

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 30 – January 30th – Matthew 20:1-28

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 20:1-8

On this parable in its context, Carr comments "Not only would the disciples not be the only ones called, but they may not reach a higher place or a higher reward than some who follow them at apparent disadvantage... [Furthermore] they must beware of a spirit very prevalent among hard workers, and not think too much of their own labours, or be displeased because others are equally rewarded." Leon Morris.

Verse 1

Ὅμοια γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότῃ ὅστις ἐξῆλθεν ἅμα πρωὶ μισθῶσασθαι ἐργάτας εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ.

ὅμοιος, α, ον like, of the same kind as

Cf. Matt 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47.

οἰκοδεσποτης, ου m householder, landowner, master

ὅστις, ἡτις, ὅ τι who, which

ἅμα adv. at the same time, together

πρωι adv early morning, in the early morning

Moule remarks that ἅμα πρωι "makes ἅμα practically equivalent to a preposition and πρωι practically equivalent to a noun." He understands the meaning to be "at dawn".

μισθῶσασθαι Verb, aor midd dep

infin μισθοομαι hire

ἐργατης, ου m labourer, workman

ἀμπελων, ωνος m vineyard

When the grapes were ripe, many hands would be required for the harvesting. The day labourers used were viewed as the lowest class in society, only a little above a slave. "They depended for their livelihood on being hired each day." Morris. The vineyard of God is a frequent OT symbol for Israel; cf. Isa 5:1-7; Jer 12:10.

Verse 2

συμφωνήσας δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐργατῶν ἐκ δηναρίου τὴν ἡμέραν ἀπέστειλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ.

συμφωνήσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

συμφωνεω agree with

δηναριον, ου n denarius

The normal daily wage (equivalent to a drachma).

ἀπέστειλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

ἀποστελλω send, send out

Verse 3

καὶ ἐξελθὼν περὶ τρίτην ὥραν εἶδεν ἄλλους ἐστῶτας ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ ἀργούς·

ἐξελθων Verb, aor act ptc, nom m s

ἐξερχομαι

τριτος, η, ον third

ώρα, ας f hour, period of time

The day, from sunrise to sunset, was divided into twelve 'hours', the duration of which varied with the length of a day. This would be about 9.00 am.

εἶδεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὄραω see, observe

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

ἐστῶτας Verb, perf act ptc, m acc pl ἵστημι stand

ἀγορα, ας f market place

ἀργος, η, ον idle, unemployed

We are not told why they remained 'idle' in the marketplace and so should not draw any conclusions. The reason for them not yet having been hired is not material to the parable.

Verse 4

καὶ ἐκεῖνοις εἶπεν· Ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν ᾗ δίκαιον δώσω ὑμῖν·

ἐκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those

ὑπαγω go

ὅς ἐαν whoever, whatever

ᾗ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just

δώσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s διδομι

"There is no suggestion that they haggled; they apparently simply wanted a job and agreed to work for whatever was right. Barclay remarks, 'A man is not a Christian if his first concern is pay. That is what Peter asked: "What do we get out of it?" The Christian works for the joy of working and the joy of serving God and his fellow-man. That is why the first will be last and the last will be first.'" Morris.

Verse 5

οἱ δὲ ἀπῆλθον. πάλιν ἐξελθὼν περὶ ἕκτην καὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν ἐποίησεν ὡσαύτως.

ἀπῆλθον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl

ἀπερχομαι

παλιν again, once more

ἕκτος, η, ον sixth

ἐνατος, η, ον ninth

At noon and at three in the afternoon.

ὡσαύτως adv in the same way, likewise

Verse 6

περὶ δὲ τὴν ἑνδεκάτην ἐξελθὼν εὗρεν ἄλλους ἐστῶτας, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί ὧδε ἐστήκατε ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἀργοί;

ἑνδεκατος, η, ον eleventh

I.e. about five in the afternoon. This may indicate he wished to complete his grape harvest that day.

ὧδε adv here, in this place

ἐστήκατε Verb, perf act indic, 2 pl ἵστημι

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete, entire

ἀργος, η, ον see v.3

Verse 7

λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· Ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς ἐμισθώσατο. λέγει αὐτοῖς· Ὑπάγετε καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν ἀμπελῶνα.

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμία, οὐδεν no one, nothing

ἐμισθώσατο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s

μισθοομαι see v.1

"Jesus does not explain how they had come to miss the householder with his continuing offers of work, but the point of the story is not that. It is rather that right up to the eleventh hour the man was ready to take on workmen and that at that very time he sent those he found back into the vineyard." Morris.

Hagner comments, "The purpose of this insertion, which breaks the pattern of the previous hirings, is apparently to underline the fact that these are the ones rejected by other employers as unworthy. These 'last' ones assume particular importance in the second half of the parable (cf. vv 8–9, 12, 14, 16). They are analogous to the tax collectors and the harlots invited into the kingdom by Jesus (see esp. 21:31). To these workers, regarded as undesirable by others, the master gives the invitation 'even you [καὶ ὑμεῖς] go into the vineyard' – the same invitation given to the earlier groups."

Verse 8

ὄψιας δὲ γενομένης λέγει ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος τῷ ἐπιτρόπῳ αὐτοῦ· Κάλεσον τοὺς ἐργάτας καὶ ἀπόδος αὐτοῖς τὸν μισθὸν ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῶν ἐσχάτων ἕως τῶν πρώτων.

ὄψια, ας f evening

ἐπιτροπος, ου m steward, foreman

"The man who had responsibility of looking after the day-to-day business of running the vineyard (and possibly other affairs of the owner)." Morris.

ἀπόδος Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s ἀποδίδωμι

give, pay

μισθος, ου m pay, wages

In compliance with Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15.

ἀρξάμενος Verb, aor midd ptc, m nom s

ἀρχω midd begin

ἐσχάτος, η, ον adj last, final

πρωτος, η, ον first

Verse 9

καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ περὶ τὴν ἑνδεκάτην ὥραν ἔλαβον ἀνὰ δηνάριον.

ἑνδεκατος, η, ον see v.6

ἀνα prep used distributively with acc. each, each one

Kistemaker makes the point that the labourers were paid not in accordance with the hours that they had worked but in accordance with their need. Part of a denarius would not have been sufficient for them to provide for themselves and their families.

Verse 10

καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ πρῶτοι ἐνόμισαν ὅτι πλεῖον λήμψονται· καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ ἀνά δηνάριον καὶ αὐτοί.

πρωτος, η, ον see v.8

νομιζω think, suppose, assume

πλειων, πλειον or πλεον more

λήμψονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl

λαμβάνω

Verse 11

λαβόντες δὲ ἐγόγγυζον κατὰ τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότου

γογγυζω grumble, complain, mutter

The imperfect denotes a continuing grumbling.

οικοδεσποτης, ου m see v.1

Verse 12

λέγοντες· Οὗτοι οἱ ἔσχατοι μίαν ὥραν ἐποίησαν, καὶ ἴσους αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν ἐποίησας τοῖς βαστάσασι τὸ βάρος τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὸν καύσωνα.

ἔσχατος, η, ον see v.8

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

ἴσος, η, ον equal, the same

βαστάσασι Verb, aor act ptc, dat pl βασταζω

carry, bear, endure

βαρος, ους n burden, weight

καυσων, ωνος m (scorching) heat

"The thrust of the complaint is ... twofold: the labourers did very little work, and what they did they did under the best conditions in the cool of the day... It wasn't fair." Leon Morris. Hagner comments, "Should not they who had worked so long and hard have been paid more than the latecomers (who in any case, not having been hired by others, were not as worthy)? The parable resembles that of the prodigal son and the reaction of the elder brother."

Verse 13

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς ἐνὶ αὐτῶν εἶπεν· Ἐταῖρε, οὐκ ἀδικῶ σε· οὐχὶ δηναρίου συνεφώνησάς μοι;

ἀποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

ἀποκρινομαι answer, reply, say

ἔταιρος, ου m friend, companion

ἀδικεω wrong, treat unjustly, harm

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

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

συμφωνεω see v.2

"Their discontent was due to envy, not to the overlooking of any of their rights." Morris.

Verse 14

ἄρον τὸ σὸν καὶ ὑπαγε· θέλω δὲ τούτῳ τῷ ἐσχάτῳ δοῦναι ὡς καὶ σοί·

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

σος, ση, σον possessive adj. your, yours

ὑπαγω go, go one's way

θελω wish, will

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin δίδωμι

"θέλω points to the action of the will; this is what the man has set himself to do. And he says he wants *to give* (δοῦναι), not 'to pay'." Morris. Hagner comments, "There is a distinct note of grace ... in this second statement."

Verse 15

οὐκ ἔξεστίν μοι ὃ θέλω ποιῆσαι ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς;

ἢ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου πονηρὸς ἐστίν ὅτι ἐγὼ

ἀγαθὸς εἰμι;

ἢ or, than

B D L Z Θ sy^{s,c} omit ἢ. Favouring its inclusion are κ C W f^{1,13} TR lat sy^{ph} co. The word could have been accidentally dropped because of the similar sounding σοι just ahead of it (itacism).

ἔξεστιν impersonal verb it is permitted, it is lawful, it is proper

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω

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

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

On this use of 'eye' cf. 6:22-23.

ἀγαθος, η, ον good

The parable is about the *goodness* of God.

Verse 16

οὕτως ἔσονται οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι.

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way

ἔσονται Verb, fut indic, 3 pl εἰμι

Many MSS (C D W Θ f^{1,13} TR latt sy mae bo^{pl}) add πολλοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν κλητοὶ, ὀλιγοὶ δὲ ἐκλεκτοί, 'for many are called, but few are chosen,' words found verbatim in 22:14. The words, which are lacking in κ B L Z sa bo^{pl}, could accidentally have dropped out through homoioteleuton (ἔσχατοι – ἐκλεκτοί), but in the opinion of the UBSGNT committee were more probably added later.

"Because God acts in grace and we so easily think in terms of merit, there will be many surprises for us all in the end when God's will is seen in its final working out. Human rankings will avail nothing at that time, and there will be those we have made *last* who will be *first*." Morris.

Hagner comments, "Although nothing in the context suggests this ... Matthew's church possibly identified those who worked the whole day with Israel and those who came last with the Gentiles, thus understanding the parable to signify the equality of gentile Christians with Jewish Christians."

Verses 17-19

Cf. Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.
This is the fourth time Jesus speaks to the disciples concerning his death (cf. 16:21; 17:12, 22-23 also 10:38).

Verse 17

Καὶ ἀναβαίνων ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα
παρέλαβεν τοὺς δώδεκα μαθητάς κατ' ἰδίαν,
καὶ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·

ἀναβαινω go up, come up
παρέλαβεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s
παραλαμβάνω take
δώδεκα twelve

Some MSS (κ D L Θ J^{d,13} sy^{s,c} bo) omit μαθητάς perhaps through assimilation to the synoptic parallels (Mark 10:32; Luke 18:31). On the other hand, μαθηταί is often added by scribes to the simple οἱ δώδεκα. The text with μαθητάς is witnessed to by B C W TR lat sy^h sa^{mss} mae.

ἰδιος, α, ον one's own; κατ' ἰδίαν privately
ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

Many others would have been travelling up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Verse 18

Ἴδου ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς
τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδοθήσεται τοῖς
ἀρχιερεῦσιν καὶ γραμματεῦσιν, καὶ
κατακρινούσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ,

παραδοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s
παραδίδωμι hand/give over, deliver up
ἀρχιερεὺς, εως m high priest, member of
high priestly family
γραμματεὺς, εως m scribe
κατακρινω condemn
θανάτος, ου m death

Verse 19

καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εἰς τὸ
ἐμπαῖζειν καὶ μαστιγῶσαι καὶ σταυρῶσαι, καὶ
τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθήσεται.

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation,
people; τα ἔ. Gentiles
ἐμπαίζω ridicule, make fun of
μαστιγῶω beat with a whip
σταυροῶ crucify

"Matthew is the only one of the Evangelists who tells us that Jesus specifically prophesied that he would be crucified. This was a form of death normally reserved for slaves, criminals, and other despised people (a Roman citizen was not crucified)." Leon Morris.

τρίτος, η, ον third

Cf. 12:40.

ἐγειρω raise

Verses 20-28

Cf. Mark 10:35-45.

Verse 20

Τότε προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ἡ μήτηρ τῶν υἱῶν
Ζεβεδαίου μετὰ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτῆς προσκυνούσα
καὶ αἰτοῦσά τι παρ' αὐτοῦ.

τοτε then, at that time
προσερχομαι come or go to, approach
προσκυνεω worship, fall at another's feet
αἰτεω ask, request

Morris says of this woman, "She may have been the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, in which case she would probably have been arguing the claims of family." He adds the following explanation in a footnote, "At the crucifixion Matthew mentions Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons (27:56). Mark has Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome (Mk 15:40). John has the mother of Jesus, her sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). A comparison of Matthew and Mark makes it likely that the mother of Zebedee's sons was called Salome, and John's account makes it seem that this lady was the sister of Jesus' mother. If this is the way the passage should be understood, James and John would be cousins of Jesus. J.A.T. Robinson says, 'This cannot be more than a hypothesis,' but that it is supported by the fact that on the cross Jesus committed Mary to the care of the Beloved Disciple."

Verse 21

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Τί θέλεις; λέγει αὐτῷ· Εἰπέ
ἵνα καθίσωσιν οὗτοι οἱ δύο υἱοὶ μου εἷς ἐκ
δεξιῶν σου καὶ εἷς ἐξ εὐωνύμων σου ἐν τῇ
βασιλείᾳ σου.

θελω wish, will
καθίσωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl καθίζω sit
down, sit, take one's seat
δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two
εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
δεξιός, α, ον right
εὐωνυμός, ον left (hand side)

"We must deplore the self-seeking implicit in their desire to get the chief places for themselves, but at the same time we should appreciate their deep conviction that in the end Jesus would certainly establish his kingdom." Morris.

Verse 22

ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· Οὐκ οἶδατε τί αἰτεῖσθε· δύνασθε πιεῖν τὸ ποτήριον ὃ ἐγὼ μέλλω πίνειν; λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· Δυνάμεθα.

ἀποκριθεὶς see v.13

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

αἰτεῶ see v.20

δυναμαί can, be able to, be capable of

πιεῖν Verb, aor act infin πινῶ drink

ποτήριον, οὐ n cup

μέλλω (before an infin) be going, be about, be destined

"Cup is used in the Old Testament with association of suffering and sometimes of the wrath of God (e.g. Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17,22; Jer 25:15-16). All four Gospels use the term when they are recording what Jesus said of his sufferings in Gethsemane and at the time of his arrest (26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42; Jn 18:11)." Leon Morris.

Many MSS (C W TR sy^h bo^{pt}) add ἡ το βαπτισμα ὃ ἐγὼ βαπτίζομαι βαπτισθῆναι (and add a similar phrase after πιεσθε in the following verse), through the influence of the parallel in Mark 10:38.

The answer of James and John demonstrates their lack of understanding.

Verse 23

λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τὸ μὲν ποτήριόν μου πιεσθε, τὸ δὲ καθίσει ἐκ δεξιῶν μου καὶ ἐξ εὐωνύμων οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι, ἀλλ' οἷς ἠτοίμασται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου.

πιεσθε Verb, fut midd dep indic, 2 pl πινῶ

"Jesus responds with what amounts to a prophecy that the brothers will suffer and/or be martyred for their association with him: they will drink his cup. The martyrdom of James is recorded in Acts 12:2; for the suffering of John, who was apparently not a martyr; cf. John 21:20–23." Hagner.

καθίζω see v.21

ἐμός, ἡ, οὐ 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin διδῶμι

ἠτοίμασται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s

ἔτοιμαζω prepare, make ready

Verse 24

Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ δέκα ἠγανάκτησαν περὶ τῶν δύο ἀδελφῶν.

δέκα ten

ἀγανακτεῶ be indignant, be angry

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δυσὶν two

"Probably what bothered them was not so much the impropriety of the request but rather that the two had made an attempt to gain for themselves alone the highest places in the eschatological kingdom. Thus Jesus calls together not just the two but all the disciples to give them further teaching on this subject." Hagner.

Verse 25

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς εἶπεν· Οἶδατε ὅτι οἱ ἄρχοντες τῶν ἐθνῶν κατακυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ μεγάλοι κατεξουσιάζουσιν αὐτῶν.

προσκαλεσάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself, summon

ἄρχων, οντος m ruler, official

ἔθνος, ους n nation; τα ἐ. Gentiles

Here, nations generally.

κατακυριεῦω have power over; try to show one's authority over

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great

κατεξουσιαζω rule over

Verse 26

οὐχ οὕτως ἔσται ἐν ὑμῖν· ἀλλ' ὅς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν μέγας γενέσθαι ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος,

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἰμι

The future tense carries the force of a command.

ὅς ἂν / ὅς ἔαν whoever

θελω wish, will

διακονος, ου m & f servant, minister

Verse 27

καὶ ὅς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος ἔσται ὑμῶν δοῦλος·

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἰμι

πρῶτος, η, ον first, leading

δουλος, ου m slave, servant

"This does not, of course, mean that among the followers of Christ there are to be no leaders, none in high places. It means that those who take the lead among them are to be humble, people seeking not personal success but the opportunity of doing lowly service." Morris.

Greatness in Jesus' kingdom is defined in a manner very different from that found in the kingdoms of this world – it is modelled on Christ himself, v 28.

Verse 28

ὡςπερ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἤλθεν
διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν
ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

ὡςπερ as, even as, just as

διακονηθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin διακονεω
serve, wait on

Cf. Phil 2:7.

δοῦναι verb, aor act infin δίδωμι

ψυχῆ, ης f self, life, 'soul'

λύτρον, ου n means of release, means of
redeeming

"The word *ransom* took its origin from the practices of warfare, where it was the price paid to buy a prisoner of war out of his captivity. It was used of sacred manumission of slaves, a process wherein the slave went through the solemn rigmarole of being sold to a god 'for freedom.' In effect that meant that, while the slave technically belonged to the god, as far as people were concerned he or she was free. This forms a vital illustration of one aspect of Christ's saving work. Sinners have been slaves of sin (Jn 8:34), and they cannot break free. But Christ has paid their ransom price, and now they are free indeed." Morris.

ἀντὶ prep with gen for, in place of

"Robertson says that this passage and Mark 10:45 'teach the substitutionary conception of Christ's death, not because ἀντὶ of itself means 'instead,' which is not true, but because the context renders any other resultant idea out of question.' ... Many commentators assert that 'many' here is equivalent to 'all,' but the absence of the article is perhaps against this." Morris. Hagner thinks that the language here (including 'many') echoes Isaiah 53:10-12.