

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 17 – January 17th – Matthew 12:1-21

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Matthew

- Hagner, Donald A *Word Biblical Commentary Vols.33a & 33b: Matthew 1-13 & Matthew 14-28*, Word Books, Dallas, 1993 & 1995
- Morris, Leon *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992

Matthew 12:1-12

Morris points out the contrast between Jesus' words concerning his yoke being easy and the oppressive traditions of the Pharisees as exemplified in the incidents that follow. For vv 1-8 (with the exception of 5-7 which are unique to Matthew) cf. Mark 2:23-38; Luke 6:1-5.

Verse 1

Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐπορεύθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς σάββασι διὰ τῶν σπορίμων· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπέινασαν καὶ ἤρξαντο τίλλειν στάχυν καὶ ἐσθίειν.

For the opening phrase cf. 11:25.

ἐπορεύθη Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 s
πορευομαι go, proceed, travel
σαββατον, ου n (often in pl) the seventh day, Sabbath

"The careful observance of the sabbath was regarded as of greatest importance in Judaism (cf. Isa 56:4-7). The sabbath was a time of rest (cf. the emphasis on rest in the preceding sentences, 11:28) and rejoicing." Hagner. Cf Ex 20:10; Deut 5:14.

σποριμα, ων n (only in pl) grainfields
μαθητης, ου m disciple, follower
πειναω be hungry
ἤρξαντο Verb, aor mid indic, 3 pl ἄρχω
rule; mid begin
τίλλω pluck, pick
σταχυς, υος m head of grain/wheat
ἐσθιω and ἐσθω eat, consume

Luke 6:1 refers to the disciples rubbing the heads of grain in their hands.

Verse 2

οἱ δὲ Φαρισαῖοι ἰδόντες εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Ἴδού οἱ μαθηταὶ σου ποιοῦσιν ὃ οὐκ ἐξεστὶν ποιεῖν ἐν σαββάτῳ.

ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὄραω
see, observe, perceive
ἐξεστὶν impersonal verb it is permitted, it is lawful, it is proper

"Travellers were permitted to eat grain from the fields they passed through (Deut 23:25); it was not the action that was the problem, but the fact that it was done on the Sabbath." Morris.

Verse 3

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε τί ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ ὅτε ἐπέινασεν καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ; ἀναγινωσκω read, read in public worship
ὅτε conj when, at which time

Verse 4

πῶς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως ἔφαγον, ὃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἦν αὐτῷ φαγεῖν οὐδὲ τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ, εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν μόνοις;

Cf. 1 Sam 21:1-6.

ἄρτος, ου m bread, a loaf
προθεσις, εως f purpose, plan, will; ἄρτοι
της π. bread offered to God
ἔφαγον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl ἐσθιω

Most MSS read the singular ἔφαγεν. The plural is supported only by κ B 481 but the UBS committee considered that the singular was more likely to be a secondary harmonisation with the parallels in Mark 2:26 and Luke 6:4.

ἐξὸν Verb, pres ptc, n nom/acc s ἐξεστὶν
φαγεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐσθιω
ἱερεὺς, εως m priest
μόνος, η, ον only, alone

Cf. Ex 25:30; Lev 24:5-9. "David was not breaking the Sabbath; the relevance of what he did was that the need to satisfy hunger overrode a liturgical provision." Morris. The law of God is not to be reduced to a set of taboos.

Verse 5

ἢ οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι τοῖς σάββασι οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τὸ σάββατον βεβηλοῦσιν καὶ ἀναίτιοί εἰσιν;

ἢ or
ἀναγινωσκω see v.3
νομος, ου m law

ιερον, ου η temple, temple precincts
 βεβηλωω desecrate
 ἀναιτιος, ου not guilty, innocent

Cf. John 7:23. "The priests are about the work of God and thus are not bound by the normal regulations concerning the sabbath. So too it is implied by an *a fortiori* argument (or in rabbinic idiom, *qal wahomer*) that Jesus and his disciples constitute a special instance and thus are not bound. They preeminently are about the work of God. Although this point is implicit and not explicit, the next saying depends on just such a conclusion." Hagner.

Verse 6

λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι τοῦ ἱεροῦ μείζον ἐστὶν ὧδε.

μειζων, ου greater, greatest
 ὧδε here, in this place

"Some MSS read 'someone greater than the temple', but it appears that we should read *something greater*. Turner, however points out that the neuter can be used of persons "provided that the emphasis is less on the individual than on some outstanding general quality"... We should understand this to refer to the nature of the service and the person of Jesus as one sent to bring in the kingdom... What God was doing in the sending of Jesus far surpassed what he did in setting up the temple worship... Or, to put it another way, while it was true that God's presence was to be discerned in the offering of sacrifices in the temple, even more so and in a fuller and deeper way, his presence was to be discerned in the mercy and work of Jesus." Morris.
 "Given the great importance of the temple, the place of God's presence and the performance of the cultus, this statement is utterly astonishing in its significance." Hagner.

Verse 7

εἰ δὲ ἐγνώκετε τί ἐστίν· ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν, οὐκ ἂν κατεδικάσατε τοὺς ἀναιτίους.

ἐγνώκετε Verb, pluperf act indic γινωσκω
 ἔλεος, ους η mercy, compassion
 θελω wish, will
 θυσια, ας f sacrifice, victim

Cf. Hos 6:6 and also Matt 9:13.

"The point here, as in 9:13, is that stringency of law observance must give way to the priority of the good news of the kingdom, which is aimed at human need and thus too the need of those who labour on behalf of the kingdom. In the showing of mercy to the needy, the law and the prophets find their fulfilment (cf. the supremely important love commandment in 7:12 and 22:39-40; see also 23:23, where Jesus faults the Pharisees for neglecting the weightier matter of mercy). Had the Pharisees understood (ἐγνώκετε) the meaning of Hosea, they would not have pronounced judgment upon the innocent (τοὺς ἀναιτίους). For Jesus' disciples are as innocent in their activity on the sabbath as are the priests in their labour on the sabbath (for whom the same word, 'innocent,' is used). Both fulfill the will of God despite their technical violation of the commandment." Hagner.

αν particle indicating contingency
 καταδικάζω condemn
 ἀναιτιος, ου not guilty, innocent

Verse 8

κύριος γὰρ ἐστὶν τοῦ σαββάτου ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

"This is obviously part of the larger fact, to which Matthew has already introduced the reader, that as the promised one, the Messiah, Jesus is the authoritative and definitive interpreter of the Torah. Thus the demands of the sabbath commandment, however they may be construed, must give way to the presence and purpose of Jesus, and not vice versa." Hagner.

Verses 9-14

Cf. Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11.

Verse 9

Καὶ μεταβάς ἐκεῖθεν ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν·

μεταβαινω leave, move, go, cross over
 ἐκεῖθεν from there

Verse 10

καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος χεῖρα ἔχων ξηράν. καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· Εἰ ἔξεστι τοῖς σάββασιν θεραπεύειν; ἵνα κατηγορήσωσιν αὐτοῦ.

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power
 ξηρος, α, ου dry, withered, paralyzed

"Besides the discomfort and unsightliness, this would have made it difficult for the man to earn a living." Morris.

ἐπηρώτησαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl
ἐπερωτώ ask, interrogate, question

From the context (vv 2, 14), the subject of the verb is understood to be the Pharisees.

ἔξεστιν see v.2

θεραπεύω heal, cure; serve

"The rabbis permitted healing on the Sabbath if life was in danger" Morris.

κατηγορήσωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl
κατηγορέω accuse, bring charges
against

"The purpose of the question, ἵνα κατηγορήσωσιν αὐτοῦ, in order to accuse him, is connected with the plot mentioned in v 14. The Pharisees were looking for evidence that could be used against Jesus." Hagner.

Verse 11

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Τίς ἔσται ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος ὃς ἔξει πρόβατον ἓν, καὶ ἐν ἐμπέσῃ τοῦτο τοῖς σάββασιν εἰς βόθυνον, οὐχὶ κρατήσῃ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐγερεῖ;

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

ἔξει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἔχω

πρόβατον, οὐ n sheep

εἰς, μια, ἓν gen ἑνός, μιας, ἑνός one, a

ἐμπέσῃ Verb, 2 aor act subj ἐμπιπτῶ fall into

βόθυνος, οὐ m ditch, pit

οὐχὶ (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no

κρατέω hold, hold fast, sieze, hold back

ἐγερεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἐγείρω raise

Verse 12

πόσῳ οὖν διαφέρει ἄνθρωπος προβάτου. ὥστε ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν καλῶς ποιεῖν.

πόσος, ἡ, οὐ how much(?), how many(?)

διαφερω be worth more than

πρόβατον, οὐ n sheep

ὥστε so that, with the result that

καλῶς adv well

"καλῶς ποιεῖν ... is used because it is broad enough to include delivering a sheep from a pit and performing a healing (cf. Mark 7:37). Again Jesus challenges not the sabbath law itself but the interpretation of that law. And again the criterion of love becomes the determinative." Hagner.

Verse 13

τότε λέγει τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· Ἔκτεινόν σου τὴν χεῖρα· καὶ ἐξέτεινεν, καὶ ἀπεκατεστάθη ὑγιής ὡς ἡ ἄλλη.

τοτε then, at that time

ἐκτεινόν Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ἐκτεινῶ stretch out, extend

"Jesus' word of command was a word of healing." Morris.

ἀπεκατεστάθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

ἀποκαθιστημι restore, make well

ὑγιής, ες sound, healthy, well, cured

ἄλλος, ἡ, ο another, other

Verse 14

ἐξεληθόντες δὲ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συμβούλιον ἔλαβον κατ' αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν.

ἐξεληθόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m pl nom

ἐξερχομαι

συμβουλίον, οὐ n plan, plot; council

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἄν) that, in order that

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill

"It was a curious action for men who were so keen on keeping the Sabbath lawfully. But, of course, what Jesus did called into question their understanding of the law of God, and thus their whole theological position. If his popularity led people to follow him in this, then their leadership was threatened; they could lose everything. More was at stake than the health of an unknown cripple." Morris. "The Pharisees were not really interested in Jesus' argument but in finding an excuse to plot against him. The obsession with the letter of the law apparently made it impossible for them to think of anything else, and so the miracle as a sign of the dawning of the kingdom and of the truth of Jesus' message was lost on them... The Pharisees know intuitively that he must be removed if their system is to remain intact. The tragedy is not the failure to accept Jesus' argument but the failure to be receptive to Jesus as the one who brings the kingdom." Hagner.

Verses 15-21

"This passage bears a remarkable formal similarity to 8:16-17, where a reference to the healing ministry of Jesus (and where he healed 'all') is followed again by a fulfilment formula quotation from Isaiah (53:4). The only element lacking in this parallel passage is the warning not to make him known." Hagner.

Verse 15

Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς γνοὺς ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν. καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ πολλοί, καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτοὺς πάντας,

γνοὺς Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s γινωσκῶ

ἀναχωρεῶ withdraw, go away

ἐκεῖθεν from there

Jesus quietly withdrew from conflict. His time had not yet come.

ἀκολουθεῶ follow, accompany

ὄχλος, οὐ m crowd, multitude

κ B have omit ὄγλοι. Metzger notes that although ὄγλοι could have been accidentally dropped because of homoioteleuton, it is "slightly more probable" that the word was added by scribes in imitation of the phrase in such passages as 4:25; 8:1; 13:2; 15:30; and 19:2.

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου much,
many
θεραπευω heal, cure; serve

Verse 16

καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μὴ φανερὸν αὐτὸν ποιήσωσιν,

ἐπιτιμαω command, order
φανερος, α, ον known, evident

Cf. 8:4; 9:30. "Jesus, while ready to heal any in need who came to him, did not want undue publicity." Morris.

"The key to the messianic secret is the fact that Jesus has come *not* as the widely expected triumphant Messiah, powerfully transforming the world order then and there, but as a servant Messiah to accomplish the will of his Father. The strange work of this Messiah explains his strange demeanour." Hagner.

Verse 17

ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος·

πληρωθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s πληρωω
fill, make full, fulfill

ῥηθὲν Verb, aor pass ptc, n nom/acc s λεγω

Verses 18-21

"Although Isa 42:1 is alluded to several times in the Synoptic tradition (cf. 3:17; 17:5; Luke 3:22; 9:35; 23:35), only here in Matthew do we find this quotation of the opening four verses of the chapter. Although the text of the quotation is in agreement with the LXX at a few points, for the most part it must be described as non-Septuagintal. On the other hand, it does not follow the Hebrew Masoretic Text closely either. Matthew may well have formed the translation from sources available to him (e.g., the Targums) or produced his original translation (so Davies-Allison) in order to suit his own purposes...

"The story of Jesus narrated in Matthew agrees exactly with Isaiah's portrait of the servant. And thus the unusual, apparently unassertive Messiah, who fails to bring judgment to the enemies of God's people and justice to the earth and who accordingly was unacceptable to his contemporaries, is shown to have been prophesied by the prophet. The one who was uniquely related to God as his chosen and beloved, upon whom the Spirit uniquely rested, came also as a servant who was ultimately to die, in agreement with Isaiah's last Servant Song (52:13-53:12). This strange sequence of events and this paradoxical Messiah are central to the Gospel as Matthew relates it." Hagner.

Verse 18

Ἴδου ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἠρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου· θήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν, καὶ κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ.

"In popular expectation messiahs exercised their authority by crushing opposition, but Jesus showed his authority in his concern for the helpless and downtrodden." Morris.

παις, παιδος m & f servant, slave, child

"The fact that παις ... can be translated as either servant or son makes the application to Jesus even more effective." Hagner.

ἠρέτισα Verb, aor act indic, 1 s αἰρετιζω
choose, appoint

A word that is found here only in the New Testament.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved
εὐδοκεω be pleased, take delight/pleasure in
ψυχη, ης f self, life, 'soul'

Cf. 3:17; 17:5.

θήσω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s τιθημι place,
set

"The placing of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus again recalls the baptism, where the Spirit descended upon Jesus to equip him for his mission (3:16; cf. Luke 4:18, where Isa 61:1 is cited)." Hagner.

κρίσις, εως f judgement, act of judgement

"That the word κρίσις should be taken in the positive sense of 'justice' rather than 'judgment' (contra Luz) seems clear from Matthew's inclusion of v 21 (Isa 42:4b)." Hagner.

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation,
people; τα ἑ. Gentiles
ἀπαγγελεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἀπαγγελλω
announce, proclaim

Verse 19

οὐκ ἐρίσει οὐδὲ κραυγάσει, οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ.

ἐρίζω argue, quarrel
κραυγαζω call out, shout
πλατεια, ας f wide street

"With whatever vicissitudes along the way, in the end the peoples of the world will come to see that the one in whom they must put their hope is the servant of God, the emissary of love who effectively brings salvation to the downtrodden." Morris.

Verse 20

κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νῆκος τὴν κρίσιν.

καλαμος, ου m reed, rod, cane
συντετριμμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s συντριβω crush, shatter, bruise
κατεάξει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s καταγνυμι break

"Reeds grew plentifully and were cheap... The natural thing was to discard an imperfect reed and replace it with a better one. But the Lord's servant does not discard those who can be likened to *shattered* reeds, earth's 'broken' ones. A perfect reed is at best fragile, so the imagery emphasizes weakness and helplessness." Morris.

λινον, ου n linen, flax, wick
τυφομαι smolder, smoke
σβέσει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s σβεννυμι extinguish, put out
ἕως ἂν until
ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel, cast out

"This is an unusual use of ἐκβαλω which normally has a meaning like 'throw out, discard' or perhaps 'drive out,' often with the notion of force. Here the thought is rather 'to cause to proceed to its goal'." Morris.

νικος, ους n victory
κρισις, εως f judgement, act of judgement, condemnation, justice

Verse 21

καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

ὄνομα, τος n name, person
ἔθνη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people
ἐλπίζω hope, hope for, hope in

"One of Matthew's purposes is to show not only that in Jesus God has been faithful to Israel but that the Gentiles are also to find salvation through him (cf. 8:11-12; 21:43; 24:14; 28:19). This development – that the Gentiles would place their hope in Isaiah's servant figure – was prophesied by Isaiah and finds its fulfilment through the work of Jesus. Almost this same language is found in the LXX of Isa 11:10 (quoted in Rom 15:12) in a messianic and apocalyptic context." Hagner.