

BRIAN CARRIER

Earthquakes and
Eschatology in the Gospel
According to Matthew

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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For Bianca and Lucía

Preface

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A. Purpose and Justification

The late movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn is reported to have given the following advice for creating a blockbuster film, “We want a story that starts out with an earthquake and works its way up to a climax.” He likely would have approved of Matthew’s Gospel. While the Gospel doesn’t include an earthquake in its opening scene, it has a predilection for them. In total Matthew contains eight references to seismic activity.¹ The first is the great earthquake (σεισμός μέγας ἐγένετο) at sea (Matt 8:24). Next is the shaking (ἐσεισθη) of Jerusalem when Jesus enters the city and initiates the week of his Passion (21:10). In 24:7, Jesus includes earthquakes (σεισμοί) as a portent of the end times. Shortly thereafter, he says that the powers of the heaven will be shaken (σαλευθήσονται) before the sign of the Son of Man (24:29). At the climax of the Gospel, the ground is shaken (ἐσεισθη) amidst a number of other apocalyptic phenomena when Jesus dies on the cross (27:51). These spectacles, and especially the earthquake (σεισμός), lead the centurion guarding Jesus and those with him to proclaim that Jesus was truly the Son of God (27:54). Finally, on the morning of Jesus’s resurrection, there is another great earthquake (σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας) when the angel comes down to roll away the stone from the tomb (28:2). This scene causes those guarding the tomb to shake (ἐσεισθησαν) with fear to the point of resembling dead men (28:4).

It is telling that the majority of these references are found only in Matthew. The fourth Gospel contains no references to shaking or earthquakes. All three Synoptics list earthquakes as a sign of the end times (Matt 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11) and contain the prophecy that the powers of the heavens will be shaken in the finale of this age (Matt 24:29; Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26). However, the remaining six references to shaking and earthquakes are unique to Matthew’s narrative. Only in Matthew is the sea storm described as a σεισμός (8:24). Only in Matthew are the shaking of Jerusalem and its corresponding dialogue recounted in the triumphal entry scene (21:10–11). Only in Matthew is there mention of the earth quaking, the rocks splitting, and the dead rising

¹ Justification for this scope will be provided in 1.B.

from their tombs in conjunction with Jesus's death (27:51–53).² Furthermore, only in Matthew is the earthquake directly connected to the centurion's proclamation of Jesus's divine sonship (27:54).³ Finally, while Matthew, Mark, and Luke all make reference to an eventful encounter at the empty tomb, only in Matthew is there mention of an earthquake (28:2) and a shaking of the guards (28:4) in conjunction with the event. The exclusivity of these six seismic events suggests that they have a special role to play in Matthew's Gospel.

The suggestion is strengthened when one observes the narrative location of all six of Matthew's unique seismic references. First, the majority of the unique Matthean shaking references occur at the climax of the story's plot, the passion and resurrection narrative (27:51, 54; 28:2, 4; cf. 21:10).⁴ Even within this section, the shaking references are centrally located: two are intricately connected with Jesus's death (27:51, 54) and two with his resurrection (28:2, 4).⁵ Second, all of the unique seismic references are connected to the motif of Jesus's identity that is prominently featured in Matthew's Gospel.⁶ In 8:23–27, the crisis of the sea quake and Jesus's subsequent response prompt the witnesses to proclaim the Gospel's first christological question, *ποταπός ἐστιν οὗτος* ("what sort is this one?"). In 21:10, when the city of Jerusalem is shaken, it cries out a nearly identical christological question, *τίς ἐστιν οὗτος*; ("who is this?"). In 27:51–54, the earthquake leads to the question's definitive answer: the centurion and those with him cry out, *ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος* ("truly this was the Son of God!"). Following the earthquake and shaking of 28:2, 4, the women worship Jesus. Though not verbally expressed as with the centurion, the women's action also constitutes a christological statement. Furthermore, the strong lexical tie between 28:2 (*καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας*) and 8:24 (*καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός μέγας ἐγένετο*) suggests that the two passages should be taken together, thereby adding another link between the quake at 28:2 and the

² All three Synoptics recount darkness and the tearing of the temple veil as accompaniments of Jesus's death (Matt 27:45, 51; Mark 15:33, 38; Luke 23:44–45).

³ In Mark it is the way that Jesus dies that precipitates the centurion's proclamation (Mark 15:39).

⁴ Though 21:10 may not form part of the passion and resurrection narrative proper (26–28), it nevertheless is closely tied to this literary unit. In the words of W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 3:128, "21.1–11 is not just the entry into Jerusalem: it is also the entry into the remainder of the narrative. By anticipating upcoming events and introducing or reiterating certain themes, the passage strengthens the unity of Matthew 21–8 and prods the reader to interpret the text in light of itself" (cf. the helpful chart they provide on 3:127–28).

⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 2 vols., WBC 33A–33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1993–1995), 1:221.

⁶ This motif runs through the entire Gospel but is especially pointed in questions (4:3, 6; 8:27; 12:23; 13:55; 16:13, 15; 21:10; 26:63; cf. 27:40, 42–43) and assertions (3:17; 8:29; 14:1, 33; 16:16; 17:5; 21:11; 27:37, 54) that directly relate to Jesus's identity.

christological theme. The unique seismic motif running through Matthew is therefore not a peripheral feature; rather, it lies at the very heart of the Gospel.

There is yet another observation that betrays an intentionality behind Matthew's unique seismic language: so great is his proclivity for earthquake imagery that he almost appears to have forced a σεισμός into the storm stilling context.⁷ Matthew refers to the event on the Sea of Galilee as a σεισμός μεγός, a "great shaking" or a "great earthquake" (8:24). However, there is little in the scene to suggest that a seismic phenomenon is in view. While the boat containing Jesus and the disciples is tossed about, it is by waves rather than tremors. Granted, earthquakes do occur frequently in the Jordan Rift Valley, and some have even generated tsunamis in the Dead Sea or the Sea of Galilee.⁸ But even if an earthquake had occurred and generated the threatening waves, it is unlikely that such an event would also create wind, and Matthew makes it clear that pneumatic gusts are a central feature of the maritime chaos (8:26–27). Moreover, when Jesus puts an end to the crisis, he does so by silencing the wind and the waves, not the shaking of the earth (8:26, 27).⁹ Thus, a sea storm would appear a far more fitting description for the source of the disciples' terror than an earthquake.¹⁰ Indeed, this is precisely how the event is described in both Mark and Luke; they state that it is a λαίλαψ άνέμου (literally, "a wind-storm" or "a hurricane of wind") that descends on the Sea of Galilee.¹¹ Matthew's redacted use of σεισμός therefore does not appear a good fit for the context if taken at face value.¹²

⁷ See 1.D for a discussion of intentionality.

⁸ Joel Marcus, "Did Matthew Believe His Myths?" in *An Early Reader of Mark and Q*, ed. Joseph Verheyden and Gilbert Van Belle (Bristol: Peeters, 2016), 217; cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 7.24.12 and Plutarch, *Cicero*, 32.3 for earthquakes that created a tsunami.

⁹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:221; John Nolland, *Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 370.

¹⁰ The majority of English translations share this conclusion, as evidenced by their translation of the Matt 8:24 σεισμός as "storm."

¹¹ Mark 4:37: λαίλαψ μεγάλη άνέμου // Luke 8:23: λαίλαψ άνέμου.

¹² Having said this, it must be noted that in October of 2019 scientists discovered "stormquakes," which are defined as storm induced "spatiotemporally focused seismic point sources with equivalent earthquake magnitudes that can be greater than 3.5" (Wenyuan Fan et al. "Stormquakes," *Geophysical Research Letters* 46 [2019]: 12,909). Windstorms thus appear capable of creating seismic activity. In these instances, intense windstorms such as hurricanes and Nor'easters create waves both on the surface and under the surface of the sea. These subsurface waves (Rayleigh waves) exert pressure on shallow sections of the seafloor that translates to a ground motion detectable by seismometers. However, as Fan, "Stormquakes," 12,914, points out, not all hurricanes generate stormquakes; the right local oceanographic and bathymetric conditions must also be in place. It is unclear if the Sea of Galilee provides these conditions and if the storms experienced on the Sea of Galilee are strong enough to generate the Rayleigh waves necessary to create a stormquake. It is also

Many commentators explain away this incongruity by stating that storms fall within the semantic domain of σεισμός.¹³ Foundational to this position is BDAG, which provides two definitions for the term: (a) an earthquake; (b) a storm on a body of water.¹⁴ In support of the latter definition, BDAG lists Matt 8:24 and four Greek sources: Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. Hist.* 26.8, scholion on Plato, *Timaeus* 25C, Artemidorus, *Oneir.* 2.38, and Maximus of Tyre, *Dialexis* 9.6a; 11.7h.¹⁵ However, as multiple scholars have argued, BDAG is on shaky ground; all four of the Greek references it cites actually describe earthquakes, not storms.¹⁶ Diodorus Siculus merely reports that Rhodes had been leveled by a σεισμός; while Rhodes was an island, there is no reason to follow BDAG in assuming that the destruction had to result from a storm or seaquake instead of a geological earthquake. The scholion on Plato theorizes that earthquakes occurring in conjunction with sea flooding are caused by winds but does not describe an earthquake as a storm. The passage from Artemidorus discusses predictions of earthquakes and rain storms (σεισμός and ὄμβρος) but does not equate the two portended phenomena.¹⁷ Maximus of Tyre metaphorically describes the soul using images of waves and σεισμοί, but it does not follow that the terms are equivalent. This leaves Matt 8:24 as the sole example for BDAG's alternative definition of storm.

Support for the storm definition does not increase when one considers other sources. According to LSJ, the term σεισμός carries three meanings, none of which is a storm: (a) shaking, shock, an earthquake; (b) shock, agitation, commotion; (c) blackmail, extortion.¹⁸ Muraoka provides only a single definition, "vibration."¹⁹ While both Louw and Nida and Wigram list two definitions, "earthquake" and "storm," they can muster only Matt 8:24 for support of the

uncertain if a stormquake on the Sea of Galilee would be detectable apart from a seismometer.

¹³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:71 n. 7; Donald A. Carson, *Matthew*, 2 vols., Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 1:215; Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:221; Craig S. Keener, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 277; Nolland, *Matthew*, 370; Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 313.

¹⁴ BDAG, 918.

¹⁵ BDAG, 918.

¹⁶ Günter Bornkamm, "σειώ, σεισμός," *TDNT* 7:199; Marcus, "Did Matthew Believe His Myths?," 218. For a more general discussion of limitations with regards to NT lexicons see John A. L. Lee, *A History of New Testament Lexicography*, Studies in Biblical Greek 8 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

¹⁷ BDAG errs in making this equation on the basis of supposed parallelism with an unrelated passage that speaks of predicting thunderstorms and rainstorms (χεμιῶν and ὄμβρος) through dreams of black figs (*Oneir.* 1.73)

¹⁸ LSJ, 1589.

¹⁹ Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Walpole: Peeters, 2009), 618.

latter.²⁰ Moulton lists only “earthquake” and metaphorically “extortion” as possible connotations.²¹ Lampe contributes only “earthquake.”²² Günther Bornkamm grants the possibility of alternate definitions when he states that the term σεισμός “usually means ‘earthquake;’” however, he fails to provide any alternative meanings and does not cite any examples beyond earthquakes.²³ Pamela Thimmes, after conducting an extensive study of the biblical and Greco-Roman sea-storm type scene, claims that Matt 8:24 is the only instance where σεισμός describes a storm at sea.²⁴ It thus appears that Matthew’s use of σεισμός in the sea storm context exhibits a Shakespearean type of novelty.

One might posit that רעַר, the Hebrew word for “earthquake,” can occasionally refer to a storm, and thus by extension so also could its normal LXX translation equivalent, σεισμός. For example, it is sometimes claimed that the רעַר of the Isa 29:6 theophany refers to a storm given the other phenomena described in the account.²⁵ Thunder, whirlwind, and tempest are all unambiguously aspects of a storm, and the fire could be descriptive of lightning. The theophany is clearly that of a storm god. Given the context, רעַר is taken as a reference to abysmal weather. However, such an interpretation is by no means the only one available. Far more likely is that רעַר retains its fundamental sense of a physical shaking and describes the rumbling that accompanies thunder. Such rumbling can feel like an earthquake if one is close enough to the source of the meteorological agitation. In this sense, the thunder, the רעַר, the great noise, and the fire all describe components of the storm rather than the רעַר describing the overall event.²⁶ Support for this interpretation is found in the description of a storm by Josephus, “a mighty storm broke out in the night, with gale-force winds, a downpour of rain and continuous thunder and lightning, and a terrible rumbling of earthquake.”²⁷ It follows that the רעַר / σεισμός

²⁰ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 171, 181; George V. Wigram, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament: Every Word and Inflection of the Greek New Testament Arranged Alphabetically and with Grammatical Analysis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983), 365.

²¹ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 571.

²² Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 1228.

²³ Bornkamm, *TDNT* 7:196.

²⁴ Pamela L. Thimmes, *Studies in the Biblical Sea-Storm Type-Scene: Convention and Invention* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University, 1992), 145.

²⁵ Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, *Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 77; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary*, trans. R. A. Wilson, *OTL* (London: SCM, 1974), 268; Schmoltdt, “רעַר, rā ‘aš, רעַר, ra ‘aš,” *TDOT* 13:591.

²⁶ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 2:311.

²⁷ *Jewish War*, 4.286. Cf., Hesiod, *Theogony*, 705, for a similar description.

of Isa 29:6 does not describe a storm, though it is intricately linked with such an event.

A meaning of storm has also been put forth for the רעש of Ezek 3:12, but should likewise be rejected. Schmoldt argues for the storm definition by equating the רעש of 3:12 with the “stormy wind” (רוח סערה) of 1:4.²⁸ He rests this claim on the overlap between the two theophanies. He notes that Ezekiel’s first theophany, where Yahweh comes with a stormy wind and a great cloud with flashing fire (1:4), features both the living creatures (1:5–14) and the wheels (1:15–21). Next, he notes that 3:13 is an expanded description of the great רעש of 3:12. Since the expanded description includes the sound of the wings of the living creatures and the sound of the wheels, Schmoldt concludes that the two theophanies are intricately connected. On the basis of this correspondence, he interprets the רעש of 3:12 as a probable reference to a storm (cf. 1:4). It is unclear, however, how Schmoldt is able to make this leap. While the two theophanies are certainly related, there is no reason to conclude that the רעש of 3:12 must describe a storm. If one were forced to draw a direct parallel for the רעש at 3:12, the sound of the waters, the sound of the voice of the Almighty (1:24), or the sound of the tumult of an army (1:24 MT) would appear a much better counterpart than the stormy wind of 1:4. A meaning of storm should therefore be rejected.

Schmoldt’s storm interpretation of the רעש of 1 Kgs 19:11–12 (στουσεισμός in the LXX) is similarly unconvincing.²⁹ He notes that the phenomena of the “anti-theophany” are listed in order of descending strength (wind, רעש, fire), and argues that since an earthquake is not likely to be weaker than wind, the רעש must describe a storm in this context. Even if Schmoldt is correct about the descending order of the phenomena, it does not require that רעש cannot describe an earthquake in this context. The account dwells on the description of the wind, depicting it as an extremely powerful force that tears apart mountains and shatters rocks. It is entirely possible that such fury would possess more energy than a low level earthquake. Thus, it is unlikely that the רעש /στουσεισμός of 1 Kgs 19:11–12 describes a storm.

There is, however, one instance where σεισμός may describe a storm. In Jer 23:19a σεισμός translates סערה, a term that ubiquitously describes a strong wind.³⁰

²⁸ Schmoldt, *TDOT* 13:591.

²⁹ As will be discussed below, στουσεισμός can function as a close synonym to σεισμός in describing an earthquake (e.g., Sir 22:16), but alternatively can describe a storm (e.g., 2 Kgs 2:1); Muraoka, *Lexicon*, 663; LSJ, 1734.

³⁰ HALOT, 762; DCH, 6:176.

Table 1: Jer 23:19 LXX vs. Masoretic Text

Jer 23:19 LXX (Old Greek)	Jer 23:19 MT
ἰδοὺ σεισμός παρὰ κυρίου	הנה סערת יהוה
καὶ ὄργη ἐκπορεύεται εἰς συσσεισμόν,	חמה יצאה
συστρεφόμενη ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄσεβεις ἦξει.	וסער מתחולל על ראש רשעים יחול

The verse delineates the σεισμός/סערה as wrath that will come upon the wicked in the form of a συσσεισμός/לחולל סער. In the MT it is clear that the wrath is depicted as a storm: סער describes a strong gale, and it is said to be whirling around (חול) as would a hurricane or tornado. The MT therefore states that the storm of Yahweh is a whirlwind of wrath that will twist upon the wicked. In the LXX it is less clear: since συσσεισμός can translate both רעה (“earthquake;” 1 Kgs 19:11–12) and סערה (“storm;” 2 Kgs 2:1, 11; Nah 1:3), it is not certain if an earthquake or storm is in mind in Jer 23:19. The fact that the wrath is said to “gather” (συστρέφειν) instead of “whirl” (חול) upon the ungodly adds little to the verse’s lucidity. Two interpretations are thus possible. The LXX could follow the MT and state that the storm (σεισμός) of Yahweh is wrath that will gather upon the ungodly as a whirlwind (συσσεισμός), or it could shift the meaning considerably by stating that the earthquake (σεισμός) of Yahweh is wrath that will gather upon the ungodly as seismic destruction (συσσεισμός). Looking to Jer 30(37):23, which forms a near verbatim repetition of 23:19 in the MT, provides little assistance in the 23:19 LXX interpretive decision. In 30(37):23 the relationship between the LXX and MT is more conceptual than semantic: ὄργη κυρίου ἐξήλθεν θυμώδης, ἐξήλθεν ὄργη στρεφόμενη, ἐπ’ ἄσεβεις ἦξει (“the hot-tempered wrath of the Lord has gone out, wrath turning about has gone out; it will come on the ungodly”). The presence of a storm-like whirling in 37:23 LXX could tip the scales towards a storm interpretation for 23:19 LXX; however, 37:23 LXX mentions neither σεισμός nor συσσεισμός and does not align semantically with the MT to the same degree as does 23:19 LXX. This renders any conclusions tentative at best. Even if one grants that the σεισμός of 23:19 LXX does describe a storm, the different translation choices of Aquila and Symmachus indicate that the LXX’s decision to use σεισμός in such a way may have burst the seams of the term’s semantic range.³¹

All of the above suggests that if Matt 8:24 is using σεισμός to describe a storm, it would represent either an unprecedented maneuver, or one that is exceedingly rare and stretches the term’s meaning to the breaking point. It should

³¹ In place of σεισμός, in the Syrohexaplaric translation of Paul of Tella, Aquila, and Symmachus both have *turbo*, which Ziegler suggest equates to καταγίς (α’) or συσσεισμός (σ’) on the basis of their respective translation choices for Jer 37:23 LXX (*Septuaginta: Jeremiah; Baruch; Threni; Epistula Jeremiae* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976]), 265.

be noted that such an awkward use of the term was by no means necessitated by limitations of the Greek language; in the LXX and NT alone one finds multiple words to describe a storm.³² The inelegance of Matthew's lexical choice is further highlighted if one grants Markan priority: it would mean that Matthew has substituted σεισμός, a term that almost universally describes a physical shaking or an earthquake, for λαίλαψ, a term that regularly means "storm" and is therefore much more apropos to the context. By making this change, Matthew has introduced ambiguity into his account, which goes against his normal redactional practice.³³

In sum, when one surveys the contours of Matthew's narrative terrain, one finds it laced with two interrelated and centrally located fault lines, one that concerns the shaking of the earth (i.e., the terrestrial fault line; 8:24; 27:51/54; 28:2) and another that describes the shaking of people (i.e., the anthropological fault line; 21:10; 28:4).³⁴ In a narrative that appears so carefully and artfully written, the uniqueness of the seismic references, their location in the Gospel account, and the awkwardness of the 8:24 σεισμός collectively suggest an intentionality behind the inclusion of these interrelated seismic rifts.³⁵

The purpose of this study is to explore that intentionality, to ascertain how Matthew's interrelated seismic fault lines impact his literary landscape. In other words, this study will explore if a seismic subplot is indeed embedded

³² In the LXX, there are at least six different words used to describe a storm: θύελλα (3x), καταγίς (29x), λαίλαψ (7x), ὄμβρος (6x), συσσεισμός (9x), χειμών (7x). A similar amount of lexical variety is observed in the NT: θύελλα (1x), λαίλαψ (3x), ὄμβρος (1x), χειμών (6x).

³³ Matthew regularly increases clarity where it is lacking in Mark. For example, he adds the source of the quotation in Mark 4:10–12 // Matt 13:10–15, removes the potentially confusing reference to Mal 3:1 in a citation attributed to Isaiah (Mark 1:2–3 // Matt 3:3), and provides Pilate's title in the crucifixion scene (Mark 13:1ff // Matt 27:2ff). Simple carelessness is not an adequate explanation for the use of σεισμός in Matt 8:24. As Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew" in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 52–57, famously demonstrated, Matt 8:18–27 has been carefully shaped, with vocabulary playing a central role in the composition.

³⁴ The interrelatedness of the terrestrial and anthropological seismic fault lines is evidenced by the shared σει* root as well as the above discussed situating of these fault lines along the Gospel's plot line and christological identity arc.

³⁵ An additional note of intentionality may be observed in Matthew's redaction of the Markan reference to ἀνασειώ in the trial scene before Pilate. Mark recounts that the chief priests ἀνέσεισαν ("stirred up") the crowd so that they demanded the release of Barabbas in place of Jesus (15:11). This term, which usually describes psychological agitation, appears a good fit for the context. However, while Luke (23:5) follows Mark in the choice of vocabulary, Matthew has replaced ἀνασειώ with πείθω ("to persuade"; 27:20). It is possible that this move was made to eliminate the occurrence of another word that can depict physical shaking; ἀνασειώ can refer to the shaking or brandishing of a sword or shield (BDAG, 71). For a discussion of intentionality, see 1.D.

into the Matthean narrative, and if so, how that subplot relates to and informs the overall Gospel story.

B. Scope and Structure

This study will focus solely on the shaking references that are unique to Matthew's Gospel, those of 8:24 (σεισμός), 21:10 (σειώ), 27:51 (σειώ), 27:54 (σεισμός), 28:2 (σεισμός), and 28:4 (σειώ). While the shaking references found at 24:7 (σεισμός), and 24:29 (σαλεύω) must also be counted part of Matthew's overall seismic motif, for the reasons outlined below, discussion of these references will be integrated into the body of the study rather than given separate or extended treatment. Falling outside of Matthew's seismic motif (and therefore outside of the scope of this study) are the references to the swaying of the reed (σαλεύω; 11:7) and the disturbance of Jerusalem (ταράσσω; 2:3).

Given the terminology, it is clear that the 24:7 reference to σεισμοί must be included in Matthew's overall seismic motif. Matthew's employment of the term here is the only nonexclusive mention of a σεισμός in his narrative; in all three synoptics, σεισμοί are included with wars and famines as indications that the end times have begun (Matt 24:6–7; Mark 13:7–8; Luke 21:9–11). As such, the function of these phenomena is limited to that of stock eschatological images (cf. 2 Bar. 27:5–7; 70:8; 4 Ezra 9:3–4).³⁶ Although it is one-dimensional, the 24:7 σεισμός reference nevertheless serves a critical function with regards to Matthew's narrative because it unequivocally demonstrates that σεισμός can carry an eschatological connotation; the 24:7 reference thus functions as a sort of interpretive lens. At the same time, since the reference's function does not extend beyond that of a stock eschatological image, the reference does not require a separate or protracted discussion.

The 24:29 reference to the shaking (σαλεύω) of the powers of heaven should likewise be included within Matthew's seismic motif. While 24:29 presents an exception in that it does not employ the σει* root, the terms σειώ and σαλεύω are nevertheless closely related. Louw and Nida group σειώ and σαλεύω together in same semantic subdomain, "to shake" (16.7), for which they provide the following gloss definition, "to cause something to move back and forth rapidly, often violently."³⁷ In the LXX, both terms are observed to function as translation equivalents for שׁעַר, though σειώ is by far the more dominant of the two given that it has a narrower semantic range than σαλεύω and therefore

³⁶ The fact that Jesus links the signs to the birthpangs of the end rather than the end itself does not mitigate the eschatological significance of the signs.

³⁷ Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 212–13. Σειώ and σαλεύω are the only terms listed in this field. Cf. Muraoka, *Lexicon*, 617, 618; LSJ, 1581, 1589; BDAG, 911, 918.

better aligns with שָׁרַר.³⁸ The semantic overlap of the terms is well illustrated by LXX Judg 5:4–5, Nah 1:5, and Job 9:6, all of which utilize σείω and σαλεύω in parallel to describe earthquakes.³⁹ Hebrews 12:26–29 also serves as a fitting example as it utilizes σείω and σαλεύω interchangeably to express the same idea. In addition, the similarity between σείω and σαλεύω extends beyond describing a vigorous physical oscillation; both terms can also be taken metaphorically to describe emotional agitation.⁴⁰ Thus, from a lexical standpoint, there is good reason to include the 24:29 σαλεύω reference within Matthew’s seismic motif.

The case for the inclusion of the 24:29 σαλεύω reference is further strengthened when one considers the context in which the reference occurs. Following Mark nearly verbatim, Matthew links the shaking (σαλεύω) of the powers of heaven with two other astrological phenomena, the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars (24:29).⁴¹ A similar combination of events is also featured at Jesus’s crucifixion: in addition to the shaking (σειώ) of the earth (27:51), there is a darkening of the celestial bodies (27:45). Moreover, as will be argued in the body of the monograph, it is highly likely that both 24:29 and Matthew’s crucifixion scene are closely connected to the prophetic Day of the Lord. In addition, it would appear that numerous scholars also find a close conceptual and semantic relationship between the two terms given their endorsement of Hag 2:6, 21 (which utilizes σείω) as an intertext for Matt 24:29 (σαλεύω).⁴² Hagner’s comments regarding probable intertexts for Matt 24:29 are illustrative of this scholarly trend,

The fourth line, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται, “and the powers of heaven shall be shaken,” finds no direct parallel in the OT but is similar to the statement in Joel

³⁸ Σείω is the normal translation equivalent for the verb שָׁרַר (19 times) and σεισμός is the normal translation equivalent for the noun (11 times). Σαλεύω twice functions as the translation equivalent for the verb שָׁרַר (Ps 18[17]:8; 77[76]:19). The wider semantic domain of σαλεύω is evidenced in the LXX: σαλεύω serves as the translation equivalent for 22 Hebrew terms, while σείω plays this role for only four (six if one counts Isa 15:5 and Job 9:28, though these occurrences likely reflect mistranslations). For further discussion of both terms see chapter two.

³⁹ Both terms regularly describe earthquakes in the LXX (e.g., σείω: 2 Sam 22:8; Isa 13:13; Jer 8:16; σαλεύω: LXX Ps 17:8; Amos 9:5; Mic 1:4). This function is less common for σαλεύω in Greco-Roman literature, though still possible (e.g., Aeschylus, *Prom.*, 1080). See chapter two.

⁴⁰ LSJ, 1581, 1589; BDAG, 911, 918; Muroaka, *Lexicon*, 617, 618. Though for this connotation they do not share the same semantic subdomain in Louw and Nida (25.233 vs. 25.242; *Lexicon*, 314–15).

⁴¹ Mark 13:24–25; cf. Luke 21:25–26.

⁴² Nolland, *Matthew*, 983; Donald Senior, *Matthew*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 271; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 487.

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