Wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels

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for the degree of
Master of Theology

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, Charles Sturt University or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of thesis, subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University.

Name: John Charles Reed

Signature:

Date:
Abstract

The intention of this thesis is to examine the ways in which the Synoptic Gospels understand and portray the connection between Jesus and wisdom. This study will first examine the nature of wisdom in general. It will then survey the place and nature of wisdom in the Hebrew scriptures and in Second Temple Judaism. Consideration will be given to the theological grounding of the wisdom material, and its relationship with the theology of the broader Hebrew scriptures, including its connection to both law and covenant.

Attention will then move on to a brief analysis of the place of wisdom in the New Testament as a whole, before turning to a detailed examination of presentation of wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels.

This examination of the Synoptic Gospels will begin with a lexical survey and analysis of the vocabulary of wisdom: where it is found and how it is used in the Synoptic writers’ presentation of Jesus. This will be followed by consideration of other ways in which there may be echoes of and allusions to Jewish wisdom material in the Synoptics, and how they are presented. Finally, consideration will turn to material in the Synoptics that, although not directly referencing or echoing OT wisdom, has the pattern or shape of wisdom material, with a view to assessing in what ways this displays both continuity and discontinuity with the Hebrew wisdom tradition.

Drawing the results of this research together, conclusions will be drawn concerning the ways in which the Synoptic writers understand and portray the connection between Jesus and wisdom. Consideration will be given to the similarities and differences between the different writers’ presentations. Further observations will be made concerning the nature of wisdom in the Synoptics, and whether Jesus is portrayed as a teacher of wisdom, an agent of wisdom, or Wisdom personified. This will lead to discussion of the ways in which the connection between Jesus and wisdom relates to the other ways in which he is presented; which has implications for understanding the theological connection between wisdom, law, and the kingdom of God in the Synoptics.
I. Introduction

In response to his critics in Matt 11:19 Jesus says: “Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds”\(^1\) (καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς). In the following chapter, he comments that the Queen of the South “came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold one greater than Solomon is here” [ὅτι ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομόνος, καὶ οἶδον πλεῖον Σολομόνος ὄδε] (Matt 12:42). These and other references in the Synoptic Gospels seem to draw a connection between Jesus and wisdom. The purpose of this study is to assess what that connection is, and how significant a role wisdom plays in the Synoptic Gospels.

Scholarly opinion is divided on the extent to which wisdom plays a role in the presentation of Jesus in the New Testament in general, and in the Synoptic Gospels in particular. Some suggest that there is very little of wisdom in the presentation and understanding of Jesus in the Synoptics. Michael Hooten, for example, says: “There are a few references to Jesus as God’s Wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels …”\(^2\) Craig Blomberg similarly suggests that although certain passages in Matthew lead some to see a distinctly Matthean wisdom Christology, “the data on which this hypothesis is based are rather slim.”\(^3\) Others disagree, and go so far as to claim that wisdom is the key category to understanding Jesus. Cynthia Bourgeault, for instance, argues that Jesus in the Synoptics is to be understood as “a master in an ancient spiritual tradition which I’ll call wisdom.”\(^4\) Given such a wide range of opinion, the intention of this research is to examine just how often—and in what ways—the Synoptic Gospels make reference to wisdom, and thus to gain an understanding of how the Synoptics understand and portray the connection between Jesus and wisdom.

To place this study in context, some initial consideration will be given to the nature of wisdom in general, and its particular formulation and

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\(^1\) All English translations are taken from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016) unless otherwise indicated.


\(^3\) Craig Blomberg, Matthew (NAC 22; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 227.

\(^4\) Cynthia Bourgeault, The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind — A New Perspective on Christ and His Message (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), 2. Emphasis original.
presentation in the Bible. This will begin with an overview of the broader understanding of the nature of wisdom, particularly in the Ancient Near East. Then, given that the Gospels were written particularly against the background of the Old Testament, and as the NT portrays its themes (and its central figure of Jesus) as fulfilling OT patterns and promises, particular attention will be given to the understanding and presentation of wisdom in the OT. Connected to, and developing from, the OT comes the Judaism of the Second Temple period. Given that this is the specific context in which Jesus appeared, lived, and taught, a brief study will be made of the various strands and themes in the understanding and presentation of wisdom in Second Temple Judaism. The final part of this background study will be an examination of the understanding and presentation of wisdom in the broader NT.

Having outlined what wisdom is, and how it is understood and portrayed in the rest of the Bible and Jewish tradition, attention will then turn to a detailed study of the presentation of wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels, examining both direct and indirect references to wisdom in the Synoptics, as well as any material that has the shape or form of wisdom.

Finally, observations will be made concerning the portrayal of wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels, and conclusions drawn regarding the understanding the Synoptic writers had of the relationship between Jesus and wisdom, and how this connects to other key themes in their presentation of Jesus.

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5 In the interests of simplicity, the phrase Old Testament will be used throughout this thesis to refer to what might also be called the Jewish scriptures. Even the term “Hebrew Bible” can be misleading, as it might be taken to refer specifically to the Hebrew text as found in the Masoretic Text (MT). This opens up the question of the relationship between this text and others such as the Peshitta in Aramaic and the Septuagint (LXX), and their distinct use by the New Testament authors.

6 “Second Temple Judaism” refers to the Jewish literature and traditions that flourished during the time that the second Temple stood in Jerusalem; that is, between the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple from 538 BCE onwards, until the destruction of the Temple by Roman forces in 70 CE. Research on the period tends to focus on the period from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE.
II. Background and context

Our first consideration is the concept and nature of wisdom in general. Graeme Goldsworthy says: “Every culture, ancient and modern, has developed its own wisdom, and recorded it in literature.”\(^7\) That is, the development of wisdom is a common human pursuit, although its expression and content may vary from culture to culture. It is also worth noting at this point that there is a distinction to be made between wisdom as a concept or entity and the wisdom literature that attempts to identify and describe wisdom.\(^8\) Clearly, any discussion of the concept and nature of wisdom cannot be conducted without mention of the body of literature that has built up over time discussing, analyzing, and debating this concept. However, they are different things and can be spoken of separately.

A. The concept and nature of wisdom

There are a number of theories that have been developed in the pursuit of a definition of wisdom. The following is a brief overview of the key theories:

1) *Wisdom as epistemic accuracy*

Sharon Ryan proposes this view as a possible understanding of the presentation of Socrates’ wisdom in Plato’s *The Apology*.\(^9\) According to this view, wise people are those who restrict their confidence to propositions which they actually know to be true, or at least have excellent justification to believe. This is, in a sense, the other side of the “empty vessels make most noise” coin. That is, the wise person is the one who recognizes their limitations and does not overstep the mark in what they pronounce. However, Ryan comes to the conclusion that accuracy, while providing


\(^8\) Throughout this thesis, the lower-case “wisdom” will be used to refer to the concept of wisdom and the literature of wisdom; while the upper-case “Wisdom” will be used to refer to the personification of wisdom, also known as Sophia, or the Woman of Wisdom.

perhaps a necessary condition for wisdom, is not enough. One can imagine a person, for example, who has a little knowledge in a small or unimportant area. They might indeed have epistemic accuracy, but they may well still not be the sort of person that anybody would ever go to for information or advice.

2) **Wisdom as knowledge**

This expectation that a wise person is someone that one might go to for advice points us in a helpful direction. Aristotle distinguished between two kinds of wisdom: theoretical and practical. What he calls theoretical wisdom might be described as extensive factual knowledge in areas such as science, history, philosophy, literature, music, and mathematics. Ryan argues that in fact theoretical wisdom is not properly to be regarded as wisdom at all, but rather, as it lacks a pragmatic element, it is better regarded as extensive knowledge or deep understanding. Stephen Grimm likewise argues that: “the sort of theoretical knowledge that is sometimes classified as ‘wisdom’ only qualifies as such if it is appropriately connected to knowing how to live well.”

3) **Wisdom as knowing how to live well**

This reference to “knowing how to live well” suggests that perhaps a more fruitful definition is to be found in Aristotle’s second concept—practical wisdom. When it comes to defining what it means to live well, this may prove as difficult as defining wisdom itself. Robert Nozick offers this:

Wisdom is not just one type of knowledge, but diverse. What a wise person needs to know and understand constitutes a varied list: the most important goals and values of life — the ultimate goal, if there is one; what means will reach these goals without too great a cost; what kinds of dangers threaten the achieving of these goals; how to recognize and avoid or minimize these dangers; what different types of human beings are like in their actions and motives (as this presents dangers or opportunities); what is not possible or feasible to achieve (or avoid); how to tell what is appropriate when; knowing when certain goals are sufficiently achieved; what limitations are

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unavoidable and how to accept them; how to improve oneself and one’s relationships with others or society; knowing what the true and unapparent value of various things is; when to take a long-term view; knowing the variety and obduracy of facts, institutions, and human nature; understanding what one’s real motives are; how to cope and deal with the major tragedies and dilemmas of life, and with the major good things too.\textsuperscript{11}

Whereas Nozick defines wisdom in terms of knowing how to achieve one’s goals, Grimm defines wisdom in terms of “well-being.” He suggests that wisdom requires three types of knowledge related to well-being: (1) knowledge of what is good or important for well-being, (2) knowledge of one’s standing relative to what is good or important for well-being, and (3) knowledge of a strategy for obtaining what is good or important for well-being.\textsuperscript{12} A slightly different perspective is offered by Graeme Goldsworthy, who defines wisdom with reference to the “authentic life”: “wisdom is about what life consists of and how one can best live the authentic life.”\textsuperscript{13}

Whether one perceives the goal of life as “well-being,” authenticity, or some other alternative, there does seem to be strength in this “knowing how to live well” theory. However, some philosophers claim that a further condition is required: that knowledge must be put into practice.

4) Wisdom as successful living

According to this theory, wisdom consists in not only knowing how to live well, but in putting that knowledge into practice and being successful at living. Specifically, one’s beliefs and values ought to cohere with one’s actions.\textsuperscript{14} As with the definition of “living well,” the definition of successful living is hard to establish. For some, the successful life may be one that results in longevity. For others, it may focus on prosperity, or on happiness. For others still, there may be an expectation of moral goodness, or beauty.

There is a certain attraction to this idea that one’s life and actions ought to reflect one’s knowledge and insight. Wisdom is often spoken of as


\textsuperscript{12} Grimm, “Wisdom,” 140.

\textsuperscript{13} Goldsworthy, “Wisdom and Its Literature,” 45.

\textsuperscript{14} So Valerie Tiberius, \textit{The Reflective Life: Living Wisely With our Limits} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
having a practical side, or of being applied knowledge. It does not seem unreasonable to expect to see some practical evidence of wisdom being shown in the life of the wise person. There is an argument, however, that it is possible to be wise and to offer judicious advice that enables others to live well, while being unable to do so oneself. Being physically incapacitated, or incarcerated unjustly, might be situations in which a wise person has limited ability to live well themselves, but they may well be able to offer others advice on how to live well. A counter to this argument is that even the offering of such advice might be regarded as some form of action, and therefore might satisfy the success condition, albeit somewhat vicariously.

In summary, it seems that wisdom involves a broad and practical understanding of life and how to live it well, with the possible added expectation that the purveyor of wisdom practices what they preach by demonstrating wisdom in their own life.

B. Wisdom in the Old Testament

Although the pursuit of wisdom is a common human enterprise, every culture has developed its own wisdom. It could, for instance, be argued that the brief survey above is based on one particular stream, or tradition, of literature, tied to a particular culture: that of the Western world, with its origins in Graeco-Roman philosophy. It is possible that there may be different streams of ideas, or different wisdom “traditions” depending on the culture and literature one examines. There may be common ideas or themes between these different traditions, but each tradition may also have its own unique elements. This study will restrict itself to the wisdom of the Bible, and the way in which the Synoptic Gospels reflect and interact with the rest of Biblical wisdom material and thinking, beginning with the OT.

The OT is a primary background source for the presentation of Jesus in the NT. The scriptures are repeatedly quoted and referred to as Jesus is presented in the Gospels as the long-awaited Messiah and fulfiller of the scriptures. Martin Luther said that the OT is “the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies,”¹⁵ and Richard Hays explains: “Just as Jesus

was wrapped in humble swaddling cloths in the manger, so too is he
wrapped in the swaddling cloths of the Law, the Prophets, and the
Writings.”16 Jesus said of himself that “everything written about me in the
Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (ὅτι δεῖ
πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς
προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς περὶ ἐμοῦ [Luke 24:44]). “The Psalms” is often
regarded as shorthand for the Writings, and if that is the sense in which
Jesus uses it here, he is claiming to fulfil the whole of the Hebrew
scriptsures in the three traditional divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.
This would include the wisdom literature. Therefore, to understand the
connection between Jesus and wisdom, it is necessary to begin with an
understanding of the nature and place of wisdom in the OT.

As its nature consists in the passing on of useful knowledge and
insights gained by observation, wisdom is not the preserve of an elite few,
and is common to many cultures. A teacher in the classroom or a parent
with a child may be a teacher of what some might call “folk wisdom,” those
sayings and generalizations that are common in everyday speech in any
culture. Israel’s wisdom, like that of their neighbours the Sumerians,
Babylonians, and Egyptians, was a part of this common human activity of
learning about life and passing that accumulated wisdom on to future
generations. Rising as it does from this shared human experience, and given
the likelihood of at least some cross-fertilization between the different
cultures, it is perhaps unsurprising that Israel’s wisdom has much in
common with that of her neighbours.

However, as Stuart Weeks has argued, direct literary connections
between biblical sources and non-biblical sources are often overestimated.17
Despite the similarities, there are unique elements to the discussion of
wisdom in the Jewish tradition that distinguish it from that found elsewhere.
Let us now turn our attention to the way in which wisdom is understood and
presented in the OT.

16 Richard B Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels (Waco, TX: Baylor University
Press, 2016), 2.
17 Stuart Weeks, An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature (London: T&T
Clark, 2010), 9.
1) *Definition and location: what is wisdom and where is it found?*

Although wisdom perspectives are found elsewhere, the key books in the Old Testament that are recognized as wisdom literature are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These are all found in the “ketuvim” (כתובים) or “Writings.” The poetry books of Song of Songs and the Psalms are also found here, and are often also regarded as wisdom literature. However, there are differences in these texts, particularly in the Psalms, that lead some to question this identification. The identification of wisdom literature, like the definition of the concept of wisdom, is not entirely clear-cut. There is a general acceptance or recognition of certain texts as wisdom literature, but it is not so easy to define just what constitutes wisdom literature. Attempts to define wisdom literature most commonly refer to both form and content.

2) *The character, content and context of wisdom literature*

   a) *The character of wisdom*

   In its style the OT wisdom literature is generally didactic or pedagogical. It comes in the form of advice or instruction from a parent or teacher. Rather than the prophetic “Thus says the Lord,” in wisdom literature one will read phrases such as “let the wise listen and add to their learning” (Prov 1:5), “Listen, my son” (Prov 1:8; 23:19; 31:12), “do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov 1:8), and “now then, my sons, listen to me” (Prov 5:7; 7:24; 8:32). Sometimes the lessons are learned from the writer’s own personal experience, while at other times it comes in the form of tradition sayings, handed down from the wise ones of the past. Sometimes (as in the case of Job and his friends) the reader is not addressed directly, but listens in as instruction is given to another.

   b) *The content of wisdom*

   With regard to its subject matter, wisdom literature tends not to focus on national events of great religious significance, but rather on the apparently mundane, everyday areas of life: buying and selling, raising children, controlling one’s tongue, coping with suffering, getting along with difficult
people, and planning for the future. Whereas elsewhere one might read the words of a historian recounting the great things God has done, or a prophet declaring what God says, in this literature one will read reflections and observations based on personal experience. Wisdom literature is littered with phrases of personal observation and experience expressed in the first person, such as “I have seen” (Eccl 1:14; 3:10; 5:13; 6:1; 7:15; 9:11; 10:5, 7), “I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge” (Eccl 1:18), “I applied my heart to what I observed” (Prov 24:32), “This is what I have observed to be good” (Eccl 5:18), and “I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labour that is done on earth” (Eccl 8:16).

c) The context and development of wisdom

In respect of the development of wisdom, whereas in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia there is evidence of established schools of education, we have little solid evidence of education and training happening in schools in the OT. The earliest reference to what sounds like an institution which exists for the instruction of students comes in Sir 51:23–28, which issues the invitation: “Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction … Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction.” However, even this reference is uncertain. The “house of instruction” may refer to a literal place of teaching, or it may simply be a metaphorical reference to putting oneself under the influence of wisdom.

The strongest evidence of where wisdom was developed and taught comes from the form and content of the wisdom literature itself. It has been suggested that generally in the OT the passing on of wisdom occurred in two main settings: the home and the court. This is based on the prevalence of what some speak of as “folk” wisdom and “royal” wisdom. Folk wisdom is characterised by examples drawn from nature and framed as instruction from parents to their children, reflecting the home as the environment in which basic education was provided (e.g., Deut 6:4–8; 11:18–19; Ps 78:1–8); whereas royal wisdom (e.g., Prov 16:10–15; 20:18; 23:1–3; 24:6; 25:6–7) seems more to relate to the court setting, where young men were trained for public office and instructed in palace politics (e.g.,

1 Kgs 12:6–7; Dan 1:3–4). However, the wisdom material itself points to a wider sphere than just the home and the courts as the source of wisdom. It contains, for example, many proverbs which relate to the world of commerce and agriculture; suggesting either that education was delivered more widely than in the home and the court, or that teachers of wisdom collected and preserved material from a broad range of areas of life. Furthermore, some identify another strand of wisdom which might be called theological wisdom.\(^19\) This is less related to the practicalities of life at home or work, or in court, but rather reflects on the challenging and difficult questions, such as why God allows suffering and what the purpose of life might be (Job; Eccl 3:19–21; 12:13–14).

Goldsworthy proposes a theory of how wisdom developed:

Popular folk wisdom would have emerged at various levels of society as the expression of what people learned through their life’s experiences … In the patriarchal society during the period before Israel went into Egypt, education in family groups would most likely have led to the formation of sayings used in the training of children. With the development of the organized state of Israel came the recognition of men who could give wise counsel in the matter of running the country. Somewhere along the way the sages or wise men emerged as a recognizable group. It is not clear whether these were recognized as officials of government, religion or education. It has been suggested that the scribes later came to be the guardians of wisdom.\(^20\)

Plausible as this explanation may be, it must be taken with a degree of caution. We have only limited evidence supporting the notion that there developed a distinct class of wise men, or that the scribes later became the guardians of wisdom. Most of the references to “wise men” in the OT in fact refer to those who serve in other nations such as Egypt (Gen 41:8; Exod 7:11; Isa 19:11), Babylon (Dan 2:12–14; 4:18; 5:15), Persia (Esth 1:13), or Edom (Obad 1:8). However, there is evidence that Israel’s kings, like the kings of the nations around them, gathered about them counselors and wise men to give them advice on matters of state (2 Sam 16:15–17:14); and that just as Moses had been in the courts of Pharaoh (Exod 2:10; Acts 7:22) and Daniel would be in Babylon (Dan 1:3–4), these men were trained and

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\(^{19}\) So, for example, Penchansky, “What is Wisdom Literature.”

educated, and then passed on their wisdom to the next generation to prepare them to serve in the court. Jeremiah, for example, seems familiar with a group known as “the wise,” whom he mentions in the same breath as the priests and the prophets, suggesting that they ranked in similar importance: “Then they said, ‘Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet’” (Jer 18:18). The further suggestion that over time these wise men were replaced by the scribes, learned men of a more explicitly religious bent who specialized in the study and teaching of the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:1–10), may not be proven but is certainly plausible, especially as we see a growing nexus between wisdom and the Law in Second Temple Judaism. In short, while its exact nature and development may be disputed, it is generally recognised that there was a strand of scholarship within Israel, commonly described as “the wisdom movement,” which produced a corpus of material that has been described as “that vast body of written and oral sayings which made sage observations about life and set down in memorable form rules for success and happiness.”


**d) The goal of wisdom**

This brings us to the question of the goal, or outcome, of wisdom. According to the quotation above, wisdom is observation and rules designed to promote “success and happiness.” Qohelet concludes that “there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live” (Eccl 3:12). And Proverbs is replete with advice about what delivers joy and success: “whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease” (Prov 1:33); “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother” (Prov 15:21; cf. Prov 10:1); “My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad” (Prov 23:15); “The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him” (Prov 23:24); and “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you” (Prov 3:1–2). By contrast, a lack of wisdom is portrayed as having numerous negative consequences: laziness leads to poverty (Prov 6:10–11;
10:4); adultery leads to shame and disgrace (Prov 6:32–33); the income of the wicked is punishment (Prov 10:16; 11:21); and the fool will end up as the servant of the wise (Prov 11:29). The wise person can reflect on the order which he observes in the universe and the ways in which God works: he can say where God will reward (Prov 12:2), where he will punish (Prov 15:25; 16:4), where he will hear (Prov 15:29), and where he will act (Prov 15:3). By adjusting his or her plans accordingly, the wise person can attempt to derive some profit from this insight. Wisdom is therefore what Zimmerli calls “the art of steering,” or the ability to master life.22

3) The literary form of wisdom literature

James Crenshaw says: “If we are correct in assuming that the wise constituted a distinct class within Israel, we may make another assumption: that these sages used a characteristic mode of discourse. It follows that the literary forms within Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon comprise a special world of communication, which can be understood only in terms of its own categories.”23 Whether or not one agrees with his assumptions regarding the existence of a class of wise men who had their own special world of communication, he does helpfully analyze the literary forms which wisdom most commonly uses. He identifies eight such categories:

a) The proverb
The proverb is a simple saying which registers a conclusion that has arisen through observation of nature, animal behavior, or human conduct. Its form is “succinct, epigrammatic, and metaphorical.”24 We are familiar with Proverbs in common usage in English, such as “waste not, want not” or “too many cooks spoil the broth.” There are, of course, many Proverbs in the book of Proverbs, but they occur elsewhere in the OT as well. For example, in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel we see the use of the proverb, “The fathers

24 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 27.
have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2).

b) The riddle
The riddle revolves around the use of code language that simultaneously informs and conceals, functioning both as clue and snare. Crenshaw concedes that no pure riddle has survived within the OT wisdom corpus. However, he says that there can be little doubt that ancient sages coined enigmas, pointing to the fact that Ben Sira thought the solving of riddles belonged to the essential tasks of the wise, and that in “wisdom literature certain vestiges of cipher language have survived, particularly in allegorical contexts.”


c) The allegory
As has just been noted, the use of cipher language manifests itself in the allegory. Here again the cipher operates at two levels, and the reader must distinguish between, or read the connection between, the two. The allegory is in effect an extended metaphor, in which one thing is described which represents another which is not named. A fine example of allegory is found in the poignant description of old age in Eccl 12:1–7, where the image of a household in decline is used to illustrate the failings of an aging body.

d) The wisdom hymn
There are many hymns or poems in the Psalms, but they also occur frequently throughout the rest of the OT. The wisdom hymn describes wisdom, often in personified form, or expresses humanity’s need or search for wisdom. Wisdom hymns feature particularly in the book of Job. A good example is found in Job 28, which not only praises the ingenuity of humanity in delving into the depths of the earth in search of precious things, but also reflects on the inaccessibility of wisdom.
e) The dialogue or disputation
Crenshaw describes this as “perhaps the supreme achievement of sapiential rhetoric.”  
These include “a mythological introduction and conclusion, the dialogue proper, and a divine resolution.”  
While some prophetic texts contain similar forms, the book of Job stands out as containing all three of these features.

f) The autobiographical narrative
This is a cautionary tale, drawn from the teacher’s own experience, or from what the teacher has observed playing out in the lives of others. Personal experience and observation of how things play out in the world is later put to good use. For example, Qohelet more than once contrasts the actions of a poor but wise youth with those of a rich yet foolish king (Eccl 4:13–16; 9:13–16), in a way that makes one wonder if these are not to be taken as lessons drawn from the life of Solomon.

g) The noun list
Technically known as an “onomastica,” Crenshaw says that these have not survived in the OT, but that “the type of thinking that produced exhaustive lists of flora, fauna, and the like has given rise to a secondary stage, in which this information has been put to work in the service of instruction concerning morals.”  
Two such examples may be found in Proverbs 30:

Three things are too wonderful for me;  
four I do not understand:  
the way of an eagle in the sky,  
the way of a serpent on a rock,  
the way of a ship on the high seas,  
and the way of a man with a virgin …

Three things are stately in their tread;  
four are stately in their stride:  
the lion, which is mightiest among beasts  
and does not turn back before any;  
the strutting rooster, the he-goat,  
and a king whose army is with him. (Prov 30:18–19, 29–31)

26 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 28.
27 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 28.
28 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 28.
Similar numerical proverbs can also be found in the apocryphal Wisdom of Ben Sira. For example:

I hate three kinds of people,
and I loathe their manner of life:
a pauper who boasts, a rich person who lies,
and an old fool who commits adultery (Sir 25:2).

**h) The didactic narrative**

Crenshaw describes this as a “sermon in story form.” There is overlap with the autobiographical narrative, as appeal to personal experience and superior knowledge heighten the impact of the story. An example is Prov 7:6–27 which recounts how the writer observed a youth lacking judgment who is seduced by a prostitute, and ends with an exhortation to avoid the snares of the temptress.

**4) Can We Speak of a wisdom “tradition”?**

Although it has been common to speak of a wisdom “tradition” when referring to the collective forms, content, and themes that are found in the OT Wisdom literature, some argue that it is wrong to do so. Weeks, for example, rejects the use of any over-generalized subject-matters and ideologies to capture the message of wisdom literature in a coherent tradition or value-system, saying: “we should be wary of presuming that any such common ground exists: shared themes or forms do not always reflect shared ideas.” Even in saying this, however, Weeks still acknowledges that there are “shared themes or forms,” and elsewhere he speaks of “shared interests” and a “distinct approach” among the wisdom writers. Thus, although he rejects the use of the word “tradition,” even Weeks recognizes that there is a body of work, or a collection of texts, that contains wisdom; and that within this body there are shared themes, forms, and interests. It seems the sticking point with the use of “tradition” is that it implies an agreed set of ideas, whereas Weeks prefers to look at these texts “not as the reflections of a particular tradition of thought, but as the products of a

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29 Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 28
particular mode of discourse.” Perhaps rather than dismiss out-of-hand the notion of a wisdom tradition, it needs to be understood in a more nuanced or open-ended way: not referring to a particular fixed body of ideas, but to an ongoing conversation around certain themes, within which ideas may be shared, debated, modified, expanded, or dismissed. Alternatively, it may be more helpful to speak of a wisdom “movement” than a wisdom “tradition.”

5) The theological basis of wisdom

a) The fear of the Lord
Whereas Crenshaw focuses on the literary forms of wisdom, others, such as Weeks, argue that common concepts, rather than common literary forms, are what help us identify wisdom literature. Weeks claims that wisdom literature is held together by its common presentation of God as creator of the universe. A recognition of, and reverence for, this creator God is perhaps the key element that lies at the heart of Biblical wisdom, and distinguishes it from all other forms of wisdom. Walter Kaiser identifies “the fear of the Lord” as “the key theme of wisdom literature.” According to Prov 1:7, for instance, the beginning of wisdom is “the fear of the Lord,” and Qohelet concludes: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl 12:13). This connection between life and faith is central to the discussion of Biblical wisdom. As Markus McDowell points out, the word usually translated as “wisdom” (חכמה) can refer to skill, shrewdness, prudence, and practical teaching (Prov 8:32–36; 13:20; Job 33:33), but also involves this element of submission to God (Prov 1:7; Ps 111:10; Job 28:28).

b) Grounded in the theology of creation
However, although Biblical wisdom is clearly founded in a relationship with God, there are questions over what the theological foundation of that relationship is, and how it fits with the rest of the OT. In some ways, the

32 Weeks, Wisdom Literature, 126.
33 Weeks, Wisdom Literature, 85–106.
wisdom literature seems to stand apart from the rest of the OT in that it does not appeal to divine truth revealed through divine action (as in the historical material) or direct revelation (as in the prophetic material), but rather its authority seems to lie in human tradition and observation. Goldsworthy, for instance acknowledges “the undoubted accuracy of the observations about a lack of covenantal and redemptive history in the wisdom books,” and George Ernst Wright says that: “In any attempt to outline a discussion of Biblical faith it is the wisdom literature which offers the chief difficulty because it does not fit into the type of faith exhibited in the historic and prophetic literatures.”

Some scholars have argued that in fact this lack of appeal to divine revelation betrays an underlying secularism in Old Testament wisdom. Wheeler Robinson, for example, suggests that wisdom may have originally been a secular movement within Israel, which gradually came under the influence of the prophets, resulting in wisdom being “the discipline whereby was taught the application of prophetic truth to the individual life in the light of experience.”

Many other scholars disagree, however, arguing that the origins and foundations of wisdom are far from secular, but rather that wisdom finds its origins and foundations firmly in the theology of creation. Perdue, for instance, argues that “Each of the wisdom texts finds its theological centre in creation.” And Walther Zimmerli, who has been a key contributor in this debate, points particularly to Gen 1:28, and argues that the essence of wisdom is a concern to understand the God-given order of the world, with a view to fulfilling the divine mandate of mastering and ruling the world.

c) Creation and covenant: conflict or cohesion?

Seeing wisdom’s origins as being grounded in creation leads to the question of the relationship between the theology of the wisdom literature and that of creation.
the rest of the Old Testament. Gerhard Hasel points out that the two
landmark OT theologies of the twentieth century, those of Eichrodt and von
Rad, sought to organize the OT around either the concept of the covenant or
“salvation history.” But if wisdom has a basis in creation theology rather
than in the theology of covenant or salvation history, how are these different
strands to be integrated? Or do we run the risk of fragmenting the Bible’s
theology, offering the possibility of more than one alternative and
competing theological foundation? Goldsworthy, for example, in
acknowledging that there is merit in a creation-based approach, then
recognizes that this could lead to the development of separate, or even
alternative, theological perspectives: “Proposing wisdom and covenant as an
either/or suggests a kind of dualism in Israel’s theology.”

There are two responses that mitigate against this threat of
fragmentation. First, there is the argument that despite the wide range of
ideas in the OT, it is in fact possible to see a theological unity. Second, there
is the argument that in the material itself there is not as clear a separation
between wisdom and the other forms of literature as some might think.

(i) Theological unity

First, with regard to the theological unity of the OT, Goldsworthy argues
that the creation narratives of Genesis 1–2, rather than offering an
alternative theological foundation, instead form part of “the presupposition
to the theology of the fall, judgment, covenant, election, and salvation in
Genesis 3–11 that, in turn, is the presupposition to the theology of covenant
in Genesis 12–17, and then to the rest of the Bible.” William Dumbrell
also argues that creation and covenant are inextricably linked:

The very fact of creation involved God’s entering into relationships
with the world, and it is therefore insufficient to side with Karl Barth
and others who would regard creation as merely the ground of
covenant, the basis on which a covenant with man can proceed … The
world and man are part of one total divine construct and we cannot

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entertain the salvation of man in isolation from the world which he has affected.\textsuperscript{44}

John Goldingay summarizes the complex relationship between creation and redemption in the following four statements:

1. The world God redeems is the world of God’s creation.
2. The world that God created is a world that needed to be redeemed.
3. Human beings are redeemed to live again their created life before God.
4. The redeemed humanity still looks for a final act or redemption or new creation.\textsuperscript{45}

Thus within the broader theological picture of the movement from creation through redemption to the future hope of new creation, sits the smaller picture, the domain of wisdom, where the focus is on everyday life and its continuity and order.\textsuperscript{46} The two are entirely compatible, as Bruce Waltke says:

The sages and the prophets were true spiritual yokefellows sharing the same Lord, cultus, faith, hope, anthropology, and epistemology, speaking with the same authority, and making similar religious and ethical demands on their hearers. In short, they drank from the same spiritual well.\textsuperscript{47}

\textit{(ii) Literary unity}

Second, with regard to the unity of the OT literature itself, David Hubbard argues that “too careful a distinction between wisdom writings and the covenant literature of Israel breaks down in the light of clear signs of interdependency.”\textsuperscript{48} He points to the interconnectedness between the monarchy, which is covenantal, and the wisdom movement. He points also to evidence of overlap between wisdom literature and the prophets. For example, Nathan uses a parable to confront the king with an unpalatable truth (2 Samuel 12); Amos uses literary patterns images and concepts from


the wisdom movement; and both Isaiah and Jeremiah likewise show an “acquaintance with the tools and techniques of wisdom.” Weeks, too, argues for the “broad interconnectedness of biblical literature” and warns that the traditions within OT literature are not as distinct as some have claimed. Lindsay Wilson in the same vein examines two case studies, the book of Esther and the Joseph narrative, arguing that these contain elements of both wisdom and salvation history, and that: “Although there seems at times to be a tension between the Wisdom and salvation history strands, that tension appears to be part of the texture of the story in its final form. This again suggests that these twin foci — while retaining their distinctive emphases — are not as alien to each other as is often asserted.”

Thus, while wisdom may seem to find its theological base in creation, without explicit reference to law or covenant, it is inextricably linked both structurally and theologically with the rest of the OT. The wisdom literature is firmly anchored in and connected to the twin doctrines of creation and redemption that are fundamental to the Bible’s theology as a whole.

6) The limits and “crisis” of wisdom

There are certain common theological presuppositions in what are generally regarded as being the earliest examples of Jewish wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs 10–29). These presuppositions are to do with order, “knowability,” and justice. The first presupposition—order—views the world as created, organized, and ruled by the Lord, its wise creator. The second presupposition—knowability—is that creation’s order can be known and understood by those who are open to wisdom. The third presupposition that follows on from this is that there is a system of justice at work whereby the wise who align themselves with God’s order will experience long life and prosperity, whilst those who foolishly deny God and his order will suffer.

These presuppositions are not without qualification. Despite the presumption of order, the world often turns out to be chaotic or absurd (Prov

49 Hubbard, “The Wisdom Movement,” 8
51 Weeks, Wisdom Literature, 140.
52 Wilson, “The Place of Wisdom,” 66.
53 These are the terms proposed by Alan W. Jenks, “Theological Presuppositions of Israel’s Wisdom Literature,” HBT 7 (1985): 43–75.
Despite the assumption of knowability, it appears that God remains mysterious (Prov 21:30–31; 30:2–4), and even humble things can be “too wonderful to understand” (Prov 30:18–19). And the way of justice can be perverted by evil and violence (Prov 28:14). Over time these tensions were increasingly brought to the fore and provoked further developments of, and modifications to, the understanding of wisdom.

In the book of Job, the ability to know God’s order is thrown into question, as is the principle of justice. The tensions raised are in the end addressed through a theophanic experience, something that has previously been unknown in wisdom literature.

Qohelet goes further than Job in his radical questioning of the presuppositions of earlier wisdom. Whereas Job sees a lack of justice in his own particular case, Qohelet sees it everywhere. The order of nature is found to be wearying and pointless (Eccl 1:4–9), and death robs life of meaning (Eccl 9:1–3). Humanity’s ability to grasp the God-given order of things is limited (Eccl 3:10–11). As Zimmerli puts it: “Through his sapiential encounter with the reality of the world, Ecclesiastes caught sight of the freedom of God, who acts and never reacts. He feels this freedom of God as a painful limitation of his own impulse to go out into the world by wisdom and to master the world.”

In general, the frustrating and at times brutal experiences of history led to a broader questioning of the justice principle and the knowability of God’s ways, in what some (like Crenshaw) have called a “crisis” of wisdom. Goldsworthy suggests that this crisis arose “because the old wisdom of Israel became fossilized and distorted in the thinking of many people so that it could not cope with the new and contradictory experiences.”

Despite this crisis, Richard Schultz, argues that there is still an inherent consistency within the OT wisdom literature:

Though wisdom by no means presents a monolithic ideology, Proverbs is in basic agreement with Job and Ecclesiastes that justice is not always immediately served, that wisdom will not give us mastery over life, and that God is not bound to reward or punish, to shelter or afflict, in response to human actions, expectations, or demands.

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55 See Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 106
56 Goldsworthy, Gospel and Wisdom, 150.
Furthermore, Ecclesiastes and Job are in basic agreement with Proverbs that righteousness and wisdom are beneficial and that God does reward good and punish evil.\(^{57}\)

Nonetheless, the crisis brought on by national destruction and exile “spelled an end to wisdom as an autonomous and self-sustaining approach to reality by bringing the tensions in wisdom thought into the forefront … Only by an infusion of something from outside wisdom’s methods and presuppositions could wisdom survive.”\(^{58}\) The endeavor to grasp, explain, justify, and record wisdom did not die out. Instead, the “crisis” seems to have led to both subtle changes and nuances in the wisdom literature, as well as the “infusion” of new components. As mentioned earlier, in Job the element that is infused into wisdom’s method is the theophany: as the book draws to a close, after much questioning and speculating as to the explanation of events, God finally speaks to Job directly and powerfully to set him straight. Thus the source of wisdom and insight is no longer simply humanity’s ability to understand and describe the order of creation; it is informed by the in-breaking voice of God. Moving into the Second Temple period, in Sirach for example, the added element is also the word of God. However, in Sirach God’s voice is heard not in any form of theophany, but through his Law.

**C. Wisdom in Second Temple Judaism**

Although it is sometimes referred to as “Intertestamental Judaism,”\(^{59}\) Second Temple Judaism does not simply follow on from the OT and precede the NT. It overlaps them both, and forms something of a transitional age between the ancient Israelite religion reflected in the OT and the emergence of both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. As such, Second Temple Judaism is a significant part of the background to the thought-world in which Jesus lived and taught.

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\(^{58}\) Jenks, “Theological Presuppositions,” 72.

1) Second Temple literature

Most, if not all, of the Jewish apocalyptic literature of this period is found in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. Within this literature, Esdras, the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach (also called Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus), and the Wisdom of Solomon are generally regarded as wisdom literature, along with sections of Baruch and the sayings of Pseudo-Phocylides. Also dating to this period are Josephus and Philo, the Qumran, or Dead Sea, Scrolls (which also contain fragments of compositions which are also regarded as wisdom texts); and the Mishnah and Targums.

2) Second Temple wisdom: continuity and development

Much of the wisdom of the Second Temple period displays a continuity with the traditional wisdom of the OT. It is, for example, pedagogical: many passages in Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon include didactic poetry, and material often appears in the form of instructions written by teachers for students (e.g., Sir 24:33–34; 4Q298 1–2 i 1). It contains exhortations to pursue and acquire knowledge and wisdom (e.g., Sir 6:32–37; 4Q298 3–4 ii 3–6; 4Q185; 4Q526). However, it acknowledges that this wisdom comes ultimately from God (e.g., Sir 4:17–19; 6:23–31). It concerns itself with practical issues of how to live well (Sir 7:18–28; 6:18; 39:1; Wis 6:10); with warnings, for example, of the dangers of hiring unreliable people (4Q424) or of falling into debt (4Q416 2 ii; 4Q417 2 ii 18–27).

Regarding this continuity, McDowell says: “Between the building of the Second Temple and the writing of the NT documents, the wisdom traditions of Israel continued to exist in the basic themes and thoughts of the HB.” And Crenshaw writes:

In the Hellenistic environment within which Ben Sira found himself, he launched a vigorous search to discover a means of presenting Jewish teaching to sophisticated audiences. In doing so, he

60 McDowell, New Testament Developments, 12.
embarked on a significant quest for *continuity*. Facing two entirely
different fronts, he endeavored to show that wisdom literature
actually continued Israel’s venerable sacred traditions, and to
convince youthful Jews that Greeks were not the only ones who
boasted a magnificent intellectual heritage. His goal was tantamount
to survival of the Jewish faith.\(^\text{61}\)

However, as well as a demonstrable continuity with OT wisdom, Second
Temple wisdom also displays some evolution, either through the further
development of old ideas, or by the introduction of new ones. McDowell,
for instance, identifies two key “developments” in Second Temple Judaism:
obedience to the Torah, and Gnosticism.\(^\text{62}\) Bennema, on the other hand,
identifies four “strands”: Torah-centred wisdom; Spirit-centred wisdom;
apocalyptic wisdom; and the Qumranian wisdom tradition.\(^\text{63}\) Matthew Goff
also identifies four “themes” or “issues” in Second Temple Judaism.
However, his list again differs from the four suggested by Bennema. He
includes: Wisdom personified; wisdom and Torah; wisdom and
apocalypticism; and piety and the praise of God.\(^\text{64}\) This lack of consistency
in categorisation does not necessarily indicate a lack of consensus in
understanding the developments of wisdom in Second Temple Judaism. It
may simply be that the different scholars are using different criteria, that the
various themes overlap and intertwine with each other, or perhaps that what
one identifies as a development in the Second Temple period, another
identifies as already existing in the OT. That having been said, the following
is a brief analysis and outline of the developments and themes identified by
these and other scholars, and how these themes grow out of, or develop
from, those found in the OT.

3) **Key themes of Second Temple wisdom**

    a) **Wisdom and the Spirit**

\(^{61}\) Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 50
\(^{62}\) McDowell, *New Testament Developments*, 20. As the consensus is that Gnosticism
did not truly develop until the second century CE, it may be questioned whether this is
a “key development” within the Second Temple period. It may be that McDowell is
using the term to refer to a leaning towards transcendence that bears some similarity to
the developments of later Gnosticism. This strand will therefore be considered in this
study under the heading “transcendence,” rather than “gnosticism.”
\(^{63}\) Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 68–78.
\(^{64}\) Matthew Goff, “Wisdom Literature,” *EDEJ*, 1340–42.
In the early stages of the life of Israel, God gave his divine Spirit to equip individuals with wisdom either in the form of artistic skill (such as the skilful ones who make Aaron’s garments in Exod 28:3 or Bezaleel who was appointed to build the ark and the tabernacle in Exod 31:1–6), or for skill in leadership (such as Joseph in Gen 41:28 or Joshua in Num 27:18). David is described as having wisdom “like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth” (2 Sam 14:20), and this seems to be attributed to the gifting of the Spirit: “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). Later, in Job, Elihu declares that wisdom does not necessarily come from age, but that “it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand” (Job 32:8).

This spirit-centred concept of wisdom continued into the Second Temple period, and is found in Diaspora Judaism. In The Wisdom of Solomon, wisdom comes from God through the mediation of the Spirit: “Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?” (Wis 9:17). And the spirit of wisdom is given to those who ask God for it in prayer: “Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me” (Wis 7:7).

Even in the emerging figure of Wisdom personified, the Spirit is at work:

for wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me.
There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy,
unique, manifold, subtle,
mobile, clear, unpolluted,
distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen,
irresistible, beneficent, humane,
steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,
all-powerful, overseeing all,
and penetrating through all spirits
that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle (Wis 7:22–23).

According to Philo, the ultimate goal of life is to know and understand God. Although God himself is transcendent, Philo “asserts that while God cannot be known in himself, he can be known through the lower levels of his being — λόγος, σοφία and πνεῦμα.” Philo thus identifies “word,” “wisdom,” and

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“spirit” as the mediators of God to humankind. He clearly does not see these as necessarily separate and distinct, since he calls the divine πνεῦμα “the spirit of wisdom,” indicating that the πνεῦμα gives or mediates wisdom (Gig. 27). This relationship between λόγος, σοφία and πνεῦμα will become significant in the NT, especially in the Gospels.

b) Wisdom and Torah

Although wisdom is undoubtedly seen as coming from God, through the mediation of his Spirit, the locus or source of wisdom is increasingly identified as being found in the Torah.

Solomon is the prototypical wise king. His wisdom is a gift from God, in response to his request (2 Chron 1:7–12). However, although his wisdom is divine in origin, there is little to no mention of the activity of the Spirit in the life of Solomon. Instead, his wisdom and success seem to be associated with the Torah. David prays for his son: “Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God. Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel” (1 Chron 22:12–13). Subsequent wise kings, such as Asa, Jehoshephat, Joaash, Hezekiah and Josiah, are those who observed the Torah (2 Chron 14:4; 17:3–9; 24:6–9; 29:1–31:21; 34:14–35:19).67

This Torah-based, or “nomistic,” wisdom is further developed in post-exilic literature, particularly Ezra–Nehemiah. In Ezra 7, for example, Ezra is described as “a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.” We are then told that the hand of the Lord was on him, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezra 7:6, 10). Ezra is sent “to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the Law of your God, which is in your hand,” and to appoint leaders for his people “according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand” (Ezra 7:14, 25).

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The parallel phrasing suggests that Ezra’s wisdom is identified with his possession of Law of the Lord.\textsuperscript{68}

In Second Temple Judaism, Torah plays a prominent role. Ben Sira, for example, teaches that: “If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will lavish her upon you” (Sir 1:26). He also says: “Reflect on the statutes of the Lord, and meditate at all times on his commandments. It is he who will give insight to your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted” (Sir 6:37). Ben Sira makes explicit the connection between wisdom and the Torah in Sir 24:23–27:

\begin{quote}
All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob. It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits. It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time. It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage.
\end{quote}

Baruch also draws a connection between wisdom and Torah, particularly the wisdom poem in 3:9–4:4, which concludes:

\begin{quote}
This is our God; no other can be compared to him. He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob and to Israel, whom he loved. Afterward she appeared on earth and lived with humankind. She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk toward the shining of her light. Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people. Happy are we, O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God (Bar 3:35–4:4).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{68} See Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 64.
We see here a reference to the personification of wisdom (“she appeared on earth and lived with humankind”), which is identified with the Torah (“She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever”).

Some Qumran texts also conflate wisdom with having the Torah. For example: “Happy is the man who has obtained wisdom and follows the Torah of the Most High” (4Q525 2 ii + 3 3–4).

Although most of the Diaspora literature focuses on Spirit-centred wisdom, 4 Maccabees identifies the Torah as the locus of wisdom:

Now reason is the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom. Wisdom, next, is the knowledge of divine and human matters and the causes of these. This, in turn, is education in the law, by which we learn divine matters reverently and human affairs to our advantage (4 Macc 1:15–17).

c) Wisdom and transcendence

As mentioned above, McDowell identifies Gnosticism as one of the key developments within wisdom literature of the Second Temple period. However, as Gnosticism is in fact a later development, it would perhaps be better to refrain from referring to this as Gnosticism per se, but rather as being a more speculative or transcendental side of wisdom. William Beardslee describes it this way:

In this line of development, the despair of finding God’s righteousness in the world, instead of leading back to the Law as a concrete revelation, stimulates a reaching beyond the world to a transcendental Wisdom not manifest in this world. This development leads to a reversal of the meaning of Wisdom. Instead of something to be identified through a sound understanding of the world, Wisdom becomes something unavailable to men, not existent in the world. It has to come to men by some special knowledge. The quest for a Wisdom from beyond the world — apparently through the route of apocalyptic-speculative thought — was one of the roots of Gnosticism. 71

69 Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 70.
70 Note that Beardslee’s use of “Wisdom” versus “wisdom” differs from that used in this thesis. As has been earlier noted, in this thesis, “Wisdom” is being used to refer to the personification of wisdom, while “wisdom” is used to refer to the concept and literature of wisdom.
Whether or not the roots of later Gnosticism are found in this literature, McDowell and Beardslee are trying to put their fingers on a strand of literature that searches for wisdom from beyond this world, rather than through experience and observation of the world. This tendency to appeal to insights from beyond this world may overlap, or indeed be subsumed within, the Spirit-centred and apocalyptic strands of wisdom.

d) Wisdom and piety
There is not a great deal of reference to piety and the praise of God in OT wisdom literature. Proverbs does refer to, and presumes, participation in the sacrificial cult (Prov 15:8; 21:3, 27), as does Qohelet (Eccl 5:1; 9:2) and the writer of Job (Job 1:5; 42:8). However, the vast majority of the material in Proverbs is concerned with practical and mundane issues of life rather than the worship of God. By contrast, Goff says: “most of the wisdom texts of early Judaism emphasize the veneration of the deity.” Ben Sira, for instance, advises that: “in wisdom must praise be uttered, and the Lord will make it prosper” (Sir 15:10), and in 4QInstruction the one who seeks understanding is urged to “praise his name constantly” (4Q416 2 iii 1 1).

This connection between wisdom and worship again points to a connection between the wisdom literature and the theology of covenant and salvation-history. The God of creation is also the God who saves, and this is the God that the wise person should honour and worship. This association between faith and wisdom will be revisited and highlighted in the Gospels.

e) Wisdom and apocalypticism
Apocalypticism (or apocalyptic) is described by Stephen Motyer as:

Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world. Apocalyptic writings are marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism.

Thus apocalypticism has two key features. The first is some appeal to access to secret sources of divine revelation, such as visions. The second is a

forward-looking focus, featuring “the proclamation of eschatological judgment, a conviction that the present world order is sinful or corrupt, the allocation of rewards and punishments after death, and a concern with the angelic world.”74

Bennema identifies the emergence of apocalyptic wisdom as an offshoot of the prophetic tradition as seen in particular in Ezekiel 40–48 and Daniel 7–12,75 in both of which visions and their interpretation cease to be attributed to the Spirit, and instead are guided, mediated and interpreted by an angelic being (Ezek 40:3–4; Dan 7:16; 8:16–19; 9:22; 10:14, 21; 11:2). Bennema says: “This apocalyptic wisdom, mediated by an angelus interpres to the visionary, had replaced the charismatic revelation and wisdom mediated by the Spirit to the prophet.”76

With regard to the appeal to secret sources of divine revelation in the Second Temple literature, there is a range of attitudes. Ben Sira, reflecting his concern for and devotion to the Torah, dismisses alternative, esoteric, sources of speculation: “Reflect upon what you have been commanded, for what is hidden is not your concern” (Sir 3:22). However, he also tells us that the scholar meditates on God’s mysteries under the guidance of God’s spirit (Sir 39:6–8), leading Celia Deutsch to think that “the prophetic tone of his words suggests that for Ben Sira the scribe has succeeded to the prophets.”77 In 4QInstruction “raz nihyeh” (נַהַיְהוּ הָרֶץ), or “the mystery to come,” is “the central theological concept”78; and the chief means of acquiring wisdom: “[Day and night meditate upon the mystery that is] to be. Inquire constantly. Then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom and [foll]y you will [recognize]” (4Q417 1 I 6–7). 4QInstruction also sees the “understanding one” as being in the hands of the angels (4Q418 81 4–5). Angelic guides and interpreters also function in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch.79

With regard to the second aspect of apocalypticism, namely a focus on eschatological judgment, Ben Sira says: “Lo, heaven and the highest

74 Goff, “Wisdom Literature,” 1341.
heaven, the abyss and the earth, tremble at his visitation!” (Sir 16:18). The Wisdom of Solomon likewise incorporates apocalyptic ideas of judgment for the wicked and the prospect of the righteous enjoying a blessed afterlife (3:7; 4:20–5:23).

f) **Wisdom as pre-existent creative force**

Another aspect of wisdom in the Second Temple period is its presentation as pre-existing creation. This has its roots in the OT. In Prov 8:22–27, for example, Wisdom existed at the beginning before the creation of the world, and was at God’s side and instrumental in creation:

> The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, 
> the first of his acts of old. 
> Ages ago I was set up,  
> at the first, before the beginning of the earth. 
> When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
> when there were no springs abounding with water. 
> Before the mountains had been shaped,  
> before the hills, I was brought forth,  
> before he had made the earth with its fields,  
> or the first of the dust of the world.  
> When he established the heavens, I was there …

This idea is picked up and continues in Ben Sira, who presents wisdom as a part of creation, issuing from the mouth of God before all else, then given a special home in Israel:

> I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist … Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’ Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be (Sir 24:3, 8–9).

As has been seen above, Ben Sira then identifies the specific locus of wisdom as being the Torah (Sir 24:23–27).

Wisdom 7:22, on the other hand, describes wisdom not simply as being created before all things, but as the “fashioner of all things.” McDowell picks up on this and other references, and says: “Wisdom continues to be presented as an active, pre-existent force in creation (extensively so in
Bar, but also in Wis 7; 9:1–2 and 1 Enoch 42).”

James Waddell, on the other hand, points out that the presentation of wisdom is a little more nuanced than that, suggesting that: “wisdom was presented as both a creation of God and a pre-existent agent of God’s creation.”

**g) Wisdom personified**

This pre-existent wisdom force is increasingly presented in personified form, as a being, or figure, sometimes referred to as “Lady Wisdom” or the Woman of Wisdom. Because the Hebrew word for wisdom (חכמה) is feminine, Wisdom is invariably a woman. She is often, in later conversation, referred to with the Greek word for wisdom “Sophia” (σοφία), which is also feminine.

Simon Gathercole says: “The roots of Wisdom’s personification in Second Temple Judaism lie in a number of OT passages, especially in Proverbs.”

The Sophia figure has a large presence in the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, in particular. She stands in contrast to the alternative personification of Folly, who appears in Prov 9:13–18 and relates to the various descriptions of seductive women in the previous chapters. She is depicted as a teacher of the truth, and is more precious than earthly valuables (Prov 3:14; 8:11; 16:16). Elsewhere in the OT, she also appears in Job 28, where the focus is on her inaccessibility.

Second Temple literature often portrays Wisdom as inaccessible, a misunderstood and therefore ostracized figure. According to Ben Sira (24:8) Adam did not truly know her. The *Similitudes of Enoch* says: “Wisdom found no place in which she could dwell, and her dwelling was in heaven. Wisdom went out in order to dwell among the sons of men, but did not find a dwelling; Wisdom returned to her place and took her seat among the angels” (1 En. 42:1–2) Baruch suggests that humanity’s inability to grasp her is due to wilful ignorance (Bar 3:15, 29–31).

This Wisdom figure is variously portrayed as a teacher, bride, sister, saviour, mother, and beloved, who actively invites men to accept her. Her

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83 This contrast with Folly suggests that what we are dealing with here is a metaphorical description, rather than a metaphysical analysis.
most extensive description comes in the Wisdom of Solomon. She encompasses all knowledge (Wis 9:11). She has a role in creation (Wis 9:9), and has played an important role in Biblical history. She preserved Adam after his transgression (Wis 10:1). She helped Noah to steer the Ark (Wis 10:4). She rescued Lot (Wis 10:6). She helped deliver Israel from Egypt (Wis 10:13). She is the inspirer, or sender, of the prophets (Wis 7:27; see below on Luke 11:49–51). And, she is the giver of immortality (Wis 8:13, 17).

According to Ben Sira she indwells the whole world, and yet has made her home particularly in Israel (Sir 24:3–6, 8), where she is particularly associated with, or even manifest in, the Torah (Bar 3:9; 4:1). She serves in the Tabernacle (Sir 24:10), and the high priest loosely embodies her in his service (Sirach 50). David Smith offers a theory as to why this connection was emphasised: “Under the influence of the struggle against Hellenism, Sirach and Baruch emphasized the value of their traditions and of the Mosaic Law by identifying the book of the Law with this personified Wisdom.”

Smith is not alone in suggesting that the portrayal of Wisdom in Second Temple Judaism reacted to influences outside the Jewish thought world. Bernard Lee, for example, says:

In the several centuries before Jesus, Sophia is fashioned out of multiple impulses for multiple reasons. Some of her essential impulses are in the proverb tradition of common sense experience and sound human judgment. Other of her impulses are in the court schools of the Near East. Still other impulses are from goddess traditions, such as Astarte, Ishtar, Ma’at, and especially Isis. The Hebrews borrow from these sources, but they reinterpret and adapt what they find to their own master story.

It is likely that there was interaction between Israelite wisdom and the teachings and beliefs of those around them in the ancient Near East. And it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that, although Wisdom is not simply borrowed, or adopted, from other sources, Jewish scholars chose to speak in language and imagery that was already in circulation and that others could readily understand. Some see links between the biblical Sophia and

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Egyptian texts concerning Ma’at, the darling daughter of the god Re and the embodiment of truth and justice, law and order, and wisdom. Some connection between Israelite wisdom and that of Egypt might be understandable, given that Israel had lived in Egypt for centuries prior to the Exodus (Exod 12:40), and that Solomon began his reign by forging a close alliance with Egypt (1 Kgs 3:1–2). Others suggest that Sophia takes on many of the characteristics of the Egyptian goddess Isis. Still others think that the background to Sophia is Canaanite, rather than Egyptian.

While these influences may indeed lie in the background of the development of the presentation of Lady Wisdom, there are clear distinctives in the personified Wisdom of the Hebrew tradition. It may indeed be that similarities between Wisdom and the goddesses of the world around them were drawn simply to then highlight the differences and contrasts. Ben Witherington, for instance, while noting that the parallels between Sophia and Isis are “so substantial that any partially alert listener who had grown up in an environment where the cult of Isis was flourishing would have heard the echoes of the Isis aretologies,”86 then goes on to add that “it may be the case that there is an element of polemic against the cult of Isis in this portrayal, which is conveyed by assigning Isis’ attributes as savior and guide to Wisdom.”87 One key difference between the Wisdom of Jewish literature and the wisdom figures found in other sources is that Sophia in Jewish texts is not divine. Although she stands at the Lord’s side (Prov 8:30), and is even called the Consort of God who sits on the throne of God (Wis 9:4), she is not equated with God. She is created by God, sent by God, and is his instrument (Prov 3:19–20; Sir 24:14). She is “a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness” (Wis 7:25–26).

Scholars have struggled to define the nature of the relationship between Wisdom and God. Martin Scott, for instance, says “Clearly she is identified with Yahweh, but is not Yahweh, clearly also she has many

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87 Witherington, Jesus the Sage, 109.
features associated with the goddesses of the ancient Near East, yet she is not herself a goddess.” \footnote{Martin Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 75.}

Some Roman Catholic theologians, like Taylor Marshall, want to identify her with Mary: “the created maternal Lady Wisdom of the Old Testament is a type of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. This has been the unbroken conviction of the Catholic Church, and especially the teaching of the Doctors of the Church such as St Bernard of Clairvaux and St Alphonsus Liguori.” \footnote{Taylor Marshall, “Immaculate Mary and Personified Wisdom in the Old Testament,” n.p. [cited 18 February 2016]. Online http://taylormarshall.com/2011/02/immaculate-mary-and-personified-wisdom.html}

However, even in making this claim, Marshall is quick to clarify “that Lady Wisdom is not Mary per se, but merely the type of the historical Mary. In other words, Mary hasn’t physically existed from all time.” Where Marshall uses the language of typology, the more common language has been that of either personification or hypostasis.

Personification may be defined as a form of metaphor that gives “attributes of a human being to an animal, an object or a concept.” \footnote{C. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Decatur: Almond, 1985), 213.}

Sophia, by this understanding, is not necessarily to be understood as a real person or being, but a metaphor, a vivid literary device used to speak of impersonal things, actions or attributes, as if they were personal. Thus, Scott for example says that seeing Wisdom as a personification “merely gives a kind of personality to an abstract concept.” \footnote{Scott, *Sophia*, 76.}

Such personification was not uncommon in the ancient world. Jerusalem, for example, is personified as a mother who has daughters (Zech 2:10). And in the early Jewish writing *Joseph and Asenath*, repentance is personified:

For Penitence is the Most High’s daughter and she entreats the Most High on your behalf every hour, and on behalf of all who repent; for he is the father of Penitence and she the mother of virgins, and every hour she petitions him for those who repent; for she has prepared a heavenly bridal chamber for those who love her, and she will look after them for ever. And Penitence is herself a virgin, very beautiful and pure and chaste and gentle; and God Most High loves her, and all his angels do her reverence (Joseph and Asenath XV:7–9). \footnote{This translation of *Joseph and Aseneth* is taken from H.F.D. Sparks, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 473–503.}
Understood as a personification, Sophia is therefore a figure of speech, a metaphor or poetic device, rather than a real or separate person. Lee, for instance, says: “the goddess notion is never entertained realistically. *Sophia* is only a personification.”93 Smith says, “It was not considered to be a divine or quasi-divine person, separate from God. Rather, it was a poetic personification.”94 And Donald Bloesch says:

> What we probably have in Proverbs 8 is not a hypostasis of Yahweh endowed with a personal identity but “an unusually striking example of personification for poetic effect.” This personification of wisdom must be understood as referring not to an ontological divide within the Godhead but simply to the sagacity by which God brought the worlds into being. Wisdom is not a separate being carrying out the commands of God but God himself in action imprinting his plan upon the whole of creation.95

The other main view, as noted by Bloesch above, is that Wisdom is best understood as hypostasis. R. Marcus defines hypostasis as “a quasi-personification of certain attributes proper to God, occupying an intermediate position between personalities and abstract beings.”96 Hence Crenshaw, for instance, says “Wisdom goes beyond personification to hypostasis: she becomes a manifestation of God to human beings, an emanation of divine attributes.”97 Witherington uses the same language, particularly in discussing the Wisdom of Solomon: “I will call what is being expressed in the Wisdom of Solomon an hypostasis, not merely a personification of an attribute, because it now entails the new element of Wisdom emanating from God.”98

> It may be that, as the figure of Wisdom grows and takes shape, she also gains a greater degree of substance, and moves from personification to hypostasis. Thus Scott, for instance, suggests that while understanding Sophia as personification “accords well with the material concerning her in

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the book of Proverbs, and to some extent that of Sirach, it still remains inadequate as a measure of her in Wisdom of Solomon.”

However, whether one speaks of personification or hypostasis, the general consensus is that Wisdom is not a separate being from God. N.T. Wright, for example, says that Jewish monotheism “was never, in the Jewish literature of the crucial period, an analysis of the inner being of God, a kind of numerical statement about, so to speak, what God was like on the inside.” Rather, it was “always a polemical statement directed outwards against the pagan nations.” In his opinion, Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ time had no difficulty in personifying separate aspects of God’s personality (i.e., wisdom [Sophia], law [Torah], presence [Shekinah] and word [Memra]). This division had the philosophical purpose of “get(ting) around the problem of how to speak appropriately of the one true God who is both beyond the created world and active within it.”

Thus Sophia is not a separate being from God, but is best understood as either personification (a metaphor referring to an attribute of God) or as hypostasis (an emanation or manifestation of God to human beings).

4) A Cord of several strands

Some suggest that the proliferation of different strands within the wisdom tradition is problematic, reflecting confusion and division. Beardslee, for example, says: “The diffuse character of later Wisdom which contributes to apocalyptic, to rabbinical interpretation, and to various forms of popular religion, is a sign both of the loss of cohesiveness of the tradition and of its stubborn persistence.” He goes on to claim that: “the tradition of Jewish Wisdom itself was unstable and even disappearing in New Testament times.” Whether or not wisdom was disappearing in NT times remains to be seen. However, the existence of several strands of wisdom does not necessarily imply discord or lack of cohesion, but can in fact build a richer and stronger reality, if those strands are intertwined. As Bennema says:

99 Scott, Sophia, 76.
100 Wright Who Was Jesus?, 48–49
103 Who, as we have seen, identifies four strands of wisdom in the Second Temple period.
As a warning against putting too much weight on the distinctions between these four strands of wisdom tradition, which could result in a division Judaism never hinted at, we want to emphasise that the four strands of wisdom tradition are not mutually exclusive or contradictory. In fact, the four strands of wisdom tradition are more similar than different, and should be seen as four threads twisted around each other to make up the one string or rope of wisdom tradition; i.e. we would be better to speak of four varieties of one wisdom tradition.\textsuperscript{104}

Whatever their number may be, Bennema is right to suggest that the existence of several “strands” need not imply an inherent contradiction or instability, any more than an apple becomes unstable by possessing the various qualities of being round, green, sweet, tart, ripe, and so forth. Although sometimes too many strands being pulled in different directions can unravel the whole, it is equally true to say that if those strands work together the whole is strengthened. As Qohelet says, “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12).

D. Wisdom in the New Testament

Having discussed the place of wisdom in the OT and in Second Temple Judaism, let us now consider briefly how wisdom is understood and presented in the broader NT, before turning particularly to the Synoptic Gospels. The OT forms a rich background to the NT, and the texts, themes, and traditions of the Writings are referenced or echoed in much of the NT, though perhaps to a lesser degree than the Law and the Prophets. The poetic style and genre of Hebrew poetry (and especially the Psalms) in particular find extensive use in the NT. However, the extent to which wisdom material and the concept of wisdom are referenced is not so obvious. McDowell, for example, says:

The vocabulary, imagery, theology, and literary structures of the Hebrew Bible permeate the NT. The use of the HB in the NT has been the focus of numerous studies in recent years … While the most common use of the HB comes from the Law and the Prophets, it is also true that Wisdom Literature (Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, as well as later Jewish writings such as the Wisdom of Solomon and Sira), Hebrew poetry, and quotes from the Psalms are found in

\textsuperscript{104} Bennema, “The Strands of Wisdom Tradition,” 67.
abundance. The use of the rest of the Writings (Lamentations, Esther, Ruth, and Song of Songs) is rare or non-existent in the NT.\textsuperscript{105}

He goes on to say that:

In the New Testament, the basic characteristics of Wisdom are retained, and many have noted a profound impact of wisdom traditions on the NT … There has been debate about whether many of the developments of wisdom of the Second Temple period are found in the NT writings, and if so, to what degree.\textsuperscript{106}

As the purpose of this study is to examine the place of wisdom specifically in the Synoptic Gospels, we shall not spend too much time examining the rest of the NT. However, a brief overview of the way in which wisdom is presented and understood in the NT as a whole is a helpful precursor to our particular study. As Paul’s letters are generally accepted to have been written first,\textsuperscript{107} we shall start there, followed by James and then the rest of the NT writers. And as our attention is on the Gospels in particular, we will finish this brief overview by looking at John’s letters and Gospel, before turning our attention to a more sustained analysis of the Synoptic Gospels.

1) \textit{Wisdom in the Pauline Corpus}

For Paul, the wisdom of God is a mystery long hidden but now revealed in Christ, who contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 2:7; Col 2:3). God’s wisdom stands in stark contrast to the wisdom of this world, which is coming to nothing (1 Cor 2:6) and is foolishness in God’s sight (1 Cor 3:19). Paul’s own teaching does not come in words of human wisdom (1 Cor 1:17; 2:1, 13; 2 Cor 1:12), so that his hearers’ faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God’s power (1 Cor 2:5). This wisdom comes through the Spirit of God, who brings revelation and understanding (Eph 1:17; Col 1:9). Paul praises the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom 11:33). He says that, in his wisdom, God acted to save by sending Jesus to die. The cross is a stumbling block to Jews and

\textsuperscript{107} See, for example, F.F. Bruce, \textit{The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), especially chapter 2: “The New Testament Documents: Their Date and Attestation.”
foolishness to Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23), but Jesus is in fact “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24); and he has become for us “wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).

Paul’s reference to Jesus “becoming wisdom from God” has a ring to it that sounds very similar to the personification of wisdom. Indeed, James Dunn claims that: “What pre-Christian Judaism said of Wisdom and Philo also of the Logos, Paul and the others say of Jesus. The role that Proverbs, Ben Sira, etc. ascribe to Wisdom, these earliest Christians ascribe to Jesus.”108 Elsewhere, he says: “Clearly, Paul was attributing to Christ the role previously attributed to divine Wisdom. Indeed, it is entirely consistent with the evidence to conclude that Paul was tacitly identifying Christ with Wisdom, indeed as Wisdom. In thinking of pre-existent Wisdom Paul now thought of Christ.”109

As has been seen above, the Second Temple personification of wisdom was never really understood as a real, separate being, but either as a metaphor used to communicate an aspect of God’s character, or as hypostasis, the emanation and self-revelation of God to the world. Hence James Waddell, for instance, offers a slightly different view than that espoused by Dunn, and argues that Paul is not directly identifying the Messiah with Wisdom, but is rather making a “metaphorical association” and that “it seems to be more accurate to say that the role of the messiah figure played in the gospel, according to Paul, ‘manifests’ or ‘reveals’ the wisdom and power of God.”110

Gabriele Boccaccini, in his discussion of the Parables of Enoch, also sees Wisdom as a metaphor which gains traction through the Second Temple period, and becomes key to the early Christians understanding of Jesus:

The Book of Parables (including chaps. 70–71) ignores the identification between Wisdom and Torah that will become normative in rabbinic Judaism, as well as the identification between Wisdom and

110 Waddell, The Messiah, 130.
111 Waddell, The Messiah, 131.
the Messiah, which will become normative in early Christianity. The document as a whole therefore testifies to a stage in which the encounter and merging of the Sapiential, Messianic, and Apocalyptic Paradigms were still at their inception — a stage that parallels the earliest origins of the Jesus movement and is the logical premise for the theological developments in Paul and the later Christian tradition. It was in fact the association between God’s Wisdom and the eschatological Messiah that opened the path to the Pauline idea that the Messiah is the primary (and even exclusive) content of God’s wisdom. Consistently, the Christian tradition will apply to its mediator, Jesus, with more and more conviction the language and metaphor of Wisdom, until Jesus himself came to be seen as the embodiment of the Wisdom-Word of God.\footnote{Gabriele Boccaccini, “The Parables of Enoch within Second Temple Jewish Literature,” in \textit{Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Parables} (ed. Gabriele Baccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 288.}

Other scholars dispute the degree to which wisdom plays a role in Paul’s Christology. Douglas Moo, for instance, suggests that “the evidence for wisdom influence on the christology in the early Pauline letters is slight and allusive.”\footnote{Douglas J. Moo, “The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters,” in \textit{Contours of Christology in the New Testament} (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 169–92 (178).} Gordon Fee goes further, denying that Paul’s Christology “is to be understood at least in part in terms of personified wisdom.”\footnote{Gordon D. Fee, \textit{Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 595.} While conceding that he does see a certain correlation of imagery and thought between Paul and the wisdom tradition, Fee’s contention is that such allusions are not enough to establish textual dependence, insisting instead that Paul’s Christology is centred on Jesus’ Lordship.\footnote{Gordon D. Fee, “Wisdom Christology in Paul: A Dissenting View,” in \textit{The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke} (ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 252–60.} While Fee makes a strong case that wisdom is not a dominant motif in Paul’s letters, his refusal to allow any place for wisdom in Paul’s Christology seems to be overstating his case. There is evidence that wisdom plays a part in Paul’s thinking, and there is no reason why this cannot be accepted as a minor motif without denying the prominent role given to Lordship. This raises the question of what the connection may be between Jesus as Messiah and as Wisdom, which will be one of the key areas to consider in the Synoptic Gospels.

\section*{2) Wisdom in James}
For James, like Paul, wisdom comes from God (Jas 1:5; 3:17). And James, again like Paul, draws a contrast between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. For James, however, in his emphasis on practical faith, wisdom is known by its fruit. The wisdom of the world is “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic,” and results in bitterness, envy, selfishness, disorder, and evil (Jas 3:14–16). By contrast, true wisdom, which comes down from heaven, is by nature pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, impartial, and sincere (Jas 3:17).

This practical focus within James has led many to identify his letter as the prime example of wisdom literature in the NT. Robert Wall, for instance, says that the letter of James “reverberates with themes from the rich biblical wisdom tradition,” and that it “describes Christian wisdom — both its theoretical knowledge and practical know-how — as embodied within a community.” And Robert Chaffin says: “The Epistle of James is highly affected by Old Testament wisdom literature … James gives to wisdom the same prominence that Paul gives to faith, John gives to love, and Peter gives to hope.”

Ralph Martin identifies four ways in which James can be seen to be the heir to wisdom literature: (1) his use of OT figures who embody wisdom, (2) the connection between prayer and wisdom, (3) peace and wisdom, and (4) eschatological motifs and wisdom. With regard to OT figures, James presents Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah as persons of wisdom because they had a practical faith and prayer life (Jas 2:21, 23, 25; 5:11, 17). When it comes to prayer and wisdom, Job was a man of constant faith (Jas 5:11) and his prayers were effective (Jas 5:16; Job 42:8–10); by contrast the double-minded person whose faith wavers cannot expect their prayers to be answered (Jas 1:5–8). In terms of peace and wisdom, just as Proverbs says that wisdom’s ways are the ways of peace (Prov 3:17), and Ben Sira teaches that wisdom bestows her first fruit with the offer of peace (Sir 1:18), so James insists that the wisdom that comes

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118 Ralph P. Martin, James (WBC 48; Waco, TX: Word, 1988), xci.
from above is peaceable and produces a harvest of righteousness (Jas 1:17–18). And, finally, just as in the wisdom books such as the Wisdom of Solomon there is a link between wisdom and the eschatological yearning for divine intervention in history, so James argues that the social inequalities and injustices present in the world cry out for divine rectification (Jas 2:5–7; 4:11–12; 5:1–9).

3) Wisdom in the rest of the New Testament

There is only one explicit reference to wisdom in Peter’s writings, when he describes Paul has having been given wisdom from God, specifically in his teaching about the Lord’s patience meaning salvation (2 Pet 3:15). Wisdom is not explicitly mentioned in Hebrews at all. However, in Heb 1:2–3 the author speaks of Jesus as the Son, the heir of all things, “through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” This seems to carry strong echoes of Wis 7:25–26, which says of Wisdom that “she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness.” This allusion suggests that the author of Hebrews is identifying Jesus with Wisdom. Similar echoes and allusions will be seen in the Synoptic Gospels, although the weight they should be given, and the extent to which we should trust any such intertextual claims, remains to be discussed.

4) Wisdom in the Johannine Literature

In John’s letters there are few if any explicit references to wisdom. In the book of Revelation, wisdom is mentioned as John sees Jesus as the Lamb on the throne who is worthy to be crowned with wisdom, power, wealth, praise, and glory (Rev 5:12; 7:11). And those who are given insight into the things of God are described as having wisdom (Rev 13:18; 17:9).

Likewise, in John’s Gospel, wisdom gets little specific reference. However, many see wisdom as being strongly implicit in John’s Gospel,
particularly in his portrayal of Jesus as the divine λόγος, which many suggest he treats as an equivalent term to σοφία (John 1).\footnote{120} Witherington, for instance, points out that in Wis 9:1–2 “word” and “Wisdom” are used in synonymous parallelism, “a development which is to be made a great deal of in the logos hymn in John 1.”\footnote{121} He goes on to say: “it may be that the evangelist simply used the term logos to better prepare for the replacement motif—Jesus superseding Torah as God’s logos.”\footnote{122} In a similar vein, Lincoln says that “Previously it was Torah that was considered to be God’s word, the embodiment of divine wisdom and revelation, and held to have pre-existed with God; now these claims are made for Jesus (1:1, 2, 14; 17:5),”\footnote{123} and that “His [Jesus’] relationship with God is so intimate that he can be regarded as the Logos, which, in the light of Jewish Wisdom literature, means that he is God’s self-expression, God’s immanent presence within the creation, which now takes human form (1:1–4, 14).”\footnote{124}

Hooten likewise argues that in John “many of the things that are said about Jesus are identical or similar to things that are said of personified Wisdom in the Old Testament and the Jewish tradition of Wisdom-literature.”\footnote{125} As evidence to back up this claim, he points to the fact that John’s presentation of Jesus as the Word who was in the beginning (John 1:1) echoes Proverbs’ presentation of Wisdom as being with God from the beginning (Prov 8:22–23) and that Jesus being the revelation of the glory of God (John 1:14) and the light of the world (John 8:12) parallels Wisdom’s being the revelation of the eternal light of God (Wis 7:26). He further suggests that Jesus being the Son come from heaven to dwell among men picks up on the description of Wisdom as having come down from heaven to dwell among men (Sir 24:8; Wis 9:10). He also notes that while Wisdom shows people the way (Prov 2:12–15; 3:17; 4:11), Jesus is the Way (John 14:6), and that just as Wisdom trains her disciples to be friends of God (Sir

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\footnote{120}{C.H. Dodd provides a list of parallel phrases to the Prologue in Proverbs (Prov 8:22–35; cf. Prov 1:2; 3:19), The Wisdom of Solomon (7:22–30; 8:1; 9:1–4), Sirach (24:6–8), and 1 Enoch (52:2) in The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 274–75. See also 104 n. 18.}

\footnote{121}{Witherington, Jesus the Sage, 108.}

\footnote{122}{Witherington, Jesus the Sage, 285.}

\footnote{123}{A.T. Lincoln, The Gospel according to Saint John (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), 77.}

\footnote{124}{Lincoln, John, 60.}

\footnote{125}{Hooten, Four Gospels, 27.}
6:20–26, Wis 7:14, 27), Jesus also instructs his disciples and tells them that they are no longer servants but friends (John 15:15). On the basis of these parallels (and this is not a comprehensive list), Hooten comes to the conclusion that “for John, Jesus is the Wisdom of God incarnate.”126

By contrast to such confident assertions, some are more cautious regarding the identification of Word with Wisdom. Don Carson, for instance, concedes that there is much to be said for the view that John assigns to the Word some of the attributes of Wisdom, and also that much the same could be said of Torah in rabbinic thought. However, he argues that “the lack of Wisdom terminology in John’s Gospel suggests that the parallels between Wisdom and John’s Logos may stem less from direct dependence than from common dependence on Old Testament uses of ‘word’ and Torah, from which both have borrowed.”127 Carson’s emphasis on wisdom terminology (or the lack thereof) raises one of the key questions that must be discussed in our study of the Synoptics. However, not all agree with his conclusion. Borchert, for example, contends that there is more than a common dependence, but that in fact “there is in Wisdom Literature, particularly as it concerns creation, an intersection of the involvement of Wisdom, Word, and Torah.”128

126 Hooten, Four Gospels, 28.
III. Wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels

Having sketched out a presentation of wisdom in the OT, Second Temple Judaism, and the broader NT, let us now turn our attention to the ways in which wisdom is understood and presented in the Synoptic Gospels.

A. Introductory comments

When it comes to wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels, the references to wisdom are far less obvious than in some other places in the NT. Raymond Brown, for example, comments that “personified wisdom language appears in the Synoptic tradition on a few occasions, but there is nothing to match the massive number of echoes in John.”129 Others argue that not only do wisdom references exist in the Synoptic Gospels, but that they may exist in greater detail and depth than has been previously assumed. As McDowell writes:

While the Synoptic Gospels present Jesus as a prophet and/or messiah, recent scholarship has noted that Jesus is also presented as a wisdom sage … Numerous parallels exist between the sayings of Jesus and the Wisdom books, as well as with later Jewish Wisdom writings such as Sira and some Qumran manuscripts.130

The nature, extent, and significance of the presentation of and reference to wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels is the question that is now to be addressed.

1) Dealing with the Jesus presented in the Synoptic Gospels

The focus of this study will be limited to the final form of the Synoptic Gospels. That is, we will examine the presentation of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as they appear in the NT. Given this textual limitation, it is important to consider the literary and historical relationship between the Synoptic Gospels, especially with regard to the so-called “Synoptic Problem.”

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Numerous attempts have been made to resolve the literary interdependence of the Synoptic Gospels. One suggestion is that the similarities between the Gospels are due to the fact that all three drew from oral traditions handed down in the early Christian community. Another is that the Gospel writers used each other as sources. There are a number of variations on this theme. For Augustine, the canonical order of the Gospels indicated the order of composition: Matthew was written first, followed in turn by Mark and Luke, who both relied on Matthew as their source. The “Griesbach hypothesis,” originally proposed by Johann Griesbach and further developed by William Farmer, suggests that Matthew was written first, and Luke second, with Mark relying on the first two. The Farrer hypothesis, developed by Austin Farrer and picked up by Michael Goulder and Mark Goodacre, suggests that Mark was written first, followed by Matthew and Luke. This theory has been the principle challenger to those theories that depend on other hypothetical sources. The first of these was the two-source theory, also known as the Oxford hypothesis, which holds to Markan priority, but also posits another source which both Matthew and Luke used for the non-Markan material they share. This source is known as Q, from the German word Quelle, which means “source.” A development from this is the four-source theory developed by B.H. Streeter, which suggests that in addition to Mark and Q, Matthew uses other material that is uniquely his (M) and Luke in turn has another source of his own (L). The Farrer hypothesis and the four-source hypothesis are the leading alternatives at this point in the debate; however, no one of these theories has won the field to the point of excluding all others.

The posited existence of Q opens up fertile ground for exploration and speculation. As Blomberg says, “enormous amounts of literature have churned from the presses analysing the contents, structure, theology, tradition-history, rhetoric, sociology, and audience of this hypothetical source.”131 This degree of speculation inevitably leads to the possibility of some over-reach in the claims being made. Darrell Bock, for instance, warns of what he sees as the abuse of Q in some quarters: “efforts like those

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popularized by the Jesus Seminar should receive a just rebuke as poor historiography at a time when they are catching intense media attention. When Burton Mack appeals to the glitz of a “lost Gospel Q” as the basis for an earliest Christianity that was devoid of eschatology, high Christology, or judgment themes, as well as passion or resurrection accounts, the study of Q has crossed into historical revisionism and distortion.”132

Time and space do not allow for a detailed analysis of the Synoptic Problem and the Q debate. Suffice to say that the intention of this study is to analyse the text of the Synoptic Gospels as it currently stands, without reference to the sources that may lie behind it. That is, we will examine Jesus as he is presented in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

2) Methodology

Within the literature concerning the place of wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels, there appear to be two contrasting tendencies in methodology. Some scholars deal with wisdom as a broad theological concept, discussing it within a complex web of themes such as salvation, justification, pneumatology, and eschatology. Aidan O’Boyle, for instance, in assessing the place of wisdom in Mark, responds to the work of scholars like Sabin by arguing that our understanding of Mark’s structure and theology “may benefit by recalling some sapiential themes.”133 Others investigate the concept on a purely terminological basis, exploring and analysing the use of specific wisdom vocabulary in the text. M. Jack Suggs, for example, provides a detailed exegesis of a limited number of pericopes in Matthew, while acknowledging that he makes no attempt to relate these passages to all other facets of Matthean theology.134 Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Working primarily at the broad conceptual level runs the risk of being overly abstract, and not engaging carefully enough with the actual

texts of the Synoptics. On the other hand, detailed analysis of the texts, while providing solid linguistic groundwork, carries the risk of failing to engage with the broader theological themes and ideas. This thesis will adopt an approach similar to that used by Constantine Campbell in his book *Paul and Union with Christ*, which he calls “an exegetical-theological approach”, beginning with the textual evidence and developing from there to the conceptual big picture.  

Our initial focus, then, will be on the textual evidence. Our starting point is to identify the wisdom vocabulary that is used in the Synoptic Gospels, and to analyse its contextual meaning. However, the presentation of an idea or theme is not limited to the use of particular vocabulary. There are two further ways in which wisdom may appear, or be referenced, in the Synoptics. The first of these is that wisdom literature may be referenced, either directly or indirectly, by quotation or allusion. The second is that the Synoptics may present Jesus and his teachings using literary forms commonly recognised as being associated with wisdom, such as sayings and proverbs. In both of these latter areas, the identification of such material is not an exact science, but along with the linguistic evidence they provide constructive information that helps paint a picture of how wisdom is presented in the Synoptics. Having carried out this tripartite analysis of the textual evidence, discussion can then broaden to the conceptual level, assessing in what ways wisdom plays a role in the Christological presentation of the Synoptics, and how it relates to other themes such as salvation, discipleship, the kingdom of God, and eschatology.

3) **Writings, Wisdom and the Psalms**

As mentioned earlier, the wisdom material in the OT is generally found in the Writings (Ketuvim). This section of the OT begins with the Psalms, and so “Psalms” is sometimes used as shorthand for the Writings. However, there is a generally recognised distinction between the Psalms and the wisdom material. Ballard expresses it in this way:

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The heart of the Ketuvim is the book of Psalms. Psalms captivate the hearts of worshippers in every age. This collection of poems is a timeless expression of the angst of humanity in pursuit of a relationship with a divine being ... If the Psalms are indeed the heart of the Ketuvim, then the wisdom books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job) can be described as its soul. As the Psalms emphasize humanity’s relationship to a divine being, the Wisdom Literature focuses on humanity’s relationship to one another and to the universe at large.\textsuperscript{136}

As discussed earlier, although the two are not mutually exclusive, wisdom literature tends to focus on observations of the world and how it works (based in a theology of creation), whereas the rest of the OT focusses on God and his works and actions (based in a theology of covenant and salvation-history). In these terms, the Psalms are distinct from the rest of the Writings in that they appeal far more to covenant and salvation-history. This distinction is reflected in the way in which the Psalms are used in the Synoptics. McDowell points out that NT writers often quote from the Psalter in order to support their theology of Christ: “The Gospel writers not only quote Psalms for this purpose, but also present Jesus as quoting or alluding to Psalms … Often in Acts, and occasionally in the Gospels, Psalm quotations are used christologically (Mt 27:35/Ps 22:19 and par. Mk 15:24 and Lk 23:34; Acts 13:33/Ps 2:7; Acts 2:25–28/Ps 16:10; Acts 2:34–35/Ps 110:1; Acts 4:11/Ps 118:22). Almost as often, the Psalms are used to support exhortation and for spiritual guidance (Acts 1:19–20/Ps 69:26 and 109:8; Acts 4:25–26/Ps 1:1–2).”\textsuperscript{137}

Thus, while the usage of the Psalms in the Synoptics is extensive and important, as it does not relate directly to wisdom it does not fall within the boundaries of this study.

B. Lexical considerations

The first window into the Gospel writers’ presentation of wisdom is the way in which they use the specific vocabulary of wisdom. Therefore we shall first discuss the various wisdom-related words that are used in the


Synoptics, and having done so, then go on to survey where they are used in the text, and to analyse that usage.

The predominant word for wisdom in the OT is חכם and its variants. The LXX normally uses σοφία/σοφός for חכם, and the NT continues this pattern, using σοφία/σοφός as the key word group for wisdom.

In the NT σοφία has a spectrum of meanings. It can be used of the personal character trait of wisdom: that is, the spiritual or intellectual capacity that at its highest potential is found in God, but which also can be found in human beings. In this regard, its range of meaning includes “wise,” “sagacious,” and “skilful in discernment.” However, whenever the NT affirms human σοφία, “such wisdom has always come in a special way from God.” This is because “wisdom is a person’s whole approach to life, arising out one’s standing in the covenant bestowed by God.” It can also refer to wisdom manifested in word and writing, in which usage it is “often almost identical with the wisdom tradition.”

The other word group often associated with wisdom in the NT is that built on the root φρήν: words such as φρονέω, φρόνημα, φρόνησις, and φρόνιμος. The word φρήν, which usually appears in the plural form φρένες, refers to the diaphragm, which was in early times regarded as the seat of intellectual and spiritual activity. Over time, the physical sense of the word was lost, and it came to refer solely to intellectual activity, with a range of meaning for the noun φρόνησις that includes “way of thinking,” “frame of mind,” “insight,” “inner part,” “intelligence,” “consciousness,” and “understanding;” and for the adjective φρόνιμος “sensible,” “thoughtful,” “prudent,” and “wise.”

Foolishness, the opposite of wisdom, is sometimes described with negative terms built from the root φρήν, such as ἄφρων and ἄφροσύνη. An alternative term that is often used is μωρός and cognates that share the same root. In classical Greek, μωρός and cognates “denote a physical or intellectual deficiency in animals or men, in their conduct and actions, also

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143 BDAG, s.v. φρόνιμος.
in things. The word can refer to physical sloth or dullness, but its main ref.
is to the intellectual life. It takes on various meanings in different contexts.
Thus it can mean “insipid” of insufficiently seasoned foods.”

Σοφία and φρόνησις are not used synonymously. Their meaning and
their usage are distinct. Gericke, citing Aristotle, explains the difference in
this way:

In Book 1 of his Metaphysics, Aristotle viewed wisdom as an insight
into causal relations. That is, wisdom involves knowing why things
are a certain way (explanation), which is assumed to be more
advanced than merely knowing that things are a certain way
(description). However, Book 6 of the Ethics distinguishes between
Sophia (theoretical wisdom) and phronesis (practical wisdom).

Thus σοφία refers to what one might call a higher order form of wisdom,
which is theoretical and explicative; whereas φρόνησις is used for a lower
order form of wisdom which is more descriptive and practical. This
distinction is borne out in the way these terms are used in the Synoptics. As
we shall see, σοφία is used almost exclusively of either Jesus or wisdom
personified (and the connection between the two remains to be explored);
whereas φρόνησις is exclusively applied to human beings as they live their
lives, and in particular as they respond to the teaching of Jesus (or in one
instance, John the Baptist).

Having given some attention to the various wisdom words used in the
NT, let us now turn our attention to a detailed examination of where these
words appear, and how they are used, in the Synoptic Gospels. In some
cases, occurrences are found in such close proximity to each other that it
seems reasonable to examine them together in the same section of text.
Furthermore, several of these sections appear in parallel passages in the
different Gospels. This would suggest that it is worth examining those
passages side-by-side, to see to what extent the two authors take an identical
approach, and also to see in what ways they differ. This might open up a
window into their distinctive understandings. In doing so, the references that

145 J.W. Gericke, “The Concept of ‘The Love of Wisdom’ in Proverbs (8): A
Comparative-Philosophical Clarification,” Journal for Semitics 22 (2013): 343–57
(347). Emphasis original.
are unique to one author will also stand out, and may open a further avenue into understanding the unique interests of that particular author.

1) Uses of σοφία and σοφός

First, we shall consider the preeminent word for wisdom in the NT—σοφία—and the variety of words that share the same root, especially σοφός. In the Synoptics σοφία occurs ten times. Six times the word is applied directly to Jesus, three times it applies to wisdom personified, and once it refers to the gift Jesus will give the disciples as he sends them out into the world. There are three occurrences of σοφός. Twice it is applied rhetorically to the allegedly wise ones of this world who reject Jesus; and once it describes the messengers Jesus will send to the world.146

a) Jesus the child growing in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52)

Just as Luke’s account of John’s early life ended with a comment on his growth (Luke 1:80), so too does his account of Jesus’ early life. Indeed, the exact same phrase is used, saying that he “grew and became strong” (τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἠδύνατο καὶ ἐκραταίοτο πληρούμενον σοφία, καὶ χάρις θεοῦ ἤν ἐπ’ αὐτό


Indeed, we do receive almost immediately some confirmation that Luke is portraying Jesus as one filled with wisdom. The next section finishes again with a comment that Jesus increased in stature and wisdom (Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν [ἐν τῇ] σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ). Nolland notes that the whole sentence here echoes 1 Sam 2:26,147 which speaks of Samuel growing in both stature and favour with both God and man (LXX: καὶ τὸ παιδάριον

146 For detailed breakdown of where these words appear, see Appendix A — “Occurrence of Words Sharing the Root of σοφός in the Synoptic Gospels.”
147 Echoes will be defined and discussed later, in section IIIIC of this thesis.
Many NT scholars suggest that it is no coincidence that the descriptions of John and Jesus bear a similarity to the description of Samuel. Robert Bergen, for instance, claims that the NT “recognises in the precocious spirituality of the boy Samuel a foreshadowing of Jesus’ own boyhood.” 148 And Thomas Mosbo points out that:

The parallels between Samuel and John are striking. Samuel becomes the one to anoint the first kings of Israel, Saul and, far more importantly, David. John the Baptist, in exact parallel, is to become the one to anoint Jesus as David’s successor through his baptism. Thus, the similarities in the stories of Samuel’s birth and John’s birth cannot have been an accident. Luke appears to be deliberately making this connection for anyone familiar with the story of Samuel. 149

The suggestion that there is a parallel between Samuel and John and the kings they anoint, Jesus and David, finds further justification in Matthew’s opening words, where he introduces Jesus as “the son of David” (Matt 1:1).

If there is a deliberate parallel being drawn between the Samuel and David story and that of John and Jesus in Luke’s Gospel, then we must note a significant difference in their childhood accounts. Luke’s description of Jesus adds the element of wisdom that is absent both in his description of John and the OT’s description of Samuel. 150 However, although wisdom is not ascribed to either Samuel or John, it is attributed to David, who (as we have seen earlier) is described as having wisdom “like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth” (2 Sam 14:20). This makes it plausible to suggest that Luke wants us to see that it is fitting that David’s greater son should in turn be portrayed as being filled with wisdom. 151 Given that this reference to wisdom occurs not just once but twice in Luke’s description of Jesus as he grew up, it suggests that Luke sees wisdom as a key characteristic in the life of Jesus. According to Fohrer and Wilckens, “σοφία here epitomises a pious manner of life which shapes

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148 Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel (NAC 7; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 81.
151 Witherington, Jesus the Sage, 353.
the character and which finds expression in early and astonishing
knowledge of the Law.”

Some see Luke’s reference to Jesus growing in wisdom as posing a
problem of contradiction within the doctrine of the incarnation. The fact that
the growth-related verbs in both Luke 2:40 (ηὐξανεν) and 2:52
(προέκοπτεν) are in the imperfect tense suggests that there was an
imperfection, or at least an incompleti
on, to Jesus’ wisdom. So, for instance,
Michael Murray and Michael Rea argue: “But nothing can grow in wisdom
without at some time lacking complete wisdom. An omniscient being
cannot lack complete wisdom … Thus, if Jesus grew in wisdom he was not
omniscient.” This interpretation of Luke 2:52 played an important role for
both the Arian movement and the Nestorians, and in response, many
ancient scholars looked with suspicion on anyone who maintained that Jesus
really grew in human knowledge. Thomas Aquinas, however, offered a
more nuanced view that distinguished between Jesus’ “infused” knowledge
and his “acquired” knowledge, saying of the latter:

But the acquired knowledge of Christ is caused by the active intellect
which does not produce the whole at once, but successively; and
hence by this knowledge Christ did not know everything from the
beginning, but step by step, and after a time—i.e., in His perfect
age;—and this is plain from what the Evangelist says, viz., that He
increased in knowledge and age together.

This view that Jesus’ human growth in knowledge and wisdom is not
incompatible with his perfect divine nature is echoed in much modern
scholarship. Michael Lodahl, for example, says that this verse in
conjunction with 1 Cor 5:19 (“In Christ God was reconciling the world to
himself”) perfectly illustrates the wonder of the incarnation: that “Jesus
Christ is the full and ultimate revelation of God — and … he is that
revelation precisely as a true human being who exercises human thought,
agency, and responsibility.” Nolland suggests that in this verse, Luke

153 Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea, An Introduction to the Philosophy of
Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 82.
155 Thomas Aquinas, The “Summa Theologica” of St Thomas Aquinas Literally
Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates &
Washbourne, 1912), III q. 12 a. 2 resp.
Long and George Kalantzis; Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2010), 172–78 (175).
speaks "out of the conviction that the human maturing process even in perfect form involves not only growth in size but also development in wisdom and in the capacity to execute that which is pleasing both to God and to one’s fellows." And Bock says that Jesus is here "portrayed as deepening in his perception of God’s will and his fear of God."  


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<td>16 Τίνι δὲ ὁμοίωσο τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην; ὁμοία ἐστὶν παιδίος καθημένος ἐν ταῖς ἁγοραῖς ἀποσφαγούντα τοὺς ἐτέρους 17 λέγουσιν· ηὐλῆσαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὰρχήσασθε, ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκώσασθε. 18 ἔλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης μὴ ἐσθίων μὴ τίνι εἰσίν διὸ οὐκ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν· δαμόμον ἔχει. 19 ἔλθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν· ἴδιον ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοποτής, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἄμαρτωλόν. καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἢ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς.</td>
<td>31 Τίνι οὖν ὁμοίωσο τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ τίνι εἰσίν ὁμοίοι; 32 ὁμοίοι εἰσίν παιδίος τοὺς ἐν ἁγορᾷ καθημένοις καὶ προσφαγούντας ἀλλήλοις τί λέγει· ηὐλῆσαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐκ ὰρχήσασθε, ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκώσασθε. 33 ἔλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς μὴ ἐσθίων άρτον καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγετε· δαμόμον ἔχει. 34 ἔλθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγετε· ἴδιον ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοποτής, φίλος τελωνῶν καὶ ἄμαρτωλὸν. 35 καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἢ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.</td>
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In this section, Jesus addresses those who criticise him for not matching their expectations. As Simon Gathercole argues, Jesus’ statement is a bitter complaint of the lack of response by his contemporaries to the message of the kingdom. Whereas they scorned John for *not* eating and drinking, they mock Jesus as a glutton and drunkard, who associates with sinners. Both Matthew and Luke record him responding that Wisdom will be vindicated, or justified (καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἢ σοφία). Paul’s usage of δικαιόω has

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160 Following the pattern used in this study, “Wisdom” is used here in recognition of the fact that the personal terminology suggests that the reference is to the figure of Wisdom personified, rather than wisdom as a concept or category.
influenced later writings, using the word almost exclusively of God’s judgment. However, here in the Synoptics it carries the sense of “justify,” or “vindicate,” as is evidenced by its usage in the description of the lawyer who wanted to justify himself to Jesus (Lk 10:29). Here, then, both Matthew and Luke have Jesus declaring that Wisdom will be vindicated, or justified. However, while Matthew (11:19) says that Wisdom is justified “by her deeds” (τὸν ἔργον ὁμηρέτης). Luke (7:34) refers to Wisdom being vindicated “by her children” (τὸν τέκνων ὁμηρής).

(i) Matthew and Wisdom’s “deeds”

Ragnar Leivestad suggests that Matthew’s phrase “Wisdom is proved right by her deeds” is a Jewish proverb similar to “a tree is known by its fruit,” thus making the phrase a warning to Jesus’ opponents that history will judge them by the outcome of their deeds. This, followed by the warning (Matt 11:20–24) of impending judgment on the cities that have not repented on seeing his works, and the comment that God has “hidden these things from the wise and understanding” (Matt 11:25), combine to suggest that Jesus’ opponents, who think they are wise, are in fact fools and will be judged as such by history.

Leivestad’s theory has not found a great deal of scholarly support. While some scholars, such as William Kynes, find it plausible, others, such as Carson, find it “difficult to defend.” Particularly since no other evidence has been found that such a proverb existed, it remains an unsubstantiated theory. But Leivestad’s insistence on an analysis of the context of the phrase is helpful, and in fact ends up leading in a different direction. Because a close examination of the context in Matthew suggests that the “deeds” referred to are not those of the opponents but of Jesus

161 BDAG, s.v. δικαίωμα.
himself. This would in turn point to a much closer connection between Jesus and Wisdom.

Matthew both opens and closes this section with reference to Jesus’ deeds. In Matt 11:2–5 Jesus receives messengers from John the Baptist, who has heard about “the deeds of the Christ” (τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Χριστοῦ). And, as the section ends, Jesus speaks of wisdom’s deeds (Matt 11:19) and then denounces the cities where “his mighty works of power” (αἱ πλεῖσται δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ) have been performed because they should have been moved to repent and have not done so (Matt 11:20). Although the words used in Matt 11:20 are not the same, there is a clear correspondence in thought. And, given that Carson says there is no doubt that there is an inclusio created by τὰ ἔργα (Matt 11:2) and τῶν ἔργων (Matt 11:19b), we see that there is a clear connection between Matt 11:2–5 and 11:19–20. This leads to the conclusion that the “deeds” mentioned in Matt 11:19 are those of Jesus, and that therefore Jesus is being equated with Wisdom. Specifically, in this context, Matthew is paralleling the rejection of Jesus with Wisdom’s rejection, as Deutsch explains: “Use of the Wisdom metaphor to describe Jesus thus explains the rejection he meets. It legitimises his preaching as well as his mighty works.” And so, with France and others, we conclude that for Matthew “Jesus is not just Wisdom’s messenger, he is Wisdom.”

This interpretation does not go unchallenged. David Turner, for instance, contends that “The use of wisdom language to describe Jesus’s mission does not justify the identification of Jesus with wisdom hypostatized … Wisdom is not used metaphysically but as a metaphor for Jesus’s and John’s credible ministries.” However, although elsewhere it may be argued that the use of wisdom language ought not be accorded too much weight, as with Mark’s sole reference to wisdom (Mark 6:2), the repeated references to wisdom and the wise in this section of Matthew, with

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Jesus’ mention of things being hidden from the wise (Matt 11:25–30) and his description of himself as one greater than Solomon (Matt 12:38–42) appearing in such close proximity, strongly suggests that Matthew is deliberately using wisdom language in its fullest metaphysical sense, rather than in a looser metaphorical sense.

(ii) Luke and Wisdom’s “children”
The strongest objection to this identification of Jesus with Wisdom in Matthew’s version comes from those who give priority to the Lukan version, which they feel does not support this interpretation. The most obvious difference in Luke’s version is that Luke refers to Wisdom being justified by her “children” rather than her “deeds.” The key to understanding what Jesus is claiming about himself here is to identify who the “children” are.

Suggs’ view is that Wisdom’s children are Jesus and John the Baptist. They belong to the line of wisdom’s prophets but are in a unique position within that line: “Jesus and John stand as the eschatological envoys of Wisdom. Their position in relation to the eschaton gives them special status: John is Elijah, Jesus is the Son of Man.” On a slightly different tack, Schüessler Fiorenza concludes that Wisdom’s children include the entire nation of Israel: “The Sophia-God of Jesus recognizes all Israelites as her children. She is justified, ‘made just’ in and by all of them.” However, Schüessler Fiorenza then goes on to concede that Jesus and John the Baptist are seen as the most prominent of those children. So, although their interpretations are distinct, these two scholars both agree that Jesus is one of wisdom’s children. However, the text itself suggests that the children are better identified as those who listen to and respond to Jesus.

There are two groups of children mentioned. First, there are the children in the marketplace (Luke 7:32). And, second, there are Wisdom’s children who bring her vindication (Luke 7:35). The children in the marketplace represent “the people of this generation” (Luke 7:31), which in turn refers to the Pharisees and the lawyers who have rejected the purpose of

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170 Suggs, Wisdom, 35.
171 Suggs, Wisdom, 55.
God for themselves (Luke 7:30), as evidenced by their criticism of both John and Jesus (Luke 7:34–35). The contrasting group, Wisdom’s children, are those by whom Wisdom is justified in Luke 7:35 (ἐδικαίωθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς). The same verb is used in Luke 7:29 to describe how “all the people,” including the tax collectors, who had been baptized by John, “declared God just” (ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεόν) when they heard Jesus. The parallel between the two references to justification suggests that the two groups are one and the same. As John Carroll puts it: “‘All the people’ acknowledged John’s work as from God and so affirmed God’s justice (edikaiōsan, Luke 7:29). These are to be identified with “all [Wisdom’s] children” who likewise vindicate divine justice (edikaiōthē, v. 35).” In other words, as James Edwards says, the children of Wisdom are the Christians. This then means that, contrary to Suggs and Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus is not one of Wisdom’s children, but rather the one to whom wisdom’s children respond.

Smith offers another interpretation: that Jesus is not one of Wisdom’s children, but her agent: “Wisdom works both through the Baptist and through Jesus. They are both her agents, and there is no basis in Luke for identifying Wisdom with Jesus himself.” In considering this possibility, thought must be given to the relationship between the Baptist and Jesus. In the immediate context of this passage (Luke 7:27–28), Jesus says that John is the one who has come to prepare the way for him; and although John is the greatest of the prophets, he is the least in the kingdom of God. Earlier, John says of himself that he is not worthy to untie Jesus’ sandals (Luke 3:16–17). John and Jesus are not equals: the one is lesser than, and prepares the way for, the other. Thus, even if John is Wisdom’s “agent,” it is unlikely that Jesus is simply a fellow agent, and more likely that the proper understanding here is that he is the one greater than the agent, namely Wisdom herself.

(iii) Wisdom and the kingdom

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175 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 49.
It is also worth noting here the connection between wisdom and the kingdom of God. In the same passage, Jesus claims both the role of Wisdom personified and that of Messiah and King. The immediately preceding context of Jesus’ reference to Wisdom is the discussion with John the Baptist’s disciples about whether Jesus is the Christ—the “one who was to come” (Luke 7:20). Jesus responds by pointing out that he fulfils messianic prophecy. After the messengers leave, Jesus says (Luke 7:28): “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” This is a time of transition. The kingdom of God is arriving in Jesus. And those who reject him reject “the purpose of God for themselves” (Luke 7:30). In so doing, they are rejecting both the kingdom of God and Wisdom.

c) Hidden from the wise (Matthew 11:25–30; Luke 10:21–24)

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<td>25 Ἐν ἔκεισθι τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ θεσσαλιόφορος εἶπεν· ἐξομολογοῦμαι σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ σωτηρίων καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτά νησίοις· 26 ναὶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἐμπροσθέν σου. 27 Πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα τις ἐπιγινώσκει εἰ μὴ υἱὸς καὶ ὃς ἔδωκεν τὸν υἱὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀγάπης ἀποκαλύψει τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας. 28 Δεῦτε πρὸς μένες οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ περιτυχομένοι, κάθώ ἀναπαύσεως ὑμᾶς. 29 Ἐγερτείς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὕπατος μου ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καὶ μᾶθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρᾶξις εἰμὶ καὶ ταπείνος τῇ καρδίᾳ, καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαίς ὑμῶν· 30 ὁ γὰρ ἄνθρωπός μου χρηστός καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἐλαφρόν ἐστιν.</td>
<td>21 Ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἠγαλλιάσατο [ἐν] τῷ πνεύματι τῶν ἀγίων καὶ ἐπεν· ἐξομολογοῦμαι σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἀπέκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ σωτηρίων καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτά νησίοις· ναὶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅτι οὕτως εὐδοκία ἐγένετο ἐμπροσθέν σου. 22 πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς γινώσκει τίς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ πατήρ εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ ὃς ἔδωκεν τὸν υἱὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀγάπης ἀποκαλύψει τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας. 23 καὶ στραφεὶς πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς κατ' ἰδίαν εἶπεν· μακάριοι οἱ ὀρθολόγιοι οἱ βλέποντες ἡ βλέπετε. 24 λέγω γὰρ ύμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ προφήται καὶ βασιλεῖς ἠθέλησαν ἰδεῖν ὅπερ ἡ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ εἶδαν, καὶ ἄκουσαν ὅ ἀκούετε καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν.</td>
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Following on from the woes against the cities that have rejected him (Matt 11:20–24; Luke 10:13–16), Jesus goes on to thank his Father in heaven

176 Although Luke adds the triumphant return of the seventy-two (Luke 11:17–20) between the woes and this prayer of Jesus.
that he has hidden “these things” from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children (ὅτι ἐκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτά νηπίοις).

God as revealer is often spoken of in the OT. God chose to reveal himself to Israel in Egypt (1 Sam 2:27); to reveal the Law to Israel at Sinai (Ps 147:19–20); to reveal things to the prophets (1 Sam 3:7; Amos 3:7; Dan 2:30); and to reveal the paths of life to those who look to him (Ps 16:11; 25:4). Here, God reveals things to some while at the same time hiding them from others.

Jesus does not define what he means by the expression “these things.” Nolland, commenting on the usage in Matthew, suggests that it is best taken as pointing to the significance of what is happening in and through the ministry of Jesus (and John the Baptist). Blomberg likewise says that it refers to “the overall significance of Jesus’ mission,” while Turner says it is “perhaps the eschatological significance of the miracles.” Robert Stein suggests that the context in Luke raises two possibilities. It may refer to the material that follows, that is Jesus’ identity as the only Son (Luke 10:22) and the privileged access he provides to the things of God (Luke 10:23–24). Or it may refer to what has preceded this comment, namely the presence of God’s kingdom and the fall of Satan (Luke 10:17–18). It is this reference to the kingdom of God that seems to touch on the heart of the matter. Hunter says that “these things” must refer, in one way or another, to “the secret of the presence of the Kingdom which was the burden of Jesus’ preaching.”

And Leon Morris agrees:

Some interpret it as speaking of eschatological happenings, and others of the knowledge the Son received from the Father and which he passes on to his followers. Or there may be a reference to the mighty works Jesus did and which the Jews in general were unable to understand as signs of kingdom. But all such views surely point to

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177 Nolland, Matthew, 470.
178 Nolland, Matthew, 470.
179 Blomberg, Matthew, 65.
180 Turner, Matthew, 303.
“the presence of the Kingdom,” and we will do well to take this as our starting point.  

These two parallel passages account for two of the three uses of σοφός in the Synoptics. In the other occurrence (Matt 23:34, see below), Jesus uses it to refer to the messengers he will send into the world. Here, by contrast, he uses it to refer to those who reject his message. The exact identity of the “wise and learned” here is not entirely clear. Stein outlines the various options as: the intelligentsia (1 Cor 1:19–25); the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes; Jesus’ opponents (Luke 19:47); or the objects of the woes in Luke 6:24–26.  

Although Stein doesn’t mention them, the context would suggest that it is more likely that Jesus has in mind those who have been the objects of the woes in the immediately preceding verses (Matt 11:20–24; Luke 10:13–16). Whichever particular group he has in mind, it seems clear that Jesus’ reference to “the wise” is an ironic one, describing those who “think themselves wise and clever,” who reject his message, and from whom the secrets of the kingdom have been hidden. The contrast is being drawn between the true wisdom of God, which is being revealed to little children, and the apparent wisdom of the world, which is in fact foolishness and will fail in the end. This parallels the usage of Paul in 1 Cor 1:19 (echoing Is 29:14), where σοφία is used to refer to “the natural wisdom that belongs to this world … in contrast to God’s wisdom and the wisdom that comes fr. God.”  

Matthew, unlike Luke, then adds the invitation to come to him and take his yoke and find rest (Matt 11:28–30). This reference, along with the reference to the unique relationship between the Father and the Son (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22), carries echoes of other significant wisdom texts, and will be revisited in the later section on references, echoes and allusions. However it is worth noting here that Richard France sees Matt 11:25–27 as containing “some of the most remarkable christological teaching of the

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186 BDAG, s.v. σοφία
187 Section IIC. 2) (i).
gospel,” providing “a suggestive context for Matthew’s clearest allusion to the Jewish figure of Wisdom in vv. 28–30.”

**d) The Queen of the South and the One greater than Solomon**

*Matthew 12:38–42; Luke 11:29–32*

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<td>38 Τότε ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ τινες τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων λέγοντες· διδάσκαλε, θέλομεν ἀπὸ σοῦ σημεῖον ἰδεῖν. 49 ὁ δὲ ἀποκρίθησεν εἰπεν αὐτοῖς· γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοχλᾶς σημεῖον ἐπίζητε, καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ τοῦ προφήτου. 40 ὥσπερ γὰρ ἦν Ἰωνᾶς ἐν τῇ κοιλίᾳ τοῦ κήπου τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας, οὕτως ἐσται ο ύός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας. 41 ἄνδρες Νινευὶς ἀναστίησον ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτῆς, ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωνᾶ ὀδὸ. 42 βασίλεια νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν, ὅτι ἠλθεν ἐκ τῶν περίτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομόνος, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομόνος ὀδὸ.</td>
<td>29 Τῶν δὲ ὄχλων ἐπαθροιζομένων ἤρξατο λέγειν· ἦ γενεὰ αὐτὴ γενεὰ πονηρὰ ἔστιν· σημεῖον ἠζητεί, καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ. 30 καθὼς γὰρ ἐγένετο Ἰωνᾶς τοῖς Νινευίταις σημεῖον, οὕτως ἔσται καὶ ο ύός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτη. 31 βασίλεια νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτοὺς, ὅτι ἠλθεν ἐκ τῶν περίτων τῆς γῆς ἀκοῦσαι τὴν σοφίαν Σολομόνος, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Σολομόνος ὀδὸ. 32 ἄνδρες Νινευὶς ἀναστίησον ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν· ὅτι μετενόησαν εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰωνᾶ, καὶ ἰδοὺ πλεῖον Ἰωνᾶ ὀδὸ.</td>
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Here Jesus once again rebukes the crowd (in Luke) and specifically the scribes and Pharisees (in Matthew) for failing to respond to him as they ought. He is both one greater than Jonah and one greater than Solomon, and yet they fail to respond to him as the Ninevites responded to Jonah’s preaching and the Queen of the South responded to Solomon’s wisdom. In both of those cases, foreigners showed a better response to God’s word through these lesser servants than the Jews have now to their own Messiah.

The specific reference to wisdom is in fact not related to Jesus, but to Solomon. The Queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon (ἀκοῦσα τὴν σοφίαν Σολομόνος). Jesus then

comments that one greater than Solomon is here (καὶ ἰδοὺ πλείον Ὁλομιφόνος ὃδε). Most commentators agree that Jesus is referring to himself when he speaks of “one greater than Solomon.” France points out that in fact this is one of three references to “one greater” in this chapter of Matthew: in Matt 12:6 one greater than the temple is here, and in Matt 12:41 one greater than Jonah is here. He suggests that the temple represents the priesthood, Jonah represents the prophets, and Solomon represents the wisdom movement, and that Matthew is claiming that in Jesus “all these lines of authority came together and found their contemporary manifestation.”

Opinion is divided as to what the exact nature of the claimed relationship between Jesus and wisdom is. As Smith says: “Most commentators relate the phrase “Something greater than Solomon is here” to Jesus, but surprisingly few do so in terms of personified Wisdom.” It could be that Jesus is simply saying that, just as Solomon was endowed with extraordinary wisdom from God, so in Jesus there stands in front of them another wise person, one has been granted an even greater degree of wisdom than was granted to Solomon. Goldsworthy, for example, says: “Solomon was always regarded as the big name in Hebrew wisdom, but Jesus outshines him by far,” and Stein says that “Jesus is the ultimate “wise man,” and his wisdom has no equal.” Even Celia Deutsch, who claims that in other places such as Matt 11:25–30 Jesus is being identified with Wisdom, says that in this particular passage he is only being described as “possessing wisdom in a preeminent way.”

However, it is also possible that the difference between Solomon and Jesus is not just of degree, but also of nature: where Solomon is the wisest person, Jesus is something greater because he is more than a human; he is in fact wisdom incarnate. Marshall, who is not convinced that this particular passage clearly identifies Jesus with divine wisdom, nonetheless sees that in conjunction with other sayings, this “forms part of a series in which the claim of Jesus to be the fulfilment of the OT wisdom tradition is to be

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190 Smith, *Wisdom Christology*, 78.
193 Deutsch, *Lady Wisdom*, 64.
found.” Witherington goes further, in believing that: “If it is true that Jesus made a claim that something greater than Solomon was present in and through his ministry, one must ask what it could be ... Surely the most straightforward answer would be that Wisdom had come in person.”

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e) Wisdom in the synagogue (Matthew 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–22)

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<td>καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν, ὡστε ἔκπλησσεσθαί αὐτοὺς καὶ λέγειν: πόθεν τούτῳ ἡ σοφία αὕτη καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις;</td>
<td>2 καὶ γενομένου σαββάτου ἐδίδασκεν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ, καὶ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἔξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες: πόθεν τούτῳ ταῦτα, καὶ τὶς ἡ σοφία ἡ δοθεῖσα τούτῳ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαῦτα διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι;</td>
<td>16 Καὶ ἔλθεν εἰς Ναζαρά, οὗ ἦν τεθραμμένος, καὶ ἐσῆλθεν κατὰ τὸ εἰσόθυμον αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ ἀνέστη ἀναγνώρισθαι ... 22 Καὶ πάντες ἐμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ καὶ ἑθαμαζόν ἐπὶ τὸς λόγος τῆς χάριτος τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλεγον· οὐχὶ υἱὸς ἐστιν Ἰωσὴφ οὗτος;</td>
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Here, Jesus speaks in the synagogue in Nazareth, and the people are amazed at him. They wonder where his wisdom and power come from. However, although they initially speak well of him, they go on to question and doubt him. As Darrell Bock puts it, “Jesus’ teaching evokes both wonder and rejection.” This rejection leads to Jesus’ comment about a prophet being without honour, or acceptance, in his hometown (Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24).

In Luke, this passage is placed at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, and is widely acknowledged as programmatic for Luke’s

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presentation of the ministry of Jesus.\textsuperscript{197} Interestingly, Luke does not refer to Jesus’ wisdom. Instead, the crowd is amazed at his “gracious words” [τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος] (Luke 4:22). This might also be translated as “words of divine grace,” and Marshall suggests that Luke is “consciously playing on both senses of the word, the people of Nazareth failing to see through the pleasing words to the message of salvation contained in them.”\textsuperscript{198} If this is right, then it implies that Luke’s focus here, as he sets the agenda for his gospel, is on Jesus as bringer of salvation and grace. That might explain why Luke does not use wisdom language here, as Matthew and Mark do: he is thinking of Jesus in terms of his place in the broader context of salvation-history, rather then in the less-prominent category of wisdom. Elsewhere, as we have seen, Luke does speak of wisdom as a key attribute of Jesus, but not here as he makes his programmatic statement.

Another distinctive in Luke is that he records Jesus reading Isa 61:1–2 (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ...”) and claiming: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Luke precedes this passage with two other references to the Spirit (Luke 4:1–2, 14–15). This reflects a general trend within Luke to focus on the Spirit perhaps more than the other Synoptic writers do, as F.F. Bruce notes: “more often it is Luke who mentions the Spirit where Matthew does not.”\textsuperscript{199} In this context, whereas Matthew and Mark have the crowd wondering at the source of Jesus’ wisdom, Luke tells us instead that he is filled with the Spirit of the Lord. We have seen that in Second Temple Judaism there was a tendency to connect Wisdom with the Spirit, and Smith claims that this passage “supports the suggestion that, for Luke, the Spirit is the source of wisdom, even of the wisdom of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{200}

We also note that this is the only occurrence of σοφία in Mark’s Gospel. Commentators seem not to know what to make of this. Robert Stein’s only comment on this in his otherwise very detailed commentary is to suggest that this saying “probably came to Mark from the tradition.”\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{200} Smith, Wisdom Christology, 81.
\textsuperscript{201} Robert H. Stein, Mark (BECNT 2; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 281.
That is, in Stein’s eyes this is so out of place that it must have been inherited from some other source. And Eugene Boring, in his recent commentary, suggests that it is not the content of Jesus’ teaching that is being emphasised here, but the authority implicit in both his teaching and his miracles.\(^{202}\) It might be suggested that this lone occurrence is the exception that proves the rule that Mark has no place for wisdom in his Christology. However, it remains to be seen if wisdom is raised in other ways in Mark. This will be explored in the subsequent sections on “references, echoes and allusions to wisdom literature,”\(^{203}\) and “wisdom forms and contexts.”\(^{204}\)

f) Sending the prophets (Matthew 23:34; Luke 11:49)

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Διά τοῦτο ίδον ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρóς ὑμᾶς προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς· ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενεῖτε καὶ σταυρώσετε καὶ ἔξω ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν·</td>
<td>διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐίπεν· ἀποστέλλω εἰς αὐτοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, καὶ ἔξω αὐτῶν ἀποκτενοῦσιν καὶ διώξουσιν</td>
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Jesus here is condemning the scribes and Pharisees for repeating the sins of their fathers. They tend the tombs of the prophets, and claim to revere them; but just as their fathers shed the blood of the prophets, so they too will kill those sent to them.

(ii) Wisdom and the sender

The first and most significant difference between Matthew and Luke is found in the initial section of the first sentence. Matthew puts these words in Jesus’ mouth in the first person, and in the present tense-form: “I” (Jesus) send you prophets (ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρóς ὑμᾶς προφήτας). Luke, on the other hand, has Jesus quoting the words of “the Wisdom of God” in the aorist tense-form (ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐίπεν· ἀποστέλλω εἰς αὐτοὺς προφήτας).

Suggs suggests that Luke’s version has Jesus quoting a lost Jewish source where these words were given as an oracle of personified wisdom.\(^{205}\)

\(^{203}\) Section IIIC
\(^{204}\) Section IIID
\(^{205}\) Suggs, *Wisdom*, 19
As with Leivestad’s theory on Matt 11:19, however, any appeal to “lost” sources remains unsubstantiated speculation. Gathercole points out that Wisdom is portrayed as the sender of the prophets in the Wisdom of Solomon, which says: “Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets” (Wis 7:27). Clearly, however, having wisdom as the speaker, and in referring to this wisdom as being “of God,” Luke is presenting these as the words of divine wisdom personified. With no evidence of any other source from which these words come, and in the light of Matthew’s presentation of these words coming directly from Jesus himself, a more satisfying explanation is that Jesus is not quoting some other source, but is referring to himself. That is, Luke is presenting Jesus as “the Wisdom of God,” who has made plans and predictions in the past that are now being recalled and played out in his incarnation.

(ii) Wisdom and the sent

A second difference is seen in those who are sent. In Matthew Jesus sends prophets, “wise men” (σοφούς), and scribes. On the other hand, Luke has “the Wisdom of God” sending prophets and apostles, but does not specifically refer to them as “wise men.” Thus, it seems that at this point Matthew’s focus is on Jesus as the source of wisdom: he is the sender of prophets and wise men, whose message and wisdom presumably comes from him. For Luke, on the other hand, the focus is more on the identity of Jesus as Wisdom incarnate. This need not be interpreted as a conflict or contradiction, but rather a choice of emphasis at this point. In other places, the balance is different: Matthew focusses on Jesus as Wisdom incarnate, and Luke on Jesus as the source of wisdom.

g) I will give you wisdom (Matthew 10:19–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12; 21:12-15)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὅταν δὲ παραδώσῃ</td>
<td>καὶ ὅταν ἂγωσιν ὑμᾶς</td>
<td>Ὅταν δὲ εἰσφέρωσιν ὑμᾶς</td>
<td>Πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here Jesus predicts the outbreak of war and persecution in the last days. But the disciples are not to be concerned at what to say when dragged before kings and governors. This will be an opportunity to bear witness, and he will give them the words to say. The only reference to wisdom here is in Luke 21:15, where Jesus specifically says that he will provide them with “a mouth and wisdom” (ἐγὼ γὰρ δῶσοι υμῖν στόμα καὶ σοφίαν). It is, in fact, debatable as to whether these four passages are to be seen as parallels.

Smith treats them as if they are. Edwards sees a three-way parallel, treating the Luke 21 passage and not the Luke 12 passage as being parallel to the Matthew and Mark passages. Deutsch, on the other hand, sees the Luke 12 passage as being parallel to Matthew’s account. Clearly it is debatable whether Luke 12 or Luke 21 should be taken as the parallel to the passages in the other Synoptics, or whether they both are. The wording in

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207 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 79.
209 Deutsch, Lady Wisdom, 116.
Luke 12 is a closer parallel to that used in Matthew and Mark. Luke 21, despite sharing a common theme, uses different wording. Therefore, it must be considered a possibility that Luke 21 is a stand-alone passage without parallel. Carroll, however, suggests that Luke 21 reinforces the message of encouragement in Luke 12, and that the book of Acts “will repeatedly narrate its enactment.”

If the Luke 21 passage is to be read on its own, then the simple interpretation is that Jesus will give his disciples the wisdom that they need, in the form of the right words to use to witness to him and to respond to those that challenge them. Edwards notes that verse 15 is strongly emphatic in Greek: “I myself will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.” Thus, Jesus is the giver, or the source, of unique and powerful wisdom. However, if it is accepted that Luke 21 has some parallel with the other three passages, a further level of interpretation can be added. The source of inspiration in the other passages is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks in Matthew and Mark. Turner notes that up to this point in Matthew, the Spirit has been mentioned solely in connection with Jesus and his kingdom ministry, but as the disciples extend the message of Jesus, they too will experience the similar work of the Spirit in their lives. It is also the Spirit who gives the disciples what to say in Luke 12. By contrast, in Luke 21 it is Jesus who gives “a mouth and wisdom.” This suggests a close connection between Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the provision of wisdom.

Smith says that this passage “supports the thesis that Luke relates Wisdom primarily with the Spirit, in line with the development of the Old Testament Book of Wisdom.” However, this conclusion seems to contradict the evidence, given that Luke is the only one of the three writers who specifically connects wisdom with Jesus. Far from downplaying any identification between Jesus and wisdom, Luke is in fact the only one who encourages such a view in this particular passage.

h) Observations on the use of σοφία and σοφός

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Let us now make some observations on what we have seen thus far. With regard to the use of the noun σοφία, when this is treated as a quality or an attribute, it is almost exclusively attributed to Jesus. Luke tells us that as a child Jesus grew in wisdom (Luke 2:40,52). In these two passages, he is described in the same terms as both Samuel and John the Baptist. However, he has the additional quality of σοφία. When Jesus taught in the synagogue (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–22), both Matthew and Mark uniquely among the Synoptic writers tell us that the hearers were amazed at his σοφία. When Jesus condemns the crowd by comparing them unfavorably to the people of Nineveh in Jonah’s time and the Queen of the South in Solomon’s time (Matt 12:38–42; Luke 11:29–32), he compares himself to Solomon. Solomon had σοφία that the Queen of the South crossed the world to see; Jesus is “one greater than Solomon.” At the very least, this is yet another reference to Jesus being the possessor of great σοφία. It is quite probable, however, that he is saying more than that: that he is in fact of σοφία in person.

There are two places in the Synoptics where σοφία is clearly treated as if it were a proper noun: that is, as referring to Wisdom personified rather than to the quality or possession of wisdom. In Matt 11:16–19, σοφία is justified by her deeds. In the context, it seems clear that the deeds referred to are the deeds of Jesus. The conclusion to be drawn is that Jesus is claiming to be Wisdom incarnate. The principal challenge to this interpretation comes from the parallel passage in Luke 7:31–35, where σοφία is justified by her children, not her deeds. However, there is a strong argument that those children are to be identified with those that respond to Jesus. This supports the interpretation that Jesus is to be identified as σοφία incarnate. The only exception to the pattern of σοφία being used of either Jesus or Wisdom personified is in Luke 21:15, where Jesus tells his disciples that when called to bear witness in the face of persecution, he will provide them with σοφία. This suggests that Jesus is the source of σοφία, or that his σοφία will be at work through them. The pattern of usage in the Synoptics, therefore, seems to reveal that at the very least σοφία is a quality that Jesus uniquely possesses, and one in case alone, gives to his disciples. This usage is particularly the case in Luke, and to a lesser degree in Matthew and Mark. There is also a strong case to be made that Jesus is in
some places identified as σοφία personified. This is most clear in Matthew, but also appears in Luke.

We can also observe a connection between σοφία and the Spirit of God. When Jesus taught in the synagogue (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–22), whereas Matthew and Mark tell us that the hearers were amazed at his wisdom, Luke tells us that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. And whereas in Luke 21:15 Jesus tells his disciples (Luke 21:15) that he will provide them with σοφία, in other places (Matt 10:19–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12) he says that the Spirit will speak through them. Thus the σοφία of Jesus is inextricably linked with the Spirit.

With regard to the adjective σοφός, this is never used of Jesus. Jesus uses it rhetorically to describe those who may be wise in the eyes of the world, but who in fact have had the things of God hidden from them (Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21). He also uses it to describe those whom he will send to them (Matt 23:34), whom they will reject and kill. Thus σοφός is a quality that some appear to have; but only those sent by Jesus truly have.

2) Uses of φρόνησις and μωρός

Having examined the various uses of σοφία and σοφός, let us now turn our attention to the other key wisdom words in the NT. There are principally two: φρόνησις and those words that share its root; and its antonym μωρός, and those words that share its root. This language is more common in the Synoptics than σοφία language. This is in all likelihood due to the fact that this is a lower-order, less specialized word, and therefore applies to more people in more situations.

Not every occurrence of words from the φρήν–root will be relevant to this analysis, as some variations have meanings that do not relate directly to wisdom. Of particular note are the nine occurrences of φρόνιμος, all of which are applied to those who respond to, serve, or wait for Jesus; while there is only one occurrence of φρόνησις, which refers to those who respond to John the Baptist as he turns the hearts of the wayward back to the Lord. It

214 Although the direct antonym of φρόνιμος is ἄφροσύνη, μωρός is more commonly used as an antonym in the Synoptics, as we shall see
215 For detailed breakdown of where these words appear, see Appendix B — “Words Sharing the Root of φρόνησις in the Synoptic Gospels.”
is noteworthy that none of the words in this group are applied to Jesus, or to Wisdom personified, but all apply to human beings. The practical wisdom that this word group describes is that of the human life that is lived well, or in the right way, and will lead to a positive outcome. By contrast, the foolish life, which will end badly, is described mostly using the μωρός word group.²¹⁶

a) Exegetical fallacies and irrelevant texts

In order to avoid being selective, it is important that any lexical study gives consideration to every occurrence of any particular word usage, rather than cherry-picking preferred examples. However, there are grounds for assessing some occurrences as being irrelevant to the study in hand. One such ground is what D.A. Carson calls “the root fallacy.” He puts it this way: “One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually has a meaning bound up with its shape of its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology: that is, by the root or roots of a word.”²¹⁷ He goes on to qualify this by adding three caveats, which acknowledge that etymological study is far from useless, because the meaning of a word may reflect the meanings of its component parts, and words are not infinitely plastic. His point is simply that “the meaning of a word cannot be reliably determined by etymology, or that a root, once discovered, always projects a certain semantic load onto any word that incorporates that root.”²¹⁸ Thus, any lexical study must give careful attention to the context and particular usage of a word, and not simply rely on identifying roots.

In this study, Carson’s warning concerning the root fallacy seems to apply particularly to φρόνησις. There are several words that share the same root (or are claimed to do so), but not all seem to carry a meaning relating to wisdom. In particular, although it apparently shares the same root as φρόνησις, εὐφραίνω does not seem to relate to wisdom at all, but rather to joy and celebration. Therefore, those places where this verb is used will not be given attention in this study. This applies specifically to the description

²¹⁶ For detailed breakdown of where these words appear, see Appendix C — “Words Sharing the Root of μωρός in the Synoptic Gospels.”
²¹⁸ Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 32.
of the feasting of the rich man in Luke 16:19, and the various references to celebration in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:23–24, 29 and 32. It may also be questioned whether the verb φρονέω has a meaning that refers to wisdom, or is a more general verb relating to thinking and mindset. However, rather than completely ignoring the use of this verb, it will be addressed, but treated with a degree of caution.

There are other instances when wisdom language or vocabulary is used, but the usage does not seem to contribute to our understanding. In particular, there is an occurrence of μωρός in Matt 5:22, where “You fool!” is an insult against a brother, for which Jesus condemns the speaker. This is not really a comment on wisdom or foolishness, but on the ungodliness of the brother, and (apart from in cross-reference from other passages) will not receive particular attention here.

b) The salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34–35)

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<tr>
<td>13 ὑμεῖς ἔστε τὸ ἁλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἁλας μωρανθῆ, ἐν τίνι ἀλεθήσεται; εἰς οúdeν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθήν ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.</td>
<td>34 Καλὸν οὖν τὸ ἁλας· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἁλας μωρανθῆ, ἐν τίνι ἀρτυθήσεται; 35 οὐτε εἰς γῆν οὔτε εἰς κοπρίαν εἴθετόν ἐστιν, ἔξω βάλλοντι αὐτῷ. ὁ ἔχων ὡτα ἀκουέιν ἀκουέτω.</td>
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In this passage, Jesus comments that salt is only useful while it retains its flavor. Luke has this as a general observation being addressed to the crowd. Matthew, on the other hand, has Jesus specifically addressing these words to the disciples: the “you” of Matt 5:13 would seem to be those who are persecuted on Jesus’ behalf (Matt 5:11) and whose reward is great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:12). Nolland tells us: “Apart from the obvious role of salt in flavouring and preserving, in the ancient world it was seen as a purifying or cleansing agent.”219 Thus the role that those who follow Jesus are to play in the world is not simply to be pure themselves, but to have a purifying, cleansing effect on the world around them. It is of note, then, that the verb used to describe the salt losing its saltiness, or going bad, is literally “go foolish” (μωρανθῆ). That implies, by contrast, that Jesus’ followers are

only “salty” when they are being wise. Wisdom is, therefore, living effectively as a follower of, and witness to, Jesus; whereas foolishness consists of being ineffectual.

c) Shrewdness and two masters (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:8–13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 6:24</th>
<th>Luke 16:8–9; 13</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 καὶ ἐπήνευσεν ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἁδίκιας ὅτι φρονίμως ἔποίησεν· ὅτι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦτοφρονιμότεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός εἰς τὴν γενεάν τὴν ἑαυτῶν εἰσὶν. 9 Καὶ ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, ἑαυτοῖς ποιήσατε φίλους ἑκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἁδίκιας, ἵνα ὅταν ἐκλίψῃ δέξονται ὑμᾶς εἰς τὰς αἰωνίους σκηνὰς.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Οὐδείς δύναναι δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ή γὰρ τὸν ἕνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἔτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἕνος ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἔτερου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾶ. 13 Οὐδείς οἰκέτης δύναναι δυσὶν κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ή γὰρ τὸν ἕνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἔτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἕνος ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἔτερου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾶ.</td>
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In the parable recorded in Luke 16:1–8, a manager who is dishonest with his master’s accounts is commended for his wisdom, or “shrewdness” (ὅτι φρονίμως ἐποίησεν). There is some debate among commentators as to whether the lord (ὁ κύριος) who does the commending is the master in the story, or Jesus the story-teller. It would be odd for the man’s employer to congratulate him for effectively stealing from him, so many commentators suggest it is Jesus who commends him instead. However, as Nolland points out, the use of ὁ κύριος in the middle of a parable generally refers to a figure in the parable, rather than to Jesus himself.220 Furthermore, as Jesus goes on to comment in in Luke 16:10 that “one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much,” it would be odd if he were here to commend a person for being dishonest.

In the comment that follows, Jesus makes it clear that he is not approving of this as an example of good behaviour, but rather commenting on the shrewdness of the ungodly in the way they work for their own profit in the world. He says that the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing

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with their own generation than are the sons of light (οἱ ὑιοὶ τοῦ ἀνώνομος
tοῦτοῦ φρονιμώτεροι ὑπὲρ τοὺς ὑιοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἑαυτῶν
eis). Thus there is a form of “wisdom” which is not of God, but finds its
origins in this world, and which is alien to the servants of God, or the sons
of light as he calls them.

Jesus then advises his disciples to make friends with unrighteous
wealth (ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας), so after it fails they may be welcomed
16:13 (which is echoed in Matt 6:24), when Jesus says that no one can serve
two masters: one will either love the one and hate the other, or be devoted to
the one and despise the other (τοῦ ἐτέρου καταφρονήσει). In this usage,
καταφρονήσει seems to carry the sense of “set your mind against,” the
opposite of “set your mind on.” Wisdom thus is shown in deciding to serve
God, and to see money as something that will not last, but which is merely
to be used in this world.

d) The wise and the foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27)

As he concludes the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus finishes with this warning
against the foolishness of hearing his words and not putting them into
practice. There are two issues to note here: the nature of, and contrast
between, wisdom and foolishness; and the relationship between Jesus’
words and the Law.

(i) A warning against foolishness

The phrase that Jesus uses to describe such a foolish man is ἄνδρὶ μωρῷ
(Matt 7:26). The contrasting figure of the wise man is ἄνδρὶ φρονίμῳ (Matt
7:24). The same two words appear in contrast again in the parable of the
wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1–13). Smith says that these two words are “almost a Matthaean exclusive in the Gospels.”

He notes that φρόνιμος is used seven times by Matthew, only twice by Luke, five times by Paul, and nowhere else in the NT. Further, not only does Luke use the word less frequently, but he also uses φρόνιμος sometimes for “shrewdness” or “prudence” (as seen above in Luke 16), rather than the stronger use Matthew has for it. Similarly, the contrasting word μωρός is used six times in Matthew, once in Mark, and six times by Paul. Thus this polemical focus on contrasting human wisdom and foolishness seems to be particular to Matthew and Paul.

(ii) Wisdom and the Law

Another factor to be considered in this passage is the connection between Jesus and the Law. It has often been suggested that as he delivers the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew is presenting Jesus as a Moses-like figure. Jonathan Draper, for instance, comments that the location on a mountain surrounded by the people suggests Moses, Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah to Israel, and K.C. Hanson says that “Like Sinai, this mountain is the place where revelation will proceed from God to the community via a mediator.” John Welch argues that the view that Jesus was a “new Moses” and the fulfiller of the Law of Moses “was recognized in early Christianity and cannot be casually ignored.” France goes further, suggesting that the portrayal of Jesus as a new Moses is insufficient. He says that Jesus is not just another Moses, but “something far higher.”

Given this parallel between Jesus and Moses, that raises the question of the relationship between what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount and the Law as delivered by Moses at Sinai. Richard Lenski puts it this way: “Jesus is thought of as expounding the true sense of the law over against the shallow and perverted exposition of the Jewish scribes and rabbis, doing

221 Smith, *Wisdom Christology*, 93.
again the work of Moses because the Jews had lost the true understanding of Moses.”

So, when Jesus says that the wise person is the one who hears “these words of mine” and puts them into practice, he is saying that wisdom consists in obeying the law as he teaches and fulfills it. Craig Keener says:

Another early Jewish teacher, while illustrating this point with many examples, went so far as to say that one who studies Torah and has good works “may be likened to” one who lays a foundation of stones and then of bricks, so that rising water or rain cannot overturn it. But one who studies Torah and has no good works is like one who builds with bricks on the bottom, so that even a small amount of water overturns it (ARN 24A). But Jesus here refers to his own words the way other Jewish teachers referred to God’s law.

We have seen that, particularly in Second Temple Judaism, there was a connection between wisdom and the Law. Here the two are drawn together in Jesus. He is the true interpreter and embodiment of the Law; and in obeying his words wisdom is found.

e) Wise as serpents (Matthew 10:16)

In the context of anticipated persecution, Jesus urges his disciples to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves (φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὀφεις καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς οἱ περιστεραί). This verse comes in the context of Jesus’ promise that the Spirit will give them the words to say. Interestingly, although this passage has parallels in both of the other Synoptics, only Matthew has this “wise as serpents” comment. Matthew’s use of φρόνιμοι here is similar to Luke’s usage in the parable of the “shrewd” manager in Luke 16. The “wisdom” there was careful use of money, whereas here it is careful use of words. The difference is that the manager in Luke 16 is dishonest, whereas Jesus here urges the disciples to be as innocent as doves.

227 ARN is Abot de Rabbi Nathan
228 Craig S. Keener, Matthew (IVPNTC 1; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 63.
The reason for this is clearly that they are in the Lord’s service, and cannot afford to bring themselves, and therefore the Lord, into disrepute. The shrewd manager, on the other hand, seems to be only concerned with his own financial gain.

**f) Mind on the things of God (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 16:23</th>
<th>Mark 8:33</th>
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<tr>
<td>ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς εἴπεν τῷ Πέτρῳ· ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ· σκάνδαλον εἶ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄλλα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.</td>
<td>ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ καὶ λέγει· ὑπαγε ὀπίσω μου, σατανᾶ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄλλα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.</td>
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</table>

As Jesus begins to teach the disciples that his destiny involves suffering, rejection and death, Peter takes him aside and rebukes him. Jesus in turn rebukes Peter, and calls him “Satan” and (in Matthew) a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον), telling him that he does not have in mind the things of God (οὐ φρονεῖς τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ) but of humans. The use of φρονεῖς here seems to be the opposite of καταφρονήσει in Matt 6:24/Luke 16:13 and in Matt 18:10. To “have in mind,” it seems, is the opposite of to “despise.” This suggests that the usage is far stronger than just to think about (as “have in mind” may suggest) but rather to have one’s mind fixed on, or by which to have one’s thinking governed.

Bearing in mind Carson’s comments on the “root fallacy,” one might still cautiously suggest that this sheds a little light on our understanding of φρόνησις. If there is a connection between the noun and the verb it would appear to have to do with wisdom coming in the form of right thinking, or having one’s mind committed to the right things, particularly the things of God.

**g) Loving the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10)**

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<th>Matthew 18:10</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ὅρατε μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἐνός τῶν μικρῶν τούτων· λέγω γάρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς διὰ παντὸς βλέπουσιν τὸ πρὸς οὗτος τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.</td>
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Jesus urges his hearers not to despise any of these little ones (μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἐνός τῶν μικρῶν τούτων). He will go on to tell the parable
of the man who rejoices over the one lost sheep that is found. The conclusion (Matt 18:14) is that it is not the will of the Father in heaven that any of these little ones should perish. The use of καταφρονήσητε (“despise”) here echoes the use in Matt 6:24 and Luke 17:13. By contrast to “despising” the little ones, the one who has their mind set on, or aligned with, the things of God will presumably follow the Father’s lead and desire to see them saved. Thus, wise thinking is concerned here with salvation, and allowing or encouraging the lost to come to Jesus.


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<tr>
<td>17 μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί, τίς γὰρ μείξον ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσὸς ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὃ ἀγιάσας τὸν χρυσὸν;</td>
<td>39 εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος πρὸς αὐτὸν· νῦν ὑμεῖς οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὸ έξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τοῦ πίνακος καθαρίζετε, τὸ δὲ έσωθέν υμῶν γέμει ἄρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>καὶ· δὲ ἂν ὑμὸς ἐν τῷ θυσιαστήρῳ, οὐδὲν ἐστιν· δὲ δὲ ἂν ὑμὸς ἐν τῷ δόρῳ τῷ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ, ὀφείλει.</td>
<td>ἄφρονες, οὐχ ὁ πούσας τὸ έξωθεν καὶ τὸ έσωθέν ἐποίησεν;</td>
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These two passages are not exact parallels. However, they are very similar, and are connected in that they both record Jesus commenting on the Pharisees tithing mint and herbs, but neglecting the weightier matters of the law such as justice, mercy, faithfulness and the love of God (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42). In both passages, Jesus calls the Pharisees “fools.” However, Matthew uses μωροὶ whereas Luke uses ἄφρονες. This is interesting in light of Jesus’ earlier comment in Matthew (Matt 5:22) that whoever calls a brother “fool” will be liable to the hell of fire (δὲ δὲ ἂν εἴητη· μωρὲ, ἄνοχος ἐσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός). There seem to be three ways of reconciling this apparent contradiction. First, in Matthew 5, Jesus is condemning those who speak in ungodly anger and haste. In Matthew 23 he is quite justified in condemning the sinfulness and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Second, in Matthew 5 he condemns those who insult a brother. In Matthew 23 he does not regard the Pharisees as brothers. Third, although it is wrong for humans to judge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:13), Jesus is quite justified in judging as he is the Lord and the anointed judge (John 5:22; Acts 17:31).
In Matthew 23, Jesus repeatedly calls the scribes and Pharisees blind and hypocritical. In this particular verse he adds foolishness to their blindness (μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί), because when it came to swearing oaths they regarded the gold in the temple as being greater than the temple itself, and the offering on the altar as being greater than the altar itself. In Luke 11, hypocrisy is also the issue, in that the Pharisees were concerned with outward appearances of righteousness, but neglected the inside, where they were greedy and corrupt. Thus, in both cases, their foolishness lies in putting emphasis on minor things while overlooking or neglecting the greater things of God.


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<tr>
<td>45 Τίς ἄρα ἐστίν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος ὃν κατέστησεν ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος αὐτοῦ τὴν τροφὴν ἐν καιρῷ; 46 μακάριος ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος ὃν ἔλῃθον ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εὑρήσει οὕτως ποιοῦντα;</td>
<td>42 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος· τίς ἄρα ἐστίν ὁ πιστὸς οἰκονόμος ὁ φρόνιμος, ὃν καταστήσει ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ δίδονα ἐν καιρῷ [τὸ] σιτομέτριον; 43 μακάριος ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος, ὃν ἔλῃθον ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εὑρήσει ποιοῦντα οὕτως.</td>
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Jesus is here speaking to the disciples about his own second coming. He tells them that the Son of Man is coming “at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44; Luke 12:40). He warns them therefore to be ready for him at any time. In Matthew, Jesus likens that day to the coming of the flood in the days of Noah (Matt 24:36–39) and to the coming of a thief in the night (Matt 24:43). Luke also refers to the thief breaking in (Luke 12:39). But instead of the flood, he uses the image of men waiting for their master to return from a wedding feast (Luke 12:35–38). Luke 12:41 then has Peter asking if this parable is being told just for the disciples, or for all (κύριε, πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην λέγεις ἢ καὶ πρὸς πάντας;). Jesus responds with a question of his own, recorded by both Matthew and Luke: “who then is the faithful and wise manager (Τίς ἄρα ἐστίν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος)?” He then goes on to tell the parable of a manager who has been left in charge of his master’s affairs (Matt 24:45–51; Luke 12:41–48) who will be either blessed or beaten, depending on his state of readiness.
when the master returns. Given that the context is a discussion of the second coming, then the message is clear: the wise person is the one who is faithful and waits in readiness for Jesus’ return.

### j) Wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1–9) 229

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 25:1–9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Τότε ὁμοιωθήσεται η ἡβασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν δέκα παρθένοις, αἱ τινὲς λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν ἐξήλθον εἰς ἑαυτὴν τοῦ νυμφίου. 2 πέντε δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἔσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι. 3 αἱ γὰρ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν ὡς έλαβον μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν ἑλαίον. 4 αἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι ἔλαβον ἑλαιόν ἐν τοῖς ἀγγείοις μετὰ τῶν λαμπάδων ἑαυτῶν. 5 χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἔνστασιν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθευδον. 6 μέσης δὲ νυκτὸς κραυγὴ γέγονεν· ἵδον ὁ νυμφίος, ἐξέρχεσθε εἰς ἑαυτῆς (αὐτὸς). 7 τότε ἤγερθαν πᾶσας αἱ παρθένοι ἔκειναι καὶ ἐκόψασιν τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν. 8 αἱ δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρόνιμοις εἶπαν· δότε ἡμῖν ὑμῶν ἑλαίον ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν ὑμῶν σβέννυνται. 9 ἀπεκρίθησαν δὲ αἱ φρόνιμοι λέγουσαι· μὴ πολλὴ ὑμῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἑλαιοῦ ὑμῶν, ὅτι αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν σβέννυνται.</td>
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Immediately on the heels of the parable of the faithful and wise manager, in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The virgins are waiting for the coming of the bridegroom, but he is delayed, and the foolish virgins who did not have enough oil in their lamps are shut out of the feast. Jesus concludes with the warning to watch, for the hour of his coming is unknown (Matt 25:13). As Tasker says:

The parable of the ten virgins is complementary to the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants which immediately precedes it. In it a further picture is given of the predicament in which disciples will find themselves at the parousia if they have failed to prepare themselves for it.230

This parable contains the highest concentration of wisdom vocabulary in the Synoptics: φρόνιμοι is used four times (verses 2, 4, 8–9) and μωραί is used three times (verses 2–3, 8). The contrasting wisdom and foolishness of the two groups of virgins is being driven home forcefully. What differentiates the foolish from the wise is “precisely the failure of the former to face the possibility that the bridegroom, their returning Lord, may come earlier or later than they expect, and that in any case the coming will be so sudden that

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229 The passage extends down to verse 13, but the use of wisdom vocabulary finishes in verse 9.

it will afford no opportunity for making good deficiencies which are then discovered.”

Thus wisdom consists in looking for, and being prepared for, the Lord’s return. This stands in slight contrast to the general understanding of wisdom as being practical advice on the art of living well, or instructions for industrious and prosperous living. However, as we have seen, Biblical wisdom is more than that: it begins with “the fear of the Lord” (Prov 1:7; 9:10). Growing out of that theological ground there is a strand of wisdom, particularly in Second Temple Judaism, that has an apocalyptic focus, anticipating the visitation of the Lord, along with judgment for the wicked and blessings for the righteous. Thus, what we see unfolding here in Jesus’ words is nothing new: wisdom has to do with more than the life lived well; it is found in being in right relationship with God, and in being prepared to meet him.

**k) Restored to right-mindedness (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark 5:15</th>
<th>Luke 8:35</th>
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<tr>
<td>15 καὶ ἔρχονται πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαιμονιζόμενον καθήμενον ἰματισμένον καὶ σοφρονοῦντα, τὸν ἐσχήκοτα τὸν λεγιῶνα, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.</td>
<td>35 ἔξηλθον δὲ ἰδεῖν τὸ γεγονός καὶ ἠλθον πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εὐρον καθήμενον τὸν ἀνθρωπον ἀφ’ οὗ τὰ δαιμόνια ἔξηλθεν ἰματισμένον καὶ σοφρονοῦντα παρά τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.</td>
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In this pericope, Jesus confronts a man who is possessed by a “legion” of demons, and drives them out. Afterwards, he is found “in his right mind” (σοφρονοῦντα). This may not be the most significant of wisdom references, if it is indeed a wisdom reference at all. It may be an instance where it could be argued that a word from the φρην-root does not have a direct association with wisdom. However, it is worth noticing this usage, as it does at least point to the fact that to be under the influence of demons is to be out of one’s “right mind,” and that Jesus restores people to their “right mind.” This may feed into a broader understanding that right-mindedness, like wisdom, is somehow connected to, or provided by, Jesus.

**l) Evil thoughts and foolishness (Mark 7:21–23)**

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231 Tasker, Matthew, 233.
In this passage, Jesus teaches that defilement comes not from what is put into the body, but rather comes from within, out of the heart of a human being (ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων). Lane says that “In Semitic expression the heart is the center of human personality which determines man’s entire action and inaction,” and points out that Jesus has already referred to the heart in Mark 7:6, when he quoted from Isa 29:13: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Jesus quotes this verse in response to the Pharisees and scribes who question why his disciples are eating with unwashed hands. He points to their hypocrisy in rejecting the command of God and insisting on their own traditions instead.

Jesus continues by explaining that out of the heart come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, and many other evils, including foolishness (ἀφροσύνη). There are three things to note here. First, Mark’s unusual use of ἀφροσύνη. This is one of only three references to foolishness in the Synoptics which does not use μωρός. The other two are Luke’s use of ἀφρονεῖς to refer to the Pharisees (Luke 11:40) and ἀφροσύνη in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:20). Second, it is unusual for Mark to use the language of wisdom at all. He only uses σοφία once, in Mark 6:2. And apart from this occurrence, he only uses φρόνησις related words twice: φρόνεις in Mark 8:33 and σωφρονοῦστα in Mark 5:15. It could be argued that in neither of those places does he really use the language in a specifically wisdom-related way: the former has to do with Peter “having in mind” the things of Satan, not of God; and in the latter instance the demon-possessed man is now “in his right mind.” Third, this reference to the evil that stems from the heart, coming in such close proximity to the previous reference to the hard hearts of the Pharisees in Mark 7:6, suggests a connection between the two. That is, having a heart that is hardened against God will lead to evil thoughts and foolishness.

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m) *Turning the hearts of the disobedient to wisdom* (Luke 1:17)

The angel in this verse announces to Zechariah the impending birth of John the Baptist, and tells him what role John is to play. He will go before the Lord, to prepare people to receive him, and in so doing he will turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous (ἀπειθεῖς ἐν φρονήσει δικαίων). Here wisdom is associated with righteousness, and is contrasted with disobedience. It is also the characteristic of those who will receive and welcome Jesus. John will carry out this mission in the spirit and power of Elijah (ἐν πνεύματι καὶ δυνάμει Ἑλίου). Nolland says that this juxtaposition of “spirit” and “power” is Lukan, pointing in particular to Luke 1:35, 4:14, and Acts 10:38. This is one of a number of places where Luke connects the Spirit with wisdom: in this instance, it empowers John as he turns people’s hearts back to wisdom and prepares them to receive Jesus.

n) *The rich fool* (Luke 12:19–21)

In response to a request that Jesus help mediate an inheritance dispute between brothers, he tells the parable of the rich fool. This man lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God (Luke 12:21). As he congratulates himself on his wealth and anticipates enjoying it, God says “Fool (ἄφρων)! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20).

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234 The passage actually begins in verse 13, but it is only in these closing verses that the reference to foolishness appears.
The foolishness depicted here consists of two things in combination: investing in things that he will not be able to enjoy; and not investing in his relationship with God. Given the context in which the parable was told, a question about an inheritance, Jesus is clearly implying that the man he is talking to is like the fool in the story. He is a fool, not simply because he is interested in money, but principally because he is not interested in a relationship with God. His foolishness consists in his blindness toward Jesus and what he offers. He views Jesus as a means to gaining money, rather than as a saviour or messiah to be followed: “in the face of the arrival of God’s kingdom, to be concerned about inheritance rights and goods is folly indeed. Better to focus on the kingdom and allow oneself to be wronged (1 Cor 6:7) than to allow greed (Luke 11:39) to control one’s life.”

This is reinforced in the passage that follows, as Jesus goes on to urge his listeners not to worry about what to eat or to wear, but rather to seek first God’s kingdom (Luke 12:31). According to Luke 11:20, the kingdom is in their midst in the person of Jesus. So this man has not sought what he should have done from Jesus, namely the kingdom of God, but has instead worried about money. That is his foolishness.

**o) Observations on the use of φρόνησις and μωρός**

With regard to the use of φρόνησις and those words that share its root, not every related word carries quite the same meaning of “wisdom.” The various verb forms which share this root, for instance, have to do with what is going on in the mind, and whether one is thinking rightly or otherwise, but are only indirectly related to wisdom. The verb φρονέω is used (Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33) to refer to Peter “having in mind” the things of Satan. The verb σωφρονέω is used (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35) to refer to the demon-possessed man being healed by Jesus and being “in right mind.” And the negative form of the verb, καταφρονέω, is used (Matt 6:24; Luke 13) to describe how one will “despise” one master and love the other, and in Matt 18:10 to urge the disciples not to “despise” these little ones whom God wants to save. Despite the variations, there is a pattern in this usage. In every case, being in one’s right mind or otherwise is shaped by and depends

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on one’s standing towards Jesus. It is Jesus who restores a person to their right mind. Peter in opposing Jesus does not have in mind the things of God. To follow Jesus one has to despise mammon. And one ought not to despise the little ones whom Jesus has come to save.

More clearly and directly related to wisdom are the noun φρόνησις and the adjective φρόνιμος. It is noticeable that these are never used of Jesus, but almost exclusively of those in this world who follow him, wait for him, or are sent by him. John, as he goes before to prepare the way for Jesus, will turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (Luke 1:17). The wise person who builds their house on the rock (Matt 7:24) is the person who hears Jesus’ words and puts them into practice. The wise servant is the one who waits in readiness for Jesus to return (Matt 24:45–51; Luke 12:42–48); and the wise virgins are the ones who are ready and prepared for the coming of Jesus the bridegroom (Matt 25:2–12). The disciples, as Jesus sends them into the world, are to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matt 10:16).

By contrast, if the disciples lose their saltiness (Matt 5:13; Luke 14:34) they “become foolish” (μωραίνω). The person who does not listen to Jesus and put his words into practice (Matt 7:24–27) is a foolish person (μωρός), as are the virgins who are not prepared and ready for the bridegroom to return (Matt 25:2–12). The rich man who is not rich towards God is a fool (ἄφρων), as is (by implication) the man who asks Jesus for money but does not seek the kingdom of God (Luke 12:13–31). And the Pharisees who oppose Jesus are blind and foolish (μωρός) for not seeing that the temple is greater than the gold therein (Matt 23:17), for cleaning the outside of the dish and not the inside (Luke 11:39–40), and for not understanding that corruption comes from within, not without (Mark 7:21–23). Human wisdom, then, according to the Synoptics, is almost exclusively related to one’s response to Jesus: it is shown in coming to him to find the kingdom of God, in putting his words into practice, and in being prepared for him when he returns. Foolishness, by contrast, is shown in not accepting what Jesus says, not seeking God’s kingdom, and not being prepared for his return.

236 The bridegroom is clearly a reference to Jesus. See Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34; John 3:29.
C. References, echoes and allusions to wisdom

1) Introductory comments

Having surveyed the use of wisdom-specific language in the Synoptic Gospels, let us now consider other ways in which wisdom may be referenced. The first thing to consider is the way in which connections are drawn with wisdom literature, either through direct quotation, or through more indirect allusion or echo.

a) Defining quotations, allusions and echoes

Quotations are generally easy to recognize. As Gregory Beale says, a quotation is a direct citation of an OT passage “that is clearly recognizable by its clear and unique verbal parallelism.” 237 Often quotations are identified with an introductory formula, such as “that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled” (Matt. 2:15) or “it is written” (Rom. 3:4). Other citations without such introductory indicators are so obviously parallel to an OT text that it is clear that a quotation is being made (e.g., see Gal. 3:6; Eph. 6:3). The vast majority of what should be recognized as quotations from the OT are agreed upon by most commentators.

However, quotations are not always word-for-word replications. There are a number of possible reasons for this. One is that the writers of the NT almost always quote from the LXX, 238 which differs from the MT (the text used in most modern translations of the HB). Other reasons for variation include the common practice of conflating passages and the fact that the writers were probably quoting from memory in many cases. 239

Further complicating matters, references to other texts do not always come in the form of direct quotation, but may come via indirect referencing. As Richard Hays says, it is possible for a text to refer to another text less explicitly: a text may “allude to an earlier text in a way that evokes

238 Which itself an anachronistic term, as there is not a single LXX tradition.
resonances of the earlier text *beyond those explicitly cited*. The result is that the interpretation of [a text] requires the reader to recover unstated or suppressed correspondence between the two texts."  

Such “unstated or suppressed” references are often referred to as “allusions” or “echoes.” The term that is often used to refer to the study of such references is “intertextuality.” This is a term that did not originate within biblical scholarship, but within the field of literary criticism. Samuel Emadi credits Julia Kristeva for coining it in an essay written in 1967.  

Given that its usage in literary criticism “is an integral part of a radical deconstructionist hermeneutic and postmodern worldview,” he notes that many have criticised the appropriation of this term for biblical studies. He quotes T.R. Hatina and G.D. Miller as suggesting that this term should not be “bandied about” as a synonym for allusion, and that the “diachronic, author-oriented approach … should be given a different name.”  

Beale, likewise, argues that “the word’s original meaning and its ongoing typical definition is the synchronic study of multiple linkages among texts that are not the result of authorial intent but are considered only from the reader’s point of view.”  

He suggests the phrases “inner-biblical exegesis” or “inner-biblical allusion” as better alternatives. However, these do not seem to have caught on in the scholarly literature. On the whole, biblical scholars continue to use the term “intertextuality” in a way that may be understood a little differently to the way in which literary critics first used it, to describe the existence of allusions and echoes within one text referring to another text. Allusions and echoes are often referred to by scholars, and generally accepted to exist. However, there is a lack of clarity and consensus on just what constitutes such a reference, and what justifies claiming to see one. In his survey of the scholarship on intertextuality, Geoffrey Miller identifies two “basic methodological approaches”: reader-oriented and author-oriented. The first of these, the reader-oriented approach, focuses “on the

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reader and the connections that she draws between two or more texts.”

This form of hermeneutics, growing out of the work of the likes of Heidegger and Gadamer, sees that the original context, and therefore the original meaning, of a text cannot be truly recovered. Building on this, some argue that there are a number of other contexts that come into play, not least that of the reader. Taken a step further, this means that the task of interpretation is not to recover the original meaning, but “to produce something new, the result of a creative dialogue between author and reader.”

Taken to its extreme, as it is by Stanley Fish for example, the reader is not just the co-partner with the author in making meaning, but in fact the author is dead and the reader is the author. Applied in the context of biblical scholarship, as Paul Foster puts it, sometimes intertextuality can be “a type of radical reader response. That is, if a reader can detect an echo or allusion, then that brings such an intertextual link into existence.”

According to this approach, allusions can be a little like beauty: found only in the eye of the beholder.

However, even at that extreme, the author will not be silenced entirely. Even the reader-response critics “with all their gusto have admitted that there is an objective base for reading which is supplied by poetic conventions and form. And this ‘form’ is given by the author.”

To borrow from Mark Twain, reports of the death of the author have been greatly exaggerated. The alternative to the excesses of reader-response is to allow the author to exist and speak in his own context. Thus, when it comes to biblical intertextual scholarship, Beale defines an allusion as “a brief expression consciously intended by an author to be dependent on an OT passage,” and Miller says that the focus should be on “identifying specific connections that the author wants readers to perceive, as well as

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246 Miller, “Intertextuality,” 284.
248 Michael P. Spikes, Understanding Contemporary American Literary Theory (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 126.
250 Bijay Kumar Das, Twentieth Century Literary Criticism (5th ed.; New Delhi: Atlantic, 2005), 77.
determining which text predates the others.”

According to this approach, if echoes and allusions are to be given any meaningful weight, that is if they are to be recognized and accepted by more than just the individual reader, some form of definition or agreed set of criteria must be applied in order to justify the claim that the author intended that connection to be understood.

It may be acknowledged that even if such criteria can be developed, they cannot guarantee correct conclusions. Allusions are still less certain than direct quotations. And, to borrow from George Orwell, some allusions are more uncertain than others. Beale suggests a sort of sliding scale of certainty: “most commentators acknowledge that the validity of allusions must be judged along a spectrum of virtually certain, probable, and possible allusions, the latter being essentially equivalent to ‘echoes.’”

Thus, echoes are not radically different to allusions, but are simply further down the spectrum of certainty, and an echo contains “less volume or verbal coherence from the OT than an allusion.”

Stanley Porter likewise agrees that an echo is less specific than an allusion: “allusion is concerned to bring an external person, place, or literary work into the contemporary text, whereas echo does not have the specificity of allusion but is reserved for language that is thematically related to a more general notion or concept.”

b) **Criteria for recognizing and justifying allusions and echoes**

Having come to an understanding of what allusions and echoes are, the next issue to face is that of recognizing them, or justifying a claim to have found one. As a starting point, Beale says that “The telltale key to discerning an allusion is that of recognizing an *incomparable or unique parallel in wording, syntax or in concept or in a cluster of motifs in the same order or structure.*” A more detailed and comprehensive analysis is that provided by Richard Hays, who wrote what most scholars regard the seminal work on intertextuality in biblical studies *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of*

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Paul. Hays emphasizes the role of the reader by affirming that “the hermeneutical event occurs in my reading of the text.” However, he resists advocating either a strictly author-oriented, audience-oriented, or reader-oriented approach, stating instead that his aim is to hold all of these in “creative tension.” Recognising that it is one thing to hear an echo of an earlier text in a later one, but quite another to explain why we hear such echoes, he suggests seven criteria, which he sees as having an overall cumulative effect in pointing to the presence of an allusion:

1. Availability. Was the proposed source of the allusion available to the author and/or the original readers?
2. Volume. What is the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns?
3. Recurrence. How often does the NT author elsewhere cite or allude to the same OT context from which the purported allusion derives?
4. Thematic Coherence. How suitable and satisfying is the alleged OT allusion? That is, how well does its meaning in the OT fit thematically into the NT writer’s argument, illuminate it and enhance it?
5. Historical Plausibility. Is it plausible that the NT writer could have intended such an allusion, and that the audience could have understood it?
6. History of Interpretation. Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?
7. Satisfaction. Does the proposed reading make sense?

Others have fed off Hays’ work, criticizing it, adding to it, and subtracting from it. Michael Thompson, for instance expands Hays’ list from seven to eleven. Dale Allison provides six criteria for discerning the presence of an intertext, which are very similar to Hays’ own criteria. Porter, who has been one of Hays’ foremost critics, drastically reduces the list, arguing that in fact only the first three of Hays’ criteria deal with validating the presence of allusions, and that the last four are less about establishing the validity of OT references and more about interpreting those references. Beale agrees

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that the last three of Hays’ criteria are less reliable guides to validating
allusions, but does not dismiss them, noting that Hays himself recognizes
that some of his criteria (in particular “history of interpretation” and
“satisfaction”) are not very strong evaluative standards. He also questions
why Porter dismisses the fourth of Hays’ criteria as being purely
interpretive, “since one of the basic criteria for judging the validity of an
allusion is that of a unique thematic link between an OT and NT text?”

Beale also argues that the fourth and seventh of Hays’ criteria (“thematic
coherence” and “satisfaction”) are so overlapping that they are virtually
synonymous, and he collapses the two together to form six criteria.

Beale agrees with Porter’s criticism of the first criteria (availability), when it asks
(in part) if the source of the allusion was available to the original readers,
saying “Porter rightly criticizes this, asking if sources were not available to
the audience does that mean that the text is different or just the audience.”

However, Beale also suggests that sometimes Porter is overly narrow and
pedantic in his criticisms of Hays. He concludes that “Porter makes some
valid criticisms of Hays’s criteria but these do not invalidate the entirety of
the various criteria concerned.”

Christopher Beetham, whose approach is
more strictly author-oriented than Hays and Allison, also modifies Hays’
criteria and separates them into two tiers: the essential criteria and
confirmatory observations.

Peter Leithart does not reject Hays’ list (or anyone else’s list, for that
matter), but places his emphasis on the reader rather than the method. He
argues that what separates good intertextual readings from bad ones is not
the criteria used but the sensitivities and virtues of the reader:

If interpretation is a scientific or quasi-scientific enterprise, it does not
depend on any character development or religious commitment in the
interpreter. A Muslim can plug the numbers into the calculator as well
as a Christian and get the same result. A pedophile can run the same
experiment as the purest virgin, and both will reach the same
conclusion.

263 Beale, Handbook, 47.
265 Beale, Handbook, 47.
267 Christopher Beetham, Echoes of Scripture in Paul’s Letter to the Colossians
   (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 28–32.
268 Peter Leithart, Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture (Waco, TX:
While he places an emphasis on the character and faith of the reader, Leithart’s approach is far from the “reader-response” view that the reader provides their own context—and therefore meaning—for the text. Rather, he argues that there is one primary context: that scripture must be read on its own terms, and that “the good interpreter of Scripture must have Scripture at his fingertips, because Scripture itself provides the first context for interpreting any particular portion of Scripture.”

There is therefore wide agreement that there is no fixed scientific formula or process for identifying allusions. Hays himself says that “precision in such judgment calls is unattainable, because exegesis is a modest imaginative craft, not an exact science; still it is possible to specify certain rules of thumb that might help the craftsman decide whether to treat a particular phrase as an echo.” While Hays’ “rules of thumb” are not universally agreed upon, nonetheless, as Emadi says: “Hays’ work is foundational and has charted the trajectory of the conversation ever since its publication in 1989.” Thus, Hays’ criteria for finding and validating allusions to the OT in a NT text are as good a place as any to start.

Hays’ criteria do not provide a distinction between allusions and echoes. However, if (as has been suggested by both Beale and Porter) the difference between an allusion and an echo is the degree of certainty, then it might be suggested that the fewer the ways in which the criteria are met, the further down the scale of uncertainty an allusion slips, first into the realm of echoes, and then finally into the discard pile.

2) Allusions and echoes in the Synoptics

With all that in mind, let us then examine whether, where, and how, the Synoptic Gospels include echoes and allusions of wisdom texts. As we begin, it should first be noted that one of the key tests or criteria that most of the above scholars accept can be assumed to be met, specifically the question as to whether the author had access to, familiarity with, and

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272 As in Hays’ first rule, that of “availability,” with which Porter agrees.
sensitivity to,\textsuperscript{273} the source texts. The Synoptic writers all had a familiarity with and understanding of the OT, as is evidenced by their repeated references to the OT. Leon Morris identifies 61 quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew, 31 in Mark, 26 in Luke, and 16 in John.\textsuperscript{274} This is entirely understandable, given both their own upbringing and education within Judaism and their years of instruction at the hands of Jesus who, according to Luke, used the OT to teach about himself: “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Matthew, in particular, repeatedly refers to the OT by saying “it is written” (Matt 2:5; 4:4,6,7,10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24,31), and emphasises the fulfilment of scripture in the life and teaching of Jesus (Matt 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9), portraying him as the son of David “who fulfils the Davidic role as Israel’s ultimate shepherd.”\textsuperscript{275}

When it comes to the literature of Second Temple Judaism, this was the milieu in which they lived and they were clearly familiar with the rabbis and the synagogue. So it is entirely reasonable to presume that they were familiar with the texts and teachings of Second Temple Judaism also. What must be examined further, in order to suggest an allusion or echo is intended in any given Synoptic text, is whether any of the other suggested criteria of intertextuality are also met. Let us now then turn our attention to passages in the Synoptics which may contain some reference or allusion to wisdom literature.

\textbf{a) Allusions and echoes in wisdom passages}

In addition to the assumption that the Synoptic writers were familiar with and had access to the source material, there are a number of passages which contain apparent allusions to wisdom literature for which there is a strong case that they also meet Hays’ two tests (which Beale combines into one) of thematic coherence and satisfaction. These are those passages which have already been identified above as containing wisdom language. Given that the writer has included specific mention of wisdom, it is much more likely

\textsuperscript{273} As in Leithart’s approach, and as is also suggested by Hays’ fifth rule of “historical plausibility.”
\textsuperscript{274} Morris, \textit{Matthew}, 3.
\textsuperscript{275} Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 346.
that any other apparent reference or allusion to wisdom was intended, and illuminates and enhances the author’s argument.

With this in mind, we will begin by revisiting those passages and their possible allusions to wisdom, before moving on to explore whether there are any other passages in the Synoptics that may contain echoes and allusions of wisdom literature.


In this passage, following on from Jesus’ denunciation of the cities that have seen his miracles but have not believed, he says that his Father has “hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children” (Matt 11:25). He then invites his hearers to come to him and “take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (Matt 11:29). In addition to (and possibly intended to bolster) the specific reference to “the wise” in Matt 11:25, there are a number of possible echoes or allusions in this passage. These allusions draw connections with the hiddenness of wisdom, the relationship between the Father and the Son, and Wisdom’s “yoke.”

(ii) Wisdom hidden and revealed

There are a number of passages that are suggested by Jesus’ reference to wisdom being hidden from the wise and revealed to children. The first is Isa 29:14 (“the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”) which is a text about wisdom, rather than a piece of wisdom literature. Given that both Matthew and Luke quote repeatedly from Isaiah elsewhere, this would certainly meet Hays’ test of recurrence. Paul also quotes this text in 1 Cor 1:18–25: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart’ … For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” The fact that this parallel is drawn by Paul as well both Matthew and Luke provides a great deal of weight in terms of historical plausibility.

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276 The Greek word translated here as “men” is the plural form of ἄνθρωπος, and refers not to men exclusively, but to humankind.
and the history of interpretation, all of which renders it highly probable that this reference was intended by the authors. In addition to that reference to Isaiah, the idea of wisdom being hidden from the many and revealed to the faithful few has several parallels in wisdom literature, as Suggs notes.\footnote{Suggs, \textit{Wisdom}, 83.}

One suggestion is that there is an allusion here to the Wisdom text of 4 Ezra 8:51–52, 61–62:

\begin{quote}
But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself, because it is for you that paradise is opened … the age to come is prepared … rest is appointed … and wisdom perfected beforehand … Therefore my judgment is now drawing near; I have not shown this to all men, but only to you and a few like you.\footnote{Suggs, \textit{Wisdom}, 83.}
\end{quote}

Another text that may be being recalled here is 1 En. 5:8:

\begin{quote}
Then wisdom will be given to all the chosen. And all these will live and will \textit{never} sin, neither against truth nor according to arrogance. There will be among enlightened man a light, and perception to a knowing man. And they will \textit{never} go wrong.\footnote{R. Brannan et al., eds., \textit{The Lexham English Septuagint} (Bellingham: Lexham, 2012).}
\end{quote}

As Suggs points out, the fact that others (such as Ferdinand Hahn) have also drawn this connection indicates that this suggested allusion carries some weight in terms of the history of interpretation.

There is also a parallel in 1QS 11:6–7:

\begin{quote}
My eye has beheld that wisdom
Which was hidden from men of knowledge,
And that prudent purpose [which was hidden] from the sons of men:
A fountain of righteousness and reservoir of strength
As well as a spring of glory [which were concealed] from the assembly of flesh.\footnote{This translation by W.H. Brownlee, \textit{The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline} (BASOR Supp 10–12; New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research), 1951.}
\end{quote}

Given the number of similar passages, and the number of similarities in wording and phrasing, there is a strong case for suggesting that this passage is indeed alluding to several wisdom texts. One significant difference that Suggs identifies is that in these other texts the revelation is to the elect, whereas in Matthew and Luke it is to infants. He says that “it is sometimes assumed that a ‘revelation to babes rather than to the wise’ runs directly
against the current of Jewish thought.”281 However, as he points out, if one understands the “wise” to be good pious people who trust God, rather than the scribes, “the ‘wise’ of 4 Ezra and the ‘babes’ of the Q saying are, in fact, the ‘elect’ under different titles.”282 Thus the texts and their applications are not as different or contradictory as may appear.

(2) The Father and the Son

Another parallel that Suggs283 highlights is that between Jesus’ portrayal of the privileged relationship between the Father and the Son and the portrayal of the relationship between God and the righteous person in the Wisdom of Solomon. In this passage in the Synoptics (Matt 11:27; Luke 10:22) the Father hands over all things to the Son and they know each other in a mutual and exclusive way. A similarity may be seen in the way the ungodly speak of the righteous man in the Wisdom of Solomon (2:13–16):

He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father. 284

There are differences. This is not speaking directly of wisdom, but rather of the righteous person. However, there is a connection, even an identification, between the righteous and the wise in the Wisdom of Solomon.285 It is also true that there is limited direct correspondence of words and phrasing between this passage and the one in the Synoptics. However, there is a similarity of language and concept, which may justify a claim to finding here an echo, rather than a particular reference or allusion. Schüssler

281 Suggs, Wisdom, 83.
282 Suggs, Wisdom, 84.
283 Suggs, Wisdom, 91–92.
284 This translation of Wis 2:13–16 is from The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).
285 See, for instance, Wis 4:16–17. In v. 16 it contrasts the righteous with the ungodly, whereas in v. 17 it is the wise who are contrasted with the ungodly. The two terms seem to be using as interchangeable parallels.
Fiorenza claims that the connections are broader than just this particular passage, suggesting that everything in this verse “can be traced back to Jewish Wisdom traditions. Just as Wisdom has received everything from God, so Jesus has received everything from God. Just as Wisdom is the only one known by God and is the only one who knows God, so Jesus has all Wisdom; he is even Wisdom herself. Just as Divine Sophia gives her Wisdom as a gift, so also Jesus reveals Wisdom to all those to whom he wants to reveal himself. Hence it could be concluded that here Jesus replaces Sophia.”

(2) Wisdom’s yoke
Matthew and Luke finish this section differently. Whereas Luke has Jesus telling the disciples how blessed they are to see what they see, Matthew has him in Matt 11:28–30 issuing the invitation to all who labor and are heavy laden to come to him and “Take my yoke upon you … you will find rest for your souls” (ἀρατε τὸν ζυγόν μου ἑφ’ ὑμᾶς … εὕρησετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν). This invitation, particularly with the reference to taking on a yoke, echoes a number of pieces of wisdom literature. In particular, it displays close parallels to several invitations issued in Sirach:

Come to (Wisdom) like one who plows and sows. Put your neck into her collar. Bind your shoulders and carry her … Come unto her with all your soul, and keep her ways with all your might … For at last you will find the rest she gives (LXX: εὕρησετε τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν αὐτῆς) … Then her fetters will become for you a strong defense, and her collar a glorious robe. Her yoke is a golden ornament, and her bonds a purple cord (Sir 6:19–31).

Draw near to me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction … Put your neck under the yoke (LXX: τὸν τρόχηλον ὑμῶν ὑπὸ ζυγόν), and let your soul receive instruction: she is hard at hand to find (Sir 51:23, 26).

The repeated invitation to come and to take on a collar or yoke, and the accompanying offer of rest and instruction for the soul, strongly suggest that an allusion, or at least an echo, is intended here. As Hays says, “The Matthew passage is not a quotation, but it is at the very least a loud echo of Sirach 51.”

286 Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus, 143–44.
287 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, 156.
It is tempting to suggest that in putting Wisdom’s words into the mouth of Jesus, Matthew is identifying Jesus as Wisdom incarnate. However, Hays points out that neither Sirach 51 nor Sirach 6 is a speech attributed to Wisdom, but they are rather utterances of the sage who has sought wisdom and summons others to do the same, concluding that “it is not the case that Matthew 11 has taken a first-person discourse of Wisdom and placed it in the mouth of Jesus.” He goes on to say that “Jesus speaks in the way we might expect Wisdom to speak, but this does not mean that Jesus is Wisdom. It means, rather, that some of the attributes of wisdom are being metaphorically associated with Jesus.” However, Hays also concedes that “there are important passages in Wisdom literature that depict Sophia speaking in the first person and summoning hearers to hear her.” These passages include Sirach 24, which says for example: “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits” (Sir 24:19). If these other passages are included in the echo which we are hearing here, the suggestion that Matthew is putting Wisdom’s words into Jesus’ mouth, thus identifying him as Wisdom incarnate, is not so far-fetched after all.

(ii) The rich fool (Luke 12:19–21)

In response to a request for help in a family dispute over an inheritance, Jesus tells this story which portrays as a fool any person who stores up riches for himself but is not rich towards God.

There are several possible allusions to OT wisdom texts here, particularly to Ecclesiastes. McDowell claims that this parable echoes Eccl 8:15–18. It is true that the words of the rich man in Jesus’ parable (“Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry [φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου]”) are very similar to Eccl 8:15 (“man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful [LXX: τοῦ φαγεῖν καὶ τοῦ πιεῖν καὶ τοῦ εὐφρανθῆναι]”). However, there is a difference in application between the two. Jesus suggests the man is foolish for opting to eat drink and be merry, whereas Qohelet is commending this attitude (“I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink

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and be joyful”). Perhaps the difference is caused by the fact that whereas Jesus instructs his hearers instead to invest in the things of God, Qohelet expresses skepticism regarding humanity’s inability to discover the ways of God (“however much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out”). Thus, although the phrase “eat drink and be merry” does tie the two passages together, in fact there is a significant difference of meaning or application. Perhaps this is deliberate. Jesus may be suggesting that what Qohelet saw as impossible (namely, discovering the plans of God) is now made possible, and one would be foolish to ignore the access to God that Jesus now offers.

It could be argued that, in terms of thematic coherence, there are in fact closer parallels to be found elsewhere in Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes 2:20–21, for instance, says:

So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity (הבל) and a great evil.

And Eccl 4:7–8 says:

Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

Both of these passages bear a similarity to Jesus’ message of the foolishness of toiling for wealth that will not be enjoyed. Also similar, but not as close, is Job 27:19 (“He goes to bed rich, but will do so no more; he opens his eyes, and his wealth is gone”). This theme that runs through Ecclesiastes, of the “vanity” of toiling for riches that will be left for someone else to enjoy,

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292 The translation of הבל in Ecclesiastes is a vexed issue. Some translate it as “meaningless” (e.g., NIV). This rendering fails to capture the true sense in which it is used. הבל is repeatedly associated with striving after, or trying to catch the wind (Eccl 1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 16; 6:9). The wind is real, it can be observed (Eccl 11:4); and it has force (Job 21:18; 27:21); but it cannot be grasped or contained (Prov 27:16; 30:4). Thus הבל refers to life lived in an attempt to catch, contain, or understand something that is beyond human ability. This is indeed an activity that will be to no avail, or undertaken in vain, and so “vanity” (as used, e.g., in the RSV and the ESV), is a more helpful translation.
is also echoed in Job 20:18; however, here the ultimate inability to enjoy everything one has worked for is specifically the fate of the wicked: “He will give back the fruit of his toil and will not swallow it down; from the profit of his trading he will get no enjoyment.”

The man in Jesus’ parable discovers the “vanity” that Qohelet speaks of, as he will not live to enjoy the fruits of his labour. And in his failure to be rich towards God, he can surely be numbered among the wicked of whom Job speaks. It is this combination of wickedness and vanity that Jesus describes as foolishness. Given the specific repetition of words from Eccl 8:15, and the thematic coherence with several other passages in both Ecclesiastes and Job, it seems reasonable to suggest that we are intended to see at the very least an echo of these wisdom texts in Jesus’ words here.

(iii) The importance of listening and doing (Matthew 7:25)

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish builders. What constitutes wisdom in this passage, as represented by the wise man of the parable (Matt 7:25) is that one not only hears but puts into action the words of Jesus (πᾶς οὖν ὁ στίς ἀκούει μου τοὺς λόγους τοῦτος καὶ ποιεῖ αὐτούς).

The importance of heeding the words of the teacher has strong echoes of wisdom literature in the OT, in particular the book of Proverbs, where there are repeated calls to hear the words of the teacher: “Hear, my son, and accept my words” (Prov 4:10); “Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise” (Prov 22:17); “Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge” (Prov 23:12). Wisdom herself makes the same appeal (Prov 8:6–8): “Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right …All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.”

Such listening leads to positive outcomes. In Prov 1:33, for instance, the result of listening is safety: “whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster [LXX: ὁ δὲ ἐμῶν ἄκουόν κατασκηνώσει ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι καὶ ἡσυχάσει ἠφόβως ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ].” And in Prov 4:10, listening leads to long life: “Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.” In Proverbs 8, Wisdom offers
more than just security and longevity; she promises the gift of life and the favour of God: “Now then, my children, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord” (Prov 8:32–35).

Jesus here speaks in a very similar way to the way Wisdom speaks in Proverbs 8, when he says that those who hear his words and put them into practice will survive the rain and floods. Although Jesus does not specifically identify the storm to which he is referring, the context is highly suggestive. In the immediately preceding verses (Matt 7:21–23) he has been talking about those who will and will not be allowed into the kingdom of heaven on the day of judgment, rendering it highly likely that the coming judgment of God is the storm to which he is referring. As Keener says: “The storm could represent any test, but surely represents especially the final test, the day of judgment … Jesus’ clear assurance of deliverance in the final test contrasts with the fears of some of his contemporaries; many people had little certainty of the afterlife.”

Thus, the words of Jesus here echo not only the words of the wise in general, but in particular the words of Wisdom herself. Whereas she offered life and the favour of God, he offers a relationship with God and a place in the kingdom of God.

Keener also sees another echo of the OT in Jesus’ reference to the wise man building his house on the rock: “The Hebrew Bible often employed the rock image for the security Israel had in God if they obeyed him (for example, Deut 32:4, 18, 31; Ps 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14), including in a time of flood and disaster (Is 28:14–19).” Richard Lenski agrees: “we may say that the rock is God himself in his Word and his grace, Deut. 32:15, 18; Ps. 18:2; Isa. 17:10; or Christ himself, Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:11. The tempest is best taken to refer to the supreme ordeal of death and not merely to the indecisive trials of this life.”

In Matt 7:26, the alternative to the wisdom of the one who hears Jesus’ words and puts them into practice is the foolishness of hearing Jesus’

293 Keener, Matthew, 64.
294 Keener, Matthew, 64.
295 Lenski, Matthew, 311–12.
words but not putting them into practice (πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ μη ποιῶν αὐτοὺς). This will lead to being swept away in the floods. Again, there are numerous parallels in Proverbs, where the fool who fails to listen to Wisdom will find disaster and death (Prov 2:12–19; 5:3–5; 7:6–27).

Although it could be argued that the lack of explicit repetition of phrasing or syntax weakens the case for there being intertextual referencing here, the sheer preponderance of possible references and the strong thematic coherence seem to justify at the very least the claim that there is an echo (or numerous echoes) here of OT wisdom. That being the case, we see that as he closes the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is not simply claiming to be the true interpreter of the Law, but the true voice of Wisdom.


In this passage, Jesus is reflecting on the person and ministry of John, and he berates “this generation” [τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην] (Matt 11:16) for rejecting both John the Baptist and himself. John was rejected as demon-possessed because he neither ate nor drank. Ironically, Jesus is rejected for doing quite the opposite: not only does he eat and drink, but what is worse he eats and drinks with tax-collectors and sinners (ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος φάγος καὶ ἐσθήτος, τελωνῶν φίλος καὶ ἁμαρτωλῶν; Matt 11:19). Yet, despite this wilful rejection, Wisdom is proved right by her deeds (Matt 11:19) or her children (Luke 7:35). As has been noted earlier, Jesus is drawing a connection between himself and Wisdom personified. This connection is strengthened when one considers that there are several echoes of wisdom literature in this passage.

(8) Wisdom and feasting

The first such echo is in the reference to eating and drinking [ἐσθίον καὶ πίνων] (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34). Witherington suggests that Jesus’ willigness to indulge in feasting reflects a general theme of wisdom literature, which “encourages one to have a certain joie de vivre, to enjoy
eating, friends and the good things in life.”  

He then points specifically to Prov 9:1–6, which speaks of a feast set by Wisdom:

Wisdom has built her house; 
she has hewn her seven pillars. 
She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; 
she has also set her table. 
She has sent out her young women to call 
from the highest places in the town, 
“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” 
To him who lacks sense she says, 
“Come, eat of my bread 
and drink of the wine I have mixed. 
Leave your simple ways, and live, 
and walk in the way of insight.

Wisdom invites the foolish to feast with her. Jesus eats and drinks with sinners. Both offer wisdom to their unlikely guests. There is no explicit repetition of words or phrases, thus ruling out a direct reference or allusion; however, it is quite likely that we are supposed to hear an echo of Wisdom’s actions in the behaviour of Jesus: “Jesus is seen acting out the part of Wisdom, and thus not surprisingly he concludes with the confidence that he will be vindicated for doing so, for his actions led to the salvation of various people of God who had been given up for lost.”

Witherington draws a longer bow when he suggests similar parallels with other passages in wisdom literature which also speak of feasting, such as Sir 31:12–32:6. This passage is about table etiquette and greed, and seems to lack any thematic coherence with the passage before us. Such echoes are so weak as to be non-existent.

(2) Mocking in the marketplace

Another possible allusion in this passage is the reference to being mocked in the marketplace, which bears some similarity to Prov 1:20–33. In the Synoptic passage “this generation” is likened to children sitting in the marketplaces (Matt 11:16; Luke 7:31–32) who call out to each other mocking their playmates who refuse to respond by dancing to the flute or weeping for the dirge. Matthew places this in the context of Jesus’ comment: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (ὁ ἔχων δότα ἀκούετο;)

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296 Witherington, Jesus Quest, 187.  
297 Witherington, Jesus Quest, 188.
Matt 11:15), implying that “this generation,” or his hearers, do not have ears to hear and therefore will not respond to him. In Proverbs there is also a calling out in the marketplace. However, it is not the scoffers who call out, but Wisdom (Prov 1:20). She appeals to the “simple ones” and scoffers (Prov 1:22) saying:

If you turn at my reproof,
  behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;
  I will make my words known to you (Prov 1:23).

But they refuse to listen (Prov 1:24). This refusal of the scoffers to listen to Wisdom has a parallel in the deaf ears of the generation to which Jesus is speaking. In both cases, the outcome is the same: in Proverbs, terror will strike like a storm, and calamity like a whirlwind (Prov 1:27). In Matthew, the day of judgment will be intolerable (Matt 11:20–24). It must be acknowledged that the connection is not terribly strong. There are no significant repetitions of wording or phrasing, and there is a key difference in that in the one case it is the scoffers who call out, whereas in the other it is Wisdom. However, there is a connection in the reference to the marketplace, in the refusal of the scoffers to listen to Wisdom, and in the consequences that will follow. Perhaps this may be seen as an echo rather than an allusion.

If there is an echo here, then a parallel is being drawn between the the scoffers in Proverbs 1 and “this generation” in Matthew 11. The scoffers in Proverbs are condemned for not listening to Wisdom and not choosing “the fear of the Lord” (Prov 1:29). In Matthew their failure is to listen to Jesus (Matt 11:15) and to repent in response to Jesus’ mighty deeds (Matt 11:20). This suggests that a parallel is being drawn between Wisdom and Jesus. It also draws a connection between the appropriate response: in Proverbs it is “the fear of the Lord” (Prov 1:29) and in Matthew it is repentance.

(5) Wisdom’s children

As we have seen, whereas in Matthew Wisdom is justified by her “deeds” (τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς; Matt 11:19), in Luke’s version she is justified by “all her children” (πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς; Luke 7:35). This reference to the “children” of wisdom has parallels in Proverbs. In Prov 8:32, for instance, Wisdom speaks to her sons: “And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are
those who keep my ways.” And in Proverbs 31, the passage concerning the “wife of noble character” who may well represent Wisdom personified, it is said that “her children rise up and call her blessed [LXX: ἥ δὲ ἐλεημοσύνη αὐτῆς ἀνέστησεν τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπλούτησαν]” (Prov 31:28).

Again, there is very little connection in terms of repetition of phrasing, other than the reference to children, but thematically there is a coherence which suggests that there may be an echo here. If that is the case, then it may not be unreasonable to see a parallel between the children in Proverbs and the children in Luke 7. The former are blessed by having Wisdom as their mother, and then in turn rise up and call her blessed. The latter “justify” Wisdom. BDAG defines δικαιόω variously as “take up a cause,” “render a favorable verdict,” “make free,” or “prove to be right.” The first two, in particular, suggest a similar reading in Luke 7:35 to that in Prov 31:28: in rising up to call their mother “blessed,” the children of Wisdom are taking up her cause and rendering a favorable verdict on her. The suggestion in Luke 7 is therefore that Jesus, like Wisdom in Proverbs, will have a favorable verdict rendered on him by his “children,” despite the mocking he encounters at the hands of “this generation.” This echo of Proverbs reinforces the suggestion that Jesus is identifying himself with Wisdom.

b) Other echoes and allusions
In all of the above cases, the suggested allusions or echoes are given strength in that, in addition to any other criteria, they meet Hays’ criteria of “thematic coherence” and “satisfaction” because they fall within passages which contain specific references to wisdom. That is, the use of wisdom language reinforces the view that the author had wisdom in mind as he wrote, thus suggesting that the allusion to wisdom makes sense in that context and fits within the NT author’s argument. There are also several possible allusions to wisdom in other passages that do not specifically mention or use the language of wisdom. As they are not found in the context

299 BDAG, s.v. δικαιόω.
of specific wisdom, there is less evidence to argue that the author intended us to see a wisdom connection. Nonetheless, there may be other grounds to support and justify these suggested intertextual references.

(i) The visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12)

Matthew is the only Synoptic author to record the visit of the Magi. Significance has been read into it in a variety of ways. Morris, for example, writes:

Matthew may well have included this story to bring out the truth that Jesus is Lord of all peoples; since this is so, it was appropriate that at the time of his infancy people came from a distant Gentile country to pay their homage. In this narrative the Jews and their king are ranged against the infant Jesus, but Gentiles do him homage. There will also be the motif that the purposes of God cannot be overthrown. Earthly kings like Herod may try to circumvent the divine purpose, but in the end they are always defeated. And, of course, there is the strong motif of the fulfilment of Scripture; Matthew finds events in the life of Jesus from the earliest days foretold in the holy writings.

Hays sees an echo here of Isa 60:6, which portrays the vision that the nations will be drawn to Israel’s light, and when they do: “They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.” Goldsworthy picks up on the same thing, but reads into it a further connection with wisdom:

The coming of the nations to Israel in response to Solomon’s wisdom echoes the covenant promise which generates the idea of Israel as a light to the nations (Gen 12:3; Deut 4:6; 1 Kgs 4:34). This is followed by the coming of the queen of Sheba and foreshadows the magi’s visit to the infant Jesus.

Goldsworthy suggests that the visit of the magi somehow fulfils, or echoes, the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. However, the connection is not strong. There is no specific wording or phrasing that draws a connection with Solomon and his wisdom. There is little within the text that points to the author intending this connection to be made. If there is an echo here, it is only faint.

300 Morris, Matthew, 34–35.
301 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, 176.
However, others see wisdom themes in this passage in other ways. Smith, for example, says: “God’s plan, guiding the Magi, is pitted against both the wisdom of the scribes and the political shrewdness of Herod … And right from the beginning this wisdom and shrewdness is shown to be powerless to affect God’s plan.”

Again, there is no specific language in the passage that supports the notion that Matthew has the theme of wisdom in mind at this point. The only wisdom language in the passage is in the reference to the magi [μάγοι] (Matt 2:1), which is often translated as “wise men.” However, this it is not a term commonly used of wise men in the NT, and its meaning is slightly different, defined by BDAG as “wise man and priest, who was expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other occult arts.” Consequently, although there is a hint of a wisdom theme, as Smith himself concedes, it is not strong: “It would undoubtedly be a mistake to make too much of the passage … But it is suggestive.”

(ii) The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2–12)

As we have seen earlier, as he delivers the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is portrayed as a new Moses delivering a fresh interpretation of the Law. As he finishes with the parable of the wise and foolish builders, he draws a connection between his words and wisdom. There is also an echo of wisdom literature at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in the Beatitudes. As McDowell says: “The blessings of Jesus in the Beatitudes are similar to 4Q525, a wisdom text from Qumran.” This fragmentary text from the Dead Sea Scrolls “was originally referred to as Wisdom Work with Beatitudes, but has now officially received the title 4QBeatitudes or Beatitudes, even though only a small section of the preserved text has those beatitudes.”

This text combines the language and metaphors of Proverbs 1–9 and Psalms 1 and 119, juxtaposing wisdom and the law of the Most High.

Eibert Tigchelaar outlines the parallel with Matthew 5 as follows:

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303 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 97.
304 BDAG, s.v. δικαιόω.
305 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 97.
The most important connection between Beatitudes and the New Testament is between the list of beatitudes in 4Q525 2 ii and in Matthew 5. From a formal perspective, 4Q525 2 ii presents the first pre-Matthean example of a long sequence of beatitudes, and the preserved 4+1 structure in Beatitudes may be related to the 8+1 structure in Matthew 5. In those respects the beatitudes of Matthew 5 may go back to a Semitic model. With regard to content, the beatitudes of both compositions share several common phrases (for example “pure heart” vs. “pure of heart”; or “humble”/“meek”).

Thus, in terms of volume, coherence, plausibility and satisfaction there is a strong case for seeing an allusion here. However, Tigchelaar also notes that both Matthew 5 and 4Q525 echo the same set of Psalms, in particular Psalm 37. In the light of this, it is possible that, rather than Jesus’ words directly alluding to 4Q525, both texts are alluding to the same source material in the Psalms. Either way, whether Matthew echoes Beatitudes, or they both echo the same material in the Psalms, there is an apparent connection between the two.

That being the case, the Sermon on the Mount, in beginning with the Beatitudes and ending with the parable of the wise and foolish builders, thus has bookends that either allude to wisdom literature or directly refer to wisdom. This strongly suggests that in this section of Matthew’s Gospel Jesus is being presented as a wisdom figure.


This view is reinforced by the inclusion of the Lord’s Prayer. Whereas Luke uses it as a stand-alone piece of teaching, Matthew embeds his version of the Lord’s Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. The Lord’s Prayer, it has been argued, also carries echoes of wisdom material. R.N. Whybray, in his commentary on Proverbs, draws a possible connection between this and Prov 30:7–9, saying: “The inclusion of this prayer, a genre unique in Proverbs, suggests that, like the Lord’s Prayer, which may have been partly based on it, has a didactic purpose: that it is intended as a model prayer, composed by a pious man for imitation and reflection.” Rick Byargeon, struck by this comment, has further argued that “significant echoes of Prov

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308 Tigchelaar, “4QBeatitudes.”
30:7–9 occur in the Lord’s prayer.”

He notes that over the years the general consensus among many NT scholars has been that the Lord’s prayer is similar to, and perhaps based on, first-century synagogue prayers, such as the Qaddish prayer and The Eighteen Benedictions, but goes on to assert that there is a significant echo of Proverbs 30 in the prayer.

The key point of similarity between the Lord’s Prayer and Proverbs 8 is the request for daily bread. Proverbs 30:8 says: “give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me [μοι τὰ δέοντα καὶ τὰ αἰτήρητα],” and Matt 6:11 says “Give us this day our daily bread [τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δῶς ἡμῖν σήμερον].” A second echo that Byargeon points to is the concern for God’s name. In Prov 30:9, the request for daily needs to be met is justified by the comment “lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God [καὶ ὀμόσῳ τὸ ὄνομά τοῦ θεοῦ],” and the Lord’s prayer opens with “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name [ἁγιασθῇ τὸ ὄνομά σου] (Matt 6:9). Based on these similarities, Byargeon argues that “a significant echo of wisdom, both in terms of structure and theology, can be heard in the Lord’s prayer.”

*(iv) Don’t worry (Matthew 6:25–34)*

Also in the Sermon on the Mount, and shortly after the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus urges his hearers not to be anxious, for “which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (Matt 6:27). Keener sees a wisdom reference here: “Not only is it true that we cannot extend our life by worrying, but daily experience in our comparatively fast-paced culture confirms the wisdom of an earlier Jewish sage, who observed that worry and a troubled heart actually shorten life (Sir 30:19–24).” The Sirach text to which he refers says:

> Indulge yourself and take comfort, and remove sorrow far from you, for sorrow has destroyed many, and no advantage ever comes from it.

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313 Keener, Matthew, 87.
Jealousy and anger shorten life, and anxiety brings on premature old age (Sir 30:23–24).

While it is true that the sentiment is similar, in highlighting the life-shortening effects of worry, the language is not exactly the same. And any thematic coherence is undermined by a key difference in the application of this observation. Sirach draws the conclusion that rather than yield to anxiety we should indulge ourselves. Jesus, on the other hand, is mounting a very different argument: namely that we should trust God and seek first his kingdom.

(v) No dwelling place (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58)

In Matt 8:20 (and its parallel in Luke 9:58) Jesus explains to a teacher of the law who expresses a desire to follow him just what the cost will be: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” [αἱ ἀλώπεκες φωλεοῦς ἔχουσιν καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνώσεις, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνῃ].

Witherington notes that this image “had been used earlier of Wisdom having no place to dwell until God assigned her such a place (cf. Sir. 24:6–7 to 1 Enoch 42:2), with Enoch speaking of the rejection of Wisdom (‘but she found no dwelling place’).” He also notes a parallel with Sir 36:31: “So who will trust a man that has no nest, but lodges wherever night overtakes him [μὴ ἔχοντι νοσσὶν καὶ καταλύοντι οὗ ἔαν ὁψίσῃ]?” The specific mention of having no nest, or no place to dwell, and the number of such references, along with the thematic coherence of the comment, provides some justification for seeing an allusion here. This presentation of Wisdom as misunderstood and ostracized has been noted earlier in our overview of Second Temple Judaism. The use of these allusions “suggests that Jesus envisions and articulates his experience in light of sapiential traditions.” Indeed, one might go so far as to suggest that in appropriating this language to himself, Jesus is claiming that what was said of Wisdom can now be said of him, thus identifying himself with Wisdom.

(vi) Hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44)

314 Witherington, Jesus Quest, 188.
315 Witherington, Jesus Quest, 188.
In this verse, Jesus speaks of the kingdom of heaven as treasure hidden in a field (θησαυρὸς κεκρυμμένος ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ), which a man finds and covers up, before selling all he has to come back and buy that field. Goldsworthy suggests a parallel with Prov 2:4-5, which speaks of the search for wisdom in these terms:

If you seek it like silver 
and search for it as for hidden treasures (ὡς θησαυρὸς ἐξερευνήσῃς αὐτήν), 
then you will understand the fear of the Lord 
and find the knowledge of God.

The common reference to hidden treasure is highly suggestive. There are, however, some key differences. In Jesus’ parable, the implication is that the man found the treasure accidently, whereas in Proverbs, the reader is encouraged to go out and search for it. And whereas in Proverbs it is wisdom that is the treasure, in Matthew it is the kingdom of heaven. This difference does not necessarily rule out the proposal that there is an allusion being made at this point. In fact, it suggests an interesting connection between finding wisdom and entering the kingdom of heaven. This connection will be given further consideration later.

(vii) How long am I to be with you? (Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41)

In response to a man’s appeal for healing for his epileptic son (and his complaint that the disciples had been unable to help) Jesus says: “O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.” Smith suggests that there are several OT passages that could be invoked as background for this saying, the strongest of which are Deut 32:1–43 and Num 14:11–35. In terms of wisdom texts, there is a possible echo of a speech of Wisdom in Prov 1:22–33. However, he concedes that the speech of Wisdom “does not seem to have influenced the general development of the passage,” and that “there is insufficient evidence that any of the three Evangelists interpreted this supra-human character here in terms of personified Wisdom.”

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316 Goldsworthy, Gospel and Wisdom, 154.
317 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 82.
(viii) When three are gathered (Matthew 18:20)

When Jesus says in this verse: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them,” Smith suggests that this is an adaptation of the Jewish saying in Pirkei Avot 3:3,\(^{318}\) where Rabbi Shimon says: “three who ate at one table and said upon it words of Torah — it is as if they ate from the table of the Omnipresent, blessed be He.”\(^{319}\) The connection is in the use of the number three, and the reference to being in the presence of God. This is certainly suggestive, but the parallels are not strong enough to imply any more than that this may be an echo. However, if there is an echo to be heard here, then the connection between Jesus and the Law is interesting: where Rabbi Shimon refers to three gathered together and speaking the words of Torah; Jesus refers to three gathering in his name, thus equating himself with the Torah.

(ix) Humbled and exalted (Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11)

Another echo or allusion of wisdom may be found in Jesus’ words of warning not to emulate the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Matt 23:12: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” \([\text{ὅστις} \, δὲ \, ύψώσει \, ἑαυτὸν \, ταπεινωθήσεται \, καὶ \, ὅστις \, ταπεινώσει \, ἑαυτὸν \, ύψωθήσεται]\). McDowell suggests that these words parallel Prov 29:23 (“One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor \([\text{ὑβρις} \, ἀνδρα \, ταπεινοὶ, \, τοῦς \, δὲ \, ταπεινόφρονας \, ἐρείδει \, δόξῃ \, κύριος]\)”) and Job 22:29 (“For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’; but he saves the lowly”).\(^{320}\) In terms of structure and word order, the former certainly displays a strong similarity with Jesus’ words. One difference is in the agent of change. In Prov 29:23 the subject is brought low or honoured by his own actions; whereas in Jesus’ words the use of the passive form of the verb implies another actor at work in bringing these things about, presumably God. Job 22:29, although structurally and linguistically dissimilar to Matt 23:12, contains the same suggestion of God’s involvement in the subject’s fate (“he saves the lowly”). Given the

\(^{318}\) Smith, Wisdom Christology, 82.

\(^{319}\) פרקי אבות, literally “Chapters of the Fathers,” is more often known as the “Ethics of the Fathers.” This translation comes from http://www.sefaria.org/

strong thematic coherence, it is not unreasonable to argue that Jesus was referring, albeit indirectly, to these OT wisdom texts.

If there is an allusion (or a double allusion) being made here, then the context is telling. In Job 22, the promise of salvation is for those who exercise humble repentance: “If you return to the Almighty you will be built up” (Job 22:23). On the other side of the coin, Proverbs 29 is warning against corruption and injustice: “Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice. An unjust man is an abomination …” (Prov 29:26–27). Jesus’ words in Matt 23:12 are spoken in the context of condemnation for the scribes and Pharisees, who are hypocrites, turning themselves and others away from salvation, and neglecting justice: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in … Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt 23:13, 23).

Thus, Jesus is summoning up the wisdom literature of the OT and applying it to the scribes and Pharisees of his day. In echoing Proverbs 29, he is suggesting that in neglecting justice they have proved themselves to be an abomination. And in echoing Job 22, he says that because of their lack of repentance they will miss out on salvation. On both counts, they who have sought to exalt themselves will in fact be brought low.

In Luke’s Gospel, this warning about humbling yourself (Luke 14:11) is placed in the context of a parable about an invitation to a wedding feast:

When you are invited to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher [προσανάβητι ἀνώτερον].’ (Luke 14:8–10).

Goldsworthy points out a similarity with Proverbs 25:6–7321:

Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, “Come up here [Ἀνάβαινε πρός με].”

321 Goldsworthy, Gospel and Wisdom, 153.
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

The thematic and linguistic similarities support the view that this is to be seen as an allusion to Proverbs 25. In conjunction with Matthew’s allusion to Proverbs 29 and Job 22, this reinforces the notion that Jesus is being portrayed as deliberately echoing OT wisdom in his criticism of the Pharisees and his warnings against hypocrisy and arrogance.


As he approaches Jerusalem, Jesus laments over her hardness of heart in rejecting him: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate” (Matt 23:37–38). Smith dismisses any wisdom allusion here, saying: “there is no evidence that the image was shaped by Wisdom speculation.”

However Suggs (citing Rudolf Bultmann) disagrees, arguing that this “is correctly identified as a Wisdom logion.”

He points to 2 Esdras 1:28–30, in which God addresses Judah, who has forsaken him:

Thus says the Lord Almighty: Have I not entreated you as a father entertains his sons or a mother her daughters or a nurse her children … I gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you out from my presence.

The repetition of the phrase relating to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings is a strong indication that an allusion is intended here. The context and meaning reinforce this, with the common theme being that of Judah’s (or Jerusalem’s) rejection of her Lord. Suggs suggests a further connection with Zion’s lament in Bar 4:12:

Let no one rejoice over me, a widow and bereaved of many; I was left desolate because of the sins of my children, because they turned away from the law of God.

322 Smith, *Wisdom Christology*, 78.
Given that in Bar 4:1 Wisdom is specifically identified with the Torah (“She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever”), Suggs concludes that “The punishment of Jerusalem in both the Q saying and in Baruch is attributed to the rejection of Wisdom.” Whereas the parallels to 2 Esdras are so striking as to give significant credibility to claims that an allusion is intended, the parallels to Baruch 4 are not so strong, raising questions as to whether an allusion is intended or not. Perhaps at best there is a faint echo. However, the two combined lend weight to the notion that Matthew and Luke here see Jesus appropriating to himself the words of God (in 2 Esdras) and Wisdom (in Baruch 4) to describe Jerusalem’s rejection of him, and her subsequent punishment.

(xi) Serving the Lord in serving the poor (Matthew 25:40)

In this passage, Jesus describes the day of judgment, when the Son of Man will separate the sheep from the goats. To the sheep on his right he issues the invitation to enter the kingdom, because they have ministered to him when he was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked and imprisoned. When they ask when they have done these things, he says: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐφ’ ὑμῶν ἐποίησατε ἐν τοῖς τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων, ἐμοὶ ἐποίησατε; Matt 25:40). Hays identifies a wisdom allusion here: “Just at this point, Israel’s wisdom tradition once again provides an unexpected shaft of illumination upon the identity of Jesus.”

The text he points to is Prov 19:17: “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.” Hays comments:

Matthew does not quote this text, and there is no obvious verbal echo of it in Matthew 25, though the LXX rendering of Proverbs 19:17 employs language characteristic of Matthew’s concerns and emphases … Nonetheless, Matthew’s account of the final judgment stands in continuity with this fundamental insight of Israel’s sages, as articulated in the Proverbs text: we will be judged and recompensed in accordance with our treatment of the poor. But the most remarkable link here between Proverbs and Matthew lies in the former’s affirmation that those who show mercy to the poor are in effect lending to the Lord.

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324 Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels, 170.
This is precisely what Matthew reaffirms and elaborates: it is the Lord Jesus who is the ultimate recipient of human acts of kindness.\footnote{Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 170. Emphasis original.}

So, if this connection between Matt 25:40 and Prov 19:17 is granted, Jesus is underlining his identity with the God of Israel, and highlighting once again that salvation is found only in a proper relationship with him.

c) **Observations on allusions and echoes of wisdom within the Synoptics**

While some of the suggested allusions that have been examined lack strong support, and are at best perhaps faint echoes, others have strong support. Their combined weight serves to reinforce the view that the Synoptic writers had wisdom material in the background as they wrote, and saw wisdom as a key category for understanding Jesus.

Many of these echoes and allusions shed light on the person of Jesus, and particularly his connection with Wisdom personified. In calling people to hear his words and do them (Matt 7:25) Jesus identifies himself with Wisdom, whose words offer life and blessing. In commenting that the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58) Jesus echoes various wisdom texts, suggesting that what was said of Wisdom can now be said of him. In feasting with sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34), Jesus acts out the part of Wisdom, who invites the simple and outcast to feast with her. In his claim to know God as Father, and to have received everything from him, Jesus is identified with Wisdom (Matt 11:27). Just as Wisdom’s children will arise and call her blessed, so too Jesus’ “children” will justify him (Luke 7:35). If there is an echo (however faint) of Proverbs 1 in Jesus’ frustrated words “How long am I to be with you?” (Matt 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41), he is once again appropriating a speech of Wisdom for himself. If the suggested echo of Pirkei Avot in Matt 18:20 is justified, then Jesus is equating himself with both the presence of God and the Law. In the double allusion to 2 Esdras and Baruch 4 in the lament over Jerusalem (Matt 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35), Jesus yet again appropriates the words of Wisdom to himself, thus identifying himself with her as well as speaking as the Lord who condemns Jerusalem for rejecting him. And in Matthew 25,
the allusion to Prov 19:17 serves to underline the identity of Jesus as the God of Israel, and that salvation is found only in a proper relationship with him.

Several other allusions portray Jesus as standing firmly within the stream of wisdom teaching. The Beatitudes, for example, present Jesus speaking in terms that are similar to other wisdom texts. By opening with the Beatitudes and closing with the parable of the wise and foolish builders, Matthew portrays the Sermon on the Mount as a wisdom text, and draws a close connection between Jesus, the Law, and wisdom. The Lord’s prayer (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:1–4) reflects the model of prayer provided in Prov 30:8, again placing Jesus in continuity with the wisdom of the sages. And Jesus’ instruction to his followers not to be anxious (Matt 6:27) reflects similar advice from the wisdom text in Esdras, and adds extra weight to the view that Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount is a piece of wisdom literature.

Various allusions are used to present Jesus’ opponents as supposedly wise people who are in fact fools, whose plans will fail and who will fall under God’s judgment. The visit of the magi provides a glimpse into the way in which the so-called wisdom of this world (represented by Herod and his scribes) is opposed to, but powerless to stop, God’s plans in Christ. In the parable of the wise and foolish builders, those who hear Jesus’ words and do not put them into practice will find disaster and death, just like those who wouldn’t listen to Wisdom (Matt 7:26). In mocking Jesus (Matt 11:16; Luke 7:31–32) those who reject him echo those who scoffed at Wisdom in Proverbs. Later Jesus talks about how God has hidden his wisdom from the many and revealed it instead to the chosen few (Matt 11:25). In his greed and his failure to be rich towards God, the rich man (Luke 12:19–21) reveals himself to be a fool who is living out the “vanity” of which Ecclesiastes spoke, and falls under the judgment of God. And if the allusions to Proverbs 25, Proverbs 29, and Job 22 in Matt 23:12 and Luke 14:11 are to be credited, then Jesus is using OT wisdom texts to condemn the scribes and Pharisees for their corruption and lack of repentance.

On the other hand, those who come to Jesus find wisdom, and take hold of the blessings that wisdom offers. Thus, for example, in heeding Jesus’ call to come to him and take his yoke upon them, the heavy laden find wisdom and rest for their souls (Matt 11:28–30), just as Wisdom
offered rest to those who take her yoke upon them. And in Jesus the searcher finds the treasure of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:44), just as the searcher of Proverbs found the treasure of wisdom.

D. Wisdom forms and contexts

A final category that may be considered to reveal a connection between Jesus and wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels is where Jesus is presented as speaking or acting in ways that reflect the practices of the wise. In particular, it is worth examining whether there is material which, while it may neither use specific wisdom language nor refer to wisdom texts, has the literary style of wisdom material. Thus, for example, in discussing whether Jesus is being presented as a wise person, Alan Winton observes: “The issue of Jesus’ social identity is raised by the continuity between much of the material attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics and the literature of wisdom.” The material that is most often cited in this regard is the parables and aphorisms of Jesus. As we have seen, Crenshaw identifies, among others, the proverb, the riddle, and the allegory as common forms of wisdom in the OT. When it comes to the Gospels, much of the teaching of Jesus is “couched in the well-worn forms developed by the wisdom teachers of the Old Testament.” This is shown in the Synoptics primarily by the presence of the two wisdom forms, the proverb and the parable.

326 “Literary style” can be understood in various ways. It may refer to the author’s unique manner of writing, her “voice,” or the expression of her individuality. This is reflected in such things as syntax, vocabulary, and idiom. It may also refer to the form of communication, whether it be formal or informal. Another use of “literary style” refers to the character of writing that belongs to a particular period or trend, such as renaissance, classicism, or romanticism. Or, it may refer to the characteristic elements that belong to a certain genre. That is the sense in which it is used here. We are looking for places where the Synoptic writers present material in a way that reflects the characteristic elements usually associated with wisdom literature.


It has been said that in the Synoptics, the parable is “a characteristic form of the teaching of Jesus.”\(^{331}\) The word “parable” (παραβολή) is hard to define, as “any definition that is broad enough to cover all the forms is so imprecise that it is almost useless.”\(^{332}\) Indeed, the semantic range of the Hebrew terms נָשָׁל and נָדָג and the Greek terms παραβολή, παρομία and γνώμη all provide a degree of flexibility and confusion in definition.\(^{333}\) The basic meaning of the noun παραβολή is “throw alongside.” Thus, like the verb παραβάλλω, it refers to a comparison.\(^{334}\) Indeed, the two are used together in Mark 4:39: “with what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?” (ποία παραβολῇ παραβάλωμεν αὐτήν).

However, even the Synoptic writers use the word in varying ways. Luke for example, in Luke 4:23, has Jesus saying: πάντως ἐρεῖ μοι τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· What follows (“Physician heal yourself [ἰατρέ, θεράπευσον σεαυτόν…”]) looks far more like a proverb than a parable, and indeed many translations use “proverb” instead of “parable.”\(^{335}\) Later, he uses the word in the more “conventional” way, to describe a longer comparative narrative (for example, with reference to the parable of the sower in Luke 8:4, 9). Generally, a parable in the NT is more than a mere metaphor or simile, it is “an independent similitude in which an evident or accepted truth from a known field (nature, human life) is designed to establish or illustrate a new truth in the preaching of Jesus.”\(^{336}\) Or, as Snodgrass puts it, parables are “stories with an intent, analogies through which one is enabled to see truth.”\(^{337}\)

Given that the LXX uses παραβολή to translate הֵשָׁל, which refers to the sacred poetry, stories, proverbs, riddles, and dialogues through which wisdom is conveyed, that suggests that a person who teaches in parables is teaching within the wisdom tradition.\(^{338}\) It certainly appears that many of the sayings of Jesus within the Synoptics fit the model of wisdom parables

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\(^{331}\) BDAG, s.v. παραβολή.


\(^{333}\) Piper, *Wisdom*, 3.

\(^{334}\) BDAG, s.v. παραβάλλω; παραβολή.

\(^{335}\) The ESV, for example, has this as “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb …”


that teach how a person should live ethically and philosophically. This supports Snodgrass’ assertion that the proper background against which to understand the parables is the OT, and their use in both wisdom and prophecy. In fact, he says that while there are related forms to be found elsewhere, “outside the OT not much is really close to the form of Jesus’ parables.” This suggests that by teaching in parables, Jesus was identifying himself as a teacher of wisdom.

However, as Blomberg points out, there is frequently a countercultural element to the parables of Jesus: whereas most of the rabbinic parables reinforced conventional wisdom or scriptural exegesis, Jesus’ parables are often told to subvert traditional wisdom. For example, in the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32), “Through a shocking parable of reversal he upends conventional wisdom concerning God’s will.” Or, again, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), Jesus “overturns conventional Jewish wisdom which saw the rich as blessed by God and the poor as punished for their wickedness.” Thus Jesus is portrayed as looking and sounding like a teacher of wisdom, using a conventional wisdom form, although he often subverts the conventional wisdom message.

Along with the parable, the aphorism, or proverb, is also a common wisdom form that Jesus employs, although at times it seems underappreciated by scholars. Wolfgang Mieder, while acknowledging the difficulty of providing a comprehensive definition, defines the proverb as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.” Whereas a parable tends to involve narrative and comparison to shed light on the truth, a proverb or aphorism tends to make a simple statement that seeks to

340 Snodgrass, Stories with Intent, 38.
341 Craig L. Blomberg, Interpreting the Parables (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 96.
342 Blomberg, Parables, 65.
343 Blomberg, Parables, 188.
344 Blomberg, Parables, 206.
express something that is true about life and human experience. It is an
observation that is clever or insightful, containing some element of
universal truth or relevance to common human experience, which can
become the possession of the hearer. Proverbs and aphorisms also tend to
have the quality of being “succinct, epigrammatic, and metaphorical.”
The distinction between an aphorism and a proverb is not entirely clear.
Some treat them as if they are interchangeable terms. Others seek to
distinguish them, for example suggesting that proverbs have more impact,
having “greater specific gravity”; and have thus taken on greater currency,
being frequently repeated and adapted by the public. That implies that the
main difference between an aphorism and a proverb is not so much a matter
of form but of usage: the proverb has been so often repeated and re-used
that it has passed into general parlance, becoming divorced from its original
context and author, being regarded as common human property. However,
this distinction, while plausible, cannot be pressed overly hard, as it is still
sometimes the case that the original author and context are not forgotten or
lost; as is the case, for example, with some of the sayings of both Solomon
and Jesus.

The proverbial sayings of Jesus are found in abundance in the
synoptic tradition. Amongst them are sayings such as: ‘The labourer is
worthy of his hire’ (Matt 10:10), ‘The measure you give will be the measure
you receive’ (Matt 7:2); and ‘The tree is known by its fruit’ (Matt 12:33).
Piper, pointing out that Crossan identifies 133 aphorisms in the Synoptic
Gospels, Carlston 102, and Küchler 108, proposes that the sheer number of
their occurrence, along with the variations in form and context, make the
task of analysis “intimidating,” and suggests that is why they receive less
attention that Jesus’ parables.

Proverbs and aphorisms can of course be used at any time by
anybody. Their occasional use cannot necessarily be taken as evidence of
sapiential activity. However, the frequency with which they appear in the
Synoptic Gospels indicates that Jesus is being presented as more than just an

347 Rudolph Bultmann, “General Truths and Christian Proclamation,” in History and
348 Crenshaw, Old Testament Wisdom, 27.
349 Harry A. Savitz, “Geriatric Axioms, Aphorisms and Proverbs,” JAGS 16 (1968):
752.
350 Piper, Wisdom, 2.
occasional user of aphorisms. As Winton notes, a “good deal of the speech attributed to Jesus is cast in a form which has obvious affinities with proverbial forms of speech found principally in the wisdom literature.”

Piper suggests that collections of aphorisms carry more weight than individual and isolated aphorisms do, and identifies five “clusters” of aphorisms in the double-tradition material of the Synoptic Gospels, arguing that in each instance “the collection of aphoristic sayings is far from haphazard in its structure and that it presents a carefully designed argument.” He then concludes that “the aphoristic sayings in double-tradition material as a whole testify to a distinctive sapiential activity.”

However, as Daniel Harrington argues, although the aphorisms of Jesus follow the conventional formal patterns of wisdom teachers, just like his parables they often subvert conventional wisdom. He calls the poor “blessed” (Luke 6:20), he promises that those who want to save their lives will lose them (Mark 8:35), and he claims that the last will be first and the first will be last (Matt 20:16). Thus, with both his parables and his proverbs, the Jesus of the Synoptic tradition is a wisdom teacher, albeit a paradoxical and challenging one.

As well as the parable and the aphorism, there are other elements to be found in Jesus’ teaching that reflect common wisdom patterns. Goldsworthy, for instance, points to Jesus’ use of the contrast of opposites: “His conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount employs a typical wisdom contrast of opposites. These are an important feature of Proverbs where wise/righteous and foolish/wicked are constantly compared. The same technique is found in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.”

Harrington similarly notes that Jesus is portrayed as teaching in modes that are common to wisdom material, in his use of the familiar Hebrew poetic

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352 The five collections of aphorisms Piper identifies are as follows: (1) Ask, seek, knock (Matt 7:7–11; Luke 11:9–13); (2) Do not worry, seek first God’s kingdom (Matt 6:25–33; Luke 12:22–31); (3) Do not judge, the speck in your brother’s eye (Matt 7:1–5; Luke 6:37–42); (4) By their fruit you will recognise them (Matt 7:16–20, 12:33–35; Luke 6:43–45); and (5) Do not be afraid, the hairs of your head are numbered (Matt 10:26–33; Luke 12:2–9).
device of parallelism (Mark 3:24–25; Matt 12:35), and of folk proverbs such as “no one can serve two masters” (Matt 6:22); in his comparison of the kingdom of God to a treasure, a merchant, and a net (Matt 13:44–50), in his use of rhetorical questions and impossible questions (Mark 2:19; Matt 6:27), in his admonitions (Luke 12:15); and in his use of beatitudes (Luke 11:28).  

In addition to the wisdom forms that Jesus is presented as employing, McDowell points to the context in which Jesus teaches as providing further indication that he is being presented as a teacher of wisdom: “Jesus is often presented as teaching in public like a prophet or Woman Wisdom (Matt 5–7; see Prov 20–21 and 8.2–3) and in the synagogues like a rabbi (Luke 4), but he is also shown teaching inside houses or outside under a tree (e.g., Mark 2:1–12, 15–22; Luke 11:37–52): the locations in which a sage taught.”

Although it cannot be claimed to be conclusive, there are strong grounds to argue that in the use of forms and techniques that are commonly used in wisdom material, and in presenting Jesus as operating in contexts similar to those in which wise men have often moved, the Synoptic writers are presenting Jesus as a teacher who travels within the stream of the Jewish wisdom tradition. This, in conjunction with the findings in our other areas of investigation, supports the view that there is a deliberate connection being drawn between Jesus and wisdom in the Synoptic Gospels.

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357 Harrington, “Jesus and Wisdom,” 100–1.
IV. Drawing the threads together

All of the above material—the direct lexical references to wisdom, the indirect references to wisdom by echo and allusion, and the presentation of Jesus using common wisdom forms in wisdom contexts—constitute the threads that can be woven together to suggest that the Synoptic writers apply the category of wisdom in their portraits of Jesus. Let us now draw those threads together, to see what may be said of the Synoptic presentation of Jesus and wisdom.

A. The Synoptic distinctives

Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke share the same view and presentation in many ways, when it comes to wisdom there are some noticeable differences.

The first, and most obvious, difference is that Mark appears to have very little interest in wisdom. This is suggested by the evidence in every area we have considered. First, in terms of the lexical references to wisdom, Mark only uses the language of σοφία or σοφός once, whereas this kind of language appears in Matthew four times, and six times in Luke. And that one occurrence is not a great statement or claim, but a question: the crowd in the synagogue wonder where Jesus’ wisdom comes from (Mark 6:2). Similarly, the language of φρόνησις or φρόνιμος occurs only three times in Mark, as opposed to sixteen times in Matthew and eight times in Luke; and none of those occurrences in Mark have any direct reference to either wisdom or foolishness, but are used in more tangential ways. The same pattern is noticeable in the use of echoes and allusions to wisdom and wisdom literature: whereas Matthew and Luke each exceed thirty such references, Mark only carries one. This trend continues in the presentation of Jesus’ use of wisdom forms. Matthew includes twenty-three parables, Luke includes twenty-four, but Mark only eight. Likewise with aphorisms: although they are common throughout the Gospels, those collections of aphorisms to which Piper ascribes particular significance due to their weight

359 For a tabulated analysis of these references, see Appendix D — “Wisdom References in the Synoptic Gospels.”
in numbers and close proximity appear only in Matthew and Luke. Thus, there is some justification to Smith’s claim that: “There is no identification of Jesus with Wisdom in Mark … The evident conclusion is that Mark shares neither Matthew’s emphasis on Jesus as Wisdom nor Luke’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit as Wisdom and giver of wisdom.”

Smith’s conclusions, however, do not represent an uncontested position. Marie Noonan Sabin, for instance, suggests that in Mark: “As Proverbs’ Wisdom invites the unwise to her banquet, so the Markan Jesus calls not the righteous but sinners. As a community of sinners, these disciples are also a community of fools, failing to grasp the basic instructions of their teacher, Wisdom/Jesus,” and that “Mark dramatizes women as the immediate foils to the foolish disciples, as symbols of the wise.” Whether or not she is right in her analysis of Mark’s presentation of the disciples and women is beyond the scope of this study. However, her claim that Mark is thinking in wisdom categories finds little justification in the text. Another who sees wisdom in Mark is Yolanda Dreyer, who argues that in Mark Jesus was “the wisdom sage who became a Rabbi.” That is, she says, the “pre-Easter Jesus” was a wisdom sage, a rabbi, and only later did Mark turn him into the Son of God. This suggestion that there was an earlier wisdom version of Jesus, which has been recrafted at some point, is not unique to Dreyer. Sally Douglas, for instance, argues that the connection between Jesus and Woman Wisdom can be found in the earliest layers of writing now contained in the NT, but in subsequent work these associations were rejected or redefined. However, Dreyer’s view is at best speculative. Given that our intent here is to study the presentation of Jesus in the final form of the text, the most that can be said is that Mark displays very little interest in wisdom in his presentation of Jesus.

Matthew and Luke, in comparison, seem to display a far greater interest in wisdom. If one takes into account the fact that they use similar

360 Smith, *Wisdom Christology*, 114.
numbers of lexical references to wisdom, echoes and allusions to wisdom, and wisdom forms, it might be said that their degree of interest is similar. Although the weight of evidence is similar, however, it has been suggested that their portrayal of wisdom is slightly different. Smith, for example, argues that whereas Matthew links wisdom primarily to Jesus, and therefore might be said to have a “Wisdom Christology,” “Luke does not have a Wisdom Christology, but he does have a Wisdom Pneumatology … He gives Wisdom and Spirit essentially the same role in his theology.”

There is some evidence that supports this view. For example, on the occasion of Jesus teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth (Matt 13:54, Mark 6:2; Luke 3:16–22), whereas in Matthew and Mark the crowd wonder at the source of Jesus’ wisdom, Luke tells us that he is filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Thus, Luke appears to betray a preference to speak of the Spirit rather than wisdom. However, there are other passages that do not support the view that Luke has a preference for speaking about the Spirit, or that he sees wisdom as coming the Spirit. In the description of the childhood of Jesus that is unique to his Gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40), and that he “increased in wisdom and stature” (Luke 2:52). This parallels the description of John, who “grew and became strong in spirit” (Luke 1:80). It is ambiguous as to whether Luke is referring here to the Spirit of God filling John, or whether it is John’s own spirit that grew. However, if it is a reference to the Spirit of God filling John, then it is interesting that Luke describes John as growing in the Spirit, while Jesus grew in wisdom. Rather than take the opportunity to connect wisdom with the Spirit, Luke associates it instead with Jesus. Another example is when Jesus warns the disciples of times of persecution to come, and assures them that they will be given what to say. Whereas elsewhere in both Matthew and Mark as well as Luke (Matt 10:19–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12), it is the Holy Spirit who will either speak or provide the words to say, in Luke 21:12–15 it is Jesus who will give them “a mouth and wisdom.” Thus, while Luke may mention the Spirit more often than Matthew and Mark, he does not associate wisdom exclusively with the

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365 Smith, *Wisdom Christology*, 120.
366 In the sense of wit, intelligence, and character.
Spirit: there are points at which he associates wisdom directly with Jesus, with no mention of the Spirit.

There are some distinctives in Matthew’s presentation of wisdom. First, there is the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7). This is not unique to Matthew; Luke has a similar Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17–49). However, unlike Luke’s version, Matthew’s Sermon has strong wisdom overtones. It begins with the Beatitudes (Matt 5:2–12), which echo both 4Q525 and various Psalms, in particular Psalm 37. And it finishes with a warning to hear and obey the words of Jesus, using the parable of the wise and foolish builders. Not only does the parable of the builders specifically use the vocabulary of wisdom and foolishness (accounting for two of Matthew’s 16 uses of words which share the root of φρόνησις), but this passage also echoes wisdom texts in the OT: the appeal to heed the words of the teacher carries strong echoes of Proverbs (Prov 8:6–8, 32–35; 22:17; 23:12); as does the image of the fool who refuses to listen and thus meets disaster (Prov 2:12–19; 5:3–5; 7:6–27). In addition to beginning and ending with passages that have strong wisdom implications, the Sermon on the Mount also includes two other examples of the use of words which share the root of φρόνησις (Matt 5:13; 6:24); and two other sections which carry echoes of wisdom in the instruction not to worry (Matt 6:25–34 echoing Sir 30:19–24) and in the Lord’s Prayer (6:9–13 echoing Sir 30:19–24). The number of these wisdom references, along with the connection to Moses and the Torah, which has often been observed in the Sermon on the Mount, combine to suggest that Matthew is portraying the Sermon as a block of wisdom teaching. Many of these references are common with Luke, but Luke does not collect them together and give them the combined weight that Matthew does.

Another distinctive feature in Matthew is his contrast between the wise and the foolish. He does this twice: in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matt 7:24–27) and in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1–13). The latter is unique to Matthew; the former is found also in Luke, but with the noticeable difference that Luke does not use the explicit vocabulary of wisdom and foolishness. Thus, although Luke draws

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367 This passage is also one of the five collections of aphorisms that Piper identifies as common to in Matthew and Luke.
a similar contrast, he does not contrast wisdom and foolishness as explicitly as Matthew does.

The fact that Mark gives very little place to wisdom in his presentation of Jesus suggests that wisdom is—for him at least—not the key category for understanding Jesus. His central theme is that of the kingdom of God. As Bultmann notes:

The dominant concept of Jesus’ message is the Reign of God. Jesus proclaims its immediately impending irruption, now already making itself felt. Reign of God is an eschatological concept. It means the regime of God which will destroy the present course of the world, wipe out all the contra-divine, Satanic power under which the present world groans—and thereby, terminating all pain and sorrow, bring in salvation for the People of God which awaits the fulfillment of the prophets’ promises. The coming of God’s reign is a miraculous event, which will be brought about by God alone without the help of men.368

Mark demonstrates that it is possible to speak of Jesus, salvation, and the kingdom (or reign) of God without any direct reference to wisdom. Matthew and Luke, however, both integrate wisdom into their presentation of Jesus. This implies that, although Jesus’ primary role is as Messiah, Saviour and instigator of the kingdom of God, a fuller understanding of Jesus includes seeing him as fulfilling the wisdom aspects of the OT, in addition to all the expectations and promises contained in the Law and the Prophets. In Luke this is a frequent undercurrent, whereas in Matthew it erupts to the surface more explicitly in such places as the Sermon on the Mount and in the parables which contrast the wise and the foolish.

B. A Christology of many strands

As we saw in our analysis of the theological foundation of wisdom in the OT, there is the potential for fragmentation between the wisdom strand, which has its basis in a theology of creation, and the salvation-history strand, which has its basis in a theology of covenant. Goldsworthy, for instance, anticipates the danger of developing a kind of dualism if it is proposed that wisdom and covenant are to be seen as an “either/or.”369 This

is seen to be a false dichotomy once it is understood that there is both a theological and a literary unity between the wisdom material and the covenantal material in the OT. We faced a similar issue in our analysis of the wisdom movement in Second Temple Judaism. Some see the proliferation of different strands within the wisdom tradition as problematic, reflecting confusion and division. However, the existence of several strands of wisdom does not necessarily imply discord or lack of cohesion; but can in fact build a richer and stronger reality, if those strands are intertwined.

We face a similar question again in our analysis of the place of wisdom within the Synoptic Gospels: does the wisdom aspect of Jesus stand in conflict with the salvation aspect, or do the two strands coexist in rich complementarity?

Cynthia Bourgeault, in her presentation of Jesus as a wisdom figure, argues that “since the mid-twentieth century our Western map of the known Christian universe has been blasted wide open.”370 Pointing to four particular influences, or factors, in this explosion,371 she suggests a paradigm shift is occurring, and a new picture is emerging which challenges our traditional view of Jesus and of Christianity: “The main difference between the Christianity we’re familiar with through our Western filter and the Christianity coming to us from these new sources can be captured in two words … the difference is between a soteriology and a sophiology.”372 She argues that whereas the Christianity of the West has always been saviour-oriented, in the East Christianity was supremely a wisdom path. Whereas in the Western soteriological view, Jesus is different to us, a higher order of being, a mediator between us and God, in the Eastern sophiological view, “Jesus was not the Savior but the Life-Giver … A sophiological Christianity focuses on the path. It emphasises how Jesus is like us, how what he did in himself is something we are called to do in ourselves.”373 Her reference to “a new picture” of Jesus, and her claim that in Eastern Christianity “Jesus was not the Saviour,” might suggest to some that this life-giving wisdom figure is a new and different figure to the one we are familiar with. That is

370 Bourgeault, The Wisdom Jesus, 16.
371 The four are: the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codex, increased interest in Syriac studies, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the “recovery” of Christianity’s contemplative tradition.
not what Bourgeault is claiming. She does not suggest that soteriology and sophiology are mutually exclusive: she speaks, rather, in terms of a different emphasis, or a new perspective. That is to say that this is not a completely new picture of Jesus, but that aspects of the old picture which might previously have been overlooked or downplayed are now being highlighted. The wisdom Jesus is not a new figure, or a lost figure now being rediscovered, but in fact wisdom has always been a part of the Jesus we have had in front of us. Understood in this way, an interest in his wisdom role enriches our understanding of Jesus, without diminishing or denying his other roles.

The Synoptic Gospels, particularly Matthew and Luke, do not see the saviour Jesus and the wise Jesus as rival interpretations but regularly intertwine the two roles, often in the same pericope. So, for example, in the passage where Jesus draws a connection with Wisdom by commenting that Wisdom is justified by her deeds (Matt 11:1–19; Luke 7:18–35), we also see him portrayed as fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the Messiah opening the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and making the lame walk (Matt 11:1–6; Luke 7:18–23; Is 35:5–6); we see him as the Messiah for whom John has prepared the way (Matt 11:7–10; Luke 7:24–27; cf. Mal 3:1); and we hear him speak of the coming of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 11:11–12) and the day of judgment (Matt 11:4). Thus, in the same section of text, Jesus is tied to prophecies about the Messiah, the coming of the kingdom of God, and the anticipation of the day of judgment, as well as with Wisdom. Likewise, when Jesus comments that “these things” have been hidden from “the wise” (Matt 11:25–30; Luke 10:21–24), “these things” refers to “the presence of the Kingdom,” and thus true wisdom is connected to seeing and understanding the things of the kingdom of God. Or, again, when Jesus is presented as referring to himself as one greater than Solomon (Matt 12:38–42; Luke 11:29–32) we are told that those who reject him will be condemned by both the Queen of the South, who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and by the Ninevites, who repented at the preaching of Jonah. Thus, being in awe of Jesus’ wisdom, repenting at his preaching, and being prepared for the coming of the day of

374 Morris, Matthew, 292.
judgment are inextricably intertwined. When the people in the synagogue in Nazareth ask, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matt 13:54), in the same breath they connect Jesus’ wisdom with his “mighty deeds,” which are acts of transformation and redemption. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is portrayed as both the true interpreter of the Law, and also the true voice of Wisdom. This is consistent with the association that had grown between wisdom and the Law in Second Temple Judaism, and reinforces the interconnectedness of covenantal and wisdom themes in the Synoptics.

The same pattern of interconnection between wisdom, covenant, and kingdom can be seen in the way echoes and allusions of wisdom texts are used in the Synoptics. For example, if there is an echo of wisdom’s scoffers (Prov 1:20–33) in this generation’s mocking of Jesus (Matt 11:16; Luke 7:31–32), then there is a clear parallel being drawn between the OT scoffers’ failure to “fear the Lord” (Prov 1:29) and the NT scoffers’ failure to repent (Matt 11:20). Thus, the wise person in the OT is the one who fears the Lord, but the wise person in the Gospels is the one who repents and follows Jesus. In Matt 13:44, Jesus alludes to a Proverbs passage about the search for wisdom in his description of the search of the kingdom of God, apparently seeing no contradiction between the two themes. And again, in Matt 25:40, Jesus quotes wisdom texts to point to his role as judge and king.

Consistently, then, throughout the Synoptics themes of Law, covenant, messiahship, the kingdom of God, salvation, and repentance, intermingle with wisdom themes and references. Sophiology and soteriology in the Synoptic presentation of Jesus are not inconsistent alternatives, but are in fact intertwined and complimentary: together they contribute to a richer, more rounded, vision of Jesus. So Winton asserts that: “any attempt to reduce the social identity of Jesus to one title will not do justice to the diverse themes and concerns of his ministry. There are elements of wisdom, charismatic aspects, prophetic/eschatological concerns, miracle working and healing stories.”

And Goldsworthy says that: “Jesus deliberately chose the role of the wise man to complement his roles as prophet, priest and king.”

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376 Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 156.
portrayal of discipleship. Jesus is not only the source of our salvation, but
“Jesus is Wisdom, and the source of Wisdom for the Christian is the
tradition of Jesus’ teaching and the guidance of his present leadership as
exalted Lord.”377 The saved person is the one who trusts in and follows
Jesus. The wise person is the one who listens to Jesus’ words and puts them
into practice. Thus, sophiology and soteriology are two sides of the same
coin. As John P. Meier says of Matthew’s presentation: “The fusion of
apocalyptic and sapiential themes in the service of a high Christology could
not be clearer.”378

C. True and false wisdom

We most commonly contrast wisdom with foolishness. However, the
Synoptics also draw a contrast between wisdom and “wisdom,” or that
which appears to be wisdom but is not. As we said at the beginning of this
discussion, wisdom is a concept and a practice that is common to many
cultures. However, although it may often share similar forms, and revolve
around similar themes, not all wisdom is the same. The Christian scriptures
recognize that there is a form of wisdom in the world; and at times it shares
the patterns and ideas of that broader wisdom. However, there is a
uniqueness to Biblical wisdom. In the OT, it is founded on a knowledge of,
and relationship with, the creator God, the God of Israel (Prov 1:7; Eccl
12:13). In Second Temple Judaism, it is increasingly portrayed as being
given by God, mediated by his Spirit and embodied in his Law. In the NT,
true wisdom comes from God (Jas 1:5; 3:17) through the Spirit (Eph 1:17;
Col 1:9), and stands in stark contrast to “the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor
1:20) which is “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic” (Jas 3:14–16),
foolishness (1 Cor 3:19), and coming to nothing (1 Cor 2:6).

This contrast between the wisdom of God and other forms of wisdom
continues in the Synoptics. Here, however, the contrasting wisdom is not
that of the wider world, but specifically that of the religious leaders of
Israel. They are sometimes directly described as foolish, for instance when

377 Smith, Wisdom Christology, 120.
378 John P. Meier, The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First
Gospel (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 80.
Jesus condemns them as “blind guides” and “blind fools” (Matt 23:16–17). However, in other places they are described as “wise,” apparently in an ironic and mocking way, contrasting their form of wisdom with the true wisdom of God. If there is an echo of wisdom in the visit of the Magi (Matt 2:1–12), then Smith may well be right when he suggests that from the beginning we are being told that “God’s plan, guiding the Magi, is pitted against both the wisdom of the scribes and the political shrewdness of Herod …. this wisdom and shrewdness is shown to be powerless to affect God’s plan.”

This contrast between the wisdom of God and the so-called “wisdom” of the scribes and other teachers of Israel is also seen in Jesus’ comment that the secrets of the kingdom have been hidden from “the wise,” and revealed instead to little children (Matt 11:25–30; Luke 10:21–24). It is seen again in his observation that there is a form of wisdom, or shrewdness, at work in the world that is alien to the “sons of light” (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:8–13). It shows again in the woes pronounced over the scribes and Pharisees, who will be sent wise men whom they will persecute and kill (Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49). It is further reinforced in the way Jesus is presented as using wisdom forms, such as parables and aphorisms: he looks and sounds like a teacher of wisdom, using conventional wisdom forms, but his message often subverts the conventional wisdom message. Thus, Goldsworthy speaks of a new “crisis” of wisdom: “a clash of a distorted form of Israel’s faith with the unexpected and utterly surprising form of the Old Testament fulfilment that Jesus announced in himself.”

By this view, the parables, for instance, “were a deliberate means of precipitating the new crisis of wisdom by confronting the false wisdom of the Pharisees.”

D. Jesus as giver of wisdom

In the Synoptics, Jesus is portrayed as either a teacher of wisdom or the source of wisdom. Thus, for example, in the parable of the wise and foolish builders, the wise person is “the one who hears these words of mine and does them” (Matt 7:24). And even after he has left them, Jesus promises the

disciples that when they face persecution and are dragged before kings and governors, he will give them (either directly, or through the mediation of the Spirit) “a mouth and wisdom” (Matt 10:19–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12). The wisdom of Jesus is portrayed as being at a new level, unseen before. So, for example, as he finishes the Sermon on the Mount, the crowd are astonished at his teaching, “for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:29). And when he teaches in the synagogue in Nazareth, they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:2).

The difference between the wisdom of Jesus and the wisdom of others is seen in the Synoptic writers’ use of vocabulary. As noted when we began our lexical analysis, there are two key wisdom words in the Synoptics: σοφία and φρόνησις. Their meaning and their usage are distinct: σοφία refers to a higher order of wisdom, which is theoretical and explicative, whereas φρόνησις is used for a lower order of wisdom which is more descriptive and practical. In the Synoptics σοφία is almost exclusively used of either Jesus or wisdom personified (and there are solid grounds for arguing the two are one and the same); whereas φρόνησις is exclusively applied to human beings as they live their lives, and in particular as they respond to the teaching of Jesus. Thus the higher order wisdom of σοφία belongs to Jesus, whereas the lower order wisdom of φρόνησις is the domain of mere mortals. As Goldsworthy says, “The scribes and wise men of Israel sought to understand wisdom and to possess it, but Jesus spoke with authority as the Source of wisdom.”382

There is an intriguing wisdom comparison in the Synoptics, between Jesus and Solomon. Solomon is the wisest person in the OT (1 Kgs 4:30), gifted by God to teach and lead his people (2 Chron 1:10); but in Jesus one greater than Solomon is here (Matt 12:38–42; Luke 11:29–32). This comparison may simply be of degree: that Jesus is possessed of more wisdom than Solomon. However, there are strong grounds for arguing that it is in fact a contrast in nature: whereas Solomon was given great wisdom, Jesus is greater because he is the source of wisdom.

382 Goldsworthy, “Christ our Wisdom.”
E. Jesus and Wisdom personified

This brings us to the question of whether Jesus is being portrayed simply as a wise person, or something more: whether he is in fact Wisdom incarnate. In the broader NT, the locus of wisdom is Jesus, who is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24); and is “wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). McDowell says that “Jesus is also depicted as personified Wisdom in the NT, though the extent of this personification, reliance on the concept in previous Wisdom texts, and the process by which Jesus became identified with Wisdom is not always agreed upon.”383 The question then is in what way Jesus is the locus of wisdom in the Synoptics.

We have seen that in parts of the OT, and in Second Temple Judaism, Wisdom is presented as a person: Sophia, or the Woman of Wisdom. This may have been a deliberate reaction to, or contrast with, the various goddesses of the world around Israel; however, particularly given that monotheism is a central tenet within Judaism, it is unlikely that Wisdom is perceived as a real, separate, divine figure. She is best understood as either a metaphor or, more substantially, a hypostasis of God. N.T. Wright argues that, along with other images or metaphors, Wisdom personified is a way of speaking of the presence and work of God in the world: “Word, Wisdom, Spirit, and ultimately Temple and Torah — these are the themes which, in Judaism, speak of the one, true and living God active within the world in general and Israel in particular.”384 In response to those who suggest that a high Christology and a real incarnational theology are foreign to Second Temple Judaism, he argues that incarnation is inherent in the various ways Second Temple Jews had developed for speaking about the activity of God in the world: “God’s Spirit broods over the waters, God’s Word goes forth to produce new life, God’s Law guides his people, God’s Presence or Glory dwells with them in fiery cloud, in tabernacle and temple. These four ways of speaking moved to and fro from metaphor to trembling reality-claim and back again.”385 To these four, he adds a fifth: “God’s Wisdom is his

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handmaid in creation, the firstborn of his works, his chief of staff, his
delight. God’s Wisdom is another way of talking about God’s presence with
his people in the checkered careers of the patriarchs and particularly in the
events of the Exodus. Wisdom becomes closely aligned thereby with Torah
and Shekinah … To embrace Wisdom is therefore to discover the secret of
being truly human, of reflecting God’s image.”386 He contends that “Long
before secular philosophy and its terminology was invoked to describe the
inner being of the one god and the relation of this God to Jesus and to the
Spirit, a vigorous and very Jewish tradition took the language and imagery
of Spirit, Word, Law, Presence (and/or Glory) and Wisdom and developed
them in relation to Jesus of Nazareth and the Spirit.”387 Thus, Wisdom is not
a separate being, but one of a number of ways in which Judaism spoke
about God’s presence and activity in the world. These were then used by the
NT writers to illuminate the identity of Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews
uses the language of hypostasis to describe Jesus as “the radiance of the
glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (ὁς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς
dόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ; Heb 1:3). John explicitly
identifies him as the Word of God incarnate (John 1:1–14), and the
revelation of God’s glory (John 1:14).

The Synoptics are less explicit, but in places their presentation
strongly suggests an identification of Jesus with Wisdom. As we have seen,
the language of σοφία is used almost exclusively of either Jesus or Wisdom
personified. The only exception to this is in Luke 21:15, where Jesus tells
his disciples that when called to bear witness in the face of persecution he
will provide them with σοφία. Even in this case, however, it can be argued
that the wisdom is still that of Jesus, mediated by his Spirit working in and
through the disciples. If every other occurrence of σοφία applies either to
Jesus or to Wisdom personified, then either there are two separate Wisdos
at work in the world, or they are one and the same. The evidence suggests
that the latter is the more likely interpretation. When Jesus speaks of
sending the prophets (Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49), while Matthew puts these
words in Jesus’ mouth in the first person, Luke instead has Jesus presenting
these as the words of “the Wisdom of God.” As has been argued above, the

386 Wright, “Jesus and the Identity of God,” 45.
387 Wright, “Jesus and the Identity of God,” 46.
most satisfactory explanation, given the parallel between the two passages, is that Luke is identifying Jesus as the Wisdom of God. When Jesus says that Wisdom will be justified by her deeds (Matt 11:19), we have contended that the deeds referred to are in fact the deeds of Jesus, who is thus being identified with Wisdom. This view is challenged by some who maintain that in the parallel passage in Luke, where Jesus says that Wisdom is justified by her children rather than her deeds (Luke 7:34), Jesus is being identified as one of Wisdom’s children, or agents, rather than as Wisdom. However, this interpretation is problematic, and particularly in the light of the parallel presentation in Matthew, it is far more likely that Luke intends us to see Jesus not as Wisdom’s child, or agent, but in fact as Wisdom herself. The proposition that Jesus is being identified with Wisdom is further strengthened by some of the echoes or allusions to wisdom literature, particularly in Matthew. For example, when Matthew has Jesus issue the invitation to all who labour and are heavy laden to come to him and “take my yoke upon you …” (Matt 11:28–30), he appears to be putting into Jesus’ mouth words that elsewhere are attributed to Wisdom (Sir 6:19–31; 51:23, 26), thus identifying the two. And when Jesus says: “foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Matt 8:20), Matthew again seems to be alluding to something that was previously said of Wisdom (Sir 24:6–7; 36:31), and appropriating it for Jesus.

The proposal that the Synoptic writers, and Matthew in particular, are presenting Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom is entirely consistent with the presentation in the rest of the NT of Jesus as being the incarnation of God, encapsulating in the flesh those aspects of God’s nature, presence, and work in the world that have only previously been spoken of in conceptual terms such as Spirit, Word, Law, Glory, and Wisdom. As Meier says of Matthew’s Gospel: “In almost Johannine fashion, the Son becomes not only revealer of the apocalyptic secret but also its content. He is not only the preacher of God’s Wisdom; he is that Wisdom, revealed to the elect.”388

F. The nature and goal of wisdom

388 Meier, The Vision of Matthew, 80. Emphasis original.
As we have seen, the only way human beings can find true wisdom in the Synoptics is to receive it from Jesus. This stands in contrast with an earlier view of wisdom, which saw it as a human enterprise, based on personal experience and observation of the order in God’s creation. The wise person can reflect on the order which he or she observes in the universe, and by adjusting their plans accordingly, can attempt to derive some profit from this insight. Thus, as Murphy says in summarising Zimmerli, wisdom “represents the human effort to fulfill the divine command to master the world.”

However, as we have seen, the presuppositions on which this view were based, namely that there is in creation both “knowability” and justice, were challenged by the experience of chaos, injustice, and the growing realisation of the limitations on human understanding. This “crisis” of wisdom led to a number of developments and refinements in the enterprise of wisdom. One key development was that wisdom ceased to be understood as primarily derived from human experience and insight, and came to be viewed as being given by God instead, through theophany, prophecy, the Spirit, and the Law.

When one comes to the Synoptic Gospels, then, it is no surprise to find that wisdom is not derived from human experience or observation, but from God in the person of Jesus. Wisdom is found in coming to Jesus in repentance and faith, as we see when John prepares people’s hearts to receive Jesus, and is presented as turning their hearts from disobedience to wisdom (Luke 1:17). Jesus is the true interpreter and embodiment of the Law, and the wise person is the one who hears his words and puts them into practice (Matt 7:24–27). Jesus provides wisdom as he teaches in the synagogues (Matt 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–22), and as he sends the prophets (Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49). And Jesus will continue to provide his disciples wisdom, either directly or through the mediation of the Spirit (Matt 10:19–20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11–12; Luke 21:12–15).

If the source and nature of wisdom have come to be found in Jesus, then so too has the goal of wisdom. Although at one time wisdom might

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390 This is the term proposed by Jenks, “Theological Presuppositions,” 43–75.
have been seen to be the art of living well, and its goal to be the successful life, we have seen that there was a growing strand of Second Temple Judaism which was more apocalyptic, or eschatological. So Ben Sira speaks of the heavens and the earth trembling at God’s visitation (Sir 16:18), and the Wisdom of Solomon anticipates judgment for the wicked and the prospect of the righteous enjoying a blessed afterlife (Wis 3:7; 4:20–5:23). When one comes to the Synoptic Gospels, the focus of wisdom is also very much eschatological. McDowell notes that there are differences between the teachings of Jesus and the conventional wisdom teachings of the time. Jesus does not, for example “offer typical wisdom advice about families or the Christian’s role towards the government.”

Instead, in the Synoptics, the focus of wisdom is not on success and prosperity in this life, but on preparedness for the day of judgment. Hence, the wise person who builds their house on the rock of Jesus and his words will survive when the storms come (Matt 7:24–27). The wise manager is the one who faithfully waits for Jesus’ return (Matt 24:45–51; Luke 12:41–48). The wise virgins are those who are ready for the time when the bridegroom returns (Matt 23:13). And the rich fool lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God and is not prepared for the day that his life is demanded of him (Luke 12:21). It might be said that the focus of wisdom has shifted from the art of living well to the art of dying well.

G. Conclusion

Having begun by asking what Jesus meant when he said: “Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds” (Matt 11:19) and “behold one greater than Solomon is here” (Matt 12:42), we have come to the view that Jesus is at the very least being presented as a wise person imbued with a wisdom that exceeds even that of Solomon, confirming the view of Cynthia Bourgeault, noted in the introduction to this thesis, that Jesus is being portrayed as “a master in the wisdom tradition.” However, we further see that there is a strong argument to be made that Jesus is in fact being presented as Wisdom.

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393 Cynthia Bourgeault, The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind — A New Perspective on Christ and His Message (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), 2 (emphasis original).
incarnate. That is, the figure of Wisdom, which was introduced in the OT and further developed in Second Temple Judaism as one of several images, metaphors, or hypostases, used to speak of God’s nature and his activity in the world, has taken on physical expression in the person of Jesus. If Jesus is God incarnate, the one in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col 1:19), then Wisdom is one among many of the aspects of the nature of God that takes on flesh in Jesus. Having noted in the introduction to this thesis that Michael Hooten, for instance, claims that there are only “a few references to Jesus as God’s Wisdom,” our exploration has revealed that there is in fact a significant weight of material in the Synoptics that points to this interpretation. We have seen that the imagery that was used to speak of God’s Wisdom is now used of Jesus. As Wisdom called men and women to come to her and take on her yoke and find rest (Sir 6:19–31; 51:23, 26), so Jesus issues the invitation to come to him, take on his yoke, and find rest (Matt 11:28–30). As Wisdom roamed the streets calling out for people to come and hear her message (Prov 1:20–21; 8:1–4; Wis 6:16), so Jesus calls people to come and hear his words (Matt 7:24–26; Mark 7:14; Luke 6:47–49). As Wisdom instructed her disciples, whom she spoke of as her children (Prov 8:17, 32–33; Wis 6:17–19; Sir 4:11–12; 6:18–26), so Jesus instructs his disciples, whom he regards as his children (Matt 5:9; 18:3; 19:14; Mark 9:37; 10:14; Luke 6:35). As Wisdom was mocked and scoffed at in the marketplace (Prov 1:20–24), so too Jesus is mocked and scoffed at in the marketplace (Matt 11:16; Luke 7:31–32). As Wisdom has no nest (Sir 36:31) and no place to dwell (Sir 24:6–7; 1 Enoch 42:2), so Jesus has no place to lay his head (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58). And as Wisdom prepared a feast and called people to eat of her bread and drink of her wine (Prov 9:5; Sir 24:19–21), so Jesus invites his disciples to eat bread and drink wine in a symbolic meal that not only anticipates his death, but the heavenly banquet they will one day share (Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20). In the Synoptic presentation of Jesus, what was previously just a metaphor, a figure of speech, has become a real historic figure. Wisdom has taken on flesh and blood and walked among us. The theme of wisdom may not be the central category for understanding him, but it is one of several

394 Hooten, *Four Gospels, One Christ*, 22.
complementary motifs that the Synoptic writers use in their multifaceted portraits of Jesus’ identity and significance.
Appendix A — Occurrences of Words Sharing the Root of σοφός in the Synoptic Gospels

Matt 11:19 ἤλθεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐσθίον καὶ πίνων, καὶ λέγουσιν· ιδοὺ ἀνθρώπος φάγος καὶ οἶνοπότης, τελωνὸς φίλος καὶ ἀμαρτωλόν. καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τὸν ἔργον αὐτῆς.

Matt 11:25 Ἐν ἑκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐπεκρίθη: ἐξομολογοῦμαι σοι, πάτερ, κύριε τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅτι ἐκρυψας ταῦτα ἀπὸ σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτά νηπίοις.

Matt 12:42 βασιλίσσα νότου ἐγερθήσεται ἐν τῇ κρίσει μετὰ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης καὶ κατακρινεῖ αὐτήν, ὅτι ἤλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς ἀκούσας τὴν σοφίαν Σολομόνος, καὶ ἴδοι πλεῖον Σολομόνος ὑδε.

Matt 13:54 καὶ ἔλθων εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν, ὡς τὸ κόσμον ἐστὶ ἀυτούς καὶ λέγειν· ποθὲν τούτῳ ἡ σοφία αὐτῆ καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις;

Matt 23:34 Διὰ τοῦτο ἴδοι ἐγώ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς· ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενεῖται καὶ σταυρώσεται καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν μαστιγώσεται ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὡμῶν καὶ διώξεται ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν·

Mark 6:2 καὶ γενομένου σαββάτου ἤρετο διδάσκειν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ, καὶ πολλοὶ ἀκούοντες ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες· ποθὲν τούτῳ ταῦτα, καὶ τίς ἡ σοφία ἡ δοθεῖσα τούτῳ, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τοιαύται διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ γινόμεναι;

Luke 2:40 Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἦβαλαν καὶ ἔκραται οὖσα πληροῦμενος σοφία, καὶ χάρις θεοῦ ἦν ἐπὶ αὐτῷ.


Luke 7:35 καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.


Luke 11:49 διὰ τούτο καὶ ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐίπεν· ἀποστελῶ εἰς αὐτοὺς προφήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενοῦσιν καὶ διώξοσιν.

Appendix B — Words Sharing the Root of φρόνησις in the Synoptic Gospels

Matt 6:24 Οὐδεὶς δύναται δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἑνα μισῆσαι καὶ τὸν ἑτέρον ἀγαπῆσαι, ἢ ἑνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονῆσαι. οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμονᾶ.

Matt 7:24 Πάς οὖν ὅστις ἀκούει μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ ποιεῖ αὐτοὺς, ὁμοιοθησθεὶς ἄνδρι φρονίμῳ, δόστε ἑκατὸν ἥμισυν αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν·

Matt 10:16 Ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς ως πρόβατα ἐν μέσῳ λύκων· γίνεσθε οὖν φρόνιμοι ως οἱ ὄφεις καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστεραὶ.

Matt 16:23 ὁ δὲ στραφεὶς εἶπεν τῷ Πέτρῳ· ὑπαγε ὅπισώ μου, σατανᾷ· σκάνδαλον εἰς ἐμοί, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄλλα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Matt 24:45 Τίς ἄρα ἔστιν ὁ πιστὸς δοῦλος καὶ φρόνιμος ὁν κατέστησεν οἱ κύριοι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκείας αὐτοῦ τῷ δούναι αὐτοῖς τὴν τροφὴν ἐν καιρῷ·

Matt 25:2 πέντε δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἦσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι.

Matt 25:4 αἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι ἔλαβον ἔλαιον ἐν τοῖς ἄγγείοις μετὰ τῶν λαμπάδων ἑαυτῶν.

Matt 25:8 αἱ δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρονίμοις εἶπαν· δότε ἕμιν ἕκ τοῦ ἔλαιον ὑμῶν, ὅτι αἱ λαμπάδες ἕμιν σβέννυται.

Matt 25:9 ἀπεκρίθησαν δὲ αἱ φρόνιμοι λέγουσαι· μήποτε οὐ μὴ ἄρκεσθη ἕμιν καὶ ἕμιν· πορεύεσθε μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράσατε ἑαυταῖς.

Mark 5:15 καὶ ἔχρησαν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαιμονιζόμενον καθήμενον ἵματισμένον καὶ σωφρονοῦντα, τὸν ἐσχήκοτα τὸν λεγίωνα, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.

Mark 7:22 μουχεία, πλασενεία, πονηρία, δόλος, ἀσέλγεια, ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός, βλασφημία, ὑπερηφανία, ἀφροσύνη·

Mark 8:33 ὁ δὲ ἐπιστραφεὶς καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐπετίμησεν Πέτρῳ καὶ λέγει· ὑπαγε ὅπισώ μου, σατανᾷ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄλλα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Luke 8:35 ἐξήλθον δὲ ἱδεῖν τὸ γεγονός καὶ ἤλθον πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εύρον καθήμενον τὸν ἀνθρώπον ἄφ’ οὗ τὰ δαιμόνια ἐξῆλθεν ἰματισμένον καὶ σωφρονοῦντα παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν;

Luke 11:40 ἄφρονες, οὖχ ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἐξοθέν καὶ τὸ ἐσωθὲν ἐποίησεν;

Luke 12:19 καὶ ἐρῶ τῇ ψυχῇ μου· ψυχή, ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ κεῖμενα εἰς ἐτή πολλα· ἀναπαύον, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου.

Luke 12:20 εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς· άφρον, ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτί τὴν ψυχήν σου ἀπαιτοῦσιν ἀπὸ σοῦ· ἃ δὲ ἡτοιμασάς, τίνι ἔσται;

Luke 12:42 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος· τίς ἄρα ἔστιν ὁ πιστὸς οἰκονόμος ὁ φρονίμος, ὃς καταστήσει ὁ κύριος ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας αὐτοῦ τοῦ διδόναι ἐν καιρῷ [τῷ] στιμομέτριον;


Luke 15:29 ὁ δὲ ἀποκρίθη εἶπεν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ· ἴδου τοσαῦτα ἐτή δουλεών σοι καὶ οὐδέποτε ἐντολήν σου παρήλθον, καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐδέποτε ἐδοκιμάσεις ἐριφθέν τινα μετὰ τὸν φίλον μου εὐφρανθῶ.


Luke 16:8 καὶ ἔπιθετο συν αὐτοῦ· ὁ κύριος τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας ὁ οἰκονόμος ἐποίησεν· ὃς οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου φρονιμότεροι ὑπέρ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἐαυτῶν εἰσίν.


Appendix C — Words Sharing the Root of μωρός in the Synoptic Gospels

Matt 5:13 Ὑμεῖς ἔστε τὸ Ἰς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἴς μωρανθῆ, ἐν τίνι ἀληθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἢ ἐν μὴ βληθῶν ἢ ἐν καταπατέσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Matt 5:22 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ύμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὁργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἐνοχὸς ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· δὲ δὴ ἐν εἴπη τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ· ῥακά, ἐνοχὸς ἔσται τῷ συνδικῷ· δὲ δὴ ἐν εἴπῃ· μωρὲ, ἐνοχὸς ἔσται εἰς τὴν γένεναν τοῦ πυρῶς.

Matt 7:26 καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ μὴ ποιῶν αὐτούς ὁμοιωθήσεται ἀνδρὶ μωρῷ, ὡστε ὁ φυσικὸς αὐτῷ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἁμμον·

Matt 23:17 μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσὸς ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἀγιάσας τὸν χρυσὸν;

Matt 25:2 πέντε δὲ ἔξιν αὐτῶν ἦσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι.

Matt 25:3 αἱ γὰρ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔλαβον μεθ’ ἐαυτῶν ἔλαιον.

Matt 25:8 αἱ δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρονίμοις εἶπαν· δοτε ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ ἐλαίου ὑμῶν, ὡστε αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν σβήσωνται.

Luke 14:34 Καλὸν οὖν τὸ ἴς· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἴς μωρανθῆ, ἐν τίνι ἄρτυθήσεται;
Appendix D — Wisdom References in the Synoptic Gospels

**KEY**

σ = use of words sharing the root of σοφία
φ = use of words sharing the root of φρόνησις or μωρος
R = reference by echo or allusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The magi (2:1-12)</td>
<td>Restored to right mind (5:15)</td>
<td>Turning the hearts of the disobedient to wisdom (1:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R?]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beatitudes (5:3-12)</td>
<td>Wisdom in the synagogue (6:2)</td>
<td>The Child growing in wisdom (2:40, 52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R x3]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[σ x2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The salt of the earth (5:13)</td>
<td>Evil thoughts and foolishness (7:21)</td>
<td>The rejection and vindication of wisdom (7:31-35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[σ] [R x5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord’s Prayer (6:9-13)</td>
<td>Mind on the things of God (8:33)</td>
<td>Restored to right mind (8:35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrewdness and two masters (6:24)</td>
<td>How long am I to be with you? (9:19)</td>
<td>How long am I to be with you? (9:41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[R]</td>
<td>[R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t worry (6:25-34)</td>
<td>Wise and foolish builders, listening and doing (7:24-27)</td>
<td>No dwelling place (9:58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R]</td>
<td>[φ x2]</td>
<td>[R x3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dwelling place (8:20)</td>
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<td>Hidden from the wise, the Father and the Son (10:21-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R x3]</td>
<td>[R x3]</td>
<td>[σ] [R x4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rejection and vindication of wisdom (11:16-19)</td>
<td>The one greater than Solomon (11:29-32)</td>
<td>The one greater than Solomon (11:29-32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[σ] [R x5]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden from the wise, the Father and the Son, Wisdom’s yoke (11:25-30)</td>
<td>Hidden from the wise, the Father and the Son (12:38-42)</td>
<td>The rich fool (12:13-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[σ; R x6]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[φ; R x4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R]</td>
<td>[R x2]</td>
<td>[R x2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom in the synagogue (13:54)</td>
<td>Humbled and exalted (14:11)</td>
<td>The salt of the earth (14:34-35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[R x3]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind on the things of God (16:23)</td>
<td>Shrewdness and two masters (16:8-13)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ]</td>
<td>[φ x2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long am I to be with you? (17:17)</td>
<td>I will give you wisdom (21:12-15)</td>
<td>I will give you wisdom (21:12-15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[R]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
<td>[σ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[395] Because the identification of echoes and allusions is not an exact science, this figure may be disputed to a certain extent, depending on whether or not all claimed references are accepted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humbled and exalted (23:12) ([R \times 2])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blind fools (23:17) ([\phi])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39) ([R \times 2])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wise manager (24:45-46) ([\phi])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise and foolish virgins (25:1-13) ([\phi \times 7])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serving the Lord in the poor (25:40) ([R])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma \times 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\phi \times 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R \times 37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Total:** |
| \(\sigma \times 1\) |
| \(\phi \times 3\) |
| \(R \times 1\) |

| **Total:** |
| \(\sigma \times 6\) |
| \(\phi \times 8\) |
| \(R \times 23\) |
Bibliography


Boccaccini, Gabriele, ed. Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the


——. *Who was Jesus?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.


