

# THE APOCALYPTIC VISION OF JESUS ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: READING MATTHEW 3:16–4:11 INTERTEXTUALLY

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## Summary

*There has been much discussion on the relationship of Jesus to apocalyptic. What has been missing is a demonstration that Jesus participated in what is at the heart of literature labeled 'apocalyptic': a visionary experience of a transcendent reality. This article argues that Jesus' post-baptismal experience and the temptation narrative that follows, particularly as recorded in Matthew 3:16–4.11, portray Jesus as undergoing such an apocalyptic visionary experience which resembles closely the visionary experience of early Jewish and Christian apocalypses. Thus, with the opening of the heavens to the final temptation, Matthew 3:16–4.11 depicts a third person account of a sustained visionary experience modeled intertextually after classic apocalyptic seers (Ezekiel, Isaiah, Enoch). Jesus' apocalyptic vision functions to authenticate Jesus' role as divine spokesperson for God and provides a perspective for the struggle that will ensue in the rest of Matthew.*

## 1. Introduction

Since the work of Albert Schweitzer, who suggested that Jesus should be understood within the context of apocalyptic, there has been much discussion regarding Jesus' relation to apocalyptic.<sup>1</sup> Attempts to place

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dale C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism Vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Crossroad, 1998): 269-80, and Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in*

Jesus within an apocalyptic framework have usually drawn attention to supposed apocalyptic motifs within Jesus' teaching, usually focusing on a certain type of 'eschatology' at its core. Jesus' teaching concerning the inbreaking kingdom of God, imminent end of the world, and eschatological judgement are considered indications of this apocalyptic framework.<sup>2</sup> Hence, 'the synoptic gospels present a Jesus who lives in an apocalyptically-oriented context and proclaims a thoroughly apocalyptic message'.<sup>3</sup> However, a more nuanced case could be made for apocalyptic as the backdrop for understanding Jesus if it could be demonstrated that he participates in the most characteristic feature of those works which are generally recognised as apocalypses: a visionary experience of a transcendent reality. The standard works on apocalyptic by John J. Collins, Christopher Rowland, David E. Aune, among others, have pointed out that at the heart of 'apocalyptic' is a visionary experience of a reality that transcends empirical reality, the knowledge of which, therefore, is not available through more rational modes of communication.<sup>4</sup> Such a transcendent reality can only be disclosed through a direct revelatory experience. Apocalypses, then, are first person narrative accounts which embody that transcendent, visionary experience.<sup>5</sup>

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*Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1994); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Allison, 'Eschatology'.

<sup>3</sup> Greg Carey, *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005): 104. Christopher Rowland concludes that 'it would seem to be a mistake to suppose that Jesus remained unaffected by the thought-world of apocalyptic' (*The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1982]: 358).

<sup>4</sup> John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Rowland, *Open Heaven*; David E. Aune, 'The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre', *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65-96. It should also be clear that I am following the common distinction between 'apocalypticism' as a sociological movement, 'apocalyptic eschatology' as a particular type of eschatology found in works considered apocalypses, and 'apocalypse' as a literary genre.

<sup>5</sup> For concise definitions see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5; Aune, 'Problem of Genre', 86-87. The classic definition is Collins': '*a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world*' (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5) (italics his). Rowland sees apocalyptic as less a literary form than 'the belief that God's will can be discerned by means of a mode of revelation which unfolds directly the hidden things of God. To speak of apocalyptic, therefore, is to concentrate on the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity' (*Open Heaven*, 14).

In the remainder of this investigation I wish to propose that Matthew 3:16–4:11 records just such an apocalyptic visionary experience. Matthew offers the fullest account of Jesus' baptism and temptation and provides, as I will argue below, the clearest textual signals as to their apocalyptic nature. Though Luke may be the more primitive form of the temptation narrative (from Q?),<sup>6</sup> the Matthean redaction consistently links it most closely with an apocalyptic-type visionary experience. While Matthew is not an 'apocalypse' generically (in terms of being a first person narrative account of a visionary experience), the purpose of this investigation is to demonstrate that the entirety of Matthew 3:16–4:11, when read intertextually against works considered apocalyptic, portrays Jesus as undergoing an ecstatic visionary experience akin to ancient seers (Ezekiel, Daniel, Enoch, etc.). The primary and obvious difference from other apocalypses is that Matthew 3:16–4:11 is a third person narration, whereas works considered apocalypses are first personal autobiographical accounts. But Matthew is not recording the words of Jesus at this point and contextually adapts the visionary account (which, like other apocalypses, presumably Jesus would have told in the first person if he related it himself) for his narrative.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, accounts of visions in Greek literature were often embedded within larger host narratives and therefore communicated in third person narration (Plutarch, *Lucullus* 12:1-2; *Eumenes* 6:4-7; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4:34; Dionysius of Hal., *Roman Antiquities* 1:57:3-4).

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<sup>6</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale Allison Jer. (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew Vol. 1: Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I-VII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988): 350-51) think that Matthew and Luke have modified the Markan narrative at this point in light of a shared source (Q?). They also think that at times Luke contains the more primitive wording (350). Cf. also John Nolland, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): 161; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium 1. Teil* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1986): 83. But cf. Wilhelm Wilkens ('Die Versuchung Jesu nach Matthäus', *NTS* 28 [1982]: 479-89), who thinks that the temptation narrative is a creation of the evangelist responsible for the first gospel.

<sup>7</sup> As Rowland explains, 'By way of comparison we may refer to the vision of Peter reported in Acts 10.11. This is found in a narrative context, and the vision itself is described in the third person...[W]hen such stories as these were given some kind of narrative framework, experiences which may originally have been reported in the first person were altered when inserted into a narrative to fit that particular context. After all, it would have been most inappropriate at this point in the gospel for the evangelists to have preserved an account of Jesus' baptism in the first person, when the story gives no indication that this was the moment when Jesus reported what he had seen' (*Open Heaven*, 360).

As will be pointed out below, scholars have sometimes noted possible visionary elements in selected features of Jesus' baptism and temptation (the opening of heaven; Jesus' view of all the kingdoms of the earth from a mountain). However, these insights have not been related specifically to an apocalyptic visionary experience as a comprehensive framework for understanding Jesus' experience in both his baptism and temptation. I wish to demonstrate in the rest of this article that the entirety of Matthew 3:16–4:11 consists of Jesus' apocalyptic vision after the manner of antecedent Jewish apocalyptic visionary experiences. Thus it will be shown that the two segments, 3:16-17 (Jesus' post-baptism) and 4:1-11 (Jesus' temptation in the wilderness), constitute a coherent textual unit linked by a continuous third person stylised report of an apocalyptic vision.

## 2. Jesus' Post-Baptismal Experience (Matt. 3:16-17)

At the conclusion (3:16-17) of the account of Jesus' baptism (vv. 13-17), Jesus emerges from the water and witnesses the opening of heaven followed by the descending spirit in the form of a dove and a heavenly audition. Importantly, 3:16-17 incorporates a number of features common to apocalyptic visionary experiences as embodied in texts considered apocalypses, signifying that this segment commences an apocalyptic vision.

The opening of the heavens following Jesus' ascent from the water (v. 16; ἰδοὺ ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί) constitutes a staple motif of early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic visionary experiences as a prelude to a vision.<sup>8</sup> This motif was based upon the apocalyptic perspective that the 'Divine space [Raum]...is separated from men upon earth, through an impenetrable partition or wall. This wall must be broken through or opened up in order to enable the seer to look at heavenly things'.<sup>9</sup> This perspective is expressed in a number of representative apocalyptic texts (cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* 9:20<sup>10</sup>).

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Fritzleo Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern: Literarkritische und gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Joseph Knecht, 1970): 106. See also Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 9-22. For an example from the magical papyri see *PGM* IV.625-28.

<sup>10</sup> 'medium video discedere caelum...'

Acts 10:11: καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνερωγμένον καὶ καταβαῖνον σκεῦος<sup>11</sup>

Revelation 4:1: καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνερωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ<sup>12</sup>

Revelation 19:11: καὶ εἶδον τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠνερωγμένον

2 Baruch 22:1: behold, *the heaven was opened*, and I saw...<sup>13</sup>

T Levi 2:6: And behold, the heavens were opened (cf. 5:1)

T Abraham 7:3: I saw *heaven opened*, and I saw a light-bearing man

Hermes Vis 1:4:1: And while I was praying *heaven was opened* (ἠνοιγή ὁ οὐρανός), and I saw that woman<sup>14</sup>

But as several scholars have recognised, already anticipated by Origen,<sup>15</sup> lexically and syntactically Matthew appears closest to Ezekiel 1:1 and so draws from it intertextually for the motif of the open heavens (plural), followed by a reference to what was seen (εἶδεν).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Acts 7.56 has ἰδοὺ θεωρῶ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς διηνοιγμένους.

<sup>12</sup> For the notion of a door opened into heaven see also *1 Enoch* 14.15.

<sup>13</sup> Translations of all pseudepigraphical works are taken from James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol. 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> To these could also be added *Apoc Abr* 19.4, which refers to the open heavens. But here it appears that the heavens are opened so that the seer can look *down* from the seventh heaven. Cf. John 1:51: ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνερωγτότα.

<sup>15</sup> 'Although the Jew, then, may offer no defence for himself in the instances of Ezekiel and Isaiah, when we compare the opening of the heavens to Jesus, and the voice that was heard by him, to the similar cases which we find recorded in Ezekiel and Isaiah...'. (*Contra Celsus* 1.48).

<sup>16</sup> See Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 78; Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33a; Dallas: Word, 1993): 57; U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1989): 179 (though Luz does not think it is a vision); Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (2nd edn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994): 52; L. Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Bombay: St. Paul, 1982): 281; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 329; Nolland, *Matthew*, 155; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007): 121; David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008): 119-20; Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu*, 108; David B. Capes, 'Intertextual Echoes in the Matthean Baptismal Narrative', *BBR* 9 (1999): 42; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 359. Though the 'splitting of the heavens' constitutes a general motif referring to God's eschatological judgement (Job 14:12 LXX; Ps. 102:26; Isa. 64:1; Hag. 2:6, 21; *Sib Or* 3.82; 8.233, 413; Matt. 24:29; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:14), Allison and Davies are correct to point to the opening of the heavens in apocalyptic texts introducing a visionary experience as the primary antecedent to the opening of the heavens here in Matt. 3:16. Cf. Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe*, 108-19. *Contra* Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999): 132 n. 174. The parallels with most of these texts and Matt. 3:16 are inexact at best. The closest

Matthew 3:16: ἰδοὺ ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδεν...<sup>17</sup>

Ezekiel 1:1 LXX: καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον...<sup>18</sup>

Thus Matthew has modelled Jesus' experience on the canonical exemplar *par excellence* of a visionary experience.<sup>19</sup> The opening of the heavens in Matthew 3:16, as a reflection of a standard apocalyptic motif, 'signifies that the seer has access to the secrets of the divine mysteries'.<sup>20</sup> This opening of the heavens functions to introduce the next two events as part of the apocalyptic visionary experience: the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven.

*The Vision of the Descending Dove* (v. 16). Following the opening of the heavens, the explicit reference to 'seeing', in addition to its occurrence in Ezekiel 1:1, is ubiquitous in visionary texts as a preface to the content of what was seen (cf. Ezekiel LXX [33x], and esp. Revelation [45x]; cf. Daniel 7–12 [15x]).<sup>21</sup> The shift from Ezekiel's first person (εἶδον) to Matthew's third person (εἶδεν) contextually adapts the vision report to Matthew's third person narrative account (cf. Plutarch, *Eumenes* 6:4-7 [εἶδεν]). Significantly, over against Mark's and Luke's reports of this event, Matthew is the only synoptic

parallel is found in Isa. 64:1 (LXX 63:19): ἀνοίξῃς τὸν οὐρανόν. But it has the singular οὐρανόν and does not contain a verb of seeing introducing a vision.

<sup>17</sup> There is much dispute over the textual variant αὐτῷ following ἠνεώχθησαν, which the UBSGNT<sup>4</sup> places within brackets (for explanation see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2nd edn; Stuttgart: UBS, 1994]: 9). αὐτῷ is included by **N**<sup>1</sup> C D, but is omitted by **N**<sup>\*</sup> B vg<sup>mss</sup>. It is difficult to decide between the two options (Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 9; France, *Matthew*, 117 n. 7; Nolland, *Matthew*, 150). Whether a scribe omitted αὐτῷ (perhaps seeing it as unnecessary) or added it to bring it into conformity with Mark 1:10 (cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 328 n. 67), its presence only makes explicit what is already implicit: this is an apocalyptic visionary experience had by Jesus, not a public vision. Thus Turner is incorrect that the omission of αὐτῷ would necessarily entail a public event (*Matthew*, 122).

<sup>18</sup> Acts 10:11; Rev. 4:1; 19:11 have the perfect passive form of ἀνοίγω, along with the singular οὐρανός. Cf. Hermes *Vis* 1.4.1 which has the aorist passive ἠνοίγη but the singular ὁ οὐρανός. The parallel in diction and word order (open heavens – seeing) in Matt. 3:16 with Ezek. 1:1 makes Rowland's comment that, 'In Matthew the experience of Jesus has been made a public proclamation of his messiahship, as is demonstrated by the way in which the verb "he saw" is moved to a position after the reference to the open heaven' (*Open Heaven*, 359) unnecessary. Matthew's order reflects Ezekiel's.

<sup>19</sup> For this perspective on Ezekiel see F. D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (BZNW 54; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989): 155.

<sup>20</sup> Sabourin, *Matthew*, 274.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. also Isa. 1:1; 6:1 (cf. v. 5); Zech. 2:1, 5, 6; 4:2; 5:1, 2, 9; 6:1.

to explicitly state that Jesus ‘saw’ the Spirit coming down (cf. Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22). The combination of these two features (open heavens, verb of ‘seeing’) clearly function to signal an apocalyptic-type vision. Moreover, Matthew’s insertion of ἰδοῦ (‘behold’) twice in Matthew 3:16-17 to introduce the open heavens and subsequently the heavenly voice is also significant in that ἰδοῦ is a recurring feature in apocalypses introducing visionary material (see e.g. Ezek. LXX 1:4, 15, 25; Rev. 4:1 [ἰδοῦ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ], 2; 2 Bar. 22:1).<sup>22</sup>

The object of Jesus’ vision (the dove) is depicted as ‘coming down’ (καταβαῖνον), a conception which conveys the heavenly origin of various visionary entities in apocalyptic texts (cf. Acts 10:11).<sup>23</sup> Thus John’s Apocalypse contains numerous instances of the seer witnessing objects descending (καταβαίνω) from heaven, using the participle form (Rev. 3:12; 10:1; 12:12; 13:13; 16:21; 18:1; 20:1, 9; 21:2, 10). In *Testament of Abraham* 7:3 the seer envisions a figure coming down out of heaven (also v. 5).<sup>24</sup> Further, an important feature of records of apocalyptic visionary experiences is communication through the medium of symbol. Thus in apocalyptic fashion the descending object in Matthew’s vision report is depicted in symbolic language. While it is not necessary at this point to decide on the precise derivation of the dove (περιστερὰν) imagery in v. 16, the point to be made is that it is likely that the dove constitutes the *object* of Jesus’ vision.<sup>25</sup> It is commonly asserted that ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν functions adverbially to modify καταβαῖνον, purportedly indicating the *manner* in which the

<sup>22</sup> Sabourin points to the double καὶ ἰδοῦ in Matt. 3:16-17 as indicating an ‘apocalyptic tone’ (*Matthew*, 281). In light of its frequency in Ezekiel, Capes also realises the apocalyptic import of the ἰδοῦ used twice in Matt. 3:16-17 (‘Intertextual Echoes’, 42). Cf. Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu*, 113, who notes that καὶ ἰδοῦ frequently introduces the object of visions in apocalyptic. Overall, Ezekiel LXX has ἰδοῦ 101 times, Daniel LXX 28 times, and Revelation 26 times, most of them occurring in the visionary segments. For the combination of εἶδον and ἰδοῦ see also Rev. 6:2, 5, 8; 14:1, 14; 19:11; Dan. 10:5; 12:5; Zech. 2:1, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:1.

<sup>23</sup> See Ben Witherington, III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): 149. Cf. John 1:51: ὅψεσθε...τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας....

<sup>24</sup> Though Matthew does not explicitly say that the Spirit comes down *out of heaven* (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), it is clearly implied with the reference to the opening of the heavens.

<sup>25</sup> For the possible background to the dove imagery here, see Sabourin, *Matthew*, 276-79; Capes, ‘Intertextual Echoes’, 46-49; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 331-34, who list no fewer than 16 options.

spirit descends owing to its syntactical position following καταβαῖνον.<sup>26</sup> However, since Matthew claims that Jesus saw (εἶδεν) it, the ὡσεὶ περιστεράν probably describes the visible form of the spirit (πνεῦμα), indicating the content of εἶδεν.<sup>27</sup> As R. T. France correctly observes, ‘some visible form must have been required to make the descent of the invisible Spirit visible’.<sup>28</sup> Further, the particle ὡς or ὡσεὶ to introduce a visionary symbol is common in apocalyptic discourse, not least of all in the book of Ezekiel. It ‘reflects the visionary character and symbolic content of apocalyptic literature’, further supporting the view that the dove is the object-symbol of Jesus’ vision.<sup>29</sup> Ezekiel 1 LXX contains several instances of ὡς used in this manner (1:4, 5, 7, 13 [2x], 16, 22, 24, 26 [2x], 27 [2x], 28), with ὡσεὶ occurring once (v. 22). Ezekiel 40:2, 3 utilise ὡσεὶ (cf. Daniel LXX [also Theod] 7:4, 6, 9, 13 [ὡς]; Rev. 1:14, 15, 16; 4:6; 5:6; 6:6, 12; 8:8, 10; 9:7 and elsewhere).<sup>30</sup> A final verbal parallel with Ezekiel is that in Matthew 3:16 the spirit comes ‘upon’ the seer, Jesus (ἐπ’ αὐτόν), further enhancing the connection with the Ezekielian visionary experience, where the Spirit came upon (Ezek. 2:2 LXX: ἐπ’ ἐμέ) Ezekiel.

*The Voice from Heaven* (v. 17). The second feature ensuing from the open heavens is the heavenly audition (φωνή ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν) in v. 17. Ezekiel, to which Matthew has already alluded, also includes a reference to an audition in the form of the word of the Lord (LXX καὶ ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου; v. 3). A ‘heavenly voice’ is ubiquitous in apocalyptic visionary accounts. Like Matthew 3:16-17, the reference to the open heaven in John’s vision in Revelation 4:1 is preceded by a heavenly audition (ἡ φωνή), calling John to ascend to heaven. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 8:1-5 describes that ‘the voice of the Mighty

<sup>26</sup> See Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 57. Cf. also Capes, ‘Intertextual Echoes’, 46 n. 20. Cf. *Sib Or* 7.65.

<sup>27</sup> Correctly Nolland, *Matthew*, 155: ‘Since Jesus can see the Spirit, it is best to refer “like a dove” to the visual form taken by the Spirit rather than to the motion of the Spirit in coming’; Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu*, 251; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 333 (‘...it seems more natural to regard “as a dove” as adjectival, this because “he saw the Spirit” almost requires some stated concretion for the Spirit’). *Contra* Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 78. Cf. Luke’s σωματικῶς εἶδει ὡς περιστεράν (3:22).

<sup>28</sup> France, *Matthew*, 122 n. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 331.

<sup>30</sup> This makes the conclusion of Capes (‘Intertextual Echoes’, 46 n. 20), that Matthew’s change of Mark’s ὡς to ὡσεὶ suggests that the dove refers to the manner of descent rather than the visible appearance of the Spirit unconvincing.

One came down from the heavens' (cf. e.g. Rev. 18:4; 21:3; 2 *Bar.* 13:1; 22:1; 3 *Bar.* 17:1; *T Abr* 10:12; cf. *T Lev.* 2:6). Reflecting a common constellation of features, if not a precise *Gattung*, Matthew 3:16-17, Revelation 4:1, and 2 *Baruch* 22:1 all contain references to 1) the heavens opened; 2) the act of seeing; 3) a voice from heaven, suggesting that, like these two texts, Matthew 3:16-17 narrates an apocalyptic vision.

Matthew 3:16-17: And behold *the heavens were opened*, and *he saw* the spirit of God...and behold a voice from heaven saying...

Revelation 4:1: After these things *I saw*, and behold, *a door opened in heaven*, and the first *voice* which I heard as a trumpet *speaking with me*, saying...

2 *Bar.* 22:1: And afterward it happened that, behold, the *heaven was opened*, and *I saw*, and strength was given to me, and *a voice was heard from on high* which said to me...

Consequently, while it is customary, though by no means undisputed, to attribute this heavenly audition in Matthew 3:17 to the *bath qol* ('daughter of the voice') prevalent in Rabbinic literature, given the apocalyptic associations already noted, there is no need to search outside of apocalyptic literature to explicate Matthew's voice from heaven.<sup>31</sup> The voice Jesus hears is the heavenly voice of apocalyptic visionary experience.

A final feature of this section potentially explicable in light of an apocalyptic visionary motif is the location of Jesus' vision in Matthew 3:16-17. Jesus is at the Jordan river for the express purpose of being baptised (v. 13). Yet a river was also a common setting for

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<sup>31</sup> This is despite Keener's (*Matthew*, 133-34) positive assessment. Several commentaries still recognise a potential parallel with the *bath qol* of rabbinic literature, but conclude that there are differences with Matthew's 'heavenly voice' in 3:17. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 58; Turner, *Matthew*, 120; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; London: Olphants, 1972): 97. Cf., however, Gundry, *Matthew*, 53, who finds no reference to the 'daughter of the voice' in v. 17; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 336, who conclude that the *bath qol* offers as much of a *contrast* as it does a *comparison* with Matt. 3:17; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002; tr. Robert R. Barr): 35; Witherington, *Christology*, 154; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970): 27. Thus the apocalyptic framework of Matt. 3:16-17 makes it unnecessary to look beyond the phenomenon of the heavenly voice found often in apocalyptic texts. An intriguing example is the reference in *b Ber* 3a to the *bath qol* as the cooing of a dove, given the mention of the dove here in Matt. 3:16. However, the late date of this text and the fact that the voice is not identified as the Spirit in Matt. 3:16-17 mitigates the value of this comparison.

apocalyptic-type visions. Thus Ezekiel has the seer at the river Chebar (1:3) when the heavens are opened. Likewise, the seer in Daniel is at the river Tigris in preparation for his vision in 10:4. Extra-canonical examples include *1 Enoch* 13.7 (the river Dan) and *3 Bar.* 2 (the river Kidron). So it is not incidental that Jesus' vision takes place alongside the Jordan river, an ideal setting for an apocalyptic vision like that of Ezekiel, Daniel or Enoch.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, clear intertextual indicators, traces left by Matthew to guide the reader, link this segment of text with antecedent apocalyptic visionary experiences. Matthew 3:16-17 exhibits a number of significant parallels with Ezekiel in particular.

1. The open heaven (Ezek. 1:1; Matt. 3:16)
2. A reference to 'seeing' (Ezek. 1:1, 3; Matt. 3:16)
3. The spirit coming upon the seer (Ezek. 1:4; Matt. 3:16)
4. A river as the visionary setting (Ezek. 1:1; Matt. 3:13)

Like Ezekiel, Jesus' mission (as divine son) is confirmed and inaugurated by an ecstatic, apocalyptic vision (see below). In addition to these features incorporated from Ezekiel 1, the reference to the visionary object as coming down, the visionary object depicted symbolically (as [ὠσεῖ] a dove), the inclusion of ἰδοῦ to introduce the visionary elements, and the voice from heaven all establish this account of Jesus' post-baptism experience semantically as an apocalyptic visionary experience. Lentzen-Deis has argued that this segment of the baptismal narrative belongs to the literary *Gattung* of a *Deute-Vision*.<sup>33</sup> However, the proposed literary form lacks shape, and most of the supposed evidence for this genre derives from later (Targumic) texts. Nevertheless, Matthew 3:16-17 conforms conceptually and verbally to standard depictions of visions in works considered apocalyptic. Yet where does Jesus' visionary experience conclude?

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<sup>32</sup> Davies and Allison (*Matthew I-VII*, 329) and Gundry (*Matthew*, 51) suggest that Matthew's usage of ἀπό (ἀνέβη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος) clearly points to Jesus' departure from the water following his baptism. Presumably, Jesus is at this point standing on the bank of the Jordan. Gundry speculates that Matthew's insertion of ἀπό was so that no one would think that Jesus stayed in the water to confess sins. However, placing Jesus along the banks of the Jordan also reflects standing beside the river in order to receive a vision, once again following Ezekiel.

<sup>33</sup> Lentzen-Deis, *Die Taufe Jesu*.

### 3. Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness (4:1-11)

The sonship of Jesus confirmed in an apocalyptic vision in 3:16-17 is now tested in 4:1-11.<sup>34</sup> The proceeding discussion will demonstrate that the apocalyptic vision inaugurated in 3:16-17 is now continued uninterrupted in the narrated sequence of Jesus' threefold temptation in the wilderness in 4:1-11.<sup>35</sup> B. Gerhardsson and others have suggested that the primary genre of this section is haggadic midrash given the role that Old Testament texts play in this section (Deut. 6–8).<sup>36</sup> However, the clearest indications of its genre situated within the intertextual space of apocalyptic visions suggest instead that 4:1-11 is primarily a third person narrative account of an apocalyptic vision,<sup>37</sup> which may include haggadic midrash within its visionary dialogue.

Though at least since Origen<sup>38</sup> many commentators have attributed a spiritual or visional quality to one or both of the last two temptations (temple, mountain), most have failed to relate this to an apocalyptic visionary experience or to find an unbroken visionary account extending throughout vv. 1-11.<sup>39</sup> As with several of the apocalypses observed above (e.g. Ezek. 1:1; Rev. 4:1), the opening of the heavens in Matthew 3:16-17 provides the backdrop for a sustained visionary experience. Here in 4:1-11 this takes the form of a guided journey to three different regions (desert, temple, high mountain), accompanied by a dialogue with a supernatural being (Satan). A common feature of apocalyptic-type visions is the visionary transportation by a spirit or

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<sup>34</sup> See Wolfgang Stegemann, 'Die Versuchung Jesu im Matthäusevangelium: Mt 4,1-11', *EvT* 45 (1985): 29-49.

<sup>35</sup> Hence, the break between 3:17 and 4:1 followed in modern translations and editions is unfortunate and misleading at this point. Nolland discerns a strong link between 3:13-17 and 4:1-11 based on the opening *τότε*, the role of the Spirit, and the Son of God language (*Matthew*, 162). To this I would simply add the unifying visionary experience.

<sup>36</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4:1-11 & Par)* (ConBNT 2.1; Lund: Gleerup, 1966). Cf. also Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 63; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 352 call it a 'haggadic tale', and find the closest formal parallels in rabbinic literature (cf. *b Sanh* 89b).

<sup>37</sup> *Contra* Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 184; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 37.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *First Principles*, IV.16. On the patristic interpretation of the temptation narrative see M. Steiner, *La Tentation de Jésus dans L'interprétation patristique de saint Justin à Origène* (Études Bibliques; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1962).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 129; France, *Matthew*, 131-32, 134 n. 30; Keener, *Matthew*, 141 n. 201, though Keener is less certain that the view from the high mountain in 4:8 is visional; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 63, 68; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 364, 370. Sabourin characterises the last temptation as 'mental' (*Matthew*, 292).

angelic being to various earthly or heavenly locations for the purpose of disclosure. One of the constant features in Collins' definition of an apocalypse is the mediation of revelation 'by an otherworldly being to a human recipient'.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Collins' taxonomy of apocalypses includes types of apocalypses that contain 'otherworldly journeys'.<sup>41</sup> Thus in *1 Enoch* 1–36 the seer is transported to various regions to observe places of eschatological reward and punishment. In several works the seer is specifically transported by a spirit to heaven (cf. *2 Enoch*; *3 Bar.* 2:1; *T Abr* 10:1 [the archangel Michael]; *Rev.* 4:1).

But Matthew's account of Jesus' visionary experience cannot be characterised as a 'heavenly journey', since Matthew's narrative lacks explicit reference to Jesus' ascent to heaven or a journey to or spatially through the heavenly realms. Yet some apocalypses contain ecstatic journeys to *earthly locales*. In Ezekiel 8:1-3 the seer is transported by a supernatural being (described in detail in v. 2) to the present Jerusalem, and later in 40:1-2 the seer is escorted to a high mountain in the land of Israel to view a city-like structure. Enoch's visionary tour also consists of transports to earthly locations in chapters 17–36.<sup>42</sup> In *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 2:1; *2 Baruch* 6:3 the seer is transported above the city of Jerusalem to witness certain events. And in the canonical Apocalypse of John, the visionary is taken to view the destruction of Babylon/Rome (*Rev.* 17:1-3) and the descent of the New Jerusalem (21:9-10).<sup>43</sup> Jesus' visionary experience would seem to be of this kind.

Several of these features (spirit, angelic guide, transport to different locations) recur in the account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11.<sup>44</sup> The visionary journey commences with the spirit (πνεῦμα,

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<sup>40</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5. 'The constant element is the presence of an angel who interprets the vision or serves as the guide on the otherworldly journey' (5).

<sup>41</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6-7. See the useful chart on p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 124-25.

<sup>43</sup> The latter text (21:9-10) is difficult to assess as far as precise location, since John envisions a new creation which has replaced the former one (20:11; 21:1-2) and now sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

<sup>44</sup> Luigi Schiavo also recognises the role that the 'heavenly journey' of apocalyptic literature plays in Jesus' temptation, based on the visionary transport topos in apocalyptic texts ('The Temptation of Jesus: The Eschatological Battle and the New Ethic of the First Followers of Jesus in Q', *JSNT* 25.2 [2002]: 144-48). However, Schiavo is more interested in reconstructing and analysing the account of the temptation from the Q source which, following John S. Kloppenborg (*The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989]: 64-

presumably the same spirit that comes upon Jesus in 3:16) leading Jesus into the desert in 4:1 (ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος).<sup>45</sup> Thus the spirit's role in Matthew 3:16–4:1 is a dual one: the visible indication of Jesus' commissioning and endowment; the inauguration of Jesus' visionary transport. As Luigi Schiavo concludes, the expression of Jesus being led by the Spirit 'characterizes the narrative as a transcendental experience of religious ecstasy'.<sup>46</sup> Several apocalypses characterise the seer as physically taken by a spirit-angel on a visionary tour, with reference to the seer being 'in the spirit' or the hand of the spirit being upon the seer, and the seer being 'led' by this supernatural being.

*1 Enoch* 75:1: He carried off my spirit, and I, Enoch, was in the heaven of heavens.

*2 Bar.* 6:3: And behold, suddenly a strong spirit lifted me and carried me above the wall of Jerusalem.

*3 Bar.* 2:1: And the angel of hosts took me and carried me where the firmament of heaven is (cf. 3:1).

*Apoc Abr* 15:2-3: And the angel took me with his right hand and set me on the right wing of the pigeon.... And he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flames.

*T. Abr.* 10:1: And the archangel Michael went down and took Abraham on a chariot of cherubim and lifted him up into the air of heaven and led him onto the cloud...(cf. *1 Enoch* 17:1-2; 71:3; 72:1; *Apoc Zeph.* 2:1; 3:1)

Once again, canonical exemplars also lie close at hand. Like Matthew 4:1, the following texts include a reference to the Spirit (πνεῦμα) and to transport using a form of ἄγω. In Ezekiel in particular the Spirit is the expressed agent of visionary transport.<sup>47</sup>

Ezekiel 3:12: And the Spirit (LXX πνεῦμα) took me.... (cf. v. 14; 2:2)

Ezekiel 8:1-3: ...the hand of the Lord God fell on me there...and the Spirit (LXX πνεῦμα) lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought (LXX ἦγαγεν) me in the visions of God to Jerusalem....

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69), he takes as better preserved in Luke ('Temptation of Jesus', 144), so that little of his analysis reflects Matt. 4.1-11.

<sup>45</sup> Luke 4:1 has ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι.

<sup>46</sup> Schiavo, 'Temptation of Jesus', 144-45.

<sup>47</sup> See Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979): 567-68.

Ezekiel 11:1: And the Spirit (LXX πνεῦμα) took me up and led (LXX ἤγαγεν) me upon the gate of the house of the Lord.... (cf. v. 24)

Ezekiel 37:1: And the hand of the Lord came upon me and led (LXX ἐξήγαγεν) me in the Spirit (LXX ἐν πνεύματι) of the Lord and placed me in the midst of the valley....

Ezekiel 43:5: And the Spirit (LXX πνεῦμα) took me up and led (LXX εἰσηγαγεν) me into the outer court....(cf. also 40:1, 17, 24 which refer to the hand of God [the Spirit?] leading [LXX ἤγαγεν] the seer to various venues.)<sup>48</sup>

Revelation, drawing intertextually on Ezekiel, punctuates its visionary narrative with the language of visionary experience, ἐν πνεύματι (1:9; 4:1; 17:3; 21:10), though in the two texts which state that the seer is 'led' it is explicitly stated that an angel is the agent of the verb of leading<sup>49</sup> (Rev. 17:3: καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον ἐν πνεύματι; Rev. 21:10: καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>50</sup> But in Hermas' *Vision* 1:1:3 the Spirit is the explicit agent: 'And the Spirit (πνεῦμα) carried me away (ἀπήνεγκεν), and took me through some pathless place'. The expressed agent of Jesus' visionary transport in Matthew 4:1, ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος, reflects the role that the Spirit plays in visionary transport in the above texts.<sup>51</sup> Thus the visionary agency of the Spirit (πνεῦμα ἤγαγεν με) is reflected in Matthew's construction ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The LXX of Ezek. 40–48 alternates between the simple form ἤγαγεν and the compounded forms ἐξήγαγεν and εἰσηγαγεν which fit the spatial motion/direction depicted in the text.

<sup>49</sup> Thus, it is not as clear in Revelation that the Spirit is the agent of visionary transport. See Richard J. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993): 156–57. 'John was ἐν πνεύματι in the sense that his normal sensory experience was replaced by visions and auditions given him by the Spirit' (152). Cf. Acts 8:39–40, though there is no mention of the transportation for the purpose of visionary experience.

<sup>50</sup> Luke 4:1 has ἦγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι. Schiavo concludes that the ἐν πνεύματι along with εἰς τὴν ἔρημον in the Lukan account suggest an inner spiritual change ('perhaps the idea is a situation of solitude') rather than a geographical location ('Temptation of Jesus', 145). While Jesus' visionary experience is certainly a spiritual experience, Matthew's ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος clearly focuses on the Spirit as the agent of visionary transport into the desert. In any case, Schiavo is correct that Jesus' temptation is not to be understood as taking place at a mundane level, but is an ecstatic visionary experience.

<sup>51</sup> *Contra* France, *Matthew*, 132 n. 22: 'Matthew's "led up by the Spirit" less clearly suggests mystical experience'.

<sup>52</sup> ἀνάγω is used only here in Matthew. Cf. Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1971): 100. Schiavo ('Temptation of Jesus', 146) concludes that the reference to being led by the Spirit suggests that the temptation narrative is to be read 'as an account of an ecstatic experience

In Matthew 4:1 the first location of Jesus' visionary transport is the setting for the first temptation.<sup>53</sup> The location of the transport of Jesus by the Spirit 'into the desert' in 4:1 also has apocalyptic parallels. The desert is the setting for a vision in Revelation 17:3 and 12:14, though only in the former text (17:3) is the seer, like Jesus, actually transported to the desert.<sup>54</sup> The desert was often a threatening place, associated with the haunt for demons and evil spirits (cf. *1 Enoch* 10:4; *2 Bar.* 10:8), and so provides an appropriate setting for Jesus' temptation by Satan.<sup>55</sup>

Matthew 4:1: ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον

Revelation 17:3: ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔρημον

Revelation 12:14: (the woman) πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Hermas Vis* 1:1:3: καὶ πνεῦμά με ἔλαβεν καὶ ἀπήνεγκέ με δι' ἀνοδίας τινός (some pathless place)

The act of fasting (Matt. 4:2) is widespread in apocalyptic literature, commonly as a prelude to a visionary experience (cf. 4 *Ezra* 5:20; 6:35; 2 *Bar.* 20:5-6; *Apoc Ezra* 1:3, 5; *Apoc Abr* 12:1-2).<sup>57</sup> The primary difference with Jesus' experience is that, while in several apocalypses fasting constitutes a preparation for the visionary experience itself, in

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that Jesus had, by which he had access to another world transcending the human, mediated through ecstasy and vision'. Though, as already mentioned, Schiavo says virtually nothing about Matthew's version of the temptation narrative basing all his observations on Luke, which he takes as the more reliable transmitter of the Q tradition.

<sup>53</sup> *Contra* Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 63 ('it hardly refers to a vision'). Seeing Jesus' temptation in the desert as visionary makes it unnecessary to propose precise geographical locations for this temptation, as most commentators are prone to do (cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 354; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 63). Reading Jesus' temptation in the desert as visionary also does not preclude seeing Moses and Israel parallels in Jesus' experience.

<sup>54</sup> In *IQM* 1.1-3 the desert is the prelude to the eschatological battle.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 354; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 85 ('hier vorgestellt als Ort der Anfechtung und Bedrohung').

<sup>56</sup> Here the desert connotes refuge rather than a home of demons, though Satan pursues the woman into the desert. Cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC 52b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998): 691.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew I-VII*, 356. *Contra* Keener, *Matthew*, 138 n. 94. By itself fasting does not necessarily convey an apocalyptic visionary experience, since it frequently accompanied acts of prayer, mourning, and repentance (*Sir.* 31.26; *Bar.* 1.5; 2 *Bar.* 5.7; 9.2; 12.5; *T Zeph.* 4.1-3; *Did* 7.4; *Tob.* 12.8; 2 *Macc.* 13.12; *T Benj* 1.4-5; *Did* 1.3; cf. *Matt.* 6:16-18). However, given the apocalyptic resonances already noted in *Matt.* 3:16-17, it is difficult not to read this element of the narrative in light of the similar phenomenon in apocalyptic visionary experiences.

Matthew 4:2 the visionary experience has already begun (it follows the opening of the heavens and Jesus being led into the desert, the first location of his visionary journey) so that the fasting functions not as preparation for the visionary experience but as the backdrop for the first temptation. Fasting and experiencing hunger *within* an apocalyptic-type vision should not be too surprising, since elsewhere seers eat scrolls and taste sweetness and bitterness (Ezek. 3:1-3; Rev. 10:9-10). Jesus' fasting and hungering are part of his visionary experience and function within the visionary narrative as a prelude to the first temptation. Interestingly, in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12:1-2 the seer refrains from food and drink for forty days and nights, despite having already encountered the accompanying angel who leads him on his visionary journey, though it is not clear that this fasting is part of the vision itself.

The remainder of the temptation narrative consists of a dialogue with Satan, who also now functions as the angelic guide (*angeles interpretes*) on Jesus' visionary journey (vv. 4-10).<sup>58</sup> Angelic beings also reappear at the conclusion of the narrative (v. 11). The fact that Jesus' temptation takes place within the domain of angels and devils suggests an apocalyptic visionary experience (cf. *1 Enoch* 1-36; 37-71; *Apoc Abr* 19). An important assumption underlying apocalyptic literature is that 'there is a hidden world of angels and demons that is directly relevant to human destiny'.<sup>59</sup> As seen above, being transported by a supernatural being to different locations (e.g. heavenly) for the purpose of a visionary experience is prevalent as a *topos* in apocalypses (Ezek. 8:1-3; 40-48; *1 Enoch* 1-36; 52:3; 71:3; *2 Enoch* 3-8, 10-21; *2 Bar.* 6:3; *3 Baruch*; *Apoc Zeph.* 2:1; *Apoc Abr* 15:2-3; *T Abr* 10:1; Rev. 4:1; 17:3; 21:9; cf. *T Lev.* 2:7-9).<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in several apocalypses the seer converses with an *angelic intermediary* (Ezek. 40; *3 Baruch*; *4 Ezra*; *T Abr* 10-14; Rev. 17:6-18; cf. Plutarch, *Lucullus* 12:1-2). In

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<sup>58</sup> Schiavo, 'Temptation of Jesus', 147.

<sup>59</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 8. As Ben Witherington rightly concludes, 'Inasmuch as the domain of devils and angels is the cosmic realm, the mention of both in this account points us in the direction of this being an account of a visionary experience' (*Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999]: 280). Cf. Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 88-113; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (OTL; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964): 235-57.

<sup>60</sup> *T Lev.* 2:7-9 does not explicitly state that an angel led the seer, but clearly Levi is accompanied by an angel in his ascent into heaven.

both cases (angelic guide and dialogue partner) Satan plays these roles in Matthew's account of Jesus' visionary experience.<sup>61</sup>

The last two temptations in particular unmistakably replicate apocalyptic visionary experiences where the seer is transported to two further locations, perhaps in ascending order (desert, temple, very high mountain). As the angelic guide, Satan transports (παραλαμβάνει) Jesus to the temple and to a high mountain (vv. 5, 8; Ezekiel LXX 3:12; 8:3; 11:1; 43:5 has ἀνέλθειν). As seen above, the city of Jerusalem was the destination of several visionary transports (Ezek. 8:1-3; 2 Bar. 6:3; *Apoc Zeph.* 2:1). And now Jesus is taken in a vision into the 'holy city' and set upon a high pinnacle of the temple for his penultimate temptation.<sup>62</sup> The final temptation transpires on a 'very high mountain' (4:8). Given the implausibility of an actual mountain that would literally afford such a view of all the kingdoms of the world (cf. Origen, *First Principles* 4:16), the very high mountain here in Matthew 4:9 reflects an appropriate vantage point for an apocalyptic vision,<sup>63</sup> where the supernatural being shows (δείκνυμι) something to the seer.<sup>64</sup>

Matthew 4:9: εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν λίσαν<sup>65</sup>

Ezekiel 40:2 LXX: ἐπὶ ὄρους ὑψηλοῦ σφόδρα

Revelation 21:10: ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν

*Apoc Zeph.* 3:2: And he took me up upon Mount Seir and he showed me three men...

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Schiavo, 'Temptation of Jesus', 147.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. correctly Hagner (*Matthew 1-13*, 66): 'In his trance-like vision Jesus sees himself perched upon one of the highest points of the temple'.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Davies and Allison (*Matthew I-VII*, 370), who note parallels with apocalyptic in 2 Bar. 76.3; 1 Enoch 87.3-4; Rev. 21:10 but do not pursue this; cf. apparently Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 68; W. Foerster, 'ὄρος', *TDNT* V, 486; Grundmann, *Matthäus*, 102; Wilkens, 'Versuchung', 485; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 90. Against a Moses typology here, see Nolland, *Matthew*, 166 n. 47. But cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> Matt. 4:8: καὶ δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ.... The verb δείκνυμι itself is found in apocalyptic visionary accounts, where the seer is shown something by a (supernatural) visionary guide. See especially Rev. 1:1 (δείξαι); 4:1 (δείξω); 17:1 (δείξω); 21:9 (δείξω), 10 (ἔδειξεν); 22:1 (ἔδειξεν), 6 (δείξαι), 8 (δεικνύντος). For further explicit references to visionary experience cf. Zech. LXX 1:9 (δείξω); 2:3 (ἔδειξεν); 3:1 (ἔδειξεν); Ezek. LXX 11:25 (ἔδειξεν); 40:4 (3x); Dan. 10.1 LXX (ἔδειχθη). Cf. e.g. also 1 Enoch 1.2; 22.1; 24.1; 33.4; 60.11; 66.1; 71.3; 72.1; 74.2; 75.4; 79.2; 80.1; 83.1; 85.1; 87.3; 2 Enoch 3.3; 4.1; 6.1; 7.1; 10.1; 11.1; 13.1; 14.1; 16.1; 3 Bar. 3.1; 6.2; 11.2; *Apoc Zeph.* 3.1.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. παραλαμβάνει...εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν in Matt 17.1, which may also record a visionary experience.

In *1 Enoch* 17:2 the seer is apparently taken to a high mountain that reaches into the heavens, and in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 9:8-9 the high mountain is the vantage for the seer to be shown things created. In *1 Enoch* 87:3 the seer is transported to a high place where he sees history unfold before him (cf. *2 Bar.* 76:3).<sup>66</sup> The significance of Jesus' location on a high mountain, then, is not geographical but visionary: it is the vantage point for the final element of Jesus' apocalyptic vision.<sup>67</sup>

As observed above, the context of confrontation with angelic/demonic beings and particularly Satan locates Jesus firmly within the world of apocalyptic (cf. *Rev.* 12; 20:1-6; *1 Enoch* 10:4-6; 54:4-6; *2 Enoch* 29:4-6; cf. *1 Enoch* 37-71). The final temptation of the offer of all the kingdoms of the world by Satan reflects an apocalyptic struggle. The kingdoms of this world (e.g. imperial Rome) are under the control of the powers of evil;<sup>68</sup> their liberation will be achieved through the establishment of God's kingdom (*Daniel* 7:13-14; 'The Animal Apocalypse' in *1 Enoch*; *2 Bar.* 4; *Rev.* 11:15; 12:10; 13:12; 15:3-4; *Asc Isa.* 4:8-12). But in *Matthew* 4:8-10 Jesus appears to relinquish his rule and possession of the kingdoms of the earth, for he must achieve them paradoxically by another route: his Messianic suffering and death. So in the end Jesus receives (*Matt.* 28:18: ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῶ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς) what he relinquishes here.<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. Reading *Matthew* 3:17–4:11 as an Apocalyptic Vision

The preceding analysis has suggested that Jesus' post-baptismal experience and the ensuing temptation by Satan are an extended third person narrative account of Jesus' apocalyptic vision. Semantically what is the contribution of reading Jesus' own experience in *Matthew* 3:16–4:11 against the background of apocalyptic visionary experience? As a decisive moment in the life of Jesus, and a decisive moment in the

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<sup>66</sup> *T Lev.* 2.5 also mentions a high mountain ('Then sleep fell upon me, and I beheld a high mountain, and I was on it.') However, unlike several other apocalypses that include this motif, here the mountain does not appear to be the vantage point for a vision, but the place from which the seer ascends into the open heaven (see above).

<sup>67</sup> Thus Schnackenburg correctly observes that the high mountain 'cannot be localized geographically' (*Matthew*, 38).

<sup>68</sup> See Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (JSNTSS 204; Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000): 106-107.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Luz, *Matthew* 1-7, 155; Hagner, *Matthew* 1-13, 70.

Matthean narrative, it is fitting that Jesus' appointment as God's son is confirmed by an apocalyptic visionary experience.<sup>70</sup> Though formally Jesus' post-baptismal experience and temptation does not constitute a 'call narrative' after the manner of Old Testament prophets, at the same time it functions in a similar way, as Jesus' experience is modelled after the inauguration of Ezekiel's prophetic vocation (Ezek. 1:1; cf. Isa. 6; *1 Enoch* 12-14).<sup>71</sup> Consequently, Jesus' mission, in which he will inaugurate the kingdom of God, is prefaced by an inaugural apocalyptic visionary experience, confirming Jesus as divine son and authentic spokesperson for God.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, such a significant event is prefaced by and validated by an apocalyptic experience. Further, that sonship is tested, not merely at a mundane level, but as part of a larger cosmic conflict, revealing in apocalyptic fashion what is at stake in Jesus' anointing as divine Son and in his subsequent ministry: it is nothing less than the struggle between God and the powers of evil at a supra-mundane level.

Consequently, in true apocalyptic fashion, Jesus' temptation unveils the essential nature of the conflict that Jesus will experience throughout the rest of the Matthean narrative. Apocalyptic lifts the veil behind the empirical world and discloses a transcendent world that stands behind it and in some way affects it. As Satan does in 4:1-11, Jesus' opponents 'test' (πειράζω) him (16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35).<sup>73</sup> Behind Jesus' struggles with earthly opponents lies a deeper struggle of apocalyptic proportions on a broader cosmic scale (cf. Daniel 10-12; 'The Animal Apocalypse' in *1 Enoch*; Rev. 12-13), a struggle with Satan and the demonic realm who control the kingdoms of this world.<sup>74</sup> As Mark Allan Powell notes, if somewhat overstates, 'What this narrative is really about is conflict on a deeper level, namely, conflict between God and Satan'.<sup>75</sup> This observation is confirmed by Jesus'

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<sup>70</sup> See Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 363.

<sup>71</sup> On this form see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979): 97-100.

<sup>72</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 363.

<sup>73</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): 46-50. See also James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003): 381 n. 195, who notes the link between the 'testing' in these later passages and the third temptation.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. also Carter, *Matthew*, 106-107.

<sup>75</sup> Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 47. Powell does not argue this based on an apocalyptic perspective as I have, but based on conflict analysis in narrative criticism.

inaugural apocalyptic vision. This perspective lies just beneath the surface of Matthew's story of Jesus, and in fact surfaces from time to time (12:28-29; 13:36-39; 16:23). Thus Jesus' struggle to bring about the kingdom of God is part of a larger apocalyptic script.

Though Schweitzer's characterisation of Jesus as a preacher of apocalyptic cannot stand in the form in which it was originally proposed, as it was too limited in terms of a particular eschatological perspective, the backdrop of apocalyptic for understanding Jesus should be maintained in that Jesus participates in the most characteristic feature of Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic: a visionary experience of a transcendent reality. Given the pervasive influence of apocalyptic in Judaism and early Christianity as evidenced literarily in the form of apocalypses, it is likely that an actual visionary experience to some extent underlies Matthew's account of Jesus' experience in 3:16–4:11. Therefore, in contrast to those who would de-'apocalypticise' Jesus, seeing Jesus' baptism and temptation within the context of an apocalyptic vision suggests that he belongs squarely within the milieu of apocalyptic.