

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 23 – January 23rd – Matthew 15:1-28

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 15:1-11

Cf. Mark 7:1-15; Luke 11:37-41.

Verse 1

Τότε προσέρχονται τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων Φαρισαῖοι καὶ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες

τοτε then, at that time
 προσερχομαι come or go to

It would seem that they had come from Jerusalem to Galilee specifically to oppose Jesus.

γραμματεὺς, εὼς m scribe, expert in Jewish law

Verse 2

Διὰ τί οἱ μαθηταὶ σου παραβαίνουν τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; οὐ γὰρ νίπτονται τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ὅταν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν.

παραβαινω break, disobey
 παραδοσις, εὼς f tradition
 πρεσβυτερος, α, ον elder

"R. Akiba explained ... 'The tradition is a fence around the law.' ... The point of this is that the tradition was seen as a protection for the law; anyone who kept the tradition would not come anywhere near breaking the law. How false this view was is clear from the incident we are considering." Leon Morris.

νιπω wash; midd wash oneself
 χεῖρ, χειρὸς f hand
 ὅταν when, whenever, as often as
 ἄρτος, οὐ m bread, food
 ἐσθίω and ἐσθώ eat

"The particular tradition that they took up with Jesus was that concerned with the washing of hands before eating. This was not a matter of personal hygiene but of the removal of ceremonial defilement.... The Pharisees discerned a great number of 'unclean' things that one might encounter in the ordinary course of life that might easily be touched with the hands. The contact made the hands unclean, and if unclean hands touched food, that, too, became unclean. When it was eaten the whole person was made unclean. To avoid such a dreadful happening the strict upholders of the tradition had evolved a ritual washing that removed defilement, and they practiced it scrupulously before eating." Leon Morris.

Verse 3

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Διὰ τί καὶ ὑμεῖς παραβαίνετε τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν;

ἀποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s
 ἀποκρίνομαι answer, reply

Note the emphatic ὑμεῖς

ἐντολῆ, ης f command

"The very heart of Pharisaism, the tradition of the elders (= 'your tradition' ...) that was supposed to protect against the violation of the Torah, had in fact become responsible for (δια, 'because of') the grievous transgression of God's command. This accusation proves to be more devastating than that of the Pharisees against Jesus' disciples (v 2)." Hagner.

Verse 4

ὁ γὰρ θεὸς εἶπεν· Τίμα τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα, καί· Ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω·

Some witnessed (κ^{*-2} C L W 0106 TR f sy^h) read ἐνετειλατο λεγων rather than εἶπεν. This is probably a scribal expansion (cf. ἐντολὴν in v 3).

τιμαω honour, regard, reverence
 κακολογεω speak evil of, curse
 ἢ or

θανατος, ου m death
τελευταω die

Cf. Exod 20:12; 21:17; Deut 5:16.

Verse 5

ὕμεις δὲ λέγετε· Ὅς ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρὶ· Δῶρον ὃ ἐστὶν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὠφελήθης,

ὅς ἂν / ἐάν whoever
δωρον, ου n gift, offering

Here the sense is 'a gift promised to God'.

ὠφελήθης Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s ὠφέλεω
gain, profit, benefit

"The son is vowing away all that he might have used to support his parents." Morris. Some contemporary evidence suggests that the son might not lose personal use of the wealth or property so vowed.

Verse 6

οὐ μὴ τιμήσει τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἠκυρώσατε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν.

τιμήσει Verb, aor act subj, 3 s τιμαω

Some MSS (C L W Θ 0106 f¹ TR vg^{cl} sy^{p,h}) add ἢ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ and others slight variants of the same. The phrase could have been added to bring about agreement with vv 4-5 and the parallel in Mark 7:12, or it could have accidentally been dropped because of the similar ending αὐτοῦ (or deliberately omitted for stylistic reasons). The committee omits the phrase on the weight of κ B D.

ἀκυροω cancel, disregard

κ^{*2} C 084 f¹³ read τον νομον; L W 0106 f¹ TR lat sy^h read την ἐτολην. The latter appears to be a harmonisation with v 3. While τον λογον could be caused by Mark 7:13, the committee preferred the weight of κ¹ B D.

Verse 7

ὕποκριταί, καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν περὶ ὑμῶν Ἡσαΐας λέγων·

ὕποκριτης, ου m hypocrite
προφητεω prophesy, speak God's message

Verse 8

Ὁ λαὸς οὗτος τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ·

Cf. Isa 29:13.

λαος, ου m people, a people
χειλος, ους n lip
καρδια, ας f heart
πορρω adv far away, far
ἀπεχω be distant

Verse 9

μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με, διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων.

ματην adv in vain, to no purpose
σεβομαι worship
διδασκω teach
διδασκαλια, ας f what is taught, doctrine
ἐνταλμα, τος n commandment, rule

Verse 10

Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν ὄχλον εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Ἀκούετε καὶ συνίετε·

προσκαλεσάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m
nom s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself,
summon
συνημι and συνιω understand,
comprehend

Verse 11

οὐ τὸ εἰσερχόμενον εἰς τὸ στόμα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦτο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in
στομα, τος n mouth
κοινω defile, make unclean
ἐκπορευομαι go or come out

Cf. Eph 4:29; Jas 3:6. "Jesus is warning that defilement is not something that may be casually acquired by physical contact (and which may easily be removed by appropriate ritual practice). It is something that affects the person at the root of his or her being. When one is evil there, then the words that come out of the mouth reveal the inner corruption." Leon Morris.

"Matthew ... probably minimises the implicit revolutionary significance of 11a because he is writing to Jewish Christians (Mark on the other hand, writing to gentile Christians, maximises the point and makes it quite explicit with the editorial comment: 'Thus he declared all foods clean' [Mark 7:19]. Even so, Matthew has not totally suppressed the radical truth that Jesus' words open the door to a new evaluation of the dietary restrictions, i.e., to the commands of the written Torah itself. For Matthew, Jesus alone is the true interpreter and upholder of the ultimate meaning of the Torah. It should be no surprise that it took some time for the implicit teaching of Jesus to be fully understood and implemented in the early church, especially by Jewish Christians. Thus we see Peter struggling with the issue in Acts 10:10f. Yet even Jewish Christians such as Peter (Acts 10:28) and Paul, himself a former Pharisee, learn eventually that the distinctions of ritual purity have been done away with in Christ (Rom 14:14, 20). Matthew's conservative Jewish-Christian church may well have continued to observe the dietary laws as a matter of custom and to support their claim vis-à-vis the synagogue that they were the fulfilment of Judaism, but they would surely have been aware that their Christian counterparts in gentile communities and perhaps even other Jewish-Christian congregations had done away with such observances." Hagner.

Verses 12-20

Cf. Mark 7:17-23.

Verse 12

Τότε προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ·
Οἶδας ὅτι οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον
ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν;

τοτε then, at that time

προσερχομαι see v.1

οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present
meaning) know, understand

σκανδαλίζω cause (someone) to give up
the faith; anger, shock, offend

G Stählin says that the verb here implies not merely "feeling hurt"; rather "the primary meaning is 'deep religious offence' at the preaching of Jesus, and this both causes and includes denial and rejection of Jesus." (TDNT)

Verse 13

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Πᾶσα φυτεία ἣν οὐκ
ἐφύτευσεν ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος
ἐκριζωθήσεται.

ἀποκριθεὶς see v.3

φυτεία, ας f plant

φυτεω plant

οὐράνιος, ον heavenly, in heaven

ἐκριζωθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s

ἐκρίζω uproot

"So far from being reliable expositors of the kingdom of God, the Pharisees were not even in the kingdom." Morris.

Verse 14

ἄφετε αὐτούς· τυφλοὶ εἰσιν ὁδηγοὶ τυφλῶν·
τυφλὸς δὲ τυφλὸν ἐάν ὁδηγῇ, ἀμφοτέροι εἰς
βόθυνον πεσοῦνται.

Cf. 23:16, 24; Luke 6:39.

ἀφιημι leave, let go

Here means, 'leave them alone,' 'let them be.'

τυφλος, η, ον blind

ὁδηγος, ου m guide, leader

The shorter text is supported by B D 0237. There are also a number of other textual variants involving word order and/or the omission of the first τυφλοι. While recognising that, from the viewpoint of external evidence, the testimony of B and D is strong, the committee thought that the longer reading (κ* L Θ f¹ f¹³ et al) better explained the origin of the several variants.

ἐάν if

ὁδηγεω lead, guide

ἀμφοτεροι, αι, α both, all

βοθυνος, ου m ditch, pit

πεσοῦνται Verb, fut midd/pass dep indic, 3 pl

πιπτω fall, fall down

"We should not miss ... the force of Jesus' future tense, which gives the air of prophetic certainty." Morris.

Verse 15

Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Φράσον
ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην.

φραζω explain, interpret

κ B f¹ sa bo omit ταυτην. The word could have been deliberately omitted by scribes since the intended 'parable' or 'analogy' is not that which immediately precedes. Thus the word is placed in the text but in brackets.

"There is something so revolutionary in his [Jesus'] attitude that their minds have difficulty in following him." Dietrich.

Verse 16

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· Ἀκμὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;
 ἄκμην adv still, even now
 ἀσυνετος, ον without understanding, dull

"The disciples had been with Jesus for quite some time, they had seen what he did and heard what he taught. They ought to have had more understanding than is implied in Peter's request." Leon Morris.

Verse 17

οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι πᾶν τὸ εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς τὸ
 στόμα εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν χωρεῖ καὶ εἰς ἀφεδρῶνα
 ἐκβάλλεται;

νοεω understand, perceive, discern
 στομα, τος n see v.11
 κοιλια, ας f stomach
 χωρεω go into
 ἀφεδρων, ωνος m latrine
 ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel, cast out

Verse 18

τὰ δὲ ἐκπορευόμενα ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ἐκ τῆς
 καρδίας ἐξέρχεται, κακεῖνα κοινοὶ τὸν
 ἄνθρωπον.

ἐκπορευομαι see v.11
 καρδια, ας f heart
 κακεινος, η, ο contraction of και ἐκεινος
 and that one, and he, that one also

'and it is these' κακεινος "can denote 'what is relatively more distant' or, as here, 'what is relatively closer' (BAGD)" Leon Morris.

κοινοω see v.11

Verse 19

ἐκ γὰρ τῆς καρδίας ἐξέρχονται διαλογισμοὶ
 πονηροί, φόνοι, μοιχεῖαι, πορνεῖαι, κλοπαί,
 ψευδομαρτυρίαι, βλασφημίαι.

διαλογισμος, ου m thought, reasoning
 πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked
 φονος, ου m murder, killing
 μοιχεια, ας f adultery
 πορνεια, ας f sexual immorality
 κλοπη, ης f theft
 ψευδομαρτυρια, ας f false evidence or
 testimony
 βλασφημια, ας f slander, blasphemy

"Matthew proceeds to a series of offences arranged in the order in which they come in the Ten Commandments." Leon Morris. However, it is not immediately obvious why Matthew omits Mark's 'covetousness,' i.e., the tenth commandment. Transgression of God's commandments is what defiles a person.

Verse 20

ταῦτά ἐστιν τὰ κοινοῦντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὸ δὲ
 ἀνίπτους χερσὶν φαγεῖν οὐ κοινοῖ τὸν
 ἄνθρωπον.

ἀνιπτος, ον not washed according to ritual
 law

χειρ, χειρος f hand
 φαγεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐσθιω eat

"For the most part ceremonial defilement must have been accidental – people did not try to be defiled. But sins like those Jesus has just mentioned are done with serious intent or with loss of self-control. It is this kind of thing that really defiles... Jesus is drawing attention to the fact that wickedness takes its origin in our inmost being. He is warning his followers against letting their personal desires and lusts be the guide to their conduct." Leon Morris. "The true problem of sin is not to be found in a failure to perform correctly some external minutiae of human making; sin is an interior matter that concerns the evil thought, words and deeds that come from the heart. Moral righteousness is thus far more important than ritual purity. The fundamental problem of humanity is more basic than the Pharisees dreamed. The Pharisees simply failed to address sin as a radical human problem. The overcoming of sin, however, was essential to the purpose and work of Jesus (cf. 1:21; 26:28)." Hagner.

Verses 21-28

Cf. Mark 7:24-30. Note also the similarities between this story and that of the centurion's request in 8:5-13.

Verse 21

Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐκεῖθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς
 τὰ μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος.

ἐξελθων Verb, aor act ptc, nom m s
 ἐξερχομαι

ἐκεῖθεν from there

ἀναχωρεω withdraw, go away

Cf. the similar phrase in 14:13.

μερος, ους n part, piece, in part, partly

First time wholly out of Jewish territory.

Verse 22

καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ Χαναanaία ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρίων
 ἐκείνων ἐξελθοῦσα ἔκραζεν λέγουσα·
 Ἐλέησόν με, κύριε υἱὸς Δαυὶδ· ἡ θυγάτηρ μου
 κακῶς δαμονίζεται.

γυνη, αικος f woman

Χαναανιος, α, ον Canaanite

ὀριον, ου n territory, region,
 neighbourhood, vicinity

ἐκεῖνος, ἡ, ο demonstrative adj. that
 ἐξεληθοῦσα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s
 ἐξερχομαι
 κραζω cry out, call out

"That she *shouted* probably means that she was agitated and spoke in an excitable way, while the imperfect tense indicates that she kept shouting." Leon Morris.

ἐλεαω and ἐλεεω be merciful, show kindness

θυγατηρ, τρος f daughter
 κακος badly, severely

κακος probably here means more than 'badly'. It may mean "cruelly demon-possessed" (NASB) or "wickedly possessed." Leon Morris.

δαιμονιζομαι be possessed by demons

Verse 23

ὁ δὲ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῇ λόγον. καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἠρώτουν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· Ἀπόλυσον αὐτήν, ὅτι κράζει ὀπισθεν ἡμῶν.

ἀπεκρίθη Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
 ἀποκρινομαι answer, reply

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach
 ἐρωταω ask, request, beg, urge

ἀπόλυσον Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ἀπολυω
 send away, dismiss

May have implied "give her what she wants and send her off."

ὀπισθεν prep with gen behind, after

Verse 24

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Οὐκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραήλ.

ἀποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s
 ἀποκρινομαι

ἀπεσταλην Verb, aor pass indic, 1 s
 ἀποστελλω send, send out

εἰ μὴ except

προβατον, ου n sheep

ἀπολωλότα Verb, perf act ptc, n nom/acc pl
 ἀπολλυμι destroy, lose; perf ptc lost

οἶκος, ου m house, household, people

Cf. 10:5-6. "There are mysteries here that we cannot solve, but while Jesus came to make that atonement for sin which would mean salvation for people in every place throughout the whole wide world, he did not come to engage in a worldwide mission of healing or the like. His earthly mission was to the Israelites, here described as *lost sheep* ... Jesus is saying that his mission was to the ancient people of God, and the Gospels show us quite clearly that this was the way it worked out. His contacts with Gentiles were very few, and his preachers went out only to Israel (10:5-6)." Leon Morris.

Verse 25

ἡ δὲ ἐλθοῦσα προσεκύνει αὐτῷ λέγουσα· Κύριε, βοήθει μοι.

ἐλθοῦσα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s ἐρχομαι
 προσκυνεω worship, fall down and
 worship, fall at another's feet
 βοηθεω help

The only occurrence of this verb in Matthew's gospel.

Verse 26

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Οὐκ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις.

καλος, η, ον good, right, proper

λαβεῖν Verb, aor act infin λαμβανω

ἄρτος, ου m bread, food

τεκνον, ου n child

"points to the injustice if children are deprived of their food." Leon Morris.

βαλεῖν Verb, aor act infin βαλλω throw
 κυναριον, ου n house dog, dog

The diminutive form here denotes a house dog as opposed to a wild street dog.

Verse 27

ἡ δὲ εἶπεν· Ναί, κύριε, καὶ γὰρ τὰ κυνάρια
ἐσθίει ἀπὸ τῶν ψιγίων τῶν πιπτόντων ἀπὸ τῆς
τραπέζης τῶν κυρίων αὐτῶν.

"The Jews universally assumed that eschatological fulfilment belonged to Israel in an exclusive sense. Many also expected that the overflow of the abundant eschatological blessing of God would be made available to 'righteous' Gentiles (i.e., by keeping the Noachic laws [Gen 9:1-17 – particularly abstaining from blood, vv.4-6]). The woman seems to know of this widespread idea and thus that as a Gentile, though she has no right to the eschatological banquet itself, she might well be allowed to enjoy something of the overflow, here described in the image of 'the crumbs' (τῶν ψιγίων, a word occurring in the NT only here and in the Markan parallel) that fall from the table (cf. Luke 16:21) to the 'house dogs' (κυνάρια, again in the NT only in these verses and in the Markan parallel)." Hagner.

ναί yes, yes indeed, certainly
ἐσθίω and ἐσθώ eat, consume
ψιγίων, οὐ n small crumb, scap (of food)
πιπτῶ fall, fall down
τραπέζα, ἡς f table

Jesus' use of the term signifying 'house dog' gives the woman an opportunity both to agree with his statement but also to assert that such dogs also have a place in the household and are fed from its provision.

Verse 28

τότε ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ· ὦ γύναι,
μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις· γενηθήτω σοὶ ὡς θέλεις,
καὶ ἰάθη ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτῆς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας
ἐκείνης.

τοτε then, at that time
ὦ O!
γύναι Noun, voc s γυνή, αἰκος f
μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

"Only she and another Gentile, the Centurion of Capernaum [8:10], are praised publicly for their faith by Jesus." Hamann.
Great faith is not great passivity. Great faith argues its cause with God and prevails.

"What becomes clear ... from the present passage is a basic principle: that it is ultimately receptive faith and not physical Jewishness that determines the blessing of God. Paul maximised this truth as apostle to the Gentiles. The latter can receive the privilege of the Jews through faith (cf. esp. Rom 4; Gal 3). Accordingly, the privilege of the Jews is no longer unique but is to be enjoyed by all who respond in faith (cf. 21:43)." Hagner.

γενηθήτω Verb, aor pass dep imperat, 3 s

γινομαι

θελω wish, will

ἰαομαι heal, cure, restore

θυγάτηρ, τρος f see v.22

ώρα, ας f hour, moment, instant

ἐκεῖνος, ἡ, ο see v.22

"For him [Matthew] two things were important, the faith of the Canaanite woman and the immediacy of the cure of her daughter. As with another Gentile, the centurion whose slave was sick, there is healing at the request of another than the sufferer, healing at a distance, and a commendation of the Gentile's faith." Leon Morris.

"The eventual answering of the request of the Canaanite woman, as with the healing of the centurion's son (8:5-13), are exceptions in the ministry of Jesus that are at the same time anticipations of the ultimate goal of the mission of the Christ, which is to bring blessing to humankind universally." Hagner.