishermen are.

² Postmodernism I refer to here is after modernism era which is the period after 1960s and 1970s. It is a period considered the time after the rejection of the Victorian era’s traditions, and exploration of industrial-age, sometimes for political purposes – the so-called modernism period. Post colonialism and poststructuralist like postmodernism also emerged after modernism.

situations in today's world. For example, this form of interpretation was used to interpret ethnic tensions in the worlds of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles in relation to the issue of land claims in Samoan society by Peni Leota.³ Leota in this study brings together the cultural understanding of land tenure and claims in the worlds of the Persian-Period and Samoa, developing a Samoan hermeneutic to deal with land tenure and claims in Samoan society. Another example of an intercultural reading of a Bible text is Frank Smith's reading of the Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective.⁴ Smith in this study develops a way to bring the social and cultural worlds of the Johannine and Samoan communities together. For Smith, it is a challenge understanding what the Bible text is, such as the Johannine text because what is told and shown in John's Gospel is an event that happened long time ago. However, making a dialogue between our own experience of our world/s and the world of the text would lead us to an understanding of the meaning of the text and its relevancy to our context/s.

Another way of using Islander criticism is using our island experiences and perspectives as hermeneutical lenses to guide an exegesis or an analysis of a text.⁵ This way is threefold. First, the island reader's experience and perspective is used to raise questions from the world of the reader to guide the exploration of the text seeking answers to those questions. Vaitusi Nofoaiga's reading of discipleship in the Gospel of

³ Peni Leota, *Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic*, (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005).

⁴ Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective: Towards an Intercultural Reading of the Fourth Gospel," (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010).

⁵ Other examples, see, Arthur John Wulf, "Was Earth Created Good? Reappearing Earth in Genesis 1:1-2:4a from a Samoan *Gafataulima* Perspective," (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2016); Makesi Neemia, "The priestly ger (alien) meets the Samoan tagata ese (outsider)," in *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Martin Wilson Mariota, "Moses, both Hebrew and Egyptian: A Samoan Palagi reading of Exodus 2-3," in *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Vaitusi Nofoaiga, "Jesus the fiaola (opportunity seeker): a postcolonial Samoan reading of Matthew 7:24-8:22," in *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Melepone Isara, "Relocating Wise Economics: A Samoan *Tamāoaigā* Reading of Two Biblical Economies," (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2018).

Matthew is an example.⁶ Nofoaiga in his study of discipleship in Matthew utilizes his experience of discipleship in his Samoan world to revisit discipleship in Matthew's Gospel. Nofoaiga argues that considering important the need of people in a local place as part of the work of a *tautua*⁷ in the Samoan world contradicts the globally-emphasized traditional view of discipleship in the First Gospel as asserted by traditional interpretations of discipleship. Islander criticism in this case does not impose the island perspectives on the text. Instead, the perspectives are used only to raise questions on certain issues guiding the exploration of the text in the search for answers to those questions. In this way, the basis of the interpretation is the text. Second, the island perspective is used as a response to an interpretation of a text. This type of reading is also called a reader-response approach, a response that is based on the text. In this type of reading, an issue from the reader's context is raised to analyse an interpretation of a text. In this reading approach, it begins with an exegesis of the selected texts followed by the analysis of that interpretation using the island experience or issue raised in the beginning. Kaititi Tokaia's reading of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14 from his experience and understanding of *te baka* (feasting in Kiribati social and cultural world) is an example.⁸ In this study, Tokaia uses his experience and understanding of feasting in the Kiribati social and cultural world to analyse his exegesis of Matt 22:1-14. This use of an island experience and perspective to read a Bible text considers the text as the basis of the interpretation. Third, the island experience and perspective is used as the

⁶ Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017)

⁷ Serve and service in a Samoan cultural and traditional way in the family, church and village.

⁸ Kaititi Tokaia, "A Kiribati Reading of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 2:1-14," (BD Honors Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2019). Other examples: Clarke Stowers, "Names as hermeneutics to read texts: *Fofogaolevai* and John the Baptizer (Mark 1:1-15)," (BTh Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2017). Caesar Samuelu, "Head Covering for Women in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, (BD Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2008). Samuelu brings into his interpretation of head covering of women in 1 Cor 11:1-16 the Samoan understanding of the sister-brother relationship.

basis of the interpretation of the text. One of the weaknesses of this approach is that the reader might end up imposing his/her island perspective/s on the text. One example is the study by Auatama Peleti Iese on shaping a ‘Tama o le Va’ Christology.⁹ Iese in this thesis seems to emphasize more his experience and understanding of ‘Tama o le Va’ in the Samoan world instead of the Bible in his shaping of a Christology of Jesus as a fatherless child. The problem with this use of our island perspectives is that we end up imposing our indigenous understanding, philosophies, and beliefs on the Bible text. Thus, the basis of interpretation is not the Bible text.

As seen in this overview, ‘islander criticism’ is an approach to reading and interpreting the text that can be carried out in different and various ways depending on the reader’s interest/s. For this study, I will use my island experience and understanding of *Tapapa*, to analyse my interpretation of the selected texts whether Jesus could be considered a fisherman in Matthew’s Gospel. In this way, the texts are the basis of the interpretation. In other words, I am seeking in the texts more meaning of the importance of being a *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan world. It is the task of the next section to describe what a *Tapapa* is, followed by how a *Tapapa* is used with narrative-rhetorical criticism to interpret the selected texts.

1.2 *Tapapa* – Master Fisherman

The word ‘*Tapapa*’ is given to a type of shark¹⁰. The word may be tied to this particular shark’s voracity in its natural habitat. It is its swiftness, strength, smartness, skills and natural instincts to catch prey while protecting its habitat from competing

⁹ Auatama Peleti Iese, “Shaping a Tama o leVa Christology for a Fatherless Child: An Australian Samoan Perspective,” (BTh Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2015).

¹⁰ Kelihiano Kalolo interviewed by Maka Galuega, Tokelau, 20 December, 2019. Kelihiano is a *Tapapa* or master fisherman from Atafu, one of the isles that makes up the three islands of Tokelau. There are three (3) islands that make up Tokelau, which are Fakaofu, Nukunonu and Atafu. Kelihiano held multi-authoritative positions in the community, church and the government.

predators. This is the reason why the word has been given to this particular special class of master fisherman in Tokelau. The *Tapapa* champions all types of fishing methods.¹¹ His knowledge starts from the breaking tides upon the beaches, all the way to the depths of the deep blue ocean. His repertoire of skills is not only restricted to the gauging of the sea, but also expands to the practical side of fishing, and also teaching others to do so¹². *Tapapa* are revered individuals in the Tokelauan community. Their words are treated with respect. Their understanding of the sea and fishing methods is knowledge envied and sought by all. This is due to his extensive catalogue of knowledge on traditional fishing and understanding of the sea. This separates a *Tapapa* from other fishermen.

In discussions with a Master Fisherman in Tokelau, Kelihiano Kalolo, he mentioned that there are different levels of fisherman. They are: *Tapapa* the master fisherman;¹³ *Naite* or *Tautai* fisherman that have only just taken up role at helm;¹⁴ *Taumalo* fisherman that have not yet received a *kaukumete*¹⁵ or not yet blessed by the Elders, and *Mate* fishermen that are deckhands¹⁶.

A fisherman's knowledge is restricted to the actual practice of fishing. As for a *Tapapa*, his knowledge transcends into family matters, the village and its day-to-day governance. The outcome of being known as a *Tapapa* in Tokelauan society is no mere

¹¹ Fano Faō interviewed by Maka Galuega. Tokelau, 20 December, 2019. Fano is the mayor of Atafu, he also have a lot of potential when it comes to fishing institutions.

¹² John Kalolo, interviewed by Maka Galuega, Tokelau, 23 December 2019. John recently graduated from Malua Theological College and is the church minister of Fakaofu now. Not only that he knows a lot about fishing from his father a *Tapapa*, but also a fisherman himself.

¹³ These master fishermen are the experienced ones, for they have been in the role for many years. He is highly recommended and respected by the society.

¹⁴ Fishermen that have just been certified and blessed by elders to take upon the role of leading in the fishing area.

¹⁵ The *kaukumete* is the Tokelau recognition of someone to be qualified for the master fisherman role.

¹⁶ Beginner role for someone to join the fishermen system and to carry out it duties.

milestone to take lightly.¹⁷ The individual is armoured with all the information specific to that particular society and environment. Not only does he understand all aspects of fishing, but can put this knowledge into other areas of social functioning, which include his family, but also the village as a whole. The village admires and looks to the *Tapapa* for his wisdom and guidance in terms of how the village should be governed. The most important responsibility of the *Tapapa* is his service to his family, village and island nation. His life decisions are founded on ensuring that the people are safe, live happy lives and prosper.

How does one become a *Tapapa*? In our Tokelauan world, encountering struggles in, and through learning how to live life as a Tokelauan makes one a better person. This is the way of becoming a *Tapapa*. One must firstly serve, observe, and learn. It is only through these endeavours that one may then realize a higher calling and reach greater heights, and have the wisdom to become a leader. The *Tapapa* starts as a deckhand. He observes and stores all that he sees from the master fisherman. This involves the actions, movements, sayings and many other skills conducted by the old master fisherman. The knowledge is passed through observation. There are no pens or booklets or formal lessons. You learn through your eyes and observation. The next step is to be customarily acknowledged by the Elders of the village that you now have the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities to become a master fisherman. In these informal learning experiences conducted by the old master fisherman, there are certain requirements that must be achieved before an individual can become a master fisherman. The beginning of one's journey to become a master fisherman, the individual must know and

¹⁷ Filipino Pelesa interviewed by Maka Galuega, Tokelau, 20 December, 2019. Filipino is one great example of a *Tapapa* that ended up appointed to the Taupulega (fono a Matai). Taupulega is the Council representative of matai from each family that holds the sole authority of looking after matters pertained to each island.

understand particular actions/methods and observation of the sea before he is given a 'kaukumete'¹⁸. They are:

- He fully understands all actions/methods of fishing;
- He knows and understands the lunar cycle and tide movement;
- He knows and understands months of the year;
- He knows and understands the constellations of the months in a year;
- He knows and understands the direction of the winds;
- He understands the waves in bad weather and when the deep ocean is rough;
- He understands the omens of the day;
- He knows where fish are bountiful, spawning times and months to which fish are abundant;
- He knows the land, sea, fishing spots, where there are shoals of fish;
- He can navigate the vessel during choppy seas;
- He knows where the current is flowing;
- He knows how to keep his crew safe;
- More importantly, he knows and understands the customary norms and etiquette expected of a master fisherman when showing mutual respect and when observing taboos during particular types fishing; and
- Especially showing respect to the Elder Master Fishermen at sea as well as on land.

The actual types of fishing methods that will be the basis for his assessment will be fishing for skipjack (use traditional bamboo pole and line fishing), catching wahoo

¹⁸ If the recognition of an achievement is by receiving certificates and graduates papers, so does the kaukumete. The kaukumete as mentioned is the Tokelau recognition of someone to be qualified for the master fisherman role. He meets all the requirements necessary for a *Tautai* (fisherman).

(use of noose to catch the wahoo), and catching sea turtles. Once these criteria have been satisfied, then one can then be given a certification that he has become a master fisherman which is known as a 'kaukumete' and receive the blessings from the Elders of the villages and the Taupulega.¹⁹ It is only when this occurs that the individual can be at the helm of the canoe (usually at the back of the canoe holds cultural significance). A common trend is that most tautai (fisherman) cease at this level. They do not proceed to become master fisherman. Only a select few continues on to become *Tapapa*. The reason being is that the roles of a *Tapapa* are not restricted to the fishing methods of the sea, the lunar cycle, where fish are located, and all matters related to fishing. His knowledge extends to the shore. This can be seen in how he leads his family, where customary norms and practices of the society he belongs are practiced. .

There are two core reasons why a fisherman goes out on a fishing expedition. The first reason is to fish for the sustenance of his family. This is his duty, which he has to deal with and it is his identity as a Tokelauan man in his family. He is born into this world, then endeavours to become a master fisherman to bring blessings and wealth into his family. Fishing for the family is also extended to his neighbours for communal benefit.

Second, he goes out on an expedition as part of his wider communal responsibility to the community. These are fishing expeditions carried out by all village fishermen, to be distributed to the whole village. This is the traditional 'inati system'²⁰ which is the equal distribution of wealth to all people in the village. Everyone gets a share from this

¹⁹ Taupulega is a Matai council that made up of representative from families of the society; they are the highest and sole authority of each island. They made the decisions, laws and distribute benefits and monetary profits coming in Tokelau.

²⁰ Judith Huntsman, and Anthony Hooper, *Matagi Tokelau* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1991), 144. In the Tokelauan customs and tradition, there is equal dividing and sharing of goods, foods and wealth amongst its people. Our Tokelauan community continues to approach our living life in our worlds as Tokelauan people from this worldview of love, the perspective of love in our community. It is a practice that we cherish, appreciate and be proud of.

communal fishing. This practice of sharing makes me a very proud Tokelauan. Any Tokelauan will testify to this cultural value. It is the communal sharing of resources. This is a customary practice that Tokelauans carried out, to ensure that the people of the village are given a share of the resources found in the islands. An observation of this practice is, all Tokelauans follow and adhere to these principles as they are taught at a young age and carry it out till they become Elders in the community.

These principles magnify concepts such as love, cooperation, living in harmony, showing love to an individual without family, being patient in any task and work. These are evidences of a society that moves as one and have mutual respect for one another. The *inati* system lessens the burden on families within the community, especially families that do not have any men to do the fishing; a family that does not have a canoe/boat; and families that are on island because of other reasons (expat community).²¹ Once an *inati* is called by the children of the village, it means that all families in the village will receive a share in the resources received from the communal efforts. Resources that are distributed during *inati*, are usually fish, pigs and dry goods from the village store.

I grew up in a family without a canoe/boat, but my father, siblings and I would do fishing methods that would not require a canoe. For example, we would take out the fishing net, or use a fishing rod while walking on the reef during low-tide. But in some cases, we would be deckhands to other master fishermen that had boats and would allow us to join in on their fishing trips. While humbling to begin with, we still managed to get fish for our household even though we did not have a canoe/boat but the *inati* system supplemented our family.

²¹ Teloloma Paulo, interviewed by Maka Galuega, Tokelau, 20 December, 2019. Teloloma is a *Tapapa* and also a member of the Taupulega (Atafu).

The experience is humbling, and reinforces my appreciation of *Tapapa* and our Elders that have passed-on their wisdom which is an important aspect of the Faka-Tokelau²² in our communities. This is a common practice in my island. It fosters harmony, peace and cooperation amongst people. This involves love for another doing things right for the community. All able men of the village go out and fish, while the females cook to await the expedition. The children of the village wait in earnest at the *malae*²³ for the canoes to come ashore to pick his or her share of the catch of the day. To this day, this practice continues to be carried out. All sorts of wealth such as dry goods, money and other things are shared. But the practice is highlighted as it is related to the resources of the sea where fish is the main objective of any fisherman for his family and the whole village.

This is the main reason why I have chosen the *Tapapa* to be my perspective to guide my exploring of whether Jesus could be considered a Master Fisherman in this paper. *Tapapa* is the highest honour and achievement a fisherman in Tokelau can reach. The *Tapapa* are known as master fishermen that all fishermen aspire to become. As mentioned, his knowledge is extensive in all fishing methods and the sea, but extends to his household, community and the whole village. He preserves culture through applying this knowledge in the village in ensuring that the whole village is looked after. This is the position that represents any kind of fisherman in Tokelau that the family and village rely and depend upon.

²² Tokelau way of life and living, its traditions, cultures and beliefs.

²³ A land space near shore area, where all the fishermen come together from fishing, bringing their catch to be shared and distributed to the village.

1.3 How *Tapapa* and Narrative-Rhetorical criticism are used in the interpretation of the texts

The characteristics of *Tapapa* as described above will be used to analyse the exegesis of the selected texts - Matthew 4:18-22; 8:23-27. I will use the narrative²⁴ and rhetorical criticisms²⁵ to exegete the texts. The narrative criticism will be used to explore the characters of Jesus as the main character in relation to other characters in the texts. Important in the exegesis is the movements of the characters and their relationships to each other. In other words, narrative criticism finds out what is happening in the story. Rhetorical criticism explores how the language of the text shows and tells what is happening in the story. When the exegesis is carried out using the narrative and rhetorical criticisms, the *Tapapa*'s characteristics then are brought in to analyse that exegesis finding more teachings of the Gospel that would help make more sense the importance of *Tapapa* as a status and as a role in our Tokelauan community.

1.4 Conclusion

Explained in this chapter is the Islander criticism as the approach most Pacific Island biblical scholars now use to interpret the Bible seeking more meaning of the Gospel that are relevant to our island worlds. There are various and different ways of doing islander criticism but I have chosen to use the way that considers the text as the basis of the interpretation. In this way of interpreting the text, I will use my Tokelauan experience and understanding of the *Tapapa* as a Tokelauan that had reached an important status and role of a Master fisherman to analyse my exploring of whether

²⁴ See Mark Allan Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1995); "Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

²⁵ George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

Jesus' character in Matthew's Gospel could be considered a Master Fisherman. It is exploring whether Jesus as the caller of the four fishermen (the first people he called to follow him in order to become better fishermen) can be looked at a *Tapapa*. Chapter Two below will deal with the exegesis of the selected texts.

CHAPTER TWO:

Exegesis of Matthew 4:18-22; 8:23-27

Introduction

According to the social and cultural world of the first century Mediterranean world, being a fisherman was very important work. Most families relied on fishing for survival. It was the task of men to fish – men as heads of their families in the patriarchal system that was practiced by Palestinian families in the first century. So a so-called good fisherman is not only good at fishing in the sea but also good at looking after the family on land by making sure that the well-being of the family is well taken care of at all times.

Jesus as a fisherman is not explicitly mentioned in the Gospels. But his offering of a promise to make a group of fishermen better fishermen by following him, and his showing to the fishermen the part of the sea to find plentiful supply of fish (according to the Gospels) implies that Jesus was a fisherman. For example, in Luke 5:4 Jesus said to Simon: *“Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”* The story says that Simon Peter with other fishermen caught many fish from casting the net into deep water. Another example as emphasized in this thesis is Jesus’ choosing of the first disciples whom were fishermen in Matt. 4:19: *And he said to them [fishermen], “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”* This command by Jesus is interpreted in this study, a command implying the consideration of Jesus as a fisherman.

Chapter Two is the exegesis of the selected texts, Matt. 4:18-22; 8:23-27 whether Jesus could be considered a Master Fisherman using narrative-rhetorical criticism. It will explore the Matthean narrative of Jesus’ ministry looking at what the story says about Jesus’ character in relation to fishing. The rhetorical exegesis part will explore

how the language of the text shows and tells that narrative. It will be followed by an analysis of that exegesis with the *Tapapa* understanding and experience explained in Chapter One. Chapter Two will be divided into three sections. Section one gives a historical account of fishing in the Palestinian world showing a background of the fishing economy in the Palestinian social, cultural, economic, and political world in the 1st century. Section two is the interpretation of the selected texts followed by the conclusion to this chapter in section three.

2.1 Fishing in the Palestinian world – the world in which Jesus carried out his ministry

It is not the purpose of this section to provide a thorough discussion of Matthew's community and its historical, social, and cultural values in relation to the fishing world of the 1st century Palestinian society.¹ Rather, it focuses only on providing a brief background of fishing in the Palestinian world to help the reading being undertaken in this thesis.

Fishing was an important part of the Palestinian economy in the first century C.E. But it was not the “free enterprise” that most modern readers of the New Testament imagined. Even fishers who owned their own boats were part of a state-run enterprise, and a complex web of financial relationships.² Fishing was controlled by the people in power – the so-called ruling elites such as the king, tetrarch, and prefect.³ They sold fishing rights to brokers such as the tax collectors who made contracts with fishers. The

¹ For some details about the existence of Matthew's community in the Roman Empire and its system see Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 9-53; Robert H. Gundry, “A Responsive Evaluation of the Social History of the Matthean Community in Roman Syria,” in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1991), 189-200.

² K. C. Hanson, “The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition,” *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 27 (1997): 99-111.

³ K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus: Social structures and social conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 106-107.

fishers received capitalization along with fishing rights and were therefore indebted to the brokers.⁴ The location of Matthew's tax collecting office in Capernaum (an important fishing area) makes him a contractor of the imperial fishing rights (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14). Luke 5:1-11 speaks of the labouring, and how to carry out their contract obligations to the brokers. The hiring of labourers who are contracted by fishers are placed at the bottom of the fishing system. For example, in Mark 1:19-20 Zebedee as a net-fisher, not only had two working sons in the business but hired labourers as well. This number shows that a significant number of more crew were needed to man larger boats.

There was a Galilean fishing economy entrenched by the Roman imperial empire during the time of Jesus' ministry.⁵ The Roman emperors like Augustus, Tiberius, Galigula reaped substantial benefits from enforcing port taxes (Mediterranean and interregional roads), as well as tributes from Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas as tetrarch took control of the sea, the harbours, and fishing rights as well as the local roads. He (or his father) also may have been responsible for building the harbours and breakwaters. Brokers contracted to collect the leases and control the harbours. They were responsible to tax administrators. Fishing families were the primary labourers who caught the fish; they formed collectives or cooperatives in order to bid for fishing contracts or leases. If there were not sufficient family members of labouring age in the fishing industry, the fisherman had to hire labourers to help with all the activities: manning the oars and sails, mending and washing nets, etc. The fishermen needed resources for the

⁴ Wilhelm H. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 23-24.

⁵ Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 11-19; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 101-116. John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 93-97; Leland Ryken et. al., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 290-291.

endeavours from farmers and artisans, including flax for nets, cut-stone for anchors, wood for boat building and repairs, baskets for transporting. Fish-processors produced fish sauces and other preserved fish products that could be taken to market. Their workshops were also taxed. The materials for fish processing had to be supplied by merchants, farmers, and artisans, including salts, wine, and oil for processing, and amphorae for shipment. These were also taxable goods and services. The preserved fish and fish sauces could be distributed to merchants throughout the Galilee and the rest of Palestine, as well as around the Mediterranean world but the fish had to be hauled by carters and shippers. The merchants were required to collect sales taxes, and carters and shippers could be taxed for use of roads, bridges, ports, and crossing Roman customs boundaries.

The fishers could hardly be classed as “entrepreneurs” in such a highly regulated, taxed and hierarchical economy.⁶ While the boat owner/fishers may or may not have also been involved in fish processing, this would not have made them wealthy and certainly not “middle class,” as many authors have contended. The “surplus” went to the brokers and the rulers. This accounts for the hostility of the general population in both Judean and early Christian sources against the “tax collectors.”

The importance of fish in Palestinian culture is signalled by several geographical names: Jerusalem had a “fish gate” (Neh 3:3); the capital of Gaulanitis was Bethsaida (which means “Fishing Village”), located on the northern shore of the Lake of Galilee (see Mark 6:45); and the Greek name for the town of Magdala (the home of Mary

⁶ Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World*, 93-97; Ryken et. al., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 290-291; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 101-116.

Magdalene) on the western shore of Galilee was Tarichaeae, which means “Processed Fishville.”⁷

The subsistent agrarian and fishing system of the local people of Palestine in the time of Jesus was condemned by the Roman Imperial system. The Imperial system prioritized the production and supply of food for commercial purposes to get money to finance building the Empire by building more roads, ports and ships, and large buildings. The Roman Empire political-economy system had the sole authority over the Mediterranean Sea and the lands. In this way, the fishing rights, production and farms and agriculture were owned by the Roman Imperial System.

2.2 Exegesis of Matthew 4:18-22; 8:23-27

2.2.1 The hermeneutical circle and the structure of Matthew used in the interpretation

In my interpretation of the selected texts (Matt. 4: 18-22; 8:23-27), I shall encounter “the hermeneutical circle.”⁸ The hermeneutical circle as a phrase means on the one hand we can only understand the parts from an understanding of the whole. On the other hand, we can only understand the whole from an understanding of the parts.⁹ An example of this relationship is shown in my considering important of the final form of the Matthean text as a narrative and rhetorical presentation of Jesus’ ministry. The final form of the Gospel of Matthew shows that its parts are different events of the story of who Jesus was in his birth, ministry, death and resurrection, and its whole is the full story from beginning to end. If I do not understand a part of that whole narrative, I will not have a full understanding of the whole narrative. Conversely, if I do not understand

⁷ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 101-116.

⁸ Werner Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 5-6; David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 20-22.

⁹ Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 5-6; Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*, 20-22.

the whole narrative, then I would not have understood the parts thoroughly. Thus, the interpretations of the selected texts herein consider important the placements of the selected texts as parts of the Matthean presentation of Jesus' ministry in the progression of that presentation or in the literary context of the Matthean presentation of Jesus' ministry as a whole. Hence, the interpretation begins with identifying a structure of the Matthean telling and showing of Jesus' ministry and how the placements of the selected texts in that structure functioned in that narrative. It is followed by an interpretation of each selected text as a narrative and rhetorical unit.

There are various structures of Matthew's gospel.¹⁰ For this study, I will use the threefold division structure proposed by Jack Dean Kingsbury.¹¹ Kingsbury argues that Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry is divided into three parts based on the formulaic sayings in 4:17 and 16:21 (*From that time Jesus began....*). Those parts are:

- (i) 1:1-4:16 'The Preparation for Jesus'
- (ii) 4:17-16:20 'The Proclamation of Jesus'
- (iii) 16:21-28:20 'The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus.'

According to Kingsbury, each of these three divisions shows and tells an important part of Jesus' ministry which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus ended with the commissioning of the disciples. I have chosen this structure of Matthew's gospel based upon the consideration of division one (1:1-4:16) as the preparation for Jesus before he begins his ministry in the second division as indicated by 4:17. As such, I will consider this division one as preparation and declaration of

¹⁰ Examples of some of those structures are: B. W. Bacon's proposed structure that divides Matthew's gospel into five divisions based upon the division of Pentateuch; Georg Strecker's proposed structure based on the consideration of Matthew's gospel as a presentation of salvation history in three epochs – "the ages of prophecy, of Jesus, and of the church." See David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (University of Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 11-12.

¹¹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 1-39; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthew's Story," in *Interpretation: The Gospel of Matthew* vol. xlvi no. 4 1992

Jesus the Messiah as a Master Fisherman. The following exegesis will elaborate on this interpretation.

2.2.2 Exegesis of Matthew 4:18- 22

The traditional interpretation of Matthew 4:18-22 is the calling of the first disciples by Jesus the Messiah. For example, Stephen Barton interprets this passage as the call story that shows the disciples' commitment to Jesus the Messiah over their social and cultural world.¹² Ulrich Luz as another example interprets the calling of the four fishermen as the beginning of the building of the church community.¹³ Luz's interpretation emphasizes the ecclesiological view. Reflected in these interpretations is the importance of Jesus' authority as the Messiah to call the fishermen as first disciples. For the exegesis shown herein, I will explore another portrayal of Jesus the Messiah who calls the fishermen as his first disciples which is Jesus as a Master Fisherman.

2.2.3 Jesus as Master Fisherman

Identifying who Jesus is in Matthew's Gospel is a huge topic and the scope of this thesis means I am not able to discuss it in detail.¹⁴ Instead, I will only focus on an interpretation of Jesus the King the Messiah as the Master Fisherman reflected in Jesus' calling of fishermen to be his first followers.

Why does Jesus begin his ministry with choosing people from the fishing field of the Palestinian society to be his first followers? One of the answers is that Jesus knows

¹² Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 139; Other examples: Warren Carter, "The Crowds in Matthew's Gospel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 58-59; Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciples in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term μαθητής* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 171-172.

¹³ Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 1-7, 200-201.

¹⁴ To find out some details of who Jesus is in Matthew's Gospel, see, Dennis C. Duling, "The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic," *New Testament Studies* 24, no. 3 (1978): 392-410; Elaine Mary Wainwright, *Shall We Look For Another?: A Feminist Rereading of the Matthean Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998); Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 43-58; Ulrich Luz, "The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ," *JSNT* 48 (1992): 3-21.

and understands very well the importance of the fishing skills in the work of the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. When we are given work to do, we always start with what we know or what we have experience in. This is reflected in Jesus' calling of fishermen in the beginning of his ministry with a promise that he will make them better fishermen by being fishers of people. Jesus as someone who is familiar with the way of life in the 1st century Palestinian society and the different systems that operated that society knew fishing as not only a type of work that people relied on for survival. It was also a type of work that was controlled by the political and economic system of the time – the Roman imperial system.¹⁵ Obviously, there is much oppression and subjugation of the families that relied on fishing for survival. Thus, Jesus' engaging first with the area of fishing in the beginning of his ministry is understandable. It could be looked at as Jesus' action of dealing first with this area in the Palestinian 1st century Mediterranean society that had been heavily oppressing people in need.

Choosing the fishermen as Jesus' first followers in Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom has significance and is reflected in Jesus' words of calling the four fishermen: "...*Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.*" Evans interpreted these words as having a literary link to the prophecies of Isaiah in vv.15-16 which show the place where the proclamation begins as near the sea across Jordan, Galilee of Gentiles.¹⁶ For Evans, calling the fishermen to follow as the first activity of Jesus' ministry is part of the fulfilment of that prophecy. Evan's interpretation reveals a reason of why Jesus chooses to call the fishermen to be his first followers. Why is Jesus sent to that place near the sea where he calls his first followers as fishermen? One of the answers is that

¹⁵ Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 11-19; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 101-116. Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World*, 93-97; Ryken et. al., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 290-291.

¹⁶ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 2012), 91-93.

Jesus is sent to that place (as fulfilment of the prophecies) because he knows that place well and its way of life in order to survive. That place is a place of fishing as mentioned where fishermen with their families live. If Jesus came to help those in need beginning in Galilee (as the prophecies say) then Jesus' dealing firstly with the fishing area of the Palestinian society is to do exactly that task. As mentioned, one of the reasons why Jesus had to start with the area of fishing in Galilee is because he knew what was going on with the fishing economy especially its connection to families in need. The fishing economies were using the people and families who were relying on fishing for survival to provide more benefits for the elites in the Roman hierarchical system.¹⁷ Thus, Jesus as someone who was familiar with that place and the systems that governed it, and Jesus' calling of the fishermen that he will make them better fishermen if they followed him, implied the consideration of Jesus as a fisherman.

These words of Jesus (“...*Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.*”) show Jesus giving a promise to the fishermen that he will make them better fishermen. This is revealed in the use of the Greek word *ποιησω*¹⁸ translated as ‘I will do or I will make’. The Greek word *ποιησω* is the future indicative active of the word *ποιεω*. The future indicative active tense shows that this command by Jesus sends a statement of a promise that will be carried out by Jesus which shows that Jesus can do fishing better than the fishermen he called. Jesus is portrayed in the first division as the Son of God who has authority to give a command such as in Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:17). So a command as a promise coming from Jesus should not be ignored. Thus, Jesus could be called not just a fisherman but a Master Fisherman. The promise also reveals that being a fisherman is a type of work that is carried out not only on the sea but also on land.

¹⁷ For this system, see, Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 9-53.

¹⁸ “*ποιησω*” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 895-900.

The interpretation of Jesus' character in Matthew's Gospel is widely accepted as the Messiah who is a healer, preacher, and teacher, as mentioned above. However, my interpretation of Jesus' calling of the four fishermen to follow him reveals another portrayal of Jesus the Messiah in Matthew's Gospel. That is, Jesus is a Master Fisherman. The following exegesis of the selected texts from Matthew's gospel will elaborate on that interpretation.

2.2.4 Placement of Matthew 4:18-22

The narrative-rhetorical criticism considers important the world that is embedded in the language of the text which is looked at as a narrative and rhetorical unit.¹⁹ Thus, Matt 4:18-22 is a narrative and a rhetorical unit which has "a beginning, middle, and an end."²⁰ To begin the exegesis, I will deal firstly with the placement of these passages in the flow of the narrative.

According to Kingsbury's proposed structure of Matthew's Gospel,²¹ Matt 4:18-22 is the first event of the second division of Matthew called 'The Proclamation of Jesus' which comes after the 'Preparation for Jesus' (1:1-4:16), the first division. The second division of this structure is marked by the phrase, *from that time Jesus began...* (v.17) – the time this verse refers to is when Jesus withdrew to Galilee when John the Baptist was arrested (v. 12). The reason for Jesus withdrawing to Galilee is to begin from there the proclamation of God's kingdom which is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy mentioned in Matt 4:14-16. This connection of the second division to the first division of Matthew's gospel according to Kingsbury's structure has significance in the

¹⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996), 7. Robbins here speaks of the language of a text as having a world of its own and is encoded with the use of "word patterns, voices, structures, devices, and modes in the text."

²⁰ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33-34.

²¹ Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 1-39; Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthews Story."

consideration of Jesus the King is the Messiah as the Master Fisherman in the story which I will elaborate upon below.

Before the story shows Jesus' calling his first followers (who are fishermen), it firstly portrays Jesus as a person with power and authority in the first division (1:1-4:16) of Matthew's Gospel. The portrayal of Jesus' authority begins with revealing Jesus' connection to the genealogy of the people of Israel in chapter 1. It is where Jesus is described as a relative of King David which makes Jesus the Messiah as fulfilment of the prophecies (1:17).²² This authority of Jesus is declared by the reactions of the wise men (2:1-2) and Herod (2:7-8) (other characters in the story) to the birth of Jesus in the first division.²³ The most important declaration comes from God during the baptism of Jesus: *And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."* (3:17). So, the authority of Jesus as the Messiah and King, or as a Master Fisherman is affirmed before the next division of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry indicated by 4:17 (*From that time Jesus began to proclaim....*). This authority is also revealed in the use of the Greek word *ἤρξατο*²⁴ in 4:17 translated as 'began to rule' (from Galilee near the sea – the place of fishing). It suggests that Jesus as the Messiah's proclamation of God's kingdom that begins in Galilee is the work to show who the main ruler is. It is not the Roman Emperor but God. Thus, relating Jesus' movement to Galilee, to Jesus' calling of the fishermen that begins in 4:18, affirms the consideration of Jesus the King as the Messiah (the ruler), the Master Fisherman in the story. Jesus' first action of being the ruler or the Master is the calling of the fishermen as the first followers of the kingdom of heaven.

²² Evans, *Matthew*, 39, 49.

²³ Evans, *Matthew*, 49-56.

²⁴ "ἤρξατο" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 81-82.

Another significance of the placement of Matt 4:18-22 is revealing in the beginning of the story the fishing economy controlled by the Roman imperial empire that has been oppressing the people in need in the time of Jesus. Hence, Jesus as the ruler or the Master Fisherman begins his ministry by helping the people affected by the fishing economy in the 1st century Palestinian society. The following interpretation of Matt 4:18-22 as a narrative and rhetorical unit will elaborate on that interpretation.

2.2.5 Matthew 4:18-22 as a Narrative and a Rhetorical unit

Matt 4:18-22 as a narrative and rhetorical unit has a literary world of its own encoded in the language of the text. It is divided into three parts:

- | | | | | |
|-------|-----------|---|-----------|------------------------------------|
| (i) | Beginning | - | v.18 | (Setting of calling the fishermen) |
| (ii) | Middle | - | vv. 19-20 | (Calling the first two-brothers) |
| (iii) | Ending | - | vv. 21-22 | (Calling the second two-brothers) |

The beginning of the unit shows six important characteristics of fishing. First, it shows Jesus the main character, the Master Fisherman. Second, it shows the place or setting where the event of fishing in the unit occurs which is the Sea of Galilee. Third, it reveals what Jesus as the Master Fisherman is doing in this part of his ministry. He is walking by the sea and watching the fishermen, looking for fishermen to be his followers. The Greek word *περιπατεω*²⁵ as a verbal adjective describes Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee, as a walk of a Master Fisherman. Jesus walks near the Sea of Galilee with a purpose which is to proclaim God's kingdom. Fourth, v. 18 as the beginning of the unit reveals other fishermen and their families as other characters in this unit. Fifth, it reveals the type of work and the materials used in this work that this

²⁵ “περιπατεω” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 804-805.

unit focuses on which is fishing with its boats, people, and nets. Sixth, it speaks of fishing as the type of work occurred in this part of Jesus' ministry.

The middle part of the unit (vv. 19-20) speaks of Jesus' command in calling the fishermen to follow him. This command as described above is Jesus' promise of making the fishermen he called, better fishermen. This part also tells the fishermen's response to Jesus' calling. They respond immediately to the call. There is a rhetorical hiatus or rhetorical problem in this part of the unit which is the immediate willingness to follow Jesus without any mention of whether they have heard Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of heaven or not. Jesus is only shown walking by the sea and seeing the fishermen. However, the Greek word *περιπατεω* as a verbal adjective as described above, shows Jesus' walking a walk to proclaim God's kingdom. Thus, the immediate response of the fishermen to follow Jesus does make sense. They have heard Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom.

The ending part of the unit (vv. 21-22) is a repetition of the calling Jesus made in the middle part of the unit. In this part, Jesus calls the other two brothers. The difference between the callings of these brothers is that Zebedee and John are shown leaving their boat and their father. Peter and Andrew are shown leaving their nets. This difference is quite significant. The nets, boat, and father represent the totality of the way of life a fisherman lived in the 1st century Mediterranean world. It shows that the most important part of a fisherman's life is to provide for his family – wife, children, and parents.

The social and cultural background of the fishing event reflected in 4:18-22 (as narrative and rhetorical unit) shows the reality of life encountered by the fishermen brothers called by Jesus to follow him. This is shown in the brothers' leaving of the nets, boat, and father. Who is going to look after and to care for their families when they leave fishing? The nets and the boat could be interpreted as a symbolic representation of

the fishing economy that has been controlling fishing in Galilee – the fishing economy where production is owned by the brokers. So leaving the nets, boat, and father is leaving the fishing system. The father represents the patriarchal system entrenched by the Roman imperial power. The father is the patriarch. In the 1st century Galilean society, the Emperor who had the power over everything in that society was the patriarch. Thus, the fishermen's leaving of the father is not leaving behind their parents but the patriarchal system that had been oppressing them and their way of survival – the fishing.

Relating this interpretation to Jesus' calling of the fishermen shows that Jesus is calling them to abandon those oppressive systems and follow him. He will provide and teach them the better fishing system where their needs are recognized and met. It is a call made by a Master Fisherman who knows the better fishing system that is, the system of God that will help those in need. Proclaiming God's system and putting it into actions is the whole ministry of Jesus as shown in the progression of the Matthew's Gospel. Examples will be shown in the exegesis of Matt 8:3-27..

2.3 Exegesis of Matthew 8:23-27

2.3.1 Placement of Matthew 8:23-27

The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29) ends with the parable of the wise man (7:24-9) who builds his house on the rock. This parable of the wise man is the application of the Sermon which emphasizes the importance of listening as described by the metaphor of house building. House building in relation to the social and cultural system of the first century Mediterranean world is the running of local households by the Roman imperial system. Families that relied on fishing for survival as described above is an example of those families affected by this type of house building. They produced fish but received little money from it in return from the middle man or broker in the patron-

broker-client relationship system that ran that society. So Jesus' talking about house building in the application of his Sermon on the Mount is part of his making the four fishermen he first called to follow him as better fishermen. Putting those words into actions is revealed in the next part of the progression of the division two which is Jesus' healings and miracles in chapters 8 and 9. Jesus in this part of his ministry helps people to know how to become good house builders in their own local spaces and places. It is showing those he promised, making them better fishermen and teaching them how to do that task by helping those in need build their own-selves so that they become good house builders for their own families and communities. For example, was the leper (8:1-4), the first person in need encountered by Jesus on his way down from the mountain. The leper stayed outside of the walls of the Jewish community because of his sickness. But when he was healed by Jesus, Jesus told him to go and take what is to be taken to the priest. Jesus taught him to become a good house builder of the Jewish community by doing what he is supposed to do in the house of God. It is the Jewish religious way of showing he is cleansed. Thus, the healing of the leper shows another way of being a good fisher of people. In other words, Jesus is teaching his first followers how to be good fishermen on land. The similar teaching is revealed in Jesus' healing of the centurion's servant (8:5-13) and Peter's mother in law (8:14-15). Jesus' healing of the centurion's servant helps make the centurion a better house builder for the Roman Imperial household or a better fisher for the Roman people. It is bringing the Roman people – other Gentiles – into salvation. Jesus' healing of Peter's mother in law shows a woman as a house builder or a woman as another fisher of people. Followed by these events is Jesus' conversation with his disciples (8:18-22) to continue on their mission to the other side of the river which was disrupted by a scribe who wanted to go with Jesus, and a disciple who wanted to go and bury his father first. Jesus' replies to the scribe

and this disciple send other messages of how to become fishers of people, to the four fishermen that Jesus called to follow him and all the followers. Jesus gives the message that becoming a fisher of people is not an easy task. It is work that takes a lot of time with little rest. It is work where a follower has to give priority to what is needed according to the time of need. Jesus' responses to the scribe (*'And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."* Matt 8:20) and one of his disciples (*But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."* Matt 8:22) led to the event in one of the selected passages (Matt 8:23-27) – Jesus and his disciples' going by boat to the other side of the river facing a windstorm on this journey.

2.3.2 *Matthew 8:23-27 as a Narrative and Rhetorical unit*

This passage has been interpreted as showing Jesus' authority over nature and this authority is revelation of Jesus as the Messiah.²⁶

This passage as a narrative and rhetorical unit is divided into three parts:

- | | | | | |
|-------|-----------|---|----------|-----------------------------------|
| (i) | Beginning | - | v.23 | (Getting into the boat) |
| (ii) | Middle | - | vv.24-26 | (Facing the windstorm on the sea) |
| (iii) | End | - | v.29 | (Disciples' amazement) |

The beginning of the unit (v.23) shows the beginning of the journey to the other side. The people on this journey are Jesus and his disciples who are traveling by boat. The beginning of the unit mentions Jesus as the leader of the journey whose entering the boat is followed by the disciples. Thus, Jesus continues to show that he is the Master Fisherman. Now they are crossing the river or the sea to the other side and he is the

²⁶ Examples of Matthew's Scholars of this traditional interpretation: Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 119-120; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2005), 369-32.

captain. Crossing the river shows Jesus as a master fisherman who is not only good in doing the work as a fisherman on land but also on the sea.

The middle part of the unit (vv.24-26) shows what actually happens on the sea during the journey. On their way to the other side, the narrator speaks of the journey being hit by a windstorm while Jesus is asleep at the deck of the boat. The disciples get worried and scared. They wake up Jesus asking him to save them. Jesus as the master fisherman could have stopped the journey to the other side of the river if he knew that the weather was not going to be good. Instead, he gave command to continue. Jesus in this event shows good signs of a true Master Fisherman. He knows the condition of the weather very well despite the time of the day they were travelling which was the evening as mentioned in 8:16. More importantly, Jesus as a Master fisherman is shown urging the disciples whom he promised to make them better fishermen to continue on the work of helping those in need on the other side of the river. The disciples' lack of faith and fear shows the difference between a fisherman and a Master Fisherman. The first called disciples have been fishermen all their lives. They should have known what to do when encountering windstorms on the sea. They should have known the type of weather at this time of the year on the part of the ocean they were travelling on. The windstorms are considered figuratively as evil forces in the Jewish world.²⁷ The use of the word ἐπετιμῆσεν²⁸ meaning rebuke is the word that is used in the Gospel to describe Jesus' action of casting out demons. Thus, Jesus' rebuking the wind in this event can be interpreted symbolically as showing Jesus' rebuking of evil in a disciple's journey of faith. Evans writes that what happens on this journey shows the disciples that their

²⁷ Evans writes, "In ancient Israel, the violent sea sometimes symbolized the forces of chaos, forces that the Lord subdued. Sometimes ancient Israel likened its enemies to a flood of water that threatened to overwhelm the small kingdom (see Isaiah 28:2, 17)." See, Evans, *Matthew*, 194-195.

²⁸ "ἐπετιμῆσεν" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 249.

becoming a disciple was dangerous.²⁹ In other words, becoming a better fisherman is difficult. It is not an easy task. It requires a lot of faith. The story says that the disciples were afraid. Jesus wakes up and calms the storm. Once again, Jesus continues to teach them how to become better fishermen. It is a work that needs more faith and inner strength especially in times of uncertainty.

The end part of the unit (v. 27) shows the disciples' amazement of Jesus' rebuking of the wind. Their questioning of Jesus' authority to rebuke the wind reveals their lack of faith. Their response could also be interpreted as their lack of understanding of the type of better fishermen they were supposed to become as Jesus promised. Maybe they were waiting to be taught more about fishing on the sea. But what Jesus was actually doing was teaching them to be better people on the sea and on the land. As the narrative progresses, they reached safely to the other side of the river and continued helping those in need.

2.4 Conclusion

This exegesis presented in this chapter reveals a portrayal of Jesus as a Master Fisherman. This interpretation is shown in the consideration of Jesus' calling of his disciples as implication of Jesus as the better fisherman than the fishermen he calls to follow him. The authority of Jesus the Messiah as the Master Fisherman is shown in the first division of Matthew's Gospel (according to Kingsbury threefold structure of Matthew) such as the recognition of the birth of Jesus as the king by the three wise men and Herod the king. The declaration of Jesus' authority as the Son of God is revealed in Jesus' baptism. All these lead to the interpretation of Jesus' promise to the fishermen he calls that he will make them better fishermen, as a call made by a better fisherman or a

²⁹ Evans, *Matthew*, 194-195.

Master Fisherman. Jesus' ministry from the calling of the fishermen to his preaching and healing the people in need are all parts of Jesus' fulfilment of his promise to those fishermen. Jesus as Master Fisherman is also reflected in the interpretation of Matt 8:23- 27 where Jesus as someone who knows very well the sea and its weather conditions at the time of their journey to the other side of the river, manages to calm the windstorm. Overall, Jesus the Messiah in Matthew's Gospel has been interpreted as the King, the Teacher, the Healer, and Preacher. The exegesis shown herein shows another portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah in Matthews Gospel. That is, Jesus the Messiah is a Master Fisherman. The following chapter is the analysis of the exegesis made in this study using my experience and understanding of the Master Fisherman as *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan world.

CHAPTER THREE:

Analysing the Exegesis with Tapapa Perspective

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to analyse the exegesis of Matt 4:18-22; 8:23-27 mentioned above with the *Tapapa* perspective to find out whether Jesus as a Master fisherman as implied in his calling of the fishermen could be looked at as a *Tapapa*. The following characteristics of a *Tapapa* will guide the analysis of the exegesis made above.

- The declaration of a fisherman to become a *Tapapa*
- The role of a *Tapapa* on land
- The role of a *Tapapa* on the sea
- Learning to become a *Tapapa*

3.1 The declaration of a fisherman to become a *Tapapa*

Mentioned in my description of a *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan world is the choosing of the *Tapapa* by the elders of our community. It is a decision that is made based on the elders' observation of how each fisherman lives life not only as a fisherman in the sea, but as a member of the Tokelauan community on land. A *Tapapa* is a person who is a family and a community man. In this way, becoming a *Tapapa* is the paramount status in the Tokelauan community – a well-respected person. So *Tapapa* is simply a saviour in the Tokelauan world who has the ability to provide for the community in times of need. When there is lack of food due to bad weather, only a *Tapapa* knows the part of the ocean where fish can be found that could feed the whole village. When there is conflict and tension between members of the community, the *Tapapa* is expected to be the peace-maker who has the wisdom to resolve those conflicts. Thus, being a *Tapapa*

as a well-respected status in the Tokelauan community is to be a humble servant that serves his people.

Jesus as shown in the exegesis is revealed as the chosen Messiah whom is a descendant of King David's line – the line of a king's family. His birth is recognized by the wise men and Herod's response when he wants to visit Jesus to pay him homage. John the Baptist's testimony when he says that he is not worthy to carry Jesus shoes is another example of the recognition of Jesus as the chosen one who has authority – the one who came to save not only the people of Israel but also Gentiles. The climax of the recognition of Jesus the Son of God as the Messiah is from God in Jesus' baptism when God declares that Jesus is his Son. Coming to the event of choosing the fishermen as first disciples where Jesus promises to make them better fishermen, the authority of Jesus as explained makes Jesus the best or master fisherman. Thus, Jesus from my Tokelauan perspective of *Tapapa* is a Master Fisherman.

Jesus is shown to have been tested by evil but came-out victorious. It shows that Jesus as a *Tapapa* is not only doing the work of fishing but spirituality has huge faith to withstand the evils temptation. This is a very important lesson from Jesus as a *Tapapa* for our *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan community. The status and role of *Tapapa* always have obstacles which could ruin the fulfilment of a *Tapapa's* role in looking after the family and community. Relying on God with faith will surely give our *Tapapa* more courage to carry on his duties for our people.

Jesus as a *Tapapa* has also shown that the status of *Tapapa* is well-respected with power and authority but Jesus did not use that to take advantage of other people. Instead, he uses it to help those oppressed by other powers in the 1st century Palestinian society.

3.2 The role of *Tapapa* on land

My explanation of the role of *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan community has shown that it is not just a role undertaken on the sea in providing fish for food and money, but also a role to be carried out on land. A *Tapapa* on land is to think of ways that would help develop the community such as planning for the planting of food and any other idea that would help the village. One of the most important parts of this role is to make sure that help for those in need are available at all times. And this is seen in our culture of *inati* system where catch from the sea by a group of fishermen led by a *Tapapa* is distributed to all families of the village based on the number of people in each family. It is the *Tapapa's* role to make sure that everyone has food. This is seen in the work of Jesus in my explanation of the placement of Matt 4:18-22 in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus first helps the people on the margins of the society such as the leper, the centurion's servant, and the woman with fever in her house mentioned in chapters 8 and 9. These people are the most disadvantaged in the 1st century Palestinian society but Jesus' helping them give them a chance in life like other people in that society. This is also seen in Jesus' calling of the fishermen and his promise to them that he will make them better fishermen. Jesus knows that the fishermen and their families despite catching the fish they continue to suffer. It is the broker and the elite benefitting from their catch. But Jesus as the Master Fisherman teaches them how to live as fisherman on land according to God's will, will make them happier and richer than the brokers and the elites. Thus, Jesus is a *Tapapa*.

3.3 The role of *Tapapa* on the sea

As shown in the interpretation of Matt 8:23-27, Jesus's role as *Tapapa* on the sea is to calm the fishermen in times of uncertainty on the sea when faced with bad weather and rough seas. A *Tapapa's* role in our Tokelauan world is someone who must know

and understand particular actions/methods and the observation of the sea. He understands all actions/methods of fishing. He knows and understands the lunar cycle and tide movements. He knows and understands the direction of the winds. He understands the waves in bad weather and when the deep ocean is rough. He understands the omens of the day. He knows where fish are bountiful. He navigates the vessel during choppy seas. He knows where the current is flowing. He knows how to keep his crew safe. All this knowledge is seen in Jesus' dealing with the windstorms that hit their boat on their way to the other side of the river mentioned in the exegesis of Matt 8:23-27. Jesus is seen having a rest on the deck of the ship showing Jesus as a Master Fisherman who knows that nothing bad is going to happen on their journey. He knows the weather very well and the part of the ocean they are travelling on. He also knows what to do when their journey is hit by disasters. If he knew that their journey will not be safe, he would have not left with his disciples to go over to the other side. As shown in the story. He wakes up and stops the wind – a good sign of a true *Tapapa*. What happens shows the difference between the disciples as fishermen and Jesus as the Master Fisherman. Once again, Jesus' action as a *Tapapa* on this journey asserts the importance of having faith to deal with disasters occurring during fishing journeys. More importantly, that faith relies on the *Tapapa* having good knowledge and understanding of the sea and the weather.

Another important part of a *Tapapa's* role on the sea as shown in this journey by Jesus and his disciples is not forgetting the main purpose behind the journey. It is a journey to help those in need on the other side of the river. It was evening, but Jesus wanted to continue over to the other side of the river. A good *Tapapa* continues on the good work of helping the community especially those in need despite the time of the day. Thus, the role of a *Tapapa* is a restless role. It might give a *Tapapa* little rest.

3.4 Learning to become a Tapapa

Jesus is considered a *Tapapa* because he makes a promise to the fishermen when he calls them that he will make them better fishermen. Thus, this part of the analysis of the exegesis made above is how the disciples as fishermen become Master Fisherman. How does one become a *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan world? It is through encountering struggles in and through learning how to live life as a Tokelauan person, that makes one a better person. Becoming a *Tapapa*, one must firstly serve, observe then learn. It is only through these endeavours that one may then realize a higher calling and reach greater heights, and have the wisdom to become a *Tapapa*. The *Tapapa* starts as a deckhand. He observes and stores all that he sees from the master fisherman. This involves the actions, movements, sayings and many other skills conducted by the old master fisherman. The knowledge is passed through observation. From Jesus' calling of the fishermen and his ministry, becoming a *Tapapa* as mentioned is what the disciples as fishermen must do. They are to learn the ministry of Jesus in and through observation – a learning to be carried out with faith and humility. It is learning that must be carried out with obedience. It is learning that is done in and through struggles and sufferings. Thus, it makes a fisherman a *Tapapa* with inner strength and power to fulfil that role – the role of serving and helping those in need.

3.5 Conclusion

The analysis as shown reveals that Jesus is a *Tapapa*. He has power and authority which he uses to offer and provide help for those in need and is what he wants his disciples, the fishermen, to learn in order to become Master Fishermen themselves. This analysis and study provides more learning and teachings for our *Tapapa* in our Tokelauan world. A true *Tapapa* is the one that relies not on his knowledge and skills but on God with faith.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Conclusion of the Study

The reasons that evoke for me the interest to carry out this study as mentioned in the beginning of this thesis is to practice the biblical interpretation approach of ‘Islander criticism’ and to do that by using a Tokelauan experience and understanding of living life in our Tokelauan community to explore a biblical text. I have chosen to explore the character of Jesus the Messiah as Master Fisherman in Matthew’s Gospel from my own experience and understanding of the status and role of a Master Fisherman in our Tokelauan world called *Tapapa*.

I have given a brief review of Pacific Island scholars mainly Samoans who practice the islander criticism approach. I have chosen the Samoan scholars as examples because I have a close connection and relationship with the Samoan people – their church and culture. From these scholars’ use of the islander criticism approach, I have chosen to use my Tokelauan experience and understanding of a *Tapapa* (Master Fisherman) as a hermeneutic to analyse my interpretation of the selected texts – which is an exploration of Jesus as a Master Fisherman. The thesis was divided into four Chapters. Chapter one gives a brief overview of the islander approach of Islander Criticism. Chapter Two is the exegesis of the selected texts – Matthew 4:18-22; 8:23-27. Chapter Three is using of the *Tapapa* characteristics to analyse the exegesis, followed by the conclusion to the thesis in Chapter Four.

This exegesis as presented in this paper reveals a portrayal of Jesus as a Master Fisherman and is shown in the consideration of Jesus’ calling of his disciples as an implication of Jesus being a better fisherman than the fishermen he calls to follow him. The authority of Jesus the Messiah as the Master Fisherman is shown in the first

division of Matthew's Gospel (according to Kingsbury threefold structure of Matthew) such as the recognition of the birth of Jesus as the king by the three wise men and Herod the king. The declaration of Jesus' authority as the Son of God is revealed in Jesus baptism. All these led to the interpretation of Jesus' promise to the fishermen he calls that he will make them better fishermen, as a call made by a better fisherman or a Master Fisherman. Thus, Jesus' ministry from the calling of the fishermen to his preaching and healing the people in need is considered as Jesus' fulfilment of his promise to those fishermen.

Jesus as Master Fisherman is also revealed in the exegesis of Matt 8:23- 27. Jesus is interpreted as someone who is very familiar and acquainted with the Sea of Galilee and its weather conditions at the time of their journey to the other side of the river. As such, Jesus is able to calm the windstorm. Jesus the Messiah in Matthew's Gospel has been interpreted as the King, the Teacher, the Healer, and Preacher. The exegesis shown herein shows another portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus the Messiah is a Master Fisherman. The analysis of the exegesis of the selected passage using my Tokelauan hermeneutic of the *Tapapa* shows that Jesus can be called a *Tapapa* – reflected in Jesus' practising of his ministry the role and status of *Tapapa*. *Tapapa* as Master Fisherman is someone who has power skills and wisdom to provide food for the community and to help them in times of need. Jesus does all these in his ministry. More importantly in Jesus' practicing of a Master Fisherman, he relies on God in faith to guide and help him in his ministry as revealed in Jesus' temptation by evil in the desert. As the story says, Jesus came out victorious because of his strong faith in God – God the Father who declares Jesus as His Son.

This study has given me the opportunity to practice using my life experience and understanding to explore the Bible in a way that will help make the meaning of the

Gospel more meaningful to our Tokelauan world. It is an exercise of biblical interpretation that I will treasure in my ministry as a church minister in our Tokelauan world.

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