

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 32 – February 1st – Matthew 21:23-46

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 23-27

Cf. Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8.

Verse 23

Καὶ ἐλθόντος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσήλθον αὐτῷ διδάσκοντι οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ λέγοντες· Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς; καὶ τίς σοι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην;

ἱερὸν, ου n see v.12

προσήλθον see v.14

διδάσκοντι Verb, pres act ptc, m dat s

διδασκω teach

"No reference is given to the content of the teaching of Jesus at this point, but it would be a fair assumption that he was again proclaiming the dawn of the kingdom of God (cf. εὐαγγελιζομένου ... in Luke 20:1)."

ἀρχιερεῖς, εως m see v.15

πρεσβυτερος, α, ου elder

λαος, ου m people, a people

I.e. representatives of the Sanhedrin. Cf. 26:3, 47; 27:1, 3, 12, 20.

ποιος, α, ου what, of what kind

ἐξουσια, ας f authority, right, power

'These things' would probably include the triumphant entry, Jesus' driving out of the traders and his healing and teaching in the temple.

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδωμι

"It was a day when originality was not highly prized. In the rabbinic schools it was necessary to cite some previous rabbi if one wished to obtain a hearing. Authority was always clothed with some external justification for him to do this. He had no authority that they could discern, and they were the people who authorised teachers. So they asked him for his credentials." Leon Morris. Cf. Acts 4:7.

Verse 24

ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Ἐρωτήσω ὑμᾶς καγὼ λόγον ἓνα, ὃν ἐὰν εἴπητέ μοι καγὼ ὑμῖν ἐρῶ ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ·

ἀποκριθεὶς see v.21

ἐρωταω ask, request

καγὼ a compound word = καὶ ἐγώ

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, a

ἐὰν if

εἴπητέ Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl λεγω

ἐρῶ Verb, fut act indic, 1 s λεγω

To answer with another question was typical of Rabbinic debate. It was not necessarily a means of avoiding the issue but could be an attempt to extract the right answer. "This was not a red herring to lead them away from their question, for if they had answered it honestly they would have had the answer to their own since John had borne witness to Jesus." Morris.

Verse 25

τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου πόθεν ἦν; ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων; οἱ δὲ διελογίζοντο ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λέγοντες· Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν· Ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, ἐρεῖ ἡμῖν· Διὰ τί οὖν οὐκ ἐπιστεῦσατε αὐτῷ;

ποθεν interrog adv. from where

οὐρανος, ου m heaven

ἢ οἱ

διαλογιζομαι discuss, consider, reason

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

"Their reasoning covers the consequences of each of the possible answers, and they give no attention whatever to the actual source of John's baptism." Morris.

εἴπωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl λεγω

ἐρεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s λεγω

πιστεω see v.22

Verse 26

ἐὰν δὲ εἴπωμεν· Ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, φοβούμεθα τὸν ὄχλον, πάντες γὰρ ὡς προφήτην ἔχουσιν τὸν Ἰωάννην.

φοβεομαι fear, be afraid (of)

ὄχλος, ου m crowd, multitude

Verse 27

καὶ ἀποκριθέντες τῷ Ἰησοῦ εἶπαν· Οὐκ οἶδαμεν. ἔφη αὐτοῖς καὶ αὐτός· Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ.

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

"It was not that they were ignorant of what was involved, nor that they did not have a strong opinion of their own about John. It was that neither answer was practical politics. Jesus had challenged them and they had declined the challenge." Morris.

"Actually this is no escape from their dilemma, for they thereby confess incompetence to judge one who except for Jesus had been the most prominent preacher of their day. If they cannot tell whether God was at work in John the Baptist, they are not competent to question and judge Jesus." Filson.

ἔφη Verb, imperf act ind, 3s φημι say

Verses 28-32

This parable of the two sons is unique to Matthew. It is the first in a series of three parables about Jesus' rejection by those who ought to receive him.

Verse 28

Τί δὲ ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἄνθρωπος εἶχεν τέκνα δύο. προσελθὼν τῷ πρώτῳ εἶπεν· Τέκνον, ὕπαγε σήμερον ἐργάζου ἐν τῷ ἀμπελῶνι.

δοκεῶ think, suppose

εἶχεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s ἔχω

τεκνον, ου n child

Cf. Luke 15:11-32.

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach

πρωτος, η, ον first

ὕπαγω go, depart

σημερον today

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

ἀμπελων, ονος m vineyard

Verses 29-31

Verses 29-31 are marked by some peculiar textual variants. Manuscripts fall into three basic categories:

- i) The first son says 'No' but later repents. When asked who did the will of the father, the answer given is 'the first'.
- ii) The first son says 'No' but later repents. When asked who did the will of the father, the answer given is 'the last'.

iii) The first son says 'Yes' but then does nothing, the second says 'No' but later repents. When asked who did the will of the father, the answer given is 'the second' (or some variant such as 'last').

Some critics favour the second reading because it does not make sense and explains the origin of the others. Westcott and Hort suggest that a primitive error is responsible for the second of the above and that this then gave rise to the variants. Metzger prefers the first reading while Nestle prefers the third.

Verse 29

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Οὐ θέλω· ὕστερον δὲ μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπήλθεν.

ἀποκριθεὶς see v.21

θέλω wish, will

ὕστερον afterwards, later

μεταμεληθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s μεταμελομαι change one's mind

Can also bear the sense 'repent.'

Verse 30

προσελθὼν δὲ τῷ δευτέρῳ εἶπεν ὡσαύτως· ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἐγὼ, κύριε· καὶ οὐκ ἀπήλθεν.

ἕτερος, α, ον other

ὡσαυτως adv in the same way, likewise

ἐγὼ is short for ἰδου ἐγὼ, 'Here I am.'

Verse 31

τίς ἐκ τῶν δύο ἐποίησεν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς; λέγουσιν· Ὁ πρῶτος. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρνηαι προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

θέλημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

τελωνης, ου m tax collector

πορνη, ης f prostitute

προαγω go before or ahead of

"The conventionally religious who cause no scandal and go through the outward motions of religious observances can fail to respond to the demand for wholehearted repentance and complete dedication to the service of God that Jesus demanded." Leon Morris.

"The contrast noted here between the receptivity of sinners and the hardheartedness of the Jewish religious leadership in relation to the message of Jesus is a common motif in the Gospel tradition (cf. 9:10-13; Luke 7:29-30, 35-50; 18:9-14; John 7:48). The connection between John the Baptist and Jesus is such that those who reject John also reject Jesus." Hagner.

Verse 32

ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ὁδῷ
δικαιοσύνης, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ· οἱ δὲ
τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρνοι ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῷ· ὑμεῖς
δὲ ἰδόντες οὐδὲ μετεμελήθητε ὕστερον τοῦ
πιστεῦσαι αὐτῷ.

ὁδος, ου f way, path

δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness

πιστευω see v.22

ιδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὄρω
see, observe

The change in the lives of these people was evident – it could be seen.

μετεμελήθητε Verb, aor pass dep indic, 2 pl

μεταμελομαι see v.29

ὕστερον see v.29

"Doing the will of the Father, for Jesus, is more than simply a matter of words; it is always a matter of deeds (cf. esp. 7:21-27; 25:31-46)." Hagner.

Verses 33-46

Cf. Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19. Green comments on the different emphases of Mark and Matthew: "For Mark the point of the parable is not that the vineyard was unfruitful but that the tenants were wicked and killed the owner's son. For Matthew it is rather that those who originally worked the vineyard did not produce the fruit expected of them no matter who came to demand it, and therefore it must be handed over to those who will. As usual, Mark's interest is Christological, Matthew's is ecclesiological."

Verse 33

Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἀκούσατε. Ἄνθρωπος ἦν
οἰκοδεσπότης ὅστις ἐφύτευσεν ἀμπελῶνα καὶ
φραγμὸν αὐτῷ περιέθηκεν καὶ ὄρυξεν ἐν αὐτῷ
ληνὸν καὶ ὠκοδόμησεν πύργον, καὶ ἐξέδετο
αὐτὸν γεωργοῖς, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν.

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

οικοδεσποτης, ου m householder,
landowner, master

Cf. 20:1-16.

ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅ τι who, which

φυτευω plant

ἀμπελων, ωνος m vineyard

φραγμος, ου m fence, wall, hedge

περιέθηκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

περιτιθημι put around

ὄρυσσω dig, dig a hole in

ληνος, ου f wine press

οικοδομεω build, build up

πυργος, ου m tower, watchtower

ἐξέδετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐκδιδομαι let out, lease, rent

γεωργος, ου m farmer, tenant farmer

ἀποδημεω go on a journey, go away

Cf. Is 5:1f for Israel similarly pictured as a vineyard.

Verse 34

ὅτε δὲ ἤγγισεν ὁ καιρὸς τῶν καρπῶν,
ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς
γεωργοὺς λαβεῖν τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτοῦ.

ὅτε conj when, at which time

ἐγγιζω approach, draw near

καιρος, ου m time

καρπος, ου m fruit, harvest

"Points to the decisive time when God will reckon with his people." Hill.

ἀπέστειλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

ἀποστελλω send, send out

δουλος, ου m slave, servant

λαβεῖν Verb, aor act infin λαμβανω

Verse 35

καὶ λαβόντες οἱ γεωργοὶ τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ
ὄν μὲν ἔδειραν, ὄν δὲ ἀπέκτειναν, ὄν δὲ
ἐλιθοβόλησαν.

ἔδειραν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl δερω beat,
strike

ἀποκτεινω kill, put to death

λιθοβολεω stone, throw stones at

Cf. 23:37. "The persecution of the prophets is a familiar theme in the OT; cf. Jeremiah, who was beaten, according to Jer 20:2, and Uriah the prophet, killed in Jer 26:21–23; Zechariah is stoned in 2 Chr 24:21; cf. the general reference to the killing of the prophets in Neh 9:26." Hagner.

Verse 36

παλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους πλείονας
τῶν πρώτων, καὶ ἐποίησαν αὐτοῖς ὡσαύτως.

παλιν again, once more

ἄλλος, η, ο see v.33

πλειων, πλειον ογ πλεον more

πρωτος, η, ον first, earlier

ὡσαυτως adv in the same way, likewise

Verse 37

ὕστερον δὲ ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὸν υἱὸν
αὐτοῦ λέγων· Ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱὸν μου.

ὕστερον adv afterwards

Cf. Heb 1:1-2.

ἐντραπήσονται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 pl

ἐντρεπω make ashamed; pass respect,
regard

Verse 38

οἱ δὲ γεωργοὶ ἰδόντες τὸν υἱὸν εἶπον ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κληρονόμος· δεῦτε ἀποκτείνωμεν αὐτὸν καὶ σχῶμεν τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ·

ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὄραω
see, observe

εἶπον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl λεγω
ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself
κληρονομος, ου m heir
δευτε adv. come (of command or
exhortation)

ἀποκτείνω see v.35

σχῶμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl ἔχω
κληρονομια, ας f inheritance

Green comments that in Jewish law, three successive failures on the part of the owner to collect his share of the annual harvest gave tenants a case for claiming that the vineyard was their own. Their case would be strengthened in practice (though hardly in law) if they could dispose of the heir for whose benefit the property was being developed.

Verse 39

καὶ λαβόντες αὐτὸν ἐξέβαλον ἔξω τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος καὶ ἀπέκτειναν.

A few MSS representing the Western text (D Θ it) reverse the order of the casting out of the vineyard and the killing of the son, with the result that the son is first killed and then cast out of the vineyard. This is probably due to the harmonization of the sequence with the Markan parallel (Mark 12:8).

ἐκβαλλω throw out, cast out
ἔξω adv. out, outside

"They would claim that the dead man had come to make an unjust claim to their vineyard and that all they had done was to repel a robber." Leon Morris.

"In v. 39 Matthew, altering the Markan order, has the son first cast out of the vineyard and then killed (so too Luke 20:15). This reversal shows beyond doubt that Matthew has the death of Jesus in mind since Jesus was in fact killed outside the city walls (the same point is emphasized in Heb 13:12; cf. John 19:20). McNeile notes that if the parable had been created by the early church, some allusion to the resurrection of Jesus would almost certainly have been included." Hagner.

Verse 40

ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος τοῦ ἀμπελῶνος, τί ποιήσει τοῖς γεωργοῖς ἐκεῖνοις;

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as

"The coming of the master of the vineyard to punish the tenants of the vineyard suggests a judgment that is eschatological in tone." Hagner.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those

Verse 41

λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· Κακὸς κακῶς ἀπολέσει αὐτούς, καὶ τὸν ἀμπελῶνα ἐκδώσεται ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς, οἵτινες ἀποδώσουσιν αὐτῷ τοὺς καρποὺς ἐν τοῖς καιροῖς αὐτῶν.

κακος, η, ον evil, bad

κακως badly, severely

ἀπολέσει Verb, fut act indic, 3 s ἀπολλυμι
destroy, kill

It is suggested that κακος κακως ἀπολεσθαι is a literary phrase which had become idiomatic. It is difficult to translate, being a combination of "he will bring those bad men to a bad end" and "he will utterly destroy those evil men". NEB translates, "he will bring those wretches to a wretched end." Hagner comments that there may be an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem.

ἐκδώσεται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 s

ἐκδιδομαι let out, lease, rent

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἡτις, ὁ τι
who, which

ἀποδώσουσιν Verb, fut act indic, 3 pl

ἀποδιδωμι give, pay, render

καρπος, ου m see v.34

A verbal echo of Ps 1:3.

Verse 42

Λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς· Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας· παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη, καὶ ἐστιν θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν;

οὐδέποτε never

ἀναγιγνωσκω read

γραφη, ης f writing, Scripture

Cf. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16; 22:31. The quotation which follows is from Ps 118:22f. This quotation is found not only in the three Synoptics at this point but also in Acts 4:11 & 1 Peter 2:7.

λίθος, ου m stone

ἀποδοκιμαζω reject (after testing)

οικοδομεω build, build up, encourage

ἐγενήθη Verb, aor indic, 3 s γινωμαι

κεφαλη, ης f head

γωνια, ας f corner; κεφαλη γωνιας main
corner stone, keystone

Seems to be a large stone laid in the foundations of a building at the corner of two walls. In such a place it would provide the key point from which those walls would be constructed and thereby the whole building. Alternatively, it could refer to the keystone or capstone at the top of the arch of a doorway (so Jeremias).

θαυμαστος, η, ον marvellous, wonderful

Verse 43

διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀρθήσεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ δοθήσεται ἔθνοι ποιῶντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς.

δια τουτου It is relationship to Jesus which defines the people of God.

ἀρθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s αἰρω
take, take away

δοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s διδωμι
ἔθνος, ος n nation, people

"The words foreshadow the appearance of the Christian church." Leon Morris. "This setting aside of the privilege of Israel as the unique people of God in favour of another people, namely, the church ... is of course nothing short of revolutionary. The singular ἔθνος, which means 'people' or 'nation,' inevitably alludes to the eventual mission to the Gentiles, the ἔθνοι, plural of the same word (cf. 12:21; 24:14; 28:19). The word in the singular here need not be thought of as excluding Jews, however, since the new nation, the church (cf. 16:18), consists of both Jews and Gentiles (and Jews are included in 28:19)... The emphasis on this new group producing the appropriate fruit (cf. v. 41) is thoroughly consonant with Matthew's frequent stress on the righteousness of the kingdom (e.g., 5:20; 6:33) that Jesus embodies and brings." Hagner.

Verse 44

Καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλασθήσεται· ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ λικμήσει αὐτόν.

There are doubts regarding the authenticity of this verse. It is missing from many manuscripts and the evidence is very evenly divided. It could have been incorporated from Luke 20:18 or the careless eye of a copyist might have slipped from αὐτῆς at the end of v43 to αὐτόν at the end of the disputed verse, so resulting in its omission.

πεσων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s πιπτω
fall, fall down

συνθλαομαι be broken in pieces

ὅς ἂν whoever

πέσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s πιπτω

λικμῶ crush

"Here it is the rejected stone – now the cornerstone (Ps 118:22 in v. 42) – who becomes to those who have rejected him either the stone of stumbling or the stone that crushes, in both cases bringing ruin to them. This sober judgment oracle may thus be thought of not as out of place but as supplementing v. 43, which spoke only of the kingdom being taken away, and as corresponding to the judgment referred to in v. 41." Hagner.

Verse 45

Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὰς παραβολὰς αὐτοῦ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγει·

ἀρχιερευς, εως m see v.15

ἔγνωσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl γινωσκω

"The self-recognition shows the effectiveness of the parables as a means of disclosure." Hagner.

Verse 46

καὶ ζητοῦντες αὐτὸν κρατῆσαι ἐφοβήθησαν τοὺς ὄχλους, ἐπεὶ εἰς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον.

ζητοῦντες Verb, pres act ptc, m nom s ζητεω

seek, look for, attempt

κρατεω hold, sieze, arrest

φοβεομαι trans fear, be afraid of,

reverence; intrans be afraid

Cf. v.26.

ἐπει since, because, for