

A STUDY OF ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years the Gospel of Matthew has become the focus of much academic study as testified by the appearance of several recent commentaries.¹ However, among scholars there has not been a consensus on several crucial issues. One of them is the meaning of the term δικαιοσύνη in Matthew.² A good number of scholars hold that the term δικαιοσύνη consistently and exclusively refers to conformity to God's will as revealed by the teachings and life of Jesus, i.e., the performance of righteous deeds in obedience to God.³ Some scholars, notably M. J. Fiedler and H. Giesen, argue that in all its occurrences in Matthew δικαιοσύνη refers to the righteousness that is a gift dependent upon God's saving activity.⁴ In contrast to the previous two view

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¹A good number of scholars have written commentaries on Matthew in recent years. For example: F. W. Beare (1982); D. A. Carson (1984); W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr. (1988); J. Gnllka (1986); R. T. France (1986); R. H. Gundry (1982); D. A. Hagner (1993); D. J. Harrington (1991); D. Hill (1981); U. Luz (1989); C. S. Keener (1999); G. Maier (1979); J. P. Meier (1980); L. Morris (1992); L. Sabourin (1982). For a bibliography of recent commentaries, see Scot McKnight, "Matthew," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 540; C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

²For an overview of the ongoing debate, see W. Popkes, "Die Gerechtigkeitstradition im Matthäus-Evangelium," *ZNW* 80 (1989): 1-23.

³B. Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 99; G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 153-158, 179-181, 187; W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (SANT 10; 3rd ed; München: Kösel, 1964), 184; D. Hill, *Greek Words with Hebrews Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 124-128; A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelish Matthäus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1948), 140; R. Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives* (SNTSMS 48; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114. Mohrlang, however, adds, "Behind the focus on demand and obedience . . . lie implicit elements of grace that, though rarely emphasized or drawn out, must not be overlooked" (p. 114); U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 177-179, 407; W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), I, 327, with the possible exception of Matt. 5:6; S. McKnight, "Justice, Righteousness," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 413-414.

⁴M. J. Fiedler, "Der Begriff δικαιοσύνη im Matthäus-Evangelium, auf seine Grundlagen untersucht," (Ph. D. dissertation; Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, 1957), 150; idem,

points, many scholars maintain that δικαιοσύνη is, on the one hand, an expression of God's gift of salvation and, on the other hand, God's demand to mankind as a condition for their realization of salvation.⁵

It appears difficult to decide whether or not Matthew used the word δικαιοσύνη in a consistent way (either as only gift or as only demand) because sometimes both ideas appear in Christian contexts where δικαιοσύνη words occur. Furthermore, it sometimes seems difficult to determine which is the primary aspect in view. In this paper, I would like to examine seven occurrences of the term δικαιοσύνη in Matthew, each in its immediate context and within its own framework of thought, and illuminate a probable interpretation of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 3:15

Jesus' words, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπει ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην have been interpreted in various ways. Some take πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην as meaning "to fulfill every divine ordinance," seeing that the ordinance of God is described as "righteousness" in Ps. 119.⁶ This view, however, forgets that baptism relates to repentance and confession of sins, not to righteousness itself.⁷ Others interpret the words as meaning "to acquire righteousness for

"Gerechtigkeit im Matthäus-Evangelium," *Theologische Versuche* 8 (1977): 63-75; idem, "Δικαιοσύνη in der diaspora-jüdischen und intertestamentarischen Literatur," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 1 (1970): 120-143; H. Giesen, *Christliches Handeln Eine redaktionische Untersuchung zum δικαιοσύνη-Begriff im Matthäus-Evangelium* (Frankfurt, 1982), 237-241.

⁵R. G. Bratcher, "'Righteousness' in Matthew," *Bible Translator* 40 (1989): 228-235; K. Kertelege, "δικαιοσύνη," *EDNT* 1:325-330; R. A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1982), 84-87; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 127-135; F. J. Matera, "The Ethics of the Kingdom in the Gospel of Matthew," *Listening* 24 (1989): 241-250; J. P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Matt. 5:17-48* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 77-80; J. Reumann, *Righteousness in the New Testament: 'Justification' in the United States Lutheran - Roman Catholic Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 127-135; E. Schweitzer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 53-56; P. Stulmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (2nd edn; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 188-191; J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Inquiry* (SNTSMS 20; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 130-136.

⁶A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 31.

⁷D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 108.

all.” This view is defended by O. Cullmann.⁸ This interpretation presupposes that the significance of Christian baptism should be read back into John’s baptism and takes no account of its salvation-historical location.⁹ This view has been criticized in that Cullmann reads Paul’s use of “righteousness” back into Matthew.¹⁰ The common view is that δικαιοσύνη here is to be understood in an ethical sense.¹¹ This view requires that Jesus must obey every divine command (πάσαν δικαιοσύνην). This interpretation is unlikely not only because there is no command in the OT regarding baptism¹² but also because John’s baptism relates, not to the standards of righteousness John preached, but to repentance.¹³ More probably δικαιοσύνη here is used in the sense of God’s purpose of salvation.¹⁴ If so, John and Jesus may together be understood as fulfilling the salvific plan of God in the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry, the culmination of which will be his redemptive death on the cross. As Hagner well states, if in fact the baptism of Jesus involves an anticipation of his death, as the *logion* from heaven with its allusion to the Isaianic Servant suggests (3:17), then the crucial stage of salvation history has been reached, a stage worthy of the words “fulfill” and “all righteousness.”¹⁵ This view is most convincing because, when Jesus fulfills all righteousness, he is fulfilling God’s saving purposes through his ministry inaugurated by the baptism. Thus, it is in accord with God’s saving will that the baptism take place.¹⁶

⁸O. Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 15f. He argues, “At the baptism Jesus received the commission to undertake the role of the suffering servant of God, who takes on himself the sins of others; and *pa/san* suggests that this baptism is related not only to his own righteousness but also to that of the whole people; accordingly, Jesus’ words mean that he will effect a general forgiveness” (p. 18).

⁹Carson, “Matthew,” 107.

¹⁰Hill, *Greek Words*, 126; Carson, “Matthew,” 107; Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 93.

¹¹U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 178; Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 94; O. Eissfeldt, “πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην in Matthäus,” *ZNW* 61 (1970): 209-215; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I:327.

¹²D. A. Hagner, “Righteousness in Matthew’s Theology,” in *Worship, Theology and Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 115. Hagner well points out the difficulties of this view (p. 116).

¹³Carson, “Matthew,” 108.

¹⁴W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Garden City; New York: DoubleDay, 1971), 31; Hagner, “Righteousness,” 116; idem, *Matthew 1-13* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 57; Meier, *Law and History*, 79; F. D. Coggin, “Note on St Matthew 3:15,” *ExpT* 60 (1948-49): 258; R. G. Bratcher, “‘Righteousness’ in Matthew,” *Bible Translator* 40 (1989): 234.

¹⁵See also L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 65.

¹⁶Hagner, “Righteousness,” 117.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 5:6

Scholars are divided whether δικαιοσύνη in 5:6 (μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην) means “an eschatological gift of God”¹⁷ or “ethical righteousness.”¹⁸ Fiedler claims that δικαιοσύνη refers solely to the eschatological gift of God.¹⁹ Some commentators²⁰ support this view maintaining that δικαιοσύνη is regarded as a gift which God gives to those who ask for it. Similarly, Bultmann suggests that δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:6 means justification.²¹ C. H. Dodd argues that it refers to God’s vindicating activity with respect to his elect.²² As some commentators claim, it is most natural in the immediate context to take the “hunger” referred to as the desire, not for the realization of a personal ethical righteousness, but for the justice that will come with the salvation of the eschatological era.²³ Some exegetes, arguing this passage refers to both the demand and the gift of God, suggest that δικαιοσύνη is the fulfillment by man of God’s will and the fulfillment by God of his own purposes of grace and mercy.²⁴

However, there is a strong objection to the view that δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:6 refers to an eschatological gift. For example, Przybylski claims that Matthew used δικαιοσύνη in an ethical sense in 5:6 on the

¹⁷Fiedler; Giesen; Stuhlmacher; Ziesler; Schweizer; Meier; Guelich; Reumann; Gundry; Bratcher; Matera.

¹⁸Przybylski; Strecker; Hill; Mohrlang; Luz; Davies-Allison; Morris.

¹⁹Fiedler, “Der Begriff,” 117.

²⁰H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), 114; McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 51; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT; 3d ed; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), 127; Schrenk, “δικαιοσύνη,” *TDNT*, 2:198.

²¹R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 1968), vol. 1. p. 273. Bultmann claims, “By those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, Matt. 5:6 obviously does not mean those who ‘ever striving, endeavour’ to attain ethical perfection, but those who long to have God pronounce the verdict ‘righteous’ as His decision over them in judgment.”

²²C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 55.

²³Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes*, 190; Reumann, *Righteousness*, 128; Meier, *Law and History*, 72; C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, 55; Hagner, “Righteousness,” 112; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 79; Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, 91-92; Gundry, *Matthew*, 70.

²⁴T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1949), 48; F. W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Commentary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982., 130; Giesen, *Christliches*, 98-103.

basis of three main reasons: (1) A direct correspondence between character and reward does not obtain in most of the beatitudes.²⁵ (2) Δικαιοσύνη was inserted by Matthew for the purpose of clarification and added to make this passage subordinate to Matt. 5:20. And just as δικαιοσύνη in 5:20 and in 6:1, 33 refers to man's conduct in accordance with the will of God, so it probably has the same meaning in 5:6.²⁶ (3) The larger context of the whole gospel favors the ethical use.²⁷

In spite of Przybylski's objections, the view that δικαιοσύνη in 5:6 refers to an eschatological salvific activity of God is certainly plausible because of the following reasons: (1) δικαιοσύνη in the LXX, notably, in Isaiah and the Psalms denotes God's vindication and the salvific activity of God(see below).²⁸ (2) The passive χορτασθήσονται seems to suggest that δικαιοσύνη is bestowed by God as a gift.²⁹ (3) The image of a feast is concerned with the coming kingdom in Matthew (8:11; 22:2-14; 25:10). The Hebrew word קָדַשׁ has a variety of meanings in the OT depending on the context. This, of course, is also true of its LXX counterpart δικαιοσύνη. Among the most important of these meanings, one may find a reference to the eschatological salvation and vindication brought to the people of God. This sense of the word δικαιοσύνη as the saving righteousness of God is particularly prominent in the prophets³⁰ and the Psalms.³¹ In the OT writings the "righteousness of Yahweh" is

²⁵ Przybylski (*Righteousness*, 97) argues, "Not all the beatitudes presuppose a direct correspondence in kind between the characteristics of the persons named and their reward. According to 5:7 the meek do not obtain meekness nor the pure in heart in 5:8 receive purity. Consequently, it cannot be taken for granted that in 5:6 the ones who hunger for righteousness will obtain righteousness as a gift." Nevertheless, Matt. 5:7 seems not to substantiate such an interpretation for it is stated that the merciful shall obtain mercy.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 97-98. Even though Przybylski's argument has some truth, however, the meaning of "righteousness" is better construed in terms of other component words in the verse.

²⁷ He opposes the view that δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:6 refers to an eschatological gift of God by arguing that the interpretation of 5:6 by the various scholars, which are based on the immediate context, are by no means without difficulties. Even though the word should be interpreted in light of the thought form of Matthew, i.e. in a macro context, it is generally recognized that the interpretation and meaning of a word in any particular passage is to be rendered on the basis of the immediate literary context.

²⁸ See Gundry's (*Matthew*, 70) argument on the relationship between this passage and Isa. 61.

²⁹ Hagner, "Righteousness," 113.

³⁰ On this see Hagner, "Righteousness," 112-113. He argues, "this can be seen in passages such as Mic. 6:5 (NRSV: "the saving acts of the Lord"), 7:9 ("his vindication"), and the question of Mal. 2:17, "Where is the God of justice?" The word has this sense very frequently in Isaiah (e.g., 46:13, "salvation")."

³¹ For qdc with the same meaning in the Psalms, see H.-J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*

Yahweh's conduct with respect to the covenant.³² In the OT it has two basic meanings: God's saving intervention (Ps. 51:14; 22:31; 35:28; 40:10; 69:27; 71:15, 16, 19, 24; Isa. 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; Mic. 6:5; 7:9); and the basis of God's saving activity (Ps. 31:1; 35:24; Isa. 38:19; 63:7). So Hagner claims that the word δικαιοσύνη is used as meaning the saving righteousness of God in Isaiah (e.g., Isa. 46:13, "salvation").³³ Particularly, in the LXX of Isa. 51:5, Hagner finds a good example supporting this sense: ἐγγίξει ταχὺ ἡ δικαιοσύνη μου καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ὡς φῶς τὸ σωτήριόν μου, "My righteousness (NRSV translates the Hebrew, "deliverance") quickly draws nigh, and my salvation will go forth as light."³⁴ So, it is probable that the author of Matthew was familiar with this meaning of δικαιοσύνη and could have used it in this way. The verb χορτασθήσονται fits this sense of δικαιοσύνη much better than it does the notion of ethical righteousness. The fact that the future tense of the verb is, so to speak, the eschatological tense and the passive is a "divine passive" may show that righteousness is bestowed by God as a gift when the kingdom is consummated. The words πεινῶντες, διψῶντες, and χορτασθήσονται may form the image of the messianic banquet (Matt. 8:11) which is related to the coming kingdom in Matthew. The immediate context provided by the other eschatologically oriented Beatitudes probably shows that one hungers and thirsts for something which one hopes to receive. Consequently, δικαιοσύνη should be seen as the gift of God³⁵ and the justice that will come with the salvation of the eschatological era.³⁶ If there is no decisive reason to deny that Matthew could have used δικαιοσύνη in the sense of God's salvific activity, and our argument is correct, it is unnecessary for us to insist that Matthew here used δικαιοσύνη only in

(Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 42f.

³²Hill, *Greek Words*, 156.

³³Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), I: 372. He gives a number of references where the plural יְהוָה צְדָקָתוֹ refers to Yahweh's saving acts in history.

³⁴Hagner, "Matthew," 113. He also indicates that in the last clauses of Isa. 51:6, 8 in LXX, σωτήριον and δικαιοσύνη are paralleled. Furthermore, he points out that in 59:9 δικαιοσύνη is paralleled with κρίσις and in 63:1 there is the combination δικαιοσύνη καὶ κρίσιν σωτηρίου "righteousness and saving judgment."

³⁵Przybylski also accepts the possibility of this interpretation in this passage, if the passage is interpreted on the basis of its immediate context (*Righteousness*, p. 97).

³⁶Hagner ("Righteousness," 97) argues, "Rather than totally altering the meaning of this Beatitude by turning it into a desire for ethical righteousness which will be fulfilled in the eschaton, Matthew has simply expanded it to a more inclusive desire of righteousness in the sense of eschatological justice."

the sense of ethical righteousness.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 5:10

Most interpreters agree about the meaning of δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:10 (μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης]. Here Jesus regards “righteousness” as a cause for persecution. In this passage it is clear that δικαιοσύνη refers to something which a person has, for one is usually persecuted for one’s own actions.³⁷ Thus, it is probably to be taken in the sense of ethical righteousness. It is the righteousness of life through obedience to the will of God. Most scholars hold that δικαιοσύνη can here only be something people have, namely, their obedient, righteous conduct and thus it has demonstrably to do with God’s demand, not God’s gift.³⁸ Fiedler and Giesen, however, attempted to interpret δικαιοσύνη here as referring to the gift of God.³⁹ Fiedler argues that it may be possible that 5:10 refers to persons who were persecuted for a righteousness which they did not possess.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, this is unconvincing because the ninth Beatitude, which also refers to suffering persecution, shows that the righteousness in view in 5:10 can hardly be thought of apart from Jesus and thus from proper conduct before Jesus Christ.⁴¹

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 5:20

With regard to the meaning of δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:20 (λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἢ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν) most scholars think that 5:20 deals exclusively with righteousness as the demand of God upon man.⁴² In this verse Jesus

³⁷Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 98.

³⁸Gundry, *Matthew*, 72; Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 98; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 242; Strecker, *Der Weg*, 154; Reuman, *Righteousness*, 127; Ziesler, *Meaning*, 142; Carson, “Matthew,” 136; Hagner, “Righteousness,” 114; Morris, 101.

³⁹Giesen, *Christliches*, 103-122; Fiedler, “Der Begriff,” 118f.

⁴⁰Fiedler, “Der Begriff,” 179. For criticism of Przybylski about Fiedler’s argument. See *Righteousness*, 98.

⁴¹Hagner, “Righteousness,” 114.

⁴²W. C. Allen, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (ICC; 3d ed; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 46; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge

challenges his disciples to have a righteousness, which exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. What then is the nature of this superior righteousness? There are indications to show that the righteousness required of Jesus' disciples is of the same kind as that of the Pharisees and the former righteousness is different from the latter one not only in quantity but in quality.⁴³ Since the nature of superior righteousness in Matt. 5:20 can be defined by the antitheses in 5:21-47, we need to know how Matthew himself viewed the antitheses. There are diverse views among scholars about this question.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, I agree with Przybylski's claim that Matthew himself viewed the antitheses as being representative of a new interpretation of the old law.⁴⁵ As Przybylski well points out, this new interpretation of the law should be viewed, not as a radicalized view of the law, but as representative of a meticulous observance of the law.⁴⁶ Jesus' words in Matt. 5:20 do not necessarily imply that Jesus requires from his disciples a radicalized Pharisaism. Thus, δικαιοσύνη, in spite of the legalistic appearance of 5:20, does not present a kind of radicalized Pharisaism and intensified Judaism. Rather, superior δικαιοσύνη implies that the disciples should attain the disposition at which the law aims, as Jesus clarifies it in his interpretation of the law.

One important issue in Matt. 5:20 that we should tackle is whether or not 5:20 teaches that δικαιοσύνη is a condition to enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴⁷ This verse appears to be a conditional sentence (ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἢ δικαιοσύνη πλείον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων), stating that superiority in righteousness is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not only 5:20 but also some other parts of the Sermon on the Mount seem to suggest the doctrine of salvation by works, not by grace (5:48; 6:12; 7:12, 24-27). Hence, Windisch claims, "the religion of the Sermon on the Mount, like that of Judaism, is predominantly a religion of works."⁴⁸ It seems plausible to say that

University Press, 1963), 291; Harrington, *Matthew*, 81; Hill, *Matthew*, 119; Trilling, *Israel*, 184; Hagner, "Righteousness," 111; Carson, "Matthew," 147; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I. p. 499; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 269; Morris, *Matthew*, 111.

⁴³Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I. 500; Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 85.

⁴⁴See Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 80.

⁴⁵Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 81-83.

⁴⁶Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 83.

⁴⁷For details, see P. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven* (WUNT 101; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 61-92.

⁴⁸H. Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount: A Contribution to the Historical*

5:20 teaches us the way of salvation by works. Here we should attend to the character of the Sermon on the Mount which is directly related to the nature of δικαιοσύνη in 5:20. Some argue that the Sermon on the Mount is inextricably concerned with both grace and law (demand).⁴⁹ This statement is different from the view of H. Windisch, who claims that the Sermon fully stands in the context of the Old Testament and Judaism and teaches an obedience ethic.⁵⁰ Thus he asserts that the central theme of the Sermon on the Mount is righteousness by works.⁵¹ Although it seems initially possible that the Sermon on the Mount teaches that one's fulfilling the law and the will of God the Father is the condition to attain salvation (5:20; 7:21), the predominant tone of the Sermon on the Mount is not legalistic. On the contrary, since every word of the Sermon is preceded by the preaching of the kingdom of God and the granting of sonship to the disciples,⁵² it is likely that the endowment of the kingdom, which is the unifying theme of the Sermon on the Mount,⁵³ accomplishes good works in its recipients, and thus the kingdom finds embodiment in the lives of the faithful.⁵⁴ Hence the radical words of Jesus are, on the one hand, the promise that one may live now like this by the power of the kingdom⁵⁵ and, on the other hand, the warning that "whoever fails to radiate the love of Christ thereby proves that he has no part in Christ and is not included in the kingdom of God."⁵⁶ To sum up, the Sermon on the Mount provides ethical guidelines for life in the kingdom.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the Sermon on the Mount is not closely related to the legalistic condition of entering the kingdom of God, because the Sermon on the Mount is concerned not

Understanding of the Gospels and to the Problem of Their True Exegesis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), 168.

⁴⁹Notably Stanton argues that "in the Sermon on the Mount and in the gospel as a whole, grace and demand are linked inextricably." G. N. Stanton, "The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis* (ed. G. G. Hawthorne with O. Betz; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 190.

⁵⁰Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount*, 9.

⁵¹Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount*, 124-53.

⁵²J. Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 30.

⁵³Carson, "Matthew," 127-28.

⁵⁴Herman N. Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 31.

⁵⁵Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 32.

⁵⁶Ridderbos, *When the Time Had Fully Come*, 32.

⁵⁷Carson, "Matthew," 128.

entirely with “demand,” but with both “grace” and “demand.”⁵⁸ In a word, the Sermon on the Mount is not a law code for entering the kingdom of God but a presentation of principles which are meant to be realized in the lives of those who have been called by Jesus to participate in the kingdom of heaven through God’s grace.

Furthermore, other parts of the first Gospel clearly show that salvation is the gift of God. The clearest statement in the Gospel of Matthew to the effect that salvation is a gift of God is found in Matt. 1:21. This passage states, “and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Another clear reference is in Matt. 8:5-13. In this passage, the centurion’s faith is praised and his salvation is promised by Jesus. Here faith and salvation are closely associated. Matt. 26:28 also shows that Matthew views salvation as the gift of God. Besides, Matt. 7:21-23 indicates that the salvation of human beings does not depend on human works since such works as prophecy, exorcism and miracles are said to be no guarantee to enter the kingdom. We should also note that in the entire Gospel of Matthew Jesus never requires a perfect fulfillment of his demands on those who are standing before the gates of the kingdom. Particularly, Matt. 5:20 does not establish how righteousness is to be gained, developed, or empowered; it simply lays out the demand.⁵⁹ Thus, if it is correct that in the Matthaean context the Sermon is intended for Jesus’ disciples who have already accepted the call of Jesus, then the demand of superior δικαιοσύνη probably is a warning to believers rather than the declaration of the condition for entrance into the kingdom. Even if the form of the verse appears legalistic, the original intention of the verse is probably a warning based on the promise. In conclusion, δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:20 is to be understood as a new and higher righteousness to which the law truly points, that is, true conformity to the teachings of Jesus.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 6:1

⁵⁸Carson (“Matthew,” 128) well indicates the inextricable link between grace and demand as follows: “The glimpse of kingdom life (horizontally and vertically) in these chapters anticipates not only the love commandments but also grace.”

⁵⁹Carson, “Matthew,” 147.

What is the meaning of δικαιοσύνη⁶⁰ in Matt. 6:1 (Προσέχετε [δὲ] τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἕμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς)? Matt. 6:1 is generally thought of as a heading for Matt. 6:2-18.⁶¹ Thus the meaning of δικαιοσύνη in 6:1 can be determined on the basis of vv. 2-18. Matt. 6:1 is concerned with motives underlying the doing of righteousness. Three illustrations of the doing of righteousness are given. These are the giving of alms (vv. 2-4), praying (vv. 5-15) and fasting (vv. 16-18). It is clear that in Matt. 6:1 δικαιοσύνη refers to the righteous life. But Fiedler claims that even here δικαιοσύνη is God's gift to man.⁶² Nevertheless Fiedler's conclusion is unconvincing because Matt. 6:1 states clearly that man can do righteousness and there is no reference to the gift of God.⁶³ Thus δικαιοσύνη here means the righteousness of life as expressed in the carrying out such religious duties as alms, prayer, and fasting.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 6:33

Matt. 6:33 (ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν [τοῦ θεοῦ] καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ) specifically exhorts the disciples to seek God's righteousness. From the outset, it should be noted that it is not very likely that one should interpret δικαιοσύνη in the Pauline sense of God's righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ - Rom 1:17; 3:21) through which man is justified even though the same phrase (δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ) is found in both.⁶⁴ As we have seen above, δικαιοσύνη often means God's eschatological vindication in Isaiah, Micah, and the Psalms.⁶⁵ The

⁶⁰The variant reading ἐλεημοσύνη here was probably an early marginal gloss on δικαιοσύνην, since in the LXX "righteousness" in Hebrew was often rendered "alms." Carson, "Matthew," 163. n. 1. He claims, "The gloss was then inserted into the text by a copyist. If 'alms' were in fact original, then v. 1 should be read with vv. 2-4, not as the introduction to vv. 2-18; and this would break the carefully wrought structure." The external evidence strongly supports δικαιοσύνην.

⁶¹Carson, "Matthew," 163; Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, 307; Hill, *Matthew*, 132; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 572; Gundry, *Matthew*, 101.

⁶²Fiedler, "Der Begriff," 133.

⁶³Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 88.

⁶⁴For a discussion regarding the meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Paul's letters, see M. T. Brauch, "Perspectives on 'God's Righteousness' in Recent German Discussion," in E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 523-42.

⁶⁵Hagner claims, "God's righteousness in the OT refers not abstractly to God's ethical character, but to his saving activity that brings about eschatological deliverance"

juxtaposition of δικαιοσύνη and βασιλεία seems to indicate that the point of this command is not that we should seek to be as righteous as God is, but that we should make God's kingdom and the righteousness that comes with it our priority.⁶⁶ Moreover, this interpretation can be supported by the verb προστεθήσεται which seems to show that δικαιοσύνη is God's gift in an eschatological sense.⁶⁷ As Przybylski well points out,⁶⁸ however, this passage deals with not God's righteousness *per se* but God's righteousness insofar as it is the norm governing man's conduct. The disciples are encouraged to live according to the righteousness of God. If there is such meaning here, then, "his righteousness" must be understood as ethical righteousness defined by God.⁶⁹ Such an understanding is not peculiar to Matthew alone. It is clear that in James 1:20 God's righteousness is not the righteousness which is freely imputed to man but that righteousness which is demanded of man.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the ζητέω in Matt. 6:33 probably shows that the disciples should pursue righteousness of life in full submission to the will of God, as defined by Jesus (Matt. 5:10, 20; 6:1). This point is similar to the Pauline expression διώκε δικαιοσύνην (Rom. 9:30; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22) which clearly refers to pursuing ethical righteousness. This expression apparently is the Pauline equivalent to Matthew's ζητεῖτε δικαιοσύνην. Thus it is fair to say that δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 6:33 is to be understood as a norm for man's conduct and righteousness of life in agreement with the will of God.

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ IN MATTHEW 21:32

Δικαιοσύνη in 21:32 (ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης) occurs in reference to John the Baptist. The focus of our discussion is: what is the meaning of the expression ἐν ὁδῷ

("Righteousness," 114). M. Dibelius supports this view. *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 50.

⁶⁶Hagner, "Righteousness," 114; F. V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (BNTC; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 102.

⁶⁷Ziesler, *Righteousness*, 135; Fiedler, "Der Begriff," 140.

⁶⁸Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 89.

⁶⁹Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 166; Hill, *Matthew*, 145; Keener, *Matthew*, 237; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 407; Strecker, *Der Weg*, 155; W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 10; 3d rev. ed.; München: Kösel Verlag, 1964), 146. This information is cited from Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 152.

⁷⁰Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 90.

δικαιοσύνης? First, what is the meaning of the word ὁδός? There is disagreement among scholars whether the word is to be viewed as a way of life or as a subject of preaching. Put differently, does it refer to the conduct of John or to the content of his message? W. Michaelis states, “The construction ἦλθεν ἐν ὁδῷ demands that ὁδός be referred to the Baptist himself.”⁷¹ On the other hand, Ziesler writes, “Probably ἐν here means ‘with,’ and the whole phrase means ‘with the message of righteousness,’ i.e. the message of the standard which God demands of men, the life of obedience to the divine will.”⁷² Probably the latter view is to be taken since the immediate context does show that the focus is not so much on John’s own exemplification of righteousness as on the way of response of the people to his message. If we take ἐν to mean “with” in the associative sense, as Ziesler does, the latter view seems plausible. Thus we can interpret the phrase “in the way of righteousness” since John brought the message of the righteous life in accordance with God’s will. Moreover, the immediate context which speaks of repentance and obedience fits well into this interpretation. John came and called the people to repentance and obedience to God; and it is tax collectors and harlots, but not the Pharisees and chief priests, who respond to his calling.

Claiming that Matt. 21:32 will always remain a *crux interpretum* unless one delves into the background of the expression “the way of righteousness,”⁷³ Fiedler asserts that on the basis of the Old Testament and a number of Jewish-Palestinian writings, in 21:32 the way of righteousness is the way upon which righteousness and salvation are won.⁷⁴ Nevertheless Fiedler’s interpretation of 21:32 in the light of specific texts drawn from the Old Testament and a number of Jewish-Palestinian writings is not convincing.⁷⁵ Moreover, Fiedler’s view is unwarranted because the phrase “the ways of righteousness,” which occurs in the LXX, can mean “practiced righteousness” (e.g. Prov. 21:16, 21; 8:20; 12:28; 16:17, 31; 17:23). More probably the phrase in

⁷¹W. Michaelis, ὁδός, *TDNT* 5 (1967), 86.

⁷²Ziesler, *Meaning*, 131.

⁷³Fiedler, “Der Begriff,” 145

⁷⁴Fiedler, “Der Begriff,” 149.

⁷⁵See the criticism of Przybylski against Fiedler’s argument. Przybylski, *Righteousness*, 94-95.

Matthew is to be taken as referring to ethical righteousness.⁷⁶ Indeed, the same expression is found in 2 Pet. 2:21, where it clearly means righteous conduct. As Hill⁷⁷ and Przybylski⁷⁸ rightly insist, “the way of righteousness” here means John’s message which requires the righteous life; particularly, John’s message conveys the life of repentance, which is manifested in the obedience to the baptism conducted by John.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion concerns the meaning and proper interpretation of δικαιοσύνη in Matthew. We have argued that Matthew probably uses δικαιοσύνη in both senses, that is, as the gift of God and as God’s ethical demand. Although many scholars insist that Matthew uses δικαιοσύνη in an ethical sense exclusively, I have argued that it seems unnecessary and improper to limit his use of the word to the designation of ethical righteousness. For it is plausible that Matthew understood the story of Jesus as the story of the grace of God in bringing salvation to his people and that Matthew was familiar with this use of the word “righteousness” (in either the Hebrew or the Greek form, or both) in the OT. It is unquestionable that Matthew uses the word primarily in an ethical sense, i.e. as conformity to the will of God. However, it is better for us to conclude that δικαιοσύνη for Matthew is, on the one hand, “an expression of the salvation of God” and, on the other, “God’s demand to mankind.”⁷⁹ I have argued that δικαιοσύνη in Matt. 5:6 probably refers to “salvation of God” and 3:15 possibly refers to “salvation plan of God.” Moreover, I have concluded that the remaining five occurrences (5:10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32) refer to “God’s ethical demand to mankind.”

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⁷⁷Hill, *Greek Words*, 124f.

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⁷⁹As Kertelege rightly insists, “This double sidedness characterizes Matthew’s use of the concept of δικαιοσύνη.” K. Kertelege, *δικαιοσύνη*, *EDNT*, I:329.

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