

Uncovering the Kingdom of Heaven: Archaeological Exploration and the Gospel of Matthew

Merrill Kitchen

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Abstract: The ‘Kingdom of God’ is a common term found in the New Testament Gospels as a descriptor of the reign of God, but the Gospel of Matthew uniquely and consistently replaces this term with the ‘Kingdom of Heaven.’ Interestingly, the mosaic art uncovered in a number of second to fifth century CE synagogues excavated over the last sixty years in Israel-Palestine also portray the heavens symbolically using the form of zodiacs and surrounding them with symbols of Israel’s ancient story. In particular, the story board of the mosaic floor of an excavated fifth-century CE synagogue in Zippori (Sepphoris) shows remarkable similarities with a narrative structure discernible within the Gospel of Matthew. This may point to a period of common cultural understanding, and even dialogue, between Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity.

Introduction

Theological reflection, artistic expression and rational human understanding have long been creative partners in the human search for holistic meaning. Furthermore, there is evidence that these creative partners have influenced the writing of the Christian Scriptures as well as inspiring its interpretation. This paper will build upon recent biblical and archaeological scholarship¹ to explore one cultural symbol that appears to have reflected a ‘fundamental current’² within the diverse religious expressions that emerged within first-century Judaism and nascent Christianity.³ Furthermore, it will be proposed that the Gospel of Matthew employs a distinctive literary framework that may have been inspired by contemporary literary and artistic expressions of a Jewish cosmic concept of the heavens (οὐρανοῖ) as a spiritual and substantial location for the creative global presence of Israel’s God.⁴

The heavens as an interpretive key in the First Gospel

The Gospel of Matthew consistently describes the reign of God in terms of ‘the kingdom of heaven: ἡ βασιλεία των οὐρανων,’ a term never employed in the other synoptic Gospels. Most scholars explain this usage in terms of the apocalyptic nature of the Matthean discourse and/or as a paraphrase of the words ‘kingdom of God: ἡ βασιλεία του θεου’ so as to avoid offending Jewish readers by deleting the name of ‘God.’⁵ Other scholars ignore the difference altogether assuming that the terms ‘kingdom of God’ and ‘kingdom of heaven’ are synonymous.⁶ But careful exploration of the consistent and unique Matthean references to ‘the kingdom of heaven’ along with other related literary elements, provides an underlying narrative framework that suggests a distinctive theological understanding in the First Gospel. For example, a comparison of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew’s Gospel with that in the Gospel of Luke exemplifies these differing emphases (Table 1)

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:2-4
9 “Pray then in this way: <i>Our Father in heaven,</i> hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come. <i>Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.</i> 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.	2 Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.

Table 1: A comparison of the text of the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke demonstrating Matthew’s emphases in Italics

The reign of God in the First Gospel

Cosmic elements feature in the birth, infancy and temptation narratives in the first four chapters of Matthew's Gospel as well as in the final passion and resurrection narratives. Prophetic and nurturing angels appear (Matthew 1:20-21; 2:19-20; 4:11; 28:2-5), wise astrologers from the East follow a significant star sign, disclose their understanding (2:1-16) and threaten the Jerusalem religious power group who appear to lack insight and are confused (2:3-12). The implicit in-breaking of a cosmic dimension is then articulated. The inauguration of the kingdom of heaven on earth is first proclaimed in the midst of water and light as John the Baptist announces Jesus to the world (3.2). The voice of God is heard affirming John's announcement (3.16-17) and this kingdom of heaven begins to cut through the human definitions of time and space. The faithful dispirited and persecuted ones not only find a welcome (5.3, 10-12) but enter into a lifelong journey of formation as community leaders who will nurture their followers appropriately and bring light into the world (5.13-16). This new kingdom is described as an ordered place embracing all human and environmental reality under the inclusive and permissive rule of God (5.34-48) where a costly continuity between words and deeds is applauded.⁷ While words alone are not enough (5.14-20), appropriate words are explicitly prescribed (6.1-10) and they support an economic kingdom in which goods are shared in a spirit of mutuality and interdependence (6.20-33; 7.11; 19.21-23).⁸ This reign of God is as productive as the global vegetation (13.24-32), as permeating as yeast (13.33), as valuable as fine possessions (13.44-46) and abundantly provides for all (14.17-18).

The Matthean concept of the kingdom of heaven is embedded in Israel's story, and while it is inclusive of race, status, gender and sexuality (8.10-13; 18.19; 20.1-16; 22.1-10), it is understood better by the innocent young than experienced elders (11.25; 18.1-5, 10, 14; 19.13). It is good news to all humanity and to be proclaimed and demonstrated unconditionally throughout the nations (10.7-8). A special place is reserved for the faithful who share this good news beyond their tribal boundaries (10.32; 11.11) so that new cosmic boundaries are established and a new form of kinship is inaugurated (12.50; 16.1-19; 18.18-35; 23.8-12). It exists in the midst of antagonism and threat but no attempt is to be made to eliminate the strange or the different. In the kingdom of heaven ambiguity will always be a present reality (13.47-51; 15.13-14).⁹ At the same time, it is also a realm in which judgment will be exacted, bringing both rewards and penalties depending on the faithfulness shown to the Divine ethos that has been disclosed in the person of Jesus (7.21; 10.33; 11.12-15, 22-23; 22.11-14; 23.13, 29; 24.36). The cosmic dimensions of this heavenly kingdom are described in terms of 'clouds of heaven' (24.30; 26.64), 'the four winds from one end of heaven to the other' (24.30,31) and the place of 'power' (26.64). It is a place where angels dwell (24.36; 28.2), along with the Son of Man (26.64).

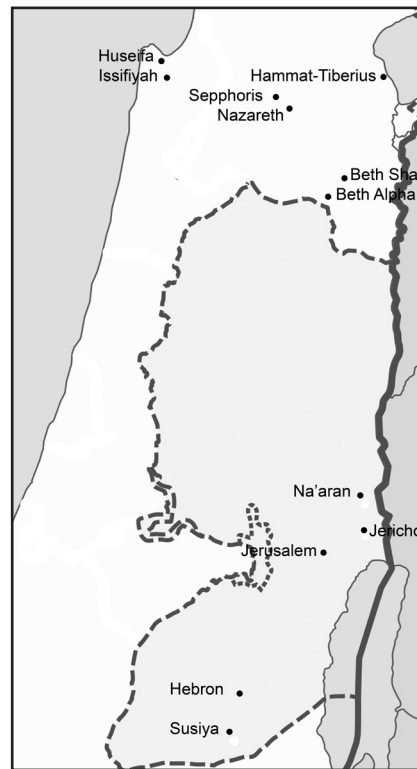


Figure 1: A map showing the locations mentioned

Cosmic Parallels in Early Synagogue Art

The intricate narrative threads that weave the kingdom of heaven images through the Matthean text are challenging concepts for a reader who is limited by the textual parameters of historical-critical studies. The New Testament Gospels are much more than historical records. They reveal a symbolic world that is more than words on paper. Furthermore, these revealed 'sacred symbols' have the powerful capacity to shape and reinforce the 'ethos' of a community and its prevailing 'worldview' (Geertz 1973: 112). The resulting symbols and their images invite the possibility of connections with other textual and even non-textual contemporary expressions such as public religious art and architecture.¹⁰ In particular, the narrative structure of the Gospel of Matthew has strong connections with the art and architecture of early synagogues in Palestine and the Jewish diaspora.¹¹

From the first-century BCE literary and architectural evidence of active synagogue life can be found wherever Jewish communities gathered,¹² and after 70 CE this evidence becomes increasingly present in Palestine.¹³ Examination of symbolic elements in the art and architecture of both early (second-temple) and later (post 70CE) ancient synagogues reveals at least two distinct interpretive streams, presumably reflecting the variant frameworks of understanding that influenced the worship life of Jewish communities.¹⁴ Some synagogues have no evidence of any architectural embellishment, while others have paintings (frescoes) and elaborate mosaic carpets that depict Israel's place in God's history of salvation as well concepts reinforced by synagogal poetic liturgy.¹⁵



Figure 2: A photo of the Sepphoris Mosaic. Image courtesy of www.HolyLandPhotos.org

Matthew and synagogue art

This study focuses on the artistic decorations revealed in the excavations of a synagogue in Zippori, an ancient city more commonly known by its Greek name, Sepphoris. The importance of Sepphoris in understanding the earliest Jesus movement is being recognised increasingly by New Testament scholars.¹⁶ A predominantly Jewish city situated just five kilometres from Nazareth in the Galilee region,¹⁷ Sepphoris appears to have contained many synagogues during the first several hundred years CE (Chancey & Meyers 2000: 20; Weiss and Netzer 1998: 8-9). It was the home of significant rabbis throughout that time and is particularly notable as a place where the Palestinian Talmud was compiled. In fact, it is mentioned in Rabbinic literature more often than any ancient city except Jerusalem (Miller 1996: 59-65). Of particular interest is a synagogue in Sepphoris, which has been excavated over the last twenty years by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This excavation has yielded a fine example of a mosaic carpet that is consistent with others found in near by ancient synagogues. Generally, the mosaic carpets consist of three parts: an inscription or biblical scene, a central zodiac panel and a representation of Jewish religious objects such as the Ark, Torah, Temple/Tabernacle or menorah. Examples may be found in the synagogues at Hammat-Tiberias, Beth Shean, Beth Alpha, Na'aran and Issifiyeh (Ovadiah 1995: 309-314). Some are more detailed than others and some are more sophisticated in their artistic design than others.¹⁸

The Sepphoris synagogue mosaic is distinctively different. It is more detailed than other mosaic carpets and its artistic 'story board' shows a remarkable similarity to the narrative pattern of the Gospel of Matthew. On entry into the building there are two panels depicting the annunciation by an angel of the promise of a son to Abraham with the

barren Sarah looking on hesitantly from behind a doorway. It is a parallel to the angelic revelation to Joseph in Matthew's Gospel where the fertile Mary is in the narrative background (Matt. 1:8-24). The synagogue carpet then follows on with a mosaic depiction of the 'binding of Isaac' or 'aqeda' where a threat to Abraham's son's life is alleviated by a message from God; a story with parallels to the threat to the life of the infant Jesus found only in Matthew's Gospel (Matt.2:13-9). The zodiac is next in the mosaic carpet sequence with its central motif of light from the Sun God coming down into water, its twelve human figures and its four female seasons. The Matthean baptismal narrative (Matt. 3:1-17) contains these same symbolic elements. The zodiac panel that follows reveals the cyclic wisdom of the heavenly God and the dimensions of the four corners of the earth. Parallels to this symbol are less evident in the Matthean narrative, but perhaps are reflected in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7). Following on from the zodiac on the synagogue mosaic carpet is a series of panels on symbols of Torah Law that are thought to represent the 'consecration of Aaron and his sons to the service of the Tabernacle,' perhaps equivalent to the formation of the disciples for service as messianic followers of Jesus. The ultimate depiction on the mosaic carpet is a wreath motif guarded by lions, 'symbols of preservation and conquest' which have some connections with the final command of the risen Christ in Matthew's Gospel who urges his followers to 'go into all the world and make disciples.' (Weiss & Ehud 1998: 20)

The presence of a zodiac has caused some scholars to dismiss these recently excavated buildings in Israel - Palestine as legitimate Jewish synagogues, but evidence of astrology in Judaism can be found in the apocryphal Book of Jubilees, as well as in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q318).¹⁹ In fact, the

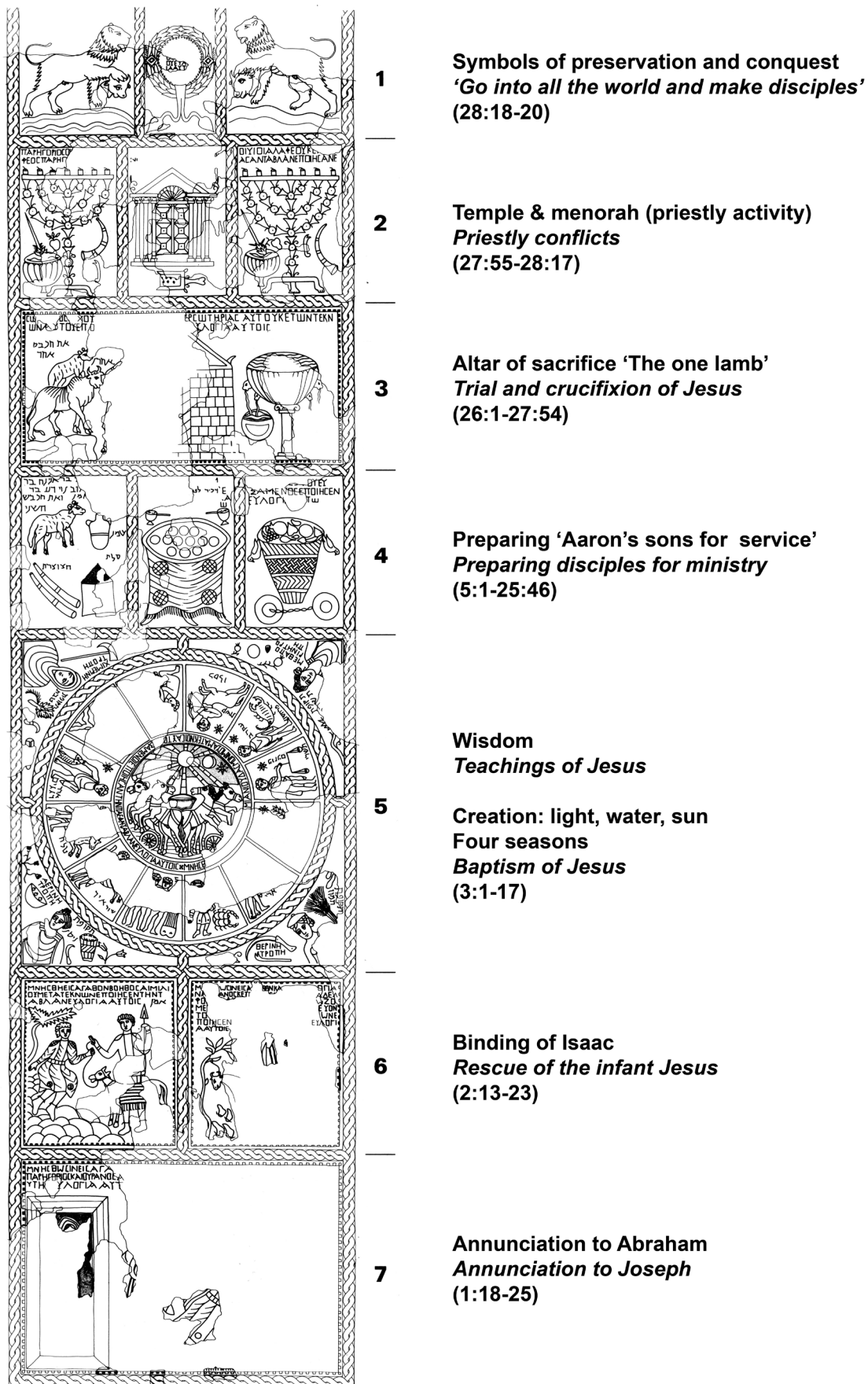


Figure 3: A diagram of the Sepphoris Mosaic showing the proposed Matthean structure. Drawing from Weiss & Netzer (1998: 14), courtesy of Prof. Zeev Weiss, *The Sepphoris Excavations*, drawing: Pnina Arad.

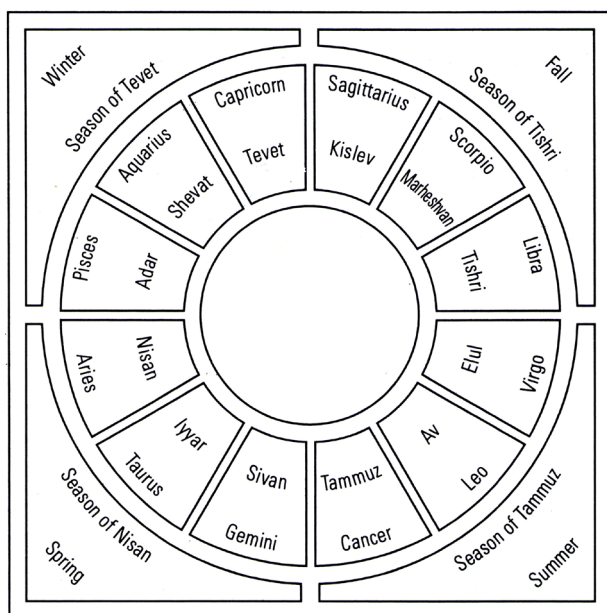


Figure 4: A diagram of the circular portion of the Sepphoris Mosaic showing the seasons, zodiac signs and calendar months. After Weiss & Netzer (1998: 28), courtesy of Prof. Zeev Weiss, *The Sepphoris Excavations*, drawing: Pnina Arad.

Calendar Texts left by the Qumran community portray a heightened, almost obsessive, concern with cosmic measured time and astrological signs.²⁰ The orderly design of the zodiac with its stable mapping of the seasons, affirmation of the cycle of agricultural production, and cyclic rhythm of lunar sequences, provided a working model for the kind of restorationist movement that emerged during the Second Temple period. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had a place in the divine order and was assigned to a calendar month-based roster that facilitated the orderly provision of sustenance to the unsettled population.²¹

In the first century CE, Josephus uses astrological language to describe the ritual lamp stands and bread of the presence in the Holy Place of the Jerusalem temple. The seven lamps, such being the number of the branches from the lampstand, represented the planets; the loaves on the table, twelve in number, the circle of the zodiac; while the altar of incense, by the thirteen fragrant spices from sea and from land, both desert and inhabited, with which it was replenished, signified that all things are of God and for God. (1987: 88, 707)²²

Rachel Hachlili, in a series of somewhat defensive studies on the place of the zodiac in the Jewish worship arena, concludes that it 'was used primarily for its calendrical value.' (1996, 121) But this conclusion is questioned by Leslie Hoppe who asserts that 'such an explanation ignores the written sources that contain 'positive references to astrology' and that 'fixed calendars were not introduced until about 325 CE.' (Hoppe 1994: 58-59) Marianne Sawicki, coming from a different perspective sees the

synagogue floors as 'defiances of Roman time' or 'symbolic resistance to the incursions of Empire, arguing that the mosaic floors with their zodiacs are '[T]he architectural co-opting of imperial time by the synagogue community' in opposition to 'the rabbi's attempt to assert liturgical time control.' (Sawicki 2000)²³ In addition to Temple-based Judaism and Essenism, astrological symbolism is also evident in Samaritanism. Ness asserts that his research has convincingly demonstrated that, 'Astrological ideas and symbolism were so pervasive that Judaism was influenced by imagery drawn from astrology.' (Charlesworth 1977) Bruce Malina agrees, describing scholars who neglect the 'sky dimensions of life' in their analysis of biblical texts as anachronistic in their 'ethnocentric perspective' and noting that 'The inhabitants of the sky formed an integral part of the social environment of the period. The huge amount of astral documents from the Greco-Roman period makes it quite obvious that for the contemporaries of Jesus, sky and land constituted a single environmental unit, a single social arena.' (1997: 83)

In determining the origin of such ideas within Judaism, Gerhard von Rad argues that Deuteronomistic theology places the heavens as the dwelling place of Yahweh in an attempt 'to clarify the problem of Yahweh's transcendence and yet . . . commitment to Israel.' He goes on to state that 'the concept of 'God of heaven' probably emerged during the Persian period of the Babylonian exile and is exemplified by the use of the expression 'God of heaven' in Daniel 2.18-44 as he 'bears witness to the God who in historical omnipotence controls the destinies of world empires and carries through His plans for the world.' In ancient astrological understandings both the immanent and the transcendent intersected.' In the opinion of Lester Ness, 'the planets were worshipped as incarnations of the gods. . . . the Mesopotamians believed that the planet-gods spoke to them by means of astral omens', that is, by the ordinary and 'the extraordinary events in the sky.' (Ness 1993) The heavens became a tethering point of reality, the dependable indicator of the mind and actions of the highest god and scholars generally concur with von Rad's observation that the early Yahwist writings (such as the second creation story in Genesis 2.4b-25) were 'formulated in a cultural and religious atmosphere that was saturated with all kinds of astrological false belief.' (von Rad 1972: 55)²⁴

Von Rad cites early 20th century European scholarship²⁵ in defence of the idea 'that according to the law of correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm the prototypes of all lands, rivers, cities and temples existed in heaven in certain constellations, while these earthly things are only copies thereof,' going on to note that 'this speculative view of the world was obviously alien to the older belief in Yahweh.' (1976: 508) Wolfgang Hübner points out the literary connections that were made between the patriarchs of Israel and the twelve zodiac figures (1983: 24),²⁶ and Avigdor Shinan points to the zodiac images in a number of *piyyutim* such as the selection below that was derived from one written for use on Tisha

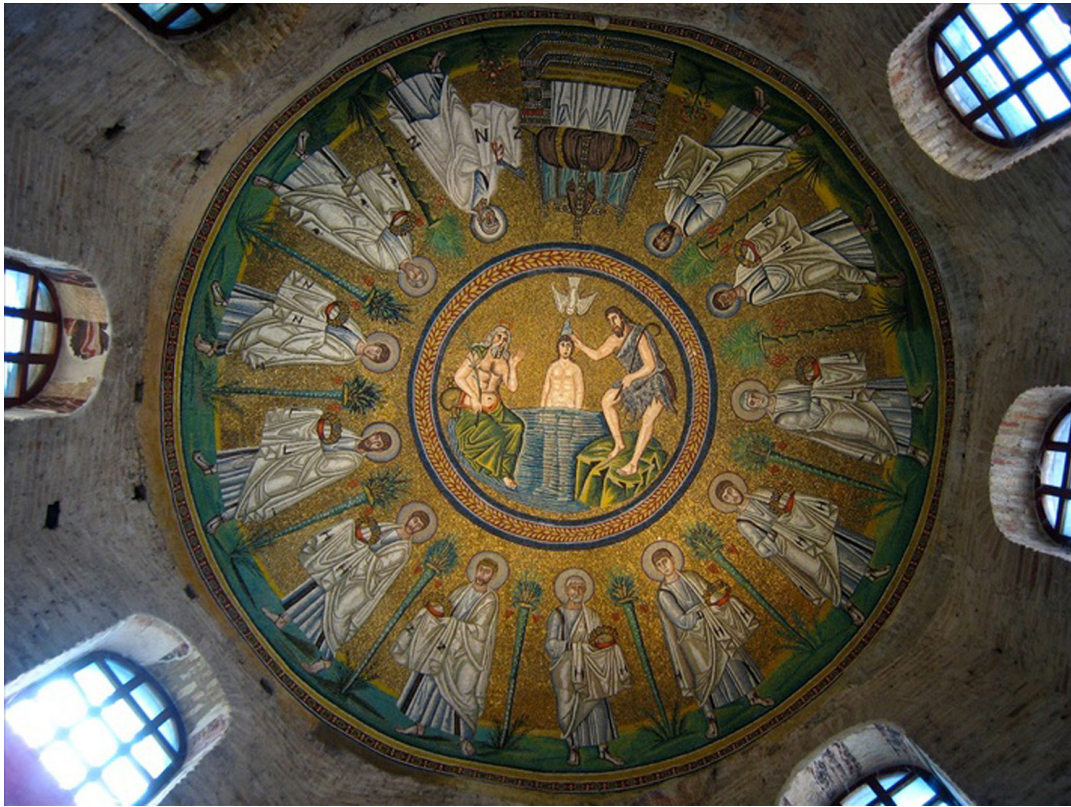


Figure 5: The baptism of Christ, the apostles and the empty throne. The dome of the Arian Baptistery in Ravenna, Italy, 493-526CE.³⁰ Photo by Jim Forest, <http://i.images.cdn.fotopedia.com/flickr-888696694-image/>

b'Av. It reads in part:

*Then, because of our sins, the Temple was destroyed
 And the sanctuary was burnt because of our iniquities.
 The tribes of Jacob cried in sorrow
 And even the constellations shed tears
 The Lamb cried first, its souls saddened
 Because its little lambs were led to slaughter.
 The Bull made its cry heard in the heavens
 Because we were all pursued to the very neck . . .
 Heaven shook from the roar of the Lion
 Because our roar [of supplication?] did not rise to heaven
 Virgins and young men were killed
 And therefore the Virgin's face was darkened.*
 (1996: 148)²⁷

Just as they had done with Canaanite and Greek cultures before, the Hebrew traditions assimilate and acculturate many influential cultural concepts adopted during their exilic journeys. The signs of the Zodiac were given specifically Jewish meanings and associations: the lion became the royal lion of David, the twins became Cain and Abel, and so on. Clearly, the Judeans adopted calendrical understandings from neighbouring societies both before and during the Second Temple period, 'the ancient Egyptian solar calendar, the Babylonian lunar calendar, and the Israelite seven-day week' undergirding the temporal rhythm of Judaism (Stegemann 1998: 166).

Conclusion

The textual and visual components that form the basis for this study suggest that there is a clear example of a contiguous form of acculturation and cultural assimilation that informed the narrative tapestry of at least one expression of Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.²⁸ Scholars are divided in their views on the relationship of the Gospels of Matthew to formative Judaism in the later first-century, but increasingly, there is recognition of the diverse nature of first-century Palestinian Judaism and of continuity and discontinuity between the social settings of the later Gospels.²⁹ The Jewish voice reflected in Matthew's Gospel is one that stands firmly in a post-exilic Hebrew cosmic tradition from which the book of Jonah developed. It is a voice being heard at a time of dislocation and reestablishment when the cosmic dimensions of the 'God of heaven' offered a theological basis for the kind of mutuality and interdependence necessary if a dispersed people with diverse spatial locations were to gather with a unified worshipping identity. In the period after the destruction of Jerusalem, such a social milieu confronted the resettling faith communities that had fled Jerusalem. It may be that the Sephoris synagogue mosaics are a reaction to the Matthean theology that was impacting a Jewish faith community in the late first century; or perhaps the Matthean leaders used a well understood synagogue storyboard ritual as a template through which to proclaim the story of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Certainly, it was not long before the Christians adopted the zodiac framework and embedded it into main-

stream church decoration as can be seen in the mosaic art on the dome of the sixth century CE Arian baptistery in Ravenna, Italy (Figure 5). Instead of zodiac symbols there are twelve apostles; instead of the central creation motif there is a depiction of the baptism of Jesus with a white dove descended from the heavens; and Jerusalem temple motifs are replaced by the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine (Macgregor & Langmuir 2000: 83).

Merrill Kitchen
Fellow of the Melbourne College of Divinity
Melbourne

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- 3 See Theissen, (1999: 1-18) for a description of the use of cultural sign systems as similar methodological approach that has been taken in this study for describing religious identity. Also note the trajectories outlined in the diagram, 'A map of middle-Judaisms,' sourced from Boccaccini (1998: xxii), recognising, also, the thesis of Alan Segal (1986) that early Judaism was the 'mother' of both rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.
- 4 Goulder (1974: 172) asserts that the Gospel of Matthew is not so much a literary genre as a 'liturgical genre' that 'follows the lections of the Jewish year' according to the lunar calendrical formulae.
- 5 See the formative historical critical approach of Bornkamm, Barth, and Held (1963); and more recently, Beare (1981: 33); Davies and Allison, (1988-1997); Senior (1988); Harrington (1991); Hagner (1993) (Jewish sense); Gundry (1994: 43); Stock (1994) (1995); Boring (1995); Stanton (1995), Byrne (2004: 35).
- 6 For example Beasley-Murray (1986) does not discuss the difference at all and (1974: 103) includes a list of cosmic references in Matthew but neglects to include the heavens as a legitimate cosmic concept.
- 7 Gibbs describes the Matthean concept of the heavens as 'a sphere over which [God] rules that may be entered as one enters a "kingdom" or Reich.' (2000: 40)
- 8 Theissen writes, 'In Matthew, the *imitatio dei*, the imitation of God, is the central reason for loving one's enemies. Love of enemies is sovereign behaviour, behaviour that makes human beings godlike. It elevates them far above their situation – as high as the sun, which shines on good and evil alike.' (1999: 117)
- 9 See Seneca *De beneficiis* 4.26.1 'If, he says, you would imitate the gods, give benefits even to the ungrateful, for the sun shines even on the wicked, and the seas are accessible to pirates too.' (*Si deos, inquit, imitaris, da et ingratis beneficia, nam et sceleratis sol oritur et pirates patent maria.*)
- 10 Hoppe remarks 'Our ancestors left behind an enormous amount of non-literary sources that reveal much about what our ancestors believed and how they lived. Literary sources, after all, were produced by an elite class of believers and therefore do not always clearly reflect popular culture and religion.' (1994: 1)
- 11 For an extensive analysis of this topic see Catto who emphasises strongly that 'it should not be assumed that architectural features or styles found in one place existed in another' (2007: 8). Also, note that the apparent cognitive dissonance with the second commandment is addressed in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (an Aramaic paraphrase of Leviticus 26:1) that permitted the use of artistic ornamentation in synagogues. Commenting on this Hachlili notes that, 'Attitudes within the Rabbinic community were mixed in regard to art. Some sages were vehemently against art, even refusing to look upon the image of the emperor or a coin. Others considered it to be relatively harmless. A statement in the Jerusalem Talmud that was preserved in its entirety only in a manuscript discovered in the Cairo Geniza reflects a more tolerant (if somewhat ambivalent) position: "In the days of Rabbi Johanan they permitted images (tzayirin) on its walls, and he did not stop them. In the days of R. Abun they permitted images on mosaics and he did not stop them." (1996: 121)
- 12 Levine (1982: 1; 1987: 7). See also Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.14.4-5, (1926-63: 328-29).

Endnotes

- 1 'the discipline governing the study of the Bible and the discipline governing archaeological research are two separate and different disciplines based on independent principles, methodology and training. Neither can be used to prove or disprove the other. At the same time, we are not at liberty to ignore either one. Indeed they complement each other.' (Charlesworth 2006: 2)
- 2 'fundamental currents become evident . . . [and] . . . they represent in each case a specific and original answer to the crisis in Jewish society.' (Stegemann & Stegemann 1995: 138)

- 13 Levine (1996). The Greek *Theodotus* inscription from first century BCE Jerusalem is the oldest evidence for synagogues in Palestine.
- 14 Binder (1999) sees the differing elements as always relating to concepts of the Jerusalem temple. See also Harland (2003: 132-135).
- 15 There is evidence of this tradition of synagogue decoration in a second century CE Syrian synagogue in Dura Europa, which is now displayed in the Damascus Museum. See Schwartz, this synagogal poetry (piyyut) were primarily 'occasional pieces . . . [that] . . . strove to read synagogue art as a commemoration of Israel's place in history and not in the cosmos.' (2000: 181). See also Kimelman (1980: 165-182).
- 16 For example Batey (1992: 50-62); Overman (1990); Saldarini (1994); Kee (1992: 21); Edwards (1992: 54); Crossan (1998: 218-226); Freyne (1999: 161-175); Tusk (2000: 34-41); Horsley (1999: 58-65); Batey (2001: 402-409).
- 17 See Miller (1996: 21-27), Sepphoris was inhabited from 1550BCE, and was renamed Antipatris by Herod Antipatris when establishing it as his capital in 3BCE and Diocaesarea after the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135CE). Although Antipatris moved his capital to Tiberias for a brief period, Agrippa II re-established Sepphoris as the Galilean capital in the 60's CE and it continued as such for several centuries. See Josephus *Ant* 18.27.
- 18 See Avi Yonah 'On constante avec surprise qu'a l'époque Byzantine l'art classique profane avait pénétré non seulement dans le milieu Chretien laïque fortement hellénisé, mais encore dans le milieu orthodoxe juif.' (1981: 396) These synagogues are situated at Hammat-Tiberias, Beit Alpha, Huseifa, Susiya, Na'aran, Yaphia and, most recently, Sepphoris. Hachlili notes the presence of a first century structure beneath the fourth-to-fifth century synagogue in Capernaum (1996, 97). On the other hand, some scholars such as Horsley (1996, 132-138), argue that there is no evidence of synagogues at all in Palestine/Galilee prior to the third century CE.
- 19 The book of Jubilees was written in Hebrew around 160BCE and represents itself as a record of the revelation from God to Moses of the true calendar in the context of the proper observance of the Israelite festivals. (*Jubilees* 6.30-32). See the discussion of 4Q318 in Collins (1995), and VanderKam (2000: 164-167). It contrasts the solar and lunar calendars, the latter regarded as 'corrupt.' (6.36)
- 20 'Calendars, or writing that presuppose them, comprise a very substantial percentage of the Dead Sea caches. . . . More than any other single element, the calendar binds these works together.' The Qumran community, who relied on the sun for their calendar calculation, were in conflict with most Jews of the time who used a lunar calendar.' (Wise 1996: 297)
- 21 Freyne (2001: 293-294) cites Wacholder (1974: 4-21).
- 22 *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 3:145-146, 182; and *The Wars of the Jews* 5:217. See also *The Antiquities of the Jews* IIIvii.7, 180-187.
- 23 'Because lunar time cannot perfectly match solar/sidereal time (for full moon occurs every 29.5 days) the religious year had to be adjusted occasionally to keep the festivals aligned with the agricultural seasons. . . '
- 24 See also Westermann (1984:127).
- 25 Bernard Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* II (1925: 110).
- 26 He notes also a 'Rota Ecclesiastica Übersicht' whereby the apostles, the patriarchs and the prophets are all assigned zodiacal labels.
- 27 The poem in its entirety uses all of the zodiac images.
- 28 See Harland (2003: 195-200) for a discussion on 'assimilation and acculturation' in the context of the synagogue and Imperial cults.
- 29 In particular Davies & Allison (1988-1997); Harrington (1991); Overman (1990); Saldarini (1994).
- 30 'The early Christian period was the critical bridge for the transmission of this grand "Dome of the Heaven" . . . from antiquity to the Middle Ages.' (Matthews 1993: 143, 155)