

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 26 – January 26th – Matthew 17:9-27

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

Verses 9-13

Cf. Mark 9:9-13. See also 11:10, 14 on John the Baptist as Elijah.

Verse 9

Καὶ καταβαινόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ ὄρους ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Μηδενὶ εἶπητε τὸ ὄραμα ἕως οὗ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθῆ.

καταβαινω come or go down, descend
ὄρος, οὐς n see v.1
ἐνετείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἐντελλομαι command, order
μηδεις, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing
εἶπητε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl λεγω

Moulton lists this use of the aorist imperative preceded by μη as one where the appropriate response would be "I will avoid doing so"; that is, the aorist means "Don't start" rather than "stop doing".

ὄραμα, τος n vision, sight, something seen
οὗ adv where; ἕως οὗ until
νεκρος, α, ον dead
ἐγερθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s ἐγειρω raise

"In this sense the transfiguration of Jesus was a foreshadowing of Jesus' glorious resurrection (cf. the appearance on the mountain in 28:16-20). When the resurrection became the centre of the early church's proclamation, then too the story of the transfiguration could be made known. But the disciples surely would have been hard pressed to comprehend at this point Jesus' intent (despite Matthew's omission of Mark 9:10)." Hagner.

Verse 10

καὶ ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες· Τί οὖν οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγουσιν ὅτι Ἠλίαν δεῖ ἐλθεῖν πρῶτον;

ἐπηρωτησαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl
ἐπερωταω ask, interrogate, question

Many MSS add αὐτου after μαθηται.

γραμματευσ, εως m scribe, expert in Jewish law
δεῖ impersonal verb it is necessary, must
ἐλθεῖν Verb, aor act infin ἐρχομαι
πρῶτον adv. first, first of all

Cf. Mal 4:5. The disciples still have fresh in their minds the vision of Elijah talking with Jesus. But now, as Jesus talks of his death and resurrection they are perplexed, they cannot fit together the prophecies and expectations concerning Elijah with what Jesus has now told them. Plummer conjectures further that the scribes may have used the absence of Elijah as an argument against Jesus' messiahship; they may have asked, "How can He be the Messiah, when Elijah, who is to precede the Messiah, is not yet come?"

Verse 11

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἠλίας μὲν ἔρχεται καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα·

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

"'Elijah indeed comes' where the present tense is used to refer to something that is past; it brings out the continuing validity of the prophecy." Leon Morris.

ἀποκαταστήσει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s
ἀποκαθιστημι reestablish, restore

"The verb ἀποκαταστήσει ... is drawn verbatim from the LXX of Mal 3:23, where, however, the object clause is 'the heart of the father to the son and the heart of a man to his neighbour' (the Hebrew of Mal 4:6 is only slightly different)." Hagner.

"The thought is apparently that sin has corrupted and ruined the creation, but Elijah's function is to usher in the events that will (through the atoning work of Jesus) restore the pristine blessedness." Morris. Hagner says that John's was "a preparatory work of repentance and renewal (as in the Malachi passage; see especially Luke 1:17 and cf. Sir 48:10)."

Verse 12

λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι Ἰησίας ἤδη ἦλθεν, καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτὸν ἀλλὰ ἐποίησαν ἐν αὐτῷ ὅσα ἠθέλησαν· οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μέλλει πάσχειν ὑπ' αὐτῶν.

ἤδη adv now, already

ἦλθεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἐρχομαι

ἐπιγινωσκω perceive, recognise

ὅσος, η, ον as much as, whatever

ἠθέλησαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl θελω
wish, will

οὕτως adv. formed from οὗτος thus

μελλω be going, be about, be destined

πάσχω suffer, experience

"There is glory on the mountain of transfiguration, but it is a glory that meant suffering for the Baptist and would mean suffering for Jesus." Morris.

Verse 13

τότε συνῆκαν οἱ μαθηταὶ ὅτι περὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς.

τοτε then, at that time

συνῆκαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl συνημι
understand, comprehend

"It is not easy for us to see how Jesus' words would convey to the disciples the information that he had been speaking of John the Baptist. Perhaps there had been no other religious figure of importance in recent times, at least among those known to the disciples, who had been mistreated in the way Jesus indicated. Or perhaps he said more than Matthew has recorded. Or the disciples may have recalled that Jesus had identified John with Elijah (11:14)." Morris.

Verses 14-21

Cf. Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.

Verse 14

Καὶ ἐλθόντων πρὸς τὸν ὄχλον προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἄνθρωπος γονυπετῶν αὐτὸν

ἐλθόντων Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl ἐρχομαι

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach

γονυπετεω kneel

Verse 15

καὶ λέγων· Κύριε, ἐλέησόν μου τὸν υἱόν, ὅτι σεληνιαζεται καὶ κακῶς πάσχει, πολλάκις γὰρ πίπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ καὶ πολλάκις εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ.

ἐλεαω and ἐλεεω be merciful, show
kindness

σεληνιαζομαι (lit be moonstruck, a
lunatic), be an epileptic

κακῶς badly, severely

πάσχω suffer, experience

A few MSS (κ B L Θ) read ἔχει rather than πασχει, reverting to the regular Greek idiomatic expression.

"Matthew often has κακῶς ἔχω (see on 4:24), but this expression occurs here only in the New Testament. It indicates not only that the ailment was severe but that the boy suffered a good deal." Leon Morris.

πολλακις often, repeatedly, frequently

πιπτω fall, fall down

πυρ, ος n fire

ὑδωρ, ὕδατος n water

Verse 16

καὶ προσήνεγκα αὐτὸν τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου, καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν αὐτὸν θεραπεῦσαι.

προσήνεγκα Verb, aor act indic, 1 s

προσφερω bring, bring before

ἠδυνήθησαν Verb, aor indic, 3 pl δυναμαι

can, be able to, be capable of

θεραπευω heal, cure

Verse 17

ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Ὡ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη, ἕως πότε μεθ' ὑμῶν ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; φέρετέ μοι αὐτὸν ὧδε.

ἀποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

ἀποκρινομαι answer, reply

ὦ O!

γενεα, ας f generation, age

ἄπιστος, ον unfaithful, unbelieving

διεστραμμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s

διαστρεφω pervert, turn away

Cf. Deut 32:5 – γενεα σκολια και διεστραμμενη LXX.

πότε interrog adv. when? (ἕως ποτε how long?)

ἔσομαι Verb, fut indic, 1 s εἰμι

ἀνεχομαι endure, be patient with

φερω bring, lead

ὧδε adv here, in this place

"Jesus' lament here is addressed not so much to the man, who after all seems to believe in Jesus' power ... or to the disciples, as it is to the unbelieving crowd that had become involved (note the repeated plural ὑμῶν ... and the plural verb φερετε ... and the 'privately' of v 19)... There is an undeniable frustration in Jesus' questions – a frustration over the breakdown of the dawning of the kingdom in his absence, reflected in the powerlessness of the disciples. They appear themselves to have been affected by the unbelief of the crowd, and they will receive their rebuke in v 20. But here the hardheartedness of the crowd is primarily in view, and Jesus asks how long he will have to be with them (cf. John 14:9) and 'put up' with them (ἀνεχεσθαι occurs in Matthew only here). The whole episode seems to have reminded Jesus of Israel's unbelief. There was no doubt some impatience in Jesus when he ordered φερετέ μοι αὐτὸν ὧδε ... cf. the command of 14:18)." Hagner.

Verse 18

καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ δαιμόνιον· καὶ ἐθεραπεύθη ὁ παῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης.

ἐπιτιμαω command, rebuke
 δαιμονιον, ου n demon, evil spirit
 ἐθεραπεύθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
 θεραπευω see v.16
 παις, παιδος m & f servant, child
 ὥρα, ας f hour, moment, instant
 ἐκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that

"The lack of delay stresses Jesus' mastery over demons and disease." Morris.

Verse 19

Τότε προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ κατ' ἴδιαν εἶπον· Διὰ τί ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό;

τοτε then, at that time
 προσερχομαι see v.14
 ἴδιος, α, ον one's own; κατ' ἴδιαν privately

"Reflecting their embarrassment over the episode." Hagner.

εἶπον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl λεγω
 ἠδυνήθημεν see v.16
 ἐκβαλλω throw out, expel, cast out

Verse 20

ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν ὑμῶν· ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν ἔχητε πίστιν ὡς κόκκον σινάπεως, ἐρεῖτε τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ· Μετάβα ἔνθεν ἐκεῖ, καὶ μεταβήσεται, καὶ οὐδὲν ἀδυνατήσει ὑμῖν.

ὀλιγοπιστια, ας f littleness of faith

This is the only occurrence in the New Testament of this noun, though the adjective occurs 4 times in Matthew and once in Luke. Many MSS read ἀπιστιαν rather than ὀλιγοπιστιαν, substituting the more common word.

It is not the *amount* of faith that is in question (as the following words make clear) but its *quality*.

ἐαν if, even if, though
 πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief
 κοκκος, ου m seed, grain
 σιναπι, εως n mustard

Cf. 13:31 "an expression that clearly had become proverbial for the smallest thing... It is not necessary to have great faith; even small faith is enough, as long as it is faith in the great God." Morris.

ἐρεῖτε Verb, fut act indic, 2 pl λεγω
 ὄρος, ους n mountain, hill
 μετάβα Verb, aor act imperat, 2s μεταβαινω
 leave, move, go, cross over
 ἐνθεν adv from here
 ἐκει there, in that place, to that place
 μεταβήσεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s
 μεταβαινω

Cf. 21:21 also 1 Cor 13:2. Morris says that "The moving of mountains was proverbial among the Jews for accomplishing something of great difficulty", and cites examples from rabbinic literature. He then adds, "Through the centuries pious souls have never been conspicuous for transferring physical objects such as literal mountains, but there are many instances on record where mountainous difficulties have been removed by the exercise of faith."

οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
 ἀδυναται impers it is impossible

"Consideration of the context leads to the conclusion that the clause 'nothing will be impossible' refers to the signs of the kingdom which the disciples in their office were commissioned to perform in chap. 10." Hagner.

Verse 21

Several of the oldest manuscripts and versions omit verse 21 (*This kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting*). Metzger comments, "Since there is no good reason why the passage, if originally present in Matthew, should have been omitted, and since copyists frequently inserted material derived from another Gospel, it appears that most manuscripts have been assimilated to the parallel in Mk 9:29."

Verses 22-23

Cf. Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43b-45.

Verse 22

Συστρεφόμενων δὲ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Μέλλει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοσθαι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, συστρεφῶ **gather, come together**

Many witnesses (C D L W Θ f¹³ TR sa^{mss} mae bo) have ἀναστρεφόμενων, 'living,' in place of the rare and more difficult συστρεφόμενων, 'gathering around (him)' (κ B f¹), which is to be preferred.

μελλῶ **be going, be about, be destined**
 παραδίδοσθαι **Verb, pres pass infin**
 παραδίδωμι **hand/give over, deliver up**

"Now for the first time the important word παραδίδοσθαι, 'to hand over, be betrayed,' is used in referring to Jesus' death (cf. 20:18-19); and especially chaps 26-27, where it occurs no less than fifteen times, underlining the fulfillment of the predictions; Acts 3:13; Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 11:23; cf. Rom 8:32, where God is said to hand over his own Son). Possibly there is also an intended allusion to the verb in the LXX of Isa 53:6, 12." Hagner.

χεῖρ, χεῖρος **f hand, power**

Verse 23

καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθήσεται. καὶ ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα.

ἀποκτενοῦσιν **Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl**
 ἀποκτείνω **kill, put to death**
 τρίτος, η, ον **third**
 ἐγείρω **raise**
 ἐλυπήθησαν **Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl λυπεῶ**
 pain, grieve; pass **be sad, sorrowful, grieve**
 σφόδρα **very much, greatly**

Verses 24-27

These verses are unique to Matthew.

Verse 24

Ἐλθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ προσήλθον οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες τῷ Πέτρῳ καὶ εἶπαν· Ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν οὐ τελεῖ τὰ δίδραχμα;

ἐλθόντων **Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl ἔρχομαι**
 προσήλθον **Verb, aor act indic, 1 s & 3 pl**
 προσερχομαι **come/go to, approach**
 δίδραχμον, ου **n two-drachma** (Greek coin with the approximate value of two denarii; annual Temple-tax, required of each Jew)
 διδάσκαλος, ου **m teacher**
 τελεῶ **finish; pay (taxes)**

A question expecting a positive answer. It amounts to a polite form of request for payment.

Verse 25

λέγει· Ναί. καὶ ἐλθόντα εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν προέφθασεν αὐτόν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Τί σοι δοκεῖ, Σίμων; οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τίνων λαμβάνουσιν τέλη ἢ κῆνσον; ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων;

ναί **yes, yes indeed, certainly**
 οἰκία, ας **f house, home**
 προφθάνω **come before**

Jesus took the initiative and spoke to Peter before he could raise the subject of the Temple tax ('forestalled him' REB).

δοκεῶ **think, suppose**
 βασιλευς, εως **m king**
 γῆ, γης **f earth**
 τέλος, ους **n conclusion; pl tax**

"τέλος means 'end', but it is also used, mostly in the plural, for customs duties, tolls levied for the passage of goods." Leon Morris.

ἢ **or**
 κηνος, ου **m tax**

"κηνος is a loanword from the Latin *census* and refers to a poll tax, the payment of tribute" Morris.

ἀλλοτριος, α, ον **belonging to another**

"Kings regularly tax their citizens, not their families." Morris.

Verse 26

εἰπόντος δέ· Ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων, ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἴρα γε ἐλευθεροί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοί.

εἰπόντος **Verb, aor act ptc, m gen s λεγῶ**

The unusual genitive absolute construction εἰποντος δε without the corresponding noun has given rise to a number of other readings. Many MSS, including TR, read λεγει αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος.

ἔφη **Verb, imperf act ind, 3s φημι say**
 γε **enclitic particle adding emphasis to the word with which it is associated**
 ἐλευθερος, α, ον **free, free person**

"Since Jesus was in a special sense the Son of God, he was exempt from taxes to be paid to the Temple of God, and by extension his close servants were exempt too." Morris.

Verse 27

ἵνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς, πορευθεὶς εἰς θάλασσαν βάλε ἄγκιστρον καὶ τὸν ἀναβάντα πρῶτον ἰχθὺν ἄρον, καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εὕρησεις στατήρα· ἐκεῖνον λαβὼν δὸς αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ ἐμοῦ καὶ σοῦ.

σκανδαλιζω cause (someone) to sin, cause offence

There is some controversy over the meaning of this verb here. "Most translators render it in some such way as 'lest we give offence to them.' But this verb has the idea of entrapment (see on 5:29). The thought is not that the tax collectors be offended but that they be tripped up, led into conduct that was sinful." Morris. Derrett suggests that, "Jesus saves the tax collectors from the sin of forcing him to pay when he need not."

However this verb is interpreted, it is evident that Jesus shows concern for the tax collectors – Green speaks of it as "pastoral concern".

πορευθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

πορευομαι go, proceed

θάλασσα, ης f sea

βάλλω throw, throw down, place

ἄγκιστρον, ου n fishhook

ἀναβάντα Verb, aor act ptc, m acc s

ἀναβαινω go up, come up

πρῶτον first, first of all

ἰχθυς, υος m fish

ἄρον Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s αἰρω take, take up

ἀνοίγω open

στόμα, τος n mouth

εὕρησεις Verb, fut act indic, 2 s εὕρισκω

στατήρ, ηρος m stater, four drachmas

"Derrett argues that the fish in mind would have been a catfish, which scavenges near landing places, is without scales, and thus is not to be eaten by Jews. It grows to a length of four feet or more. It has a large mouth and, according to Derrett, would be attracted to a bright disk, which when taken into the mouth 'might easily be caught in the framework of the hinder part of the mouth'." Morris.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that

λαβων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s λαμβανω

δὸς Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s δίδωμι

ἀντι prep with gen for, in place of

"Matthew does not tell us that Peter actually caught the fish in this way and paid the tax... Thus Melinsky thinks that Jesus' words to Peter "may have been a humorous way of saying 'Get on with your fishing and the tax will look after itself'." But if this is what Matthew meant, he has recorded it in a very strange way. It is better to understand him to mean that there would be a real coin in the mouth of a real fish." Morris. Hagner comments, "The fulfilment of Jesus' directions and their truthfulness are not recorded but left unassumed. Thus the miraculous provision is itself de-emphasised in favour of the underlying lessons."

Postscript to vv 24-27

"The issue of the pericope concerns not the paying of taxes to the state, i.e., the secular authorities (this issue comes up specifically in 22:15-22), but a specifically religious tax for the maintenance of the temple and its ritual, wherein atonement for sins was made possible. Given the present situation of the dawning of the kingdom of God in the ministry and person of Jesus, the paying of the temple tax was or would be, strictly speaking, no longer a necessity (cf. 12:6). That nearness is an inescapable aspect of this pericope, given the larger context of the Gospel. Those who participate in this new reality are the children of the king and thus need not pay the tax to support what will after all soon belong to the old order (cf. the prophecy of the destruction of the temple [24:1-2]). Yet for Jesus more important things are at hand, and there is no point to make an issue out of this, thereby offending the Jewish authorities. And so Jesus chooses *not* to exercise his and Peter's rightful freedom as the children of God not to pay the tax, thereby anticipating what would become a basic principle of Pauline practice and the practice of all knowledgeable and 'stronger' Christians: the avoidance of unnecessary offence of the 'weaker.' At bottom here is love and concern for others rather than the use of one's rightful freedom. The two aspects of the pericope – loyalty to the temple together with freedom from the law of the temple tax – would have been particularly appropriate for those grappling with issues of continuity and discontinuity and, of course, would have had important ramifications for relationships with the Jewish community." Hagner.