

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 27 – January 27th – Matthew 18:1-20

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

Chapter 18

Hagner says, "It seems clear that Matthew meant this discourse, like the other discourses, to be a practical guide to the Christian community." He offers the following structural analysis:

- i) Greatness in the Kingdom (vv 1-4)
- ii) Warning against causing others or allowing oneself to stumble (vv 5-9)
- iii) The Father's concern that no disciple perish (vv 10-14) (with supporting parable, vv 12-14)
- iv) Handling matters of church discipline (vv 15-20)
- v) The necessity of forgiveness (vv 21-35) (with supporting parable, vv 23-35)

Verse 1

Ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες· Τίς ἄρα μείζων ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν;

For verses 1-2 cf. Mark 9:34-35; Luke 9:46-47.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο see 17:27

ὥρα, ας f see 17:18

Filson draws attention to this link with what has immediately preceded and suggests that the question asked is, in effect, "if sons of the Kingdom are free and the full Kingdom will be so great a privilege, who will have top rank in it?"

προσῆλθον Verb, aor act indic, 1 s & 3 pl
προσερχομαι come/go to, approach
μείζων, ον and μείζοτερος, α, ον (comp of μεγας) greater, greatest

"The very fact that they asked that question showed that they had no idea at all what the Kingdom of Heaven was." Barclay.

Verse 2

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος παιδίον ἔστησεν αὐτὸ ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν

προσκαλεσάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m
nom s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself
παιδίον, ον n child, little child

"παιδίον is strictly diminutive, but the word is used of children generally. Here, however, the child must have been a small one; a big child would have obscured the point Jesus is making." Leon Morris.

ἔστησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἵστημι set, place, stand
μεσος, η, ον middle; ἐν μ., εἰς μ. in the middle, among

Verse 3

καὶ εἶπεν· Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ στραφῆτε καὶ γένησθε ὡς τὰ παιδιά, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Cf. Mark 10:15.

ἐὰν μὴ unless

στραφῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl στρεφω intrans (mostly in pass) turn, turn around; trans turn, change

Tasker objects to the translation "turn," maintaining that it is best to take στραφῆτε "as a strict passive, for the change that is necessary before a man becomes as a little child is not something that he can bring about by himself. It is in fact a new birth, which we are told in John 3:3-6 is supernatural." Morris.

γένησθε Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 pl γινομαι

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in

"He seems to be referring to the insignificance and unimportance of children as the ancient world saw them, perhaps also to qualities like trustfulness and dependence" Morris.

"From Jesus' point of view, the disciples were so fundamentally on the wrong track in their admiration of, and quest of, what *they* considered to be greatness that it was questionable whether they really understood the kingdom he proclaimed and, in particular, that its basis lay in God's free grace (cf. Mark 10:15). The status of the disciples before God was like that of dependent little children, and their corresponding attitude was to be a childlike humility, not pride of position or power (cf. 1 John 2:16-17)." Hagner.

Verse 4

ὅστις οὖν ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν ὡς τὸ παιδίον
τοῦτο, οὕτως ἔστιν ὁ μείζων ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ
τῶν οὐρανῶν·

ὅστις, ἥτις, ὁ τι who, whoever
ταπεινοῶ humble
ἑαυτοῦ, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

"In Western societies children are often seen as important, but in first century Judaism they were not." Morris.

μείζων, ον see v.1

"The kingdom of heaven is not like earthly kingdoms. In earthly kingdoms military might or earthly wealth is what counts. It is the ability to overthrow others or to outsmart them or to outbid them that matters. The person who asserts himself is the one who gets on. But Jesus' kingdom is quite different.

Paradoxically it is the person who is like the little child who is the greatest. Being in the kingdom does not mean entering a competition for the supreme place, but engaging in lowly service. True greatness consists not in receiving service but in giving it. The genuinely humble person is *the greatest*.

"We should not overlook the fact that this implies reliance on the love and grace of God. Jesus does not emphasize these qualities at this point, but they are implied. The little child can do nothing to bring about his status; all that the child is and has comes from someone else. Jesus' followers are not great achievers who carve out for themselves a niche (or a cave!) in the kingdom of heaven. For all that they have and all that they are depend on the heavenly Father." Morris.

Verses 5-9

Cf. Mark 9:45-50; Luke 17:1-2. Hagner argues that verse 5 marks the beginning of a new pericope rather than belonging with v 4.

Verse 5

καὶ ὃς ἐὰν δέξηται ἐν παιδίον τοιοῦτο ἐπὶ τῷ
ὀνόματί μου, ἐμὲ δέχεται.

ὃς ἐὰν / ὃς ἂν whoever
δέξεται Verb, aor act subj, 3 s δεχομαι
receive, accept, welcome

εἰς, μίᾳ, ἐν gen ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one, a

Hagner argues that this verse is not about children "but about welcoming the disciple of Jesus, who for the moment in this transitional verse is referred to as ἐν παιδίον τοιοῦτο ... the disciple who has become childlike." Cf. ἐνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων in vv 6, 10, 14.

τοιοῦτο Pronoun, n nom/acc s (variant form)
τοιούτος, αὐτη, οὐτον correlative pronoun
and adjective such, of such kind, similar,
like

"It is the habit of the world to serve the great and the popular, but for the follower of Jesus the priority must be to receive and welcome the world's little people." Morris.

ὄνομα, τος n name
ἐμὲ Pronoun, acc s ἐγώ

i.e. doing as Jesus would do, acting in accordance with his character.

Verse 6

Ὁς δ' ἂν σκανδαλίση ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων
τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, συμφέρει αὐτῷ ἵνα
κρεμασθῇ μύλος ὄνικος εἰς τὸν τραχήλον
αὐτοῦ καὶ καταποντισθῇ ἐν τῷ πελάγει τῆς
θαλάσσης.

σκανδαλίζω cause (someone) to sin, cause
(someone) to give up the faith
μικρός, α, ον little, small; of least
importance
πιστεῶ believe (in), have faith (in)

This phrase is probably intended to include all 'lowly believers' whether children or those who are older in years. Morris speaks of such as "God's little people"

συμφερῶ usually impersonal it is better
κρεμασθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s
κρεμάννυμι hang
μύλος, ου m mill; millstone (μ. ὄνικος large
millstone drawn by a donkey)
ὄνικος, η, ον of a donkey
τραχήλος, ου m neck
καταποντισθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s
καταποντιζομαι sink, be drowned
πελάγος, ους n depths (of the sea); sea,
open sea

Only here and Acts 27:5.

θαλασσα, ης f sea

Verse 7

οὐαὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἀπὸ τῶν σκανδάλων· ἀνάγκη
γὰρ ἔλθειν τὰ σκάνδαλα, πλὴν οὐαὶ τῷ
ἀνθρώπῳ δι' οὗ τὸ σκάνδαλον ἔρχεται.

οὐαὶ interj. woe! how horrible it will be!

"An expression of regret and compassion"
Leon Morris.

σκανδαλον, ου n that which causes sin/
offence, obstacle
ἀνάγκη, ης f necessity
ἔλθειν Verb, aor act infin ἔρχομαι
πλὴν conj. but, yet, nevertheless

Many MSS include ἐκεῖνῳ after ἀνθρώπῳ, cf. 26:24.

Verse 8

Εἰ δὲ ἡ χεὶρ σου ἢ ὁ πούς σου σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔκκοψον αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· καλὸν σοὶ ἐστὶν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωὴν κυλλὸν ἢ χωλόν, ἢ δύο χεῖρας ἢ δύο πόδας ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον.

On the following words, cf. 5:29-30.

χεῖρ, χεῖρος f hand, power

ἢ or

πούς, ποδός m foot

σκανδαλιζῶ see v.6

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

ἐκκοπτῶ cut off, remove

βαλλῶ throw

καλός, η, ον good, right, proper, fine

"An example of the positive used in the sense of the comparative." Morris.

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in

ζωή, ης f life

κυλλός, η, ον crippled

ἢ or, than

χωλός, η, ον lame, crippled

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δύοσιν two

βληθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin βαλλῶ

πῦρ, ος n fire

αἰώνιος, ον eternal, everlasting

"Eternal fire is, of course, used metaphorically in an expression that brings out the painfulness of the lost in their eternal lostness." Morris.

Verse 9

καὶ εἰ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔξελε αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· καλὸν σοὶ ἐστὶν μονόφθαλμον εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν, ἢ δύο ὀφθαλμούς ἔχοντα βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.

ἔξελε Verb, 2 aor act imperat ἐξαιρεῶ pull out

μονόφθαλμος, ον one-eyed

γεεννα, ης f hell

Verse 10

Ὁρᾶτε μὴ καταφρονήσητε ἑνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων, λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς διὰ παντός βλέπουσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.

ὄραω see; make sure, see to

καταφρονήσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl

καταφρονεῶ despise, treat with contempt, think nothing of

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνός, μιας, ἑνός one

οὐρανός, ον m heaven

διὰ παντός always

βλεπῶ see, look

πρόσωπον, ον n face

Morris discusses the difficulties surrounding these words and concludes, "We can say no more than that the passage looks like a reference to guardian angels but comes short of proof, and in any case we have no further information on who such angels are or what they do..." He suggests in any case that the phrase 'guardian angel' may be misleading. "The angels of which Jesus speaks do not 'guard' the little ones, but bring their situation before God. He is using picturesque language to bring out the truth that God in heaven is aware of the situation here on earth of even the lowliest of his people." Hagner comments, "The point here is not to speculate on the *ad hoc* role of angels in aiding disciples of Jesus but rather simply to emphasise the importance of the latter to God. If the very angels of God's presence are concerned with the 'little ones,' how much more then should also fellow Christians be for one another! They are to be received and esteemed; special care must furthermore be taken not to cause them to stumble."

Verse 11

On this verse Metzger comments, "There can be no doubt that the words ἤλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου σωσαὶ τὸ ἀπολωλός are spurious here, being omitted by the earliest witnesses representing several text types ... and manifestly borrowed from Luke 19:10."

Verses 12-14

Cf. Luke 15:3-7.

Verse 12

τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηται τινὶ ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ πλανηθῇ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἑννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον;

δοκεῶ think, suppose

ἐὰν if, even if, though

γένηται Verb, aor midd subj, 3 s γινομαι

ἑκατὸν one hundred

προβατόν, ον n sheep

πλανηθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s πλαναῶ lead astray

Cf. Ezek 34, esp 34:6.

οὐχὶ (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no; used in questions expecting an affirmative answer.

ἀφίημι leave, forsake

ἐνενηκόντα ninety

ἑννεα nine

ὄρος, ος n mountain, hill

πορευθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

πορευομαι go, proceed, travel

ζητεῶ seek, search for, look for

Present tense implies 'keep looking'

Verse 13

καὶ ἂν γένηται εὐρεῖν αὐτό, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν
ὅτι χαίρει ἐπ' αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς
ἐνενήκοντα ἑννέα τοῖς μὴ πεπλανημένοις.

γένηται see v.12

χαίρω rejoice, be glad

μᾶλλον adv more

ἢ see v.8

πεπλανημένοις Verb, perf pass ptc, m & n dat
pl πλαναω

Verse 14

οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ
πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν
τῶν μικρῶν τούτων.

οὕτως and οὕτω adv thus, in this way

θέλημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

ἔμπροσθεν before, in front of

A reverent form of expression, equivalent to
"God does not will."

Some MSS (B N Γ Θ f¹³ sy^{s,h} co) read μου in
place of ὑμῶν (so κ D [*ήμων] K L W Δ f¹ latt
sy^{c,p,hmg}), probably through the influence of v
10 (cf. v 35).

ἀπόληται Verb, aor midd subj ἀπολλυμι
destroy, lose; midd be lost, perish, die

"As the shepherd would not lose one sheep, so
it is the will of the Father that not one of these
little ones perish. If this is so, then the
demeanour of disciple to disciple in the
community is a matter of grave importance.
Human beings must not be allowed to overturn
the saving purpose of God. And thus a disciple
must esteem every other disciple in the same
way that God esteems them all." Hagner.

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Verse 15

Ἐὰν δὲ ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς σὲ ὁ ἀδελφός σου, ὑπάγε
ἔλεγξον αὐτὸν μετὰ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου.
ἐὰν σου ἀκούσῃ, ἐκέρδησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου.

Cf. Luke 17:3.

ἂν see v.12

ἀμαρτανω sin, commit sin

"There is a difficult textual problem as to
whether we should read *against you* or omit
the words. εἰς σε is read by MSS like D K L X
Δ Θ etc., but is omitted by κ B f1 etc. The
words may have been omitted by scribes who
wanted to make the passage apply to all sin, or
they may have dropped out by accident. But it
is also possible that they were not originally in
the text and were put in by scribes who wanted
something parallel to verse 21. Metzger's
committee enclosed the words within square
brackets, and most students would think that
fair enough. It is impossible to be sure of the
original reading." Leon Morris.

ὑπάγω go

ἔλεγξον Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ἐλεγχω
show (someone his) fault, rebuke

Try to get the person to see his sin for what it
is. "The meaning here is not to scold someone
or to abuse them verbally for their conduct but
rather to bring the offensive matter to their
attention in the hope that they will repent of
their actions and be restored to the community.
The same verb occurs in the LXX of Lev
19:17... It is also to be seen in passages
reflecting the practice of the church (e.g., 1
Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15; cf also Gal
6:1; Titus 3:10). This first stage is to be done
strictly in private, μετὰ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου
... so as to avoid spreading unnecessary
knowledge of the person's sin." Hagner. Cf.
also Jas 5:19-20.

μετὰ prep with gen between, among

μόνος, η, ον adj only, alone

ἐκέρδησας Verb, aor act indic, 2 s κερδαίνω
gain, win

"The offender is thus like the stray sheep of the
preceding passage, who must be brought back
to the fold." Hagner.

Verse 16

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ, παράλαβε μετὰ σοῦ ἔτι ἓνα
ἢ δύο, ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν
σταθῇ πᾶν ῥῆμα.

παράλαβε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s

παραλαμβάνω take

ἔτι still, yet, moreover

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two

στομα, τος n mouth, utterance

μαρτυς, μαρτυρος dat pl μαρτυσιν m
witness

τρεις, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three

σταθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s ἵστημι pass

stand, be established

ῥῆμα, ατος n word, thing, matter

Morris believes that there is a reference to Deut 19:15 which regulates evidence in a court of law but he makes the point, "Jesus is not, of course talking about a trial ... Jesus is saying that the church must not apply less stringent tests than the courts. It must not be slipshod."

Verse 17

ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν, εἰπὼν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ·
ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω
σοι ὡσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελῶνης.

παρακουῶ refuse to listen; pay no
attention to

Shows that the two or three are not simply to act as witnesses; their prime role is as helpers in winning back the brother. The same is true of the role of the church.

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church
ἔστω Verb, pres act imperat, 3s εἶμι
ὡσπερ as, even as, just as
ἐθνικός, η, ον pagan, heathen, Gentile
τελώνης, ου m tax collector

A figurative expression for those outside of the people of God.

Hagner writes, "At this point it is felt that enough opportunity for repentance has been given, and that if the person has failed to respond appropriately, the only course of action that remains is ostracism from the community... (The Pauline admonitions of 1 Cor 5:9-13 and 2 Thess 3:14-15 are similar in effect; cf. Titus 3:10.)" Hagner goes on to comment, "Excommunication or ostracism today has nowhere near the same effect as it did in the first century. That is, in Matthew's day to be cast out left one with no other options for Christian community. Today a person may simply walk down the street to the next church or next denomination. This is not to say that the church must give up on the possibility of church discipline but simply to say that the process will take on its own character appropriate to the present-day situation. It is also worth pointing out that the notion of an 'isolated, individual Christian' (e.g., a 'TV' Christian) was not then considered a possibility. The Christian is always to be accountable to a community."

Verse 18

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
ἔσται δεδεμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ὅσα ἐὰν λύσητε
ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔσται λελυμένα ἐν οὐρανῷ.

Cf. notes on 16:19.

"The [following] words are very similar to those in 16:19, except that there the verbs are in the singular since they are addressed to one individual, Peter, while here they are in the plural, embracing believers as a whole, the entire church. As we observed in the earlier passage, the probability is that we should understand the 'binding' and 'loosing' as declaring forbidden or permitted. That would certainly fit this context, where the church in the last resort has to say whether what the offender has done is forbidden to the Christian or whether it is permitted." Morris continues by drawing attention to the perfect tenses and says, "Jesus is not giving the church the right to make decisions that will then become binding on God. Such a thought is alien from anything in his teaching. He is saying that as the church is responsive to the guidance of God it will come to the decisions that have already been made in heaven." The verse underlines the power and vitality of the corporate life of the people of God – in contrast to modern individualism.

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as,
how much; ὅσος ἂν, ὅσος ἐάν whoever,
whatever

δήσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl δεῶ bind,
tie

γῆ, γῆς f earth

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

δεδεμένα Verb, perf pass ptc, n nom/acc pl
δεῶ

λυῶ loose, untie, allow

Verse 19

Πάλιν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν δύο
συμφωνήσωσιν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς περὶ
παντὸς πράγματος οὗ ἐὰν αἰτήσωνται,
γενήσεται αὐτοῖς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν
οὐρανοῖς.

παλιν again, once more

συμφωνεῶ agree with, be in agreement
with, agree

πράγμα, τος n matter, thing, event, deed

ὅς ἐάν whoever, whatever

αἰτήσωνται Verb, aor midd subj, 3 pl αἰτεῶ
ask; midd ask for oneself, request

Morris believes that a new subject, namely that of prayer is being dealt with. However, he states that "This is disputed by J D M Derrett ... He points out that the context deals with offences, not prayer, and argues that the 'two or three' are arbitrators, one from each of the opponents in the dispute and the third from the church if the two could not resolve the dispute." Morris rejects this view stating, "there is nothing to indicate that the passage refers to a judicial dispute. The verb 'ask' is often used of asking in prayer (7:7-11; 21:22 etc.)" Hagner also disagrees with Derrett saying, "In instances of discipline, the community leaders will 'ask' (αἰτησονται) for guidance; where two (δύο; cf. v 16) are agreed (συμφωνησωσιν; the verb occurs again in Matthew only in 20:2, 13), they can be assured of God's guidance in their decisions."

παρα preposition with gen from

"Prayer is effective, not because of the power of the number of praying people, but because the answer is given by 'my Father who is in heaven' Prayer is offered to a mighty God, one who commonly does his greatest works on earth in response to the prayers of his humble people." Morris.

Verse 20

οὗ γάρ εἰσιν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἔμδον ὄνομα, ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.

γάρ introduces the reason

οὗ adv where

συνηγμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl

συναγω gather, gather together

ἔμδς, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

ὄνομα, τος n name

ἐκεῖ there, in that place

μεσος, η, ον middle; ἐν μ., εἰς μ. in the middle, among

"This presence of Jesus should not be understood as a metaphor (as in the case of Paul's statement in 1 Cor 5:4) but is the literal presence of the resurrected Christ, in keeping with the promise to be articulated in 28:20 (cf. 1:23b). The community founded by Jesus (16:18) is assured that he will be present in that community until the close of the age." Hagner.