

## Chapter Eleven

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” to show the close connection between Jesus having finished instructing his disciples, the two verbs being *teleo* + and *diatasso* (S *shelam* and *paqad*, both +). The former suggests the bringing to a completion and the latter literally to set through. The preposition *dia-* is suggestive of thoroughness and prefaced to the verbal root *tasso* meaning to set in proper order. It should be noted in 10.5 that Jesus sent the twelve disciples on an exploratory mission of sorts. However, between then and the beginning of this chapter where we are right now there’s no word as to how they made out. Presumably the disciples returned to Jesus and filed a report. Nothing is said of what he had done in this interim period nor how long it was. Also he must have had some hesitation if not fear as to how they would fare and was eager to hear about their adventures and give further pointers on how to improve their game.

One thing is certain. The twelve went on their mission with no mention of the Holy Spirit. That would have to wait until Pentecost when their real mission began. As for the situation at hand, we can be assured that there must have been ample time for lively discussions before Jesus moved on (*metabaino*) from where he was to both teach and to preach (*didasko* and *kerusso*, both +; S *yeleph* and *karaz*, both +). In other words, the neighboring cities mentioned in vs. 1 most likely means the synagogues in them. The discussions as to the recent adventures of the twelve must have continued to preoccupy them. At least it kept their minds off the hardships of trekking around which to them was familiar territory. Since Jesus was engaged in *didasko* and *kerusso*, the very two things which he had elaborated upon concerning their own mission, they paid even closer attention to him actually doing this. In that way they could learn what to say and just as important, what not to say in future missions. As for the content, we can assume it was essentially an extension of his lengthy discourse on the mountain. Jesus couldn’t simply launch into talking about his divinity. That would make the people either stone him or completely ignore him, thinking he was crazy.

In 4.12: John the Baptist is arrested for no apparent reason. Perhaps one such flimsy grounds or pretense is that he had called the Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers (cf. 3.7) for having stood by and not received baptism. While this may have played a role, the immediate reason was his denunciation of King

Herod's marriage which was illegal under Jewish law. So compared with his near celebrity status, Jesus at the time was an unknown entity and therefore no threat. However, in the interim period he was beginning to gain notoriety by religious and political leaders. Soon they discovered that by imprisoning John, they could use him as leverage in any attack against his defenders as well as Jesus.

Vs. 2 has John getting word of Jesus or as the text puts it in a formal sort of way, "the deeds (*ergon* +) of the Christ." The Greek text lacks "word," simply using the verb *pempo* which connotes dispatching and thus includes the sense of a word going forth. If it did not, it wouldn't be considered a word. The Syriac is similar with the verb *shadar* +. Perhaps the delegation sent by John is a way to recognize the true role of Jesus as successor to his mission of baptizing at the Jordan River. After all, John had insisted that one mightier than he is to come after him (cf. 3.11). Note that John is quick to point out *ergon*, something that he had never done nor had claimed to have done. With this firmly implanted in his mind, he could remain in prison perfectly content for the rest of his life although he sensed his days were coming to a quick end. His witness from this confined place is not unlike that of Simeon in Lk 2.30-32: "for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

So when John's disciples received the exact words they were to communicate to Jesus, they were taken aback. Surely their master must have recognized that Jesus was the one to come, that there's no need to look for anyone else. The verb is *prosdokao* (S *shaka'*, also to expect) with the preposition *pros-* suggestive of looking into the future. It seems that John wanted confirmation after lingering in prison to make double-certain his message of repentance was being fulfilled by Jesus. John knew that Jesus was the "one to come" (*erchomai* +) by reason of that *skirtao* or leaping in his mother's womb mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Four. As for the actual distance between the two events, in a situation such as this it's irrelevant.

It seems that neither John nor Jesus made any move beforehand. Again, that bond of *skirtao* was the invisible uniting force between the two men. It was the point-of-connection even before both were born. As for the contact at hand, it takes place after Jesus spent the bulk of the previous chapter instructing his disciples. With them to back him up, if you will, the two men could continue

on what now was their separate ways. Surely Jesus kept close tabs on his cousin, more than the text intimates while at the same time distinguishing himself from John's mission of repentance and baptism. Jesus too must have given serious thought to incorporating baptism into his mission but does not. That will be up to the disciples after Pentecost.

In vs. 4 Jesus gives an answer to John through his disciples who, by the way, must have dwindled considerably by now. Indeed, it caused him considerable sorrow, but he had to conceal it from them. Nevertheless, a few die-hards remained but with the distinct feeling the end was near. Whether or not they'd joined Jesus isn't recorded, but if they were true to their master, they would make the move. However, they wished to hang on as long as possible to see what would happen. In light of this gloomy assessment Jesus bids the messengers to tell John what they hear and see. That means they have hung around with Jesus for a while in his missionary activity which consisted mostly of healing though preaching played a role.

As for Jesus' mission, he passes on six crucial elements which the disciples of John both hear and see. The two verbs go and tell are added deliberately as a means to reassure them and John in return as to what is going on: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleaned, the deaf hear, the dead raised and the poor have the good news preached to them. As for the second verb, *euaggelizo* (S *shavar*, to think, hold as true) means to announce and is prefaced with the adverbial form of *agathos* (good), *eu-*. The recipients are those who are poor or *ptochos* which is the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew *anawym*, those who remain faithful to God despite difficulties. Such words are meant to encourage John, that his mission had not been in vain but has been transferred over to Jesus.

As for the blind and poor, they are singled out, if you will, with Jesus quoting in part the following two verses from the prophet Isaiah, 35.5 and 61.1 respectively: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted." As for the dead being raised, this is the most dramatic of them all but passed over almost in casual fashion as part of a list. It gives the impression that while indeed spectacular, it's secondary to preaching or *euaggelizo*. To hear the good news is even better than being raised from death.

Jesus concludes this succinct summary to John's disciples with an exclamation of sorts, that is, whoever takes no offense at him is blessed or *makarios* + (S *tu* +), this adjective also meaning to be happy. The verb is *skandalizo* + (S *kashal*, to stumble) or to trip up, cause someone to fall. While John isn't called *makarios* as such, Jesus indeed knows it applies to him and hopefully to the disciples conveying the message although we have no word as how he received it. Since the disciples did bring this report, we can assume that John did another *skirtao* as mentioned above, his prison being the womb where this took place.

Vs. 7 has Jesus going away (*poreuo* +), that is, from John's disciples. The impression is that he broke off the conversation with them rather abruptly, having communicated only what he deemed sufficient for John to hear. It would come as no surprise that John's disciples found this bordering on indifference. They were left with the task of trying to figure out how to convey these words to their master. And so they stood there dumbfounded watching Jesus walk away with his disciples. Perhaps John's disciples attention was more focused on those of Jesus and *visa versa*, this parting being more than a *poreuo* but a true passing on of John's ministry to Jesus.

We get the impression that as soon as Jesus left he began speaking to the crowds about John and continues to do so through vs. 19. Note the verb *archo* or to begin which intimates a connection between *poreuo* and *lego* + or to go away and to speak. That is to say, we have another indication of the break between John the Baptist and Jesus. At the same time Jesus was eager to speak about John or more specifically, having in mind those who had gone out to see him. Presumably most in the area had done this at one time or another and were baptized by John. How they integrated this into their lives isn't given, but it may provide a reserve for future converts. As for Jesus speaking of John's relationship with the crowds (*ochlos* again), he presents six rapid fire rhetorical questions. In other words he's questioning their motives:

- to behold in the wilderness
- reed shaken by wind
- go to the wilderness
- man in soft clothing
- go out to the wilderness
- to see a prophet

With regards to the last, Jesus concurs but calls John more than a prophet, the comparative of *perissos* which means exceeding the usual number. That leads him to quote from the prophet Malachi (3.1) which contains the first part of this verse. In order to appreciate it more, the text in full runs as follows from the Hebrew: “Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming says the Lord of hosts.”

This chapter of the prophet Malachi begins with *hineh* or behold in order to draw attention to the Lord sending his own messenger or *mal’ak* + to prepare the way before him or literally “to his face,” *panah* and *derek*. Suddenly (*pit’om* or in a moment) the Lord will come to his temple which means there’s an almost non-existent time gap between this sending (*shalach*) and what happens next, the two being connected with the conjunctive *v-* as “and.” A second *hineh* follows with the Lord coming not a second time but saying this by reason of the immediacy involved.

Although the people delight (*chaphets* +) in this messenger, vs. 2 puts the day of his coming in terms of a rhetorical question, this verse being added here in light of the six Jesus just proposed. It’s in terms of two parts: enduring and standing, *kul* and *hamad*. The first is with respect to the day of the Lord’s coming and the second with respect to the Lord appearing, the common verb to see, *ra’ah*. Though Jesus doesn’t quote this verse to the crowds, surely he was aware of it in relation to them and John the Baptist.

With this quote in mind, Jesus gives his own spin on John the Baptist beginning with *amen* or “truly,” a way of formalizing his words or giving them the same authority as with the Malachi quote. He speaks of John as “born of women” which is obviously true of all human beings. However, the phrase suggests that the Baptist is of an order on the verge of passing away, he being prison as symbolic of this, and his disciples will be left with no master. In his same breath Jesus states boldly that the person who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. In sum, we have a contrast between *mikros* and *mezas*, small and large.

Within this context is the verb *egeiro* (S *qum* +), to rise up in the sense of making an appearance, a way to enhance John’s status. As for the kingdom of

heaven, John himself was the first to proclaim it in 3.2 as *eggizo* +, near or at hand followed by Jesus with the same words in 4.17. Thus we have two instances of *eggizo*. In this light, the latter *eggizo* supersedes the former, something John was aware of even in prison. There he could never forget those first public words of his now being re-phrased, if you will, by his cousin and couldn't agree more. The same applies to anyone in that kingdom of heaven, and if John had the chance, he would readily acknowledge such a person.

In vs. 12 Jesus continues speaking about the kingdom of heaven where a person is greater than John the Baptist. He's referring to a specific time concerning this kingdom of heaven or from the days of John until now. The interim period is marked by suffering violence by men who are as such, *biazo* also as to use force, the nature of which isn't described. However, these men are storming the kingdom of heaven, *harpazo* fundamentally to seize at once. Most likely such *biazo/harpazo* refers to persecution first of John the Baptist and then Jesus Christ. While the former has been delineated, the latter has not taken on full force. With regards to *biazo*, the Syriac has the verb *davar* as to lead with the noun *qatiyra'*, coercion, necessity. With regards to *hapazo* it's *chaphatu*, diligence, with pains.

Jesus is primarily concerned about the kingdom of heaven, and in vs. 13 he does well to situate it within the larger context of Judaism, that is to say, not just the prophets but with the Law or *Torah* +. These two mighty streams prophesied about John the Baptist although there's no explicit mention of him by name. To discover these points of reference, one would have to go through the entire Hebrew scriptures to find them. One approach would be searching for such words as "kingdom" and prophecies as with the suffering servant of Isaiah. The gist of all this? Jesus is attempting to convey to his listeners that John is the end-of-the-line for both prophets and *Torah*. Again, John being confined in prison is symbolic of this and if asked if he felt left out of the picture, he would respond strongly in the negative. His attention is totally focused upon his cousin, Jesus Christ.

Vs. 14 is part of the previous verse as an extended sentence where Jesus speaks of Elijah. Everyone was familiar with Elijah's ascension into heaven in a chariot, so mere mention of that name was bound to perk every ear. However, Jesus puts Elijah in a context the people didn't expect. He tells the people if they are open, then John the Baptist is Elijah to come. Obviously that thrilled

them, but Jesus' words went right over their heads. In a way, he's responsible for created a misunderstanding for not having put this in clearer language. Surely Jesus thought of doing this but hesitated. He wanted to be thought provoking and get the people to realize that all the works and miracles of Elijah were fulfilled in John. Everyone was aware that John's ministry was at an end, having been locked away. Only a miracle would get him out of prison. Perhaps he'd do one up on Elijah and ascend directly from prison into heaven.

Should anyone have paid more attention to the relationship between Elijah and John, they'd realized that both had centered their attention upon someone else, the very person now addressing them. However, it's easy to say this with hindsight. As for John, we can assume that all this talk had reached his ears. Although there's no record of his response, we can assume that he was vindicated and even had a private laugh at all the confusion that was swirling around him. "Imagine me being compared to Elijah" John had mused. As for Jesus' words, about hearing or paying attention, there's just one use of the verb (*akouo*): "He having ears, let him hear." We can assume that virtually no one did so. Although it has no direct bearing upon this, one can't help but think of the well known line in scripture with special emphasis upon hearing: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" [Dt 6.4].

Vs. 16 carries over Jesus' strong sense that no one present paid attention (i.e., with their ears) or were attuned as with the Deuteronomy verse above. That's why he begins with the conjunctive *de* + rendered as "but." It sets the tone basically for the rest of the chapter as well wondering aloud in a deliberate way to see if anyone is indeed listening. He speaks as such through vs. 19. Jesus resorts to a less than flattering image which he could have picked up while making his rounds, children in a market place calling out a ditty to their friends. The verb is *prophoneo* (S *qaha'* to call out aloud), the preposition *pros-* again indicative of directness. Such directness here is marked by play, even mockery and thus has a stinging quality about it.

The little ditty sung by the children is representative of the current generation which fails to see the relationship between Elijah, John the Baptist and ultimately Jesus. Instead, they prefer not only to mock what's so essential to their religious heritage but put it to music which is even worse. The very fact that Jesus is resorting to such imagery is bound to infuriate his audience. To call them children is bad enough but worse as children engaged in songs of

derision. In sum, Jesus refused to dance to any tune they offered him, another way of saying that he refused to act as their personal buffoon. We can say that in essence that Jesus is fleshing out their refusal to recognize not only himself but John the Baptist. As for John, they throw at him the ultimate insult of being possessed by a demon. *Daimonion* (S *dayoa'*: an evil spirit) means an incorporeal being existing between human beings and the divine. We have no record, but can presume that those hostile toward John fostered such rumors. With that in place, it would be easier to put him to death as soon as possible.

Vs. 19 is an extended sentence from the previous verse where Jesus mimics those deriding John and himself with their claim that he as Son of man came eating and drinking. Such an attribution is insulting in that it infers Jesus has no regard for religious observance as it pertains to nourishment. As for drinking, they single this out, claiming among other things that he's an outright drunkard. They are spot on, however, when it comes to saying he's a friend of tax collectors and sinners, the two lumped together and inferring Jesus' relationship with Gentiles. Obviously he was thinking of Matthew who had become one of his trusted disciples.

In conclusion to Jesus having played back these observations about himself—rumors based on the distortion of facts—he has the last word. He identifies himself with wisdom or *sophia* (S *chekmata'*) which automatically brings to mind such passages as from the Wisdom of Solomon 7.22-8 + where *sophia* takes on a personality all her own. So the works (*ergon* +) of this *sophia* is the deciding point, that is, her justification which is rendered by the verb *dikaioo* (S *zadak*: it is right) or to be declared to be in the right by God. As for those to whom these words are addressed, no response. How could they refute them? We can assume that Jesus spoke as he did here not with a raised voice but calmly and deliberately. This was enough to unnerve any of his accusers.

Failure to see the connection between Elijah and John and hence to himself had frustrated Jesus yet at the same time it's understandable from the viewpoint of the people. Jesus continues to give vent to this frustration in vs. 20 marked by two words, *tote* and *archo* (both +), then and to begin. Both are linked directly to him as he upbraids not just individuals but whole cities, the verb being *oneidizo* (S *chasad*, both +) implying the finding of faults in a way which demeans another person. In these places Jesus had spent considerable time or in the words of vs. 20, he had done “most of his mighty works,” *dunamis* (S *cheyl*)

suggestive of strength. At the end of this verse comes the punch line, if you will. The people did not repent, *metanoëo* (S *tu v*, both +). This, of course, goes directly against the message not only of Jesus but of John, the very word with which they had begun their respective ministries.

In vs. 21 failure of the people to repent leads Jesus to curse two town, Chorazin (mentioned one other place, Lk 10.13) and Bethsaida. In other words, they are the object of Jesus' *oneidizo* or upbraiding. Apparently the two are noted for their wickedness, a kind of current Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus is really worked up now. Almost in a fit of anger he claims that the two coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon are better off than Chorazin and Bethsaida. By reason of their location by the coast they represent a certain cosmopolitan milieu where various religious and philosophical ideas blended compared with the simpler, more unified strain of Judaism found locally. Despite their exposure to many alien influences, they end up as being better off.

Jesus continues his rant (or so it can appear) by claiming that Tyre and Sidon would have repented a long time ago by donning sackcloth and ashes. Obviously it brings to mind Jonah's effective preaching to the inhabitants of Nineveh even though it went against his will. "They proclaimed as fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them" [Jon 3.5]. Surely this analogy wasn't lost on those two whom Jesus was cursing.

In vs. 22 Jesus continues by favoring Tyre and Sidon, that things will be more favorable for those two cities, *anektos* (S *neyach*: connotes rest, quiet) being the adjective also as endurable with regard to the day of judgment, *krisis* +.

Right after this Jesus turns attention to another town, Capernaum being the same place in which he had come to reside noted in 4.13. The approach this time is to speak directly to that town through a rhetorical question, for its inhabitants had claimed they exalted (*hupsoo*: to raise on high) themselves to heaven. That very act will bring them down (*katabaino*) to Hades, *heos* not being an adjective but means something like "until" denoting the end of a period of time in addition to place. Jesus puts *hupsoo* as more as being done on their part whereas *katabaino* will come from another source such as God.

This *hupsoo/katabaino* is part of a quote from Is 13 & 15 which runs in full as "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will

set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north...15).’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.”

Jesus continues in the same verse (that is, vs. 23) referring to mighty works again (*dunamis* +) which he had done in Capernaum or as the text put it, in the passive. That is to say, if such *dunamis* had been done in Sodom, it would have remained (*meino*) better until (*mechri*) this day or to the present when Jesus is speaking. An exaggeration, of course, but one that has consequences of which the inhabitants of Capernaum are oblivious unless they take them to heart. Jesus speaks only of Sodom although Gomorrah also was destroyed because it was to the former that the two angels had come (cf. Gn 19.1).

At last in vs. 24 Jesus brings to a conclusion his unvarnished words with regard to his rejection. While the crowds may have been basically indifferent, it must have been difficult for the disciples to hear their master go on as he had done. Of chief concern for them was that if Jesus had been rejected so roundly, they too are included. Luckily for Jesus they didn’t bail out at this point which was a real possibility. And so Jesus concludes with words presumably against Capernaum (‘but I tell you’) that Sodom will come off better, the second use of the adjective *anektos* + or more tolerable. As for the disciples, they must have wondered how this could be. After all, Sodom along with Gomorrah was pummeled by fire and brimstone.

Vs 25 begins with “At (literally ‘in’) that time” which is the exact same time or when Jesus began his lengthy words about John the Baptist who was preceded by the prophet Elijah and now fulfilled in himself. Despite the people having soundly rejected all three, Jesus breaks out into spontaneous thanks. He recognizes that in the face of what’s so unfortunate, even tragic, there is real reason to give thanks to the Father. Included are his rather lengthy, harsh words about the current generation. The verb is *exomologeo* + (S *yadah*: as with Hebrew, to know, to acknowledge) which infers declaring openly or to acknowledge.

Such thanks concerns the Father who had been at work secretly hiding (*krupto* and S *kasa*’, both +) “these things” (*tauta*) which infer all he has said concerning Elijah, John the Baptist and the kingdom of heaven. That is, he had been keeping them from the wise and those with understanding or *sophos* and *sunetos*, also as clever, skilled and endowed with discernment. Although both adjectives

are essentially indicative of admirable qualities, they can literally get in the way. That is, they can cloud perception of the Father's role in all this while boils down to an awareness of the transcendent element working in human affairs. At the exact same time the Father has been hard at work revealing "these things" to those who are called babes. The verb is *apokalupto* (S *galal* +) or literally to uncover that which is already present with regard to *nepios* (S *yaluda'*: weaned child), also as a young child. Those so designated aren't special by themselves but are made so only by this divine uncovering. That, of course, means seeing beneath the confusion and grasping precisely the relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist with regard to Jesus Christ. Once this uncovering is done, such persons will go about their normal business and act as leaven in the larger society.

Vs. 26 is a short extension of the previous verse where Jesus exclaims *nai* or strong affirmation rendered as "yes" with regard to his Father. The Greek text comes off literally as "so it was well-pleasing before you," *eudokia* (S *tsevyana'*: the will), a state of being kindly disposed. The preposition *emprosthen* or "before" suggests that the Father has taken delight in having *apokalupto* or revealing triumph over *krupto* or hiding as discussed above.

Vs. 27 is important in that Jesus shows his close relationship with the Father which is presented as follows in three parts:

-All things or *panta* most likely all that exists is handed over to Jesus by his Father, *paradidomai* + or literally handed over-beside, *para-*. So if the Father is fully transcendent, that means Jesus is as such but at the same time remains a human being. So what is *para-* the Father is equally *para-* the Son. The major difference is that Jesus isn't doing anything with it, a somewhat awkward way of expression. Then again, how could we articulate this adequately if at all?

-Only the Son has knowledge of the Father, the verb being *epiginosko* (*yadah*, both +) or to know upon (*epi-*) meaning intense of complete focus.

-The Son has the prerogative of sharing this *epiginosko* with whomever he pleases which means he will reveal or *apokalupto* +...unveil...the Father to such persons. Thus knowing-upon and uncovering-from are one and the same. To date this doesn't seem to be in operation. Most likely it is tied in with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Jesus stating his relationship with the Father must have astonished not only his disciples but those listening to him. On one hand it was presumptuous yet on the other, extremely attractive. With this in mind Jesus singles out those who labor and are laden with heavy burdens to come to him, *kopiao* as to exert oneself and *phortizo* as to burden as well as to weary. Clearly implied are those not belonging to the ruling classes nor the educated. Only to the unfortunate Jesus will give rest, *anapauo* (S *noach*) also as to give relief or to bring to a conclusion. The root is *pauo* or to rest with the preposition *ana-* connoting that which is above; i.e., the verb at hand suggests a rest from everything that is troublesome. While people wanted to share in the same relationship Jesus has with the Father, admittedly they hadn't an idea of what he meant which again means the Spirit has to get involved. That, however, would have to wait for a later time or Pentecost.

Chapter Eleven comes to a conclusion with Jesus speaking of his yoke or *zugon* which normally is associated with plowing animals and is an image of slavery. He invites his listeners to take his own yoke, not that he will put it on them which means they have an option. If a person chooses to be so yoked, he will learn from Jesus, *manthano* (S *yalaph*, both +). Also while burdened, he will find it weightless by reason of this learning which apparently will be an unending process.

The weightless nature of Jesus' yoke reflects him as both gentle and lowly in heart, *praus* + and *tapeinos*. The Syriac *nyach* connotes rest while *mak* infers lowliness. The former pertains more to a spiritual and psychological quality whereas the latter to poverty in the physical sense. Both describe the heart or *kardia* + of Jesus, seat of the physical, mental and spiritual life. Close to this *kardia* is *psuche* + or soul which can be described as the seat of one's life just as with the Syriac *nephesh* +. And so Jesus' two qualities of being *praus* and *tapeinos* enable a person to gain easy access to rest, *anapausis* (S *nyacha'*) which is derived from *anapauo* noted above.

The last verse of this chapter is one simple sentence where Jesus speaks of his yoke and burden, *zugon* + and *phortion*, the latter being a load associated for transport. The former is described as *chrestos* and the latter as *elaphros* (S *baseym* also means sweet and *qaleyal*, lightness). Nevertheless, the two are meant as something to be carried about. What that yoke and burden consist of Jesus doesn't spell out but leaves it up to each person to decide. The decision will be

made on how a person perceives all that Jesus has said and done thus far. Surely his words provoked intense discussion among the disciples who in many ways already were bearing both the yoke and burden of their master.

## Chapter Twelve

This chapter begins with words showing how a story gets underway. It's conveyed by the words "in (*en*) that time" or *kairos* + (S *zavan*: time, era) which is indicative of a special circumstance or event. Also we can take this in the context of the last chapter, that is, the actual location of "their cities" beginning Chapter Eleven. There Jesus spoke at some length of Elijah, John the Baptist followed by his relationship with the Father and an invitation to follow him. In a way, *kairos* represents a conjunctive where Jesus moves from being located there to a field where he makes what seems to be a provocative gesture. That is to say, Jesus and his disciples were going through some grain fields...not big deal in and by itself...but were doing so on the Sabbath. Prohibition against this is set against the backdrop of Lev 24.5-9. More specifically it deals not so much with grain but with twelve cakes made from fire fine flour as "a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord" and that this be done for Aaron and his sons as a "perpetual due."

As for the situation at hand, it appears to be rather spontaneous, the decision being made on the spur of the moment because Jesus and his disciples were engaged in a lively discussion. At one point Jesus figured that the field of grain which they had approached was a short cut to their destination while at the same time enabling them to stay within the limits of necessary religious observance. If so, then there came to Jesus' mind an opportunity...a *kairos* as the text says...to offer a teaching. The issue at hand was some Pharisees observing the disciples plucking grain to satisfy their hunger. Most likely it was a more casual gesture but one the Pharisees saw as an issue to exploit. Apparently they've been hovering in the background watching and waiting not only Jesus but those with him to make the slightest gesture or casual word in order to trip them up. As for the incident at hand, Jesus must have thought them to be genuine fools. Only sticklers uptight over observance would make that an issue.

It may be that Jesus did see the Pharisees which made him cut through the field deliberately in a desire to teach them a lesson, the disciples included. The

opportunity certain arose when the Pharisees claimed it wasn't lawful to pluck grain, *exesti* being the verb. By now Jesus knew that dealing with such people is supremely boring whereas the disciples, by reason of being essentially uneducated, continued to hold them in awe even if they may despise them. Thus by reason of their association with Jesus they were learning how to overcome their fears and see through them. More essential than this, Jesus always was on the lookout to show how his teaching stands in relation to Jewish religion, that there is no conflict between the two. One gets the impression, deliberately left unrecorded, that as soon as the Pharisees brought up their objections, they regretted it. They lost the argument as soon as they opened their mouths, making a long unnecessary connection between what they had seen and the Leviticus quote. It was their turn to suffer the consequences by being thoroughly embarrassed.

The consequences came the form of Jesus coming off with a rhetorical question with regard to David (cf. 1Sam 21.1-6) before he had been anointed king. He and the men with him were fleeing King Saul and asked for bread to eat. However, there was none on hand except the "bread of the Presence." Actually David made up a lie, saying that he was on a mission from the king for taking this bread. The noun for Presence is *Prothesis*, a setting-before (*pro-*). *Panyim* is the Hebrew word literally as faces; the Syriac is *Patur* or table, altar. Jesus brings home the special nature of this bread by saying it was reserved for the priests which, of course, the Pharisees knew. For anyone other than them to eat this bread was unlawful or *exesti* +.

Before the Pharisees could respond, Jesus continues with another rhetorical question putting them on the spot once again by referring to when priests can profane the Sabbath yet remain guiltless. As for the words priest and temple, they are *iereus hieron*, that is, from the same root. Jesus uses the wording "have you not read," a way of saying something like aren't you aware of what is so basic to your profession? *Bebeloo* (S *chyl*) is the verb to defile, to make something highly exalted become as common and *anaitios* (S *dal*: thin, fine) the adjective for guiltless, also as innocent. The reference point is Num 28.9-10 which speaks of two male lambs and an ephah of fine flour being offered on the Sabbath.

To this already provocative example Jesus adds words which are equally provocative, namely, that something here is greater than the temple. Note how

he refers to himself using the impersonal *me gas* or the neuter form of the adjective which could be a way of tying in with the temple proper. That is, Jesus and the temple are one and the same, again something which his disciples must have had a hard time swallowing.

In vs. 7 this confrontation with the Pharisees ends with Jesus proposing a verse from Hos 6.6 with regard to mercy over sacrifice, *eleos* (S *chanan*, both +) and *thusia*. To this he adds his own spin, namely, that if the Pharisees favored mercy over sacrifice, they would not have condemned the guiltless, the *kata-* of the verb *katadikazo* giving it more force as “down.” As for the Hebrew text, it runs as follows: “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” The verse begins with the small but important word *ky* or “for” where the Lord gets straight to the issue at hand. The verb *chaphets* or desire has a spontaneous, almost erotic air about it. It’s suggestive of delight and is tied in with two pairs, love vs. sacrifice and knowledge of God vs. burnt offerings. The first two of each pair are *chesed* and *dahath* (both +). As for *chesed*, it isn’t the one resembling a morning cloud in vs. 4 which most likely is related to sacrifices offered by Ephraim and Judah.

In vs. 8 Jesus brings this confrontation with the Pharisees to a conclusion by referring to himself as Son of man and that he is lord (*kurios*; S: *mare’*, both +) of the Sabbath. The last time we find this title is 11.19 while here there’s no response to what seems to be a preposterous claim. Most likely Jesus’ opponents are too dumbfounded to respond adequately and by no means have given up on thwarting him. In fact, these words simply strengthened their resolve to do him in.

Vs. 9 simply begins with “And he went from there,” the conjunctive *kai* with the verb *metabaino* +, the preposition *meta-* (after) indicating a passage from one place to another. As for the Pharisees, we can be sure that if they didn’t follow on Jesus’ heels as when they were observing him and his disciples in the field plucking grain, they had their agents keeping a close eye. Note that *metabaino* is followed by Jesus entering “their” synagogue, that place apparently not being certain. However, it is secondary. Jesus goes to a place of worship, the heart of any Jewish town where people assemble.

At or near the synagogue Jesus comes across a man whose hand is withered, *xeros* also as dried. Some people who go unidentified ask Jesus if it’s lawful to

heal on the Sabbath. Perhaps this is deliberate on Matthew's part. He knew it was the Pharisees but couldn't bring himself to mention them by name. Regardless, let's say they are a different group of Pharisees in league with those who had accused Jesus of a similar "crime," of not observing the Sabbath on the pretext of some minor legal infraction. They didn't want a repeat performance, hence the shift in tactics. Also the man with a withered hand had a suspicious air about him. What's interesting...indeed strange...is that he didn't ask Jesus to be healed. He was simply there. An implant by the Pharisees? If so, they bribed him, an easy way to make some extra money.

Once again Jesus heard the tiresome *exesti* + or "Is it lawful," this time with regard to healing, *therapeuo* (S 'asa', both +). Tied in with this cure (provided Jesus does it) is that he ends up being accused, *katagoreo* (S *qaraz*: to glance with scorn). The situation is somewhat delicate, that is, Jesus and those trying to undermine him outside the synagogue. Never would local officials allow this inside. That means people streaming inside for the service had to pass this scene, another ploy to make Jesus look like a fool. Surely everyone recognized the man with the withered hand and took him for a local poor sap who was bribed into making easy money.

Instead of responding with an answer, Jesus comes off with a question with regard to a sheep which has fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, explaining that a man is far more valuable than such an animal. The verb is *diaphero*, literally to carry through (S *yetar*: to have over and above, both +). Note the similarity with the sparrows mentioned earlier. And so Jesus brings to a close this boring engagement saying it's lawful to do good on the Sabbath, *exesti* along with the adverb *kalos* (both +), essentially means that which is beautiful.

With this out of the way, Jesus asks the man with the withered hand to extend it after which he cured it. We have no response from him which leads to the suspicion that although his ailment was genuine, he was planted. Those who accused him are identified as Pharisees which we knew all along and whom Matthew had to mention much as he'd prefer not to do so. Note that they went out, *exerchomai* +. This is the same as their taking counsel against Jesus with the ominous words to destroy him, the verb being *sumbouleuo* (S *malak*). It's comprised of the root *bouleuo* with the same meaning but enhanced with the preposition *sun-*, with. As for their intent, *apollumi* + infers complete destruction.

Their intent was clear to Jesus just by the way they huddled together and decided not to enter the synagogue but to leave (*anachoreo* +). While the incident took place outside, in a way the synagogue itself was polluted by such talk. Indeed, Jesus was fully aware of what the Pharisees were plotting, *ginokso* or to know being the verb. The statement comes across simply enough, but we can be certain that Jesus was deeply troubled. Although they're not mentioned, we can be certain that the disciples, present yet not mentioned, were equally troubled if not more so. Yet it is to their credit that they remained with Jesus.

Despite this, Jesus went on with his mission of healing or *therapeuo* + or more specifically, those who had been following him. By now it must have been difficult to be nagged constantly by such people which certainly continued to draw attention. We can assume some if not most had been present with the just mentioned incident of the Pharisees. Some following Jesus may have been watching but did so in a half-hearted manner, not concerned about whether to heal or not to heal on the Sabbath. Such talk was meaningless to them, way above their heads. They wanted healing right now. However, Jesus could take little comfort in this. Despite all the healing he has done thus far, he didn't gain any real followers partly because of the growing tension between him and religious authorities. So even if some may have entertained following Jesus, this was enough to make them turn away. In reality, should Jesus be arrested right now, the people would abandon him without a thought as they would do later on.

In vs. 16 which is an extended sentence from the previous verse, Jesus gives what appears to be a ridiculous command. He tells those who've been cured not to make him known, *phaneros* (*S galal* +) an adjective also as plain in the sense of evident. Indeed, Jesus was known already. Just consider the recent head-to-head confrontation with the Pharisees who obviously filed a report with their superiors. Then we have the *ochlos* or crowd which must have made the Roman authorities nervous. At first no problem but because such crowds not only remained constant but grew, it was a cause for growing alarm. Those listening to Jesus may have agreed to keep quiet out of respect but as soon as they went their own way, word spread like fire. Perhaps Jesus was speaking as such to divert attention away from the healing he had been doing and focus instead on his teaching. Chances are indeed slim that only a handful took his words to heart.

The growing tension between Jesus and the Pharisees compelled Matthew to put this in perspective, that is, within the context of his Jewish religion. We can just imagine him rummaging around in his mind, trying to find the right words. Then he hit upon an extended passage from Isaiah, a well-suited choice. He uses what had become a frequent though important verb, *pleroo* or to fulfill. Without this verb all that he and others were witnessing wouldn't make much sense. Because the quote from Isaiah 42.1-4, a favorite prophet with regard to Jesus, the text is given in two parts. First the one in the Gospel at hand and then the Hebrew text:

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope.”

The text begins with *idou* + or behold in order to get the reader's attention with regard to the *pais* + (S *haved*: also servant, slave), the common term for a child and often one's more immediate offspring. This *pais* is also called *agapetos* (S *chavyv*) or beloved, one to whom the Lord shows *agape*. Note the preposition *eis* with the verb *eudokeo* + (S *such*: to long for) or to be kindly disposed, literally as “into whom my soul or *psuche* + is well pleased.” Because of this the Lord will place (*tithemi*, also to set, arrange) his *pneuma* + upon him. I.e., we have here a manifestation both of the divine *psuche* and *pneuma*. The two will enable this *pais* to proclaim justice not to the Jews but to the Gentiles, *apaggello* (S *karaz*, both + and *krisis* + or judgment (S *dyn*).

When this *pais* engages in proclaiming justice, he will do so discreetly. That is, he won't wrangle, cry aloud not be heard in the streets: *erizo*, *kraugazo* and *akouo* +: to quarrel, to cry out in an excited manner and the common verb to hear. Compare with Prov 1.20: “Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice; on the top of the walls she cries out, at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.” This verse and the one at hand are opposites yet at the same time one and the same.

This threefold quietness by the *pais* will be marked by gentleness toward those who are weak and faltering, hence the image of a reed and wick at their last end.

Note, though, *eos* or “until” which means that while such breaking and quench may take place, it will happen only after the *pais* brings justice to victory. The verb is *ekballo* +, literally to cast out with regard to *krisis* +, this being into or *eis* victory, *nike*. Use of *ekballo* is a strong verb to show that the *pais* will be taking decisive action.

By way of conclusion, in vs. 21 the Gentiles to whom the *pais* will proclaim justice will have hope (*elpizo*) in the Lord’s name or *onoma* +. Instead of name being separate from the one bearing it (i.e., the Lord), it is an essential part of his divinity. In other words, *onoma* can be taken as the Lord himself but in a way that can be approached more readily, if you will. In effect, *onoma* and the Lord himself are one and the same.

As for the Hebrew text, it runs as follows along with excerpts from a text on Isaiah also on this homepage:

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.”

The Lord introduces his *heved* or servant/slave with *hineh* or “behold” without giving his name which makes him all the more mysterious and perhaps confused with Cyrus. He both upholds and delights in him *tamak* and *ratsah*. The former connotes attaining of acquiring whereas the latter, to receive graciously. With regard to the latter, the Lord specifically mentions his soul or *nephesh*, that is, his inmost being.

*Ruach* +or spirit is the direct result of this taking delight and has a special purpose, namely, justice (*mishpat* +), not just for Israel but for all nations. The verb *yatsa’* is suggestive of issuing forth, not just simply bestowing. In other words, it is a fitting verb to show the relationship between *ruach* and *mishpat* as a flowing-forth.

*Tsahaq* is the verb to cry out and used especially when it comes to help. It’s something we wouldn’t expect from the unnamed *heved* and stands in contrast

to the personification of wisdom in Prov 9.14-16. This reference parallels the quote from Proverbs with regard to vs. 19 of the Greek text: “She sits at the door of her house, she takes a seat on the high places of the town, calling to those who pass by...Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” Note that wisdom does not leave her house but bids passers-by to turn in which parallels the *heved* in his activity.

The two examples of dying or near death with regard to a bruised reed and wick echo strongly among the people listening here, especially in light of the meekness of the servant presented at the outset of this new chapter.

This is the second time the Lord is mentioned as bringing forth justice (*yatsa'* and *mishpat* in vs. 1) but with the added feature of doing it “faithfully” or ‘*emeth*’ (cf. 39.8), literally “to (*l-*) justice.”

*Kahah* and *ratsats* are two verbs in vs. 4, (not) to fail and (not) to be discouraged. The former suggests being feeble as well as dim whereas the latter, being oppressed. Both will not prevent the Lord from establishing justice (*sum*, to place or set up and *mishpat* +). This reference to coastlands is the place to which the Israelites had fled before the advance of King Cyrus. Now with the crisis is over, people there are waiting for the Lord’s law or *Torah* +, the verb being *yachal* which connotes trust.

The use of *tote* + or “then” beginning vs. 23 after this lengthy passage from Isaiah connects well with the incident at hand, namely, a man brought to Jesus who is both dumb and blind and labeled a demoniac (*daimonizomai* +, S *dayoana'*) because it was thought that a demon had caused this double affliction. Right away Jesus healed (*therapeuo*, S ‘*asa*’; both +) him which caused amazement among those present. The Greek text calls them *ochlos* + or crowds, the verb being *existemi* (S *damar*, to be wonderful), literally as to stand out as from oneself.

As for the man who had been cured, we have no record of what he spoke or saw, let alone if he was blind and deaf from birth or became that way later in life. Surely the people would have wanted Jesus to continue and most likely he did though in smaller groups. And so another cured person comes on the scene, occupies it for a short while and fades off into the background. Such people had real lives to live. How they went about it would be provide material enough to

write a book. Then again, leaving them as such is better because it creates a sense of mystery.

Upon seeing this miracle the *ochlos* asked a rhetorical question not unlike a Greek chorus, wondering aloud if Jesus was the Son of David which is a title for the Messiah. Apparently no one dared to ask Jesus himself. Something restrained them out of fear and respect which is what he would want simply because it gave him breathing space. Actually the people didn't quite know what to make of this healer and decided to leave it at that at least for now.

As expected, the Pharisees got wind of all this. The way the text presents it ('But when the Pharisees heard it'), they weren't present to see this healing but were nearby as always, hovering about like vultures. Because a man supposedly possessed by a demon had been cured, they knew that Jesus was at it again and wanted to attribute evil to his activity simply because it was the only way could manifest their inherent impotence. So they decided to do what they do best, hatch a plot to catch Jesus off guard. Then one of them recalled words he uttered earlier that could be used against him.

The Pharisees decided to stick Jesus with the insulting title of Beel-zebul or Lord of Flies last mentioned in 10.25 by Jesus himself but in a different context. There he's speaking to those closest to him in a disciple-to-master relationship. If the Pharisees hadn't heard this directly in reference to those whom Jesus said not to fear, soon they got word of it and used this derogatory title against him. In other words Jesus is the lord and his disciples are the flies. The Pharisees took great pains to spread this lie among the people. We don't know whom they favored, preferring stay as neutral as possible in this ongoing conflict. Most people simply wanted to get along with their lives, no more no less.

In vs. 25 Jesus addresses the Pharisees who, according to vs. 24, weren't present but nearby. They like to be in the vicinity but not too close, hovering nearby like vultures as they did with John the Baptist. This verse begins with Jesus "knowing their thoughts" or the verb *eidon* (S *yedah*, both +) which also means to see and in the context at hand, is a seeing-from-a-distance. The object of this knowing/seeing are the Pharisees' thoughts, *enthumesis* (S *machshsvta'*: intention, purpose) having its root in the noun *thumos* + which as noted earlier, connotes intense desire. Here it has the preposition *en* or "in" prefaced to it by way of intensification. We can assume there's a safe distance between Jesus and

the Pharisees or better, between him and their inner *thumos*. Both sides knew how close to get and how far to stay away while off to the side is the *ochlos* or crowd only half-aware of what was going on between the two.

No small wonder that the havoc inferred in vs. 25 takes the form of division which is what Jesus throws back to the Pharisees. The verb is *merizo* (S *palag*, also to separate) as applied to a kingdom, city or house. That is to say, we have three layers of society: the most inclusive to the more familiar to the more intimate. Such division from within (*kath' heautes*, literally as 'according to itself') produces immediate collapse.

In vs. 27 Jesus poses a rhetorical question, a retort to the Pharisees where tongue-in-cheek he acknowledges casting (*ekballo* +) out demons by Beel-zebul. He wants to know if he is as such and by whom the sons of the Pharisees cast them out. Then comes the punch line. Their sons will be the judges (*krites*) of their fathers.

Jesus continues speaking right on through vs. 38 not letting the Pharisees to get a word in edge-wise. Actually they were reduced to silence from the get-go. Now in vs. 28 Jesus says that if he's casting out demons as he had done with the dumb and blind man, it's not on his own initiative or power but by the Spirit or *Pneuma* + of God. Such is a sign that the kingdom of God has come which he specifies as "upon you," that is, you the Pharisees. The verb is *phthano* which means to reach a position or to arrive. If that doesn't make them uncomfortable then what does?

In vs. 29 Jesus continues without letting the Pharisees get a word in edgewise as indicated by the one letter word *e* (that is, the Greek letter *eta* for 'or') along with *pos* or "how." Both serve to introduce a rhetorical question with regard to the example of stealing from the house of a strong man, that is, first he must be subdued. At least in this example no murder is committed.

Vs. 30 puts the mission of Jesus in stark terms, *meta* or *kata*, with or against him. This is reflected in two verbs, *sunago* + and *skorpizo*, to gather (*sun-* or with) and to scatter. Immediately following this in vs. 31 we have *dia touto* translated as "therefore" which shows one major consequence of this failure to be *meta* and *sunago* concerning Jesus. Ultimately sins and blasphemy can be forgiven (*hamartia* +and *blasphemia*). The former is put in general terms whereas

the latter, though serious because it's against God, still can be dealt with, *aphiemi* (S *shavaq*: to leave or let go; both +) fundamentally as to release. Now Jesus gets more specific with blasphemy against the Spirit or *Pneuma* +. That cannot be forgiven. One way of understanding this is that because the Spirit can inhabit a person, once inside and establishes an intimate relationship, rejection of this relationship is tantamount to a rejection of oneself.

Keeping in mind this idea of blasphemy, in vs. 32 anyone who says a word or *logos* (S *melata'* with *hal* or upon; both +) against the Son of man can be forgiven, *aphiemi*. As for that title, it's mentioned last in vs. 8 where he's identified with the Sabbath. Then he continues in order to drill home the inability to apply *aphiemi* to the *Pneuma*. You'd think mention of one age or *aion* would be bad enough, but Jesus speaks of two which in this instance refers to two peculiar segments of time, the one at hand and the one to come. As for the latter, that seems to apply to the kingdom of heaven. The general drift of all this? *Pneuma* is invisible which allows for human error whereas the Son of man is visible as a man, right there for all to see and does not allow for such error. Surely such words were enough to confuse anyone, Pharisees, disciples and of course, the crowds or *ochlos*.

In vs. 33 Jesus uses the image of a tree, *dendron* usually the fruit producing kind which fits in here. The person caring for it starts out by making it good or *kalos* +, fundamentally as beautiful. The verb *poieo* + or to make is used which can apply to watering and fertilizing the tree which will make the fruit equally *kalos*. Similarly, one can make the tree bad or *sapros* + more as of poor quality. Inferred, of course, is failure to cultivate it. Then Jesus utters the well known words about a tree being recognized (*ginosko* +) by the fruit it produces. Actually it depends upon the person caring or not caring for the tree.

Now for the first time after having launched into a number of invectives against the Pharisees Jesus calls them a brood of vipers, an expression he could have picked up from his cousin John the Baptist (cf. 3.7) who dealt with the same religious authorities. He throws out two questions, one rhetorical and one marked by an exclamation as to how, while being evil, they can speak good, *agathos* and *poneros* (both +). Compare these two adjectives with *kalos* and *sapros* as pertaining to the fruit tree itself. Jesus expands on this a bit by likening the act of speaking and doing so in abundance or *perisseuma*, also as fullness, to a treasure or *thesauros* +. One either brings forth (*ekballo* +) that which is *agathos*

or *poneros*. As for *exballo* or casting forth, it is as *perisseuma*, by no means a small amount. As for this image of a *thesauros*, it connotes a place of safekeeping, that is, valuable either as objects or as money.

When Jesus begins with “I tell you,” those within hearing range had better brace themselves for what follows. They’ve heard such words before which are a kind of introduction for words difficult to swallow. Indeed, he speaks of the day of judgment or *krisis* + mentioned last in 11.22 with respect to the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon, comparing them less favorably to Sodom. On that day which is equivalent to a *kairos* event, each person will render an account for every careless word uttered. That is to say, a *rhema* + or what comes from one’s mouth as *argos*. This infers something more generic in the sense of unproductive; while not so much harmful directly, it cast a kind of pall which lingers. Also note *logos* + as word which stands by itself, lacking the adjective “careless” as in the **RSV**.

The cautionary note with regard to speaking? Vs. 37 continues as an extended sentence where Jesus mentions words or *logos* in two different ways: they will have the effect of either justifying *dikaioo* (S *zadak*, both +) or condemning (*katadikazo* +, S *chayav*). This can be taken in the context of the Pharisees having associated Jesus with Beel-zebul back in vs. 24 where all this had started.

Vs. 38 speaks of “some of the scribes and Pharisees” compared with “the Pharisees” of vs. 24 implying that a number of them had drifted away due to his harsh words. Most likely they weren’t interested in taking these words to heart but how to use them in order to trip him up. As a group they made a request, calling him Teacher or *Didaskalos* + (S *Malpanah*’), a form of feigned flattery, if you will, which didn’t make the slightest impression on Jesus. They thought by asking for a sign or *semeion* (also as token, indication; S *’ata*’) Jesus would provide them with something spectacular, preferably of a flashy nature. Some if not most of these religious leaders had seen Jesus’ perform healings, so something of that nature would fit the bill but only more dramatic. Raising someone from the dead would be great.

Jesus gives his response in vs. 39 which begins with “but” or *de* + indicating that he’s not going to concur with the question as expected. Instead, he comes out with an apparently outlandish example, that of Jonah who had been swallowed up in the belly of a whale. Before he delves into that, he calls those posing the

question a generation which is both evil and adulterous, *poneros* + and *moichalis*. Jesus expands his audience from the immediate scribes and Pharisees to the current generation as a whole. The first adjective (*poneros*) is out there for all to see whereas the second is a bit more obscure. It seems to tie in with a prohibition mentioned in Ex 34.15: “Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices.” Here *zanah* or to commit fornication equals *moichalis*. With this verse in mind, Jesus is referring to the current generation prostituting themselves to the gods of those occupying their land. Such worship is characterized by an unwanted zeal for signs or *semeion*, S ‘*ata*’; both +). The verb used with regard to this sign-seeking is *epizeteo* (S *baha*’ +), the preposition *epi*- or upon indicative of an intense longing.

As for the passage which Jesus has in mind, it runs as follows: “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” [Jon 1.17]. There’s a parallel between Jesus giving this example and the Hebrew verb *manah* or to appoint, fundamentally as to number or to allot, that is, to lay out a plan for action. Such action, of course, is attributed to the Father. As for the so-called whale, *dag* is the general word for fish. As for the word belly, *koilia* also equals womb which parallels the Hebrew *meheh* of the same meaning.

Jesus himself provides the key to linking Jonah to himself or what will happen to him by two words. The first begins vs. 40, *hosper* and the second follows as *houtos*, just as → so. Jonah sets the example by *hosper* and Jesus follows by *houtos*. To the second Jesus speaks of himself as another person, the Son of man (cf. vs. 32) which can be taken as an ordinary man but implying God incarnate buried in a grave as represented by the image of a fish’s belly. In order to show the centrality of what this image stands for, Jesus speaks of the burial place as the “heart (*kardia* +) of the earth.” Heart also can imply in the very center of the place he has come to redeem from which will spread out his message of good news.

Jesus continues speaking about Jonah which by now must have astonished everyone, disciples included. All this reluctant prophet said...no more, no less...was “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” [Jon 3.4]! The next verse follows with an unexpected immediate response and is joined by the

conjunctive *v-* or “and,” “And the people of Nineveh believed God.” You’d think Jonah would have been delighted, even amazed, because Nineveh was an arch-enemy of Israel. As 4.1 puts it somewhat humorously, “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry.” Anyway, this background helps understand how the Ninevehites will arise with the current generation.

Stretching this out a bit, those of the current generation will be horrified to see their enemies rising simultaneously with them, that is, continuing to rise until they reach judgment or *krisis* +. Then the Ninevehites will condemn them, *katakrino*, the verbal root *krino* prefaced with the preposition *kata-* or down, a more intensive form of condemnation. The basis for this lays in repentance, *metanoeo* (S *tuv*, both +) also as to feel remorse. And so vs. 41 concludes with the neuter *pleion* or “something greater” or Jesus speaking of himself with regard to Jonah. He doesn’t elaborate on that, leaving it up to the scribes, Pharisees, disciples and anyone else to figure out what he means. The similarity to Jonah being in the whale may have registered with some if not all his disciples as to Jesus’ approaching death because it’s sufficiently clear without further reflection needed.

Immediately after speaking of Jonah and in almost the same breath Jesus mentions the unnamed queen of the South, that is, the queen of Sheba who had visited King Solomon to listen to his wisdom (*sophia* +, cf. 1Kg 10+). She was totally enthralled or as vs. 5 puts it so well, “there was no more spirit (*ruach* +) in her.” This comparison was much more evident as introduced by *idou* + or “behold.” That is, because of his wisdom, Jesus is the new King Solomon and if “this generation” of vs. 41 doesn’t listen to him, foreign nations will come to him.

To understand vss. 43 through 45, one must consider it at applicable to “this generation,” this phrase having been noted just above. Actually the punch line is in the second sentence of vs. 45, *tote* + or “so.” You have to go through two verses in order that *tote* unlocks what Jesus is saying.

As for the verses at hand, they deal with a spirit which is unclean, *pneuma* + modified by *akathartos*. Surely Jesus had in mind his experience with the two Gadarene demoniacs (cf. 8.28+) though that adjective doesn’t apply directly to them. In the verse at hand Jesus puts the going out (*exerchomai* +) of such spirits as effected on their own power, not speaking of whom or what had brought it

about. If the scribes and Pharisees weren't acquainted with Jesus' earlier miracles in this regard, surely his disciple knew the details. Now in a way Jesus makes fun of the spirit that had been expelled by saying to himself that he'll return to the house from which he had booted out. *Oikos* is the word he uses, treating the man he had afflicted earlier as a thing to make use of. Jesus continues with this image of *oikos*, putting the man so afflicted in the background. Now the *oikos* has been cleaned up and in order, *kosmeo* (S *tsaveth*: to set in order, to decorate) meaning to make neat and tidy.

Apparently this house which had been spiffed up was attractive to the spirit. You'd think what it represents would be repulsive but quite the contrary. The spirit pays a visit (which suggests that necessarily he didn't enter the house) but saw from the outside that it was well-kept and thought it'd make a great place for his friends to come as well. Actually the seven are also called spirits worse (*pneuma* and *poneros*, both +) than himself. Perhaps the first spirit thought that messing up the house on his own would be too much work, so he decided on inviting these friends to lend a helping hand.

So the spirit who had enjoyed the man as his own personal *oikos* decides to return with his friends and makes this poor fellow's state worse than before. All that cleaning a putting in order was for nothing. The dwelling by the spirit and his seven cronies is expressed by the verb *katoikeo* + which means to remain in a place for an extended period of time. Jesus concludes this example with *houtos* + or "thus" where he says that the current generation resembles these eight spirits by reason of being *poneros* + or evil. It'd be difficult to find harsher words to enrage the scribes and Pharisees. Again, the disciples heard the same and must have been shocked. Has their master gone too far? If he endangers his own life, that means they could suffer the same fate.

Jesus has been engaged in making a shift from Israel as favored by God to those willing not just to listen to him but to follow him. This, of course, is as radical as it gets. The last few verses of this chapter continue this theme with a concrete example. Vs. 46 begins with "while (*eti*) he was still speaking," that is, speaking in such direct terms to the people (note lack of scribes and Pharisees who by now must have drifted away). This puts the chapter at hand in perspective, for it begins with Jesus in the grain fields and ends up in someone's house or synagogue. As for Jesus being in this house, perhaps it served as

impetus to speak of the just mentioned unclean spirit and seven others with regard to the man-as-*oikos*.

Furthermore, mention of Jesus' mother and brothers who "stood outside" comes as no surprise though this is the first time they're mentioned as a group. It suggests that they've tagged along from the beginning of Jesus' ministry and offered consolation when things go tough. Brothers, of course, can apply to a broader extension of one's family including cousins, etc. Note use of *zeteo* + or to seek. This gives the impression that Mary and the brothers are among the many present with no special status even if others were aware of it. This apparent indifference serves to clarify Jesus' response in the next two verses. As for this *zeteo*, the distance between Jesus, his relatives and especially mother is emphasized by two factors: being outside and the need for one of them which vs. 46 calls a man, perhaps a servant of the owner of the house in which Jesus happened to be present.

Even though Mary and those relatives with her swallowed their pride and remained patient, Jesus continued to treat them with indifference bordering upon neglect. He did get the message but instead of responding, stretched out his hands toward his disciples. They are his mother and his brothers. They are the ones who are doing his Father's will (*thelema* +) in heaven. Not only are they disciples of Jesus but his brother, sister and mother all wrapped together as one. Thus Chapter Twelve closes on a somewhat sour note. We're left hanging without knowing how Mary and those with her responded. The same, of course, applies to the twelve disciples. They were taken aback with feelings both of honor and of shame in light of these people looking on. The same could apply to any spouses, children and other relatives of the disciples. They too must have been less than pleased, that being left unrecorded which is for the better.

## Chapter Thirteen

This new chapter begins rather abruptly with "in that day," the same day Jesus had engaged in several tussles with the Pharisees. Furthermore, Chapter Twelve concludes with the enigmatic and somewhat harsh words of Jesus concerning his mother and brothers. As for the Pharisees, they drifted away at least for now. However, we can feel their presence in the background as they

continue to watch and plan do away with Jesus. That means we await the inevitable as we go through the remaining chapters of Matthew's Gospel

Somewhere along the line in Chapter Twelve Jesus had entered a house by the lake of Galilee, the owner's identity not given. Practice of hospitality was an essential part of the local culture, so this could be the house of anyone who had invited Jesus. Indeed, Jesus had gained some renown, so to have him stay would be a great honor. Chances are it was fairly well off, the owner knowing that Jesus would have his customary retinue in tow which meant no small number of guests.

As soon as Jesus left the house, he sat by the sea most likely by himself. As always, he was pressed by the crowds and welcomed any chance for a bit of solitude. Here the noun *ochlos* + or crowd is modified by *polus*, literally "many" which suggests a genuine throng. Also Jesus may have had second thoughts about what he said concerning his brothers and especially his mother. "Was I too harsh on them?" he wondered, having sent out the wrong message. Now it was time to make a move about being pressed in from all sides. Surely he asked his disciples for advice who incidentally recognized many familiar faces among the people. Some may have questioned them as to why they were with Jesus. That put them in an awkward situation and essentially were at a loss to give an explanation.

Because some of Jesus' disciples had been fishermen and left that profession not long ago, one or two of them may have spotted a boat formerly in their possession. They suggested that Jesus address the people from on board after putting out into the water a slight distance. Jesus thought it was great idea and so complied. He sat there wondering for a bit just as he had come out of the house. All the while the ever present crowd assembled looking on somewhat nervously. Was Jesus going to put out and cross the lake as he had done before? The last time a storm arose, that always being a distinct possibility. Some must have eyed other boats nearby to hop in just in case. The time it was evident Jesus was going to address the people slightly off shore, so it was evident he wasn't going to sneak off. By now it was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop.

Once things have settled down, Jesus begins to tell "many things" in the form of a parable, *parabole* or that which serves as a model or example pointing

beyond itself for later realization. Jesus wishes to present homey examples which could be applied to daily life, unpacked later on as well as be the subject of discussion. Actually this is the very first time Jesus speaks as such and for the rest of the chapter fires off one parable after the other. Furthermore, the flat service of the water provided a good means to amplify his voice, something familiar to the disciples who had made this suggestion which appealed to Jesus. Consider a parallel example in Chapter Twenty of John's Gospel where Jesus calls out to his disciples fishing on the lake, his voice reaching them easily and clearly. As for the text at hand, we have eight parables with the exception of several interludes for explaining them.

Being on the water, you'd think that Jesus would begin his first parable with fish or fishing. No, he prefers to lead off with that of a sower, an image also familiar to many present. Actually the only experience he has had with regard to fishing came from the two sets of brothers who made their living on the lake. The openings words "A sower went out to sow" sound repetitious, even slightly humorous. After all, such is the job description of this person. He's either distracted or outright careless, for there are three out of four instances which are total failures. Note that in each case the sower isn't mentioned explicitly. Instead, the seed in each of the four examples is described as having fallen, that is, almost on their own initiative:

-Birds devoured the seed described as having fallen along the path. We get the impression that the sower was simply ambling along, not paying much attention or was unaware of a hole in his bag. Furthermore, as he walked along, he was oblivious as to the birds swooping down to gobble up the seed.

-Rocky ground with little soul. It seems that the sower had little experience as to the best soil for seed so settled on one full of rocks. Perhaps he was sowing for someone else, cared little for what he was doing and wanted to get the job over and done with as quickly as possible. He figured that by the time the seed would sprout and dry up in the sun he would have pocketed his salary and be long gone from the area.

-Seeds which fell among thorns can suggest complete disregard as to what the man was doing. Again, the sower would be able to be long gone. The way the text is phrased is that the thorns "grew up" meaning, of course, at the time of sowing they didn't appear. If the sower had been more diligent, he would have recognized the soil as unfavorable and would produce such thorns.

-Finally...at long last...the seed fell on good (*kalos* +) soil, *kalos* usually translated as beautiful. Also we have the identity of this seed which is grain, important for producing bread products. The somewhat indiscriminate element is mentioned again because some seed produced anywhere from thirty to a hundred fold.

Jesus concludes his first parable with the well known “He who has ears, let him hear.” Not having ears would be like the sower just depicted. He has a lousy track record, three failures and just one success. Hearing (*akouo* +) is like that. Despite the fact that everything Jesus says reaches one’s ears, only a fraction registers.

Vss. 10-17 consist of a rather lengthy, unexpected interruption with regard to Jesus speaking in parables. Right after the first one the disciples intervene, somewhat irritated in that he left the parable unexplained. Note that they came up with the excuse that he used parables with regard to “them” when in actuality they hadn’t a clue as to what he was getting at. It was easier to hide behind the crowd’s apparent ignorance than to present their request for an explanation in a more humble, straight-forward manner. Also they feared that Jesus might drone on for some time with parable after parable. You’d think that by now the disciples would have sufficient exposure to how the people responded to Jesus’ teachings. In sum, it didn’t seem to make much of a dent. Instead, they wanted the more immediate results of being cured from their ailments. So it can be argued that the disciples had a pretty good argument on their behalf.

Jesus gets the point. In vs. 11 he responds, using the passive “it is given” with regard to the disciples knowing the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. That serves to get him off the hook and puts responsibility on the Father. The disciples are contrasted with the crowds of whom Jesus says bluntly that they are completely ignorant of the kingdom of heaven. Clearly the disciples give the strong impression that they haven’t probed the *ginosko* (S *yadah*, both +) handed over to them. Indeed, they heard Jesus speak of the kingdom of heaven but if pressed, would acknowledge they hadn’t a clue as to what this kingdom was about.

They must have been deeply embarrassed with regard to these so-called secrets. After all, who doesn’t love secrets? The word is *mysterion* (S *‘araz*), a really

loaded term which although often used as initiation as with sacraments, here implies the un-manifest counsel of God. Yes, the disciples were familiar with Jesus having spoken of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, it is among Jesus' very first words...his mission statement...found in 4.17. So despite hearing of it, the disciples were clueless when it came to *ginosko* of it. In the end they were no better off than the crowds whom they disdained. However, things would change with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus was priming them for that, but if he said so openly, the disciples wouldn't have the slightest idea of what he's talking about and show a collective blank face.

After this rather embarrassing revelation and learning experience for the disciples, Jesus adds that the such *ginosko* has not been given to the people. That doesn't mean the disciples should view this in terms of "we" against "them." Instead, once they've recovered from having been so exposed and have familiarized themselves with this special *ginosko*, their task is to initiate people into the *musterion* of the kingdom of heaven. And so *musterion* is tied in with that commission to teach which the disciples had experienced in Chapter Ten.

In vs. 12 Jesus continues to use the passive not only of *didomi*, "more will be given" but the one for *airo* + or "will be taken away." As for the first, what's involved is not stated directly but presumed to be the bestowal of the *musterion* or secrets just noted. The response isn't stated but most likely infers acceptance of the *ginosko* or knowing with regard to *musterion* which is a real treasure house. It doesn't stop there. Instead, Jesus adds the verb *perisseuo* or to be more than enough or in abundance. In contrast to this Jesus speaks of a person who "has (*echo* +) not"...even what's in his possession...will be taken away. Who or what does this isn't mentioned but is left to one's imagination. If Jesus gave the details, those listening to him would not be as attentive to his teaching. Anyway, it centers around a certain knowledge or *ginosko* relative to the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. By reason of their official religious affiliation the Pharisees have it even if dimly. The same applies but in a different sense to the disciples. They must learn to be on guard because what they have from their intimacy with Jesus can be snatched away in an instant.

This strong caveat serves as a back-drop to what Jesus means in vs. 13 when he's speaking in parables. No one listening to Jesus has the capacity to understand how they relate to the kingdom of heaven. Even that reality can be confused with the expectation of an earthly one as is so well known. Jesus proceeds to set

up three contrasts for those listening to him, the disciples not excluded: seeing/not seeing, hearing/not hearing and not understanding, the third one not being contrasted. The verb is *suniami*, literally as to bring or to put together (*sun-*) and also means to beware, to take notice.

This threefold deficiency which most likely is deliberate, even willfully so, has the intent to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah (6.9-10). The verb is *anapleroo* (S *shelam* +) with the preposition *ana-* showing an intensification, on, upon or upward. The prophecy is given in two variations, the first being the Greek or the one at and the other, or the Hebrew:

V. 14: “You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. 15) For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.”

Note the pair of two similar verbs, each having its opposite in the negative: *akouo* and *blepo* (both +). The former as to hear occurs twice for emphasis, one standing in for “indeed” whereas the other is to see in the sense of having the power of sight. Their opposites are *suniami* and *horao* (both +) or to understand and to look at. Vs. 15 continues this transition of a dulling of perception with regard to two senses plus the heart, all belonging to the people. The sense of hearing has become *barus* or heavy while the sense of seeing has become *kammuo* or heavy. At the same time the heart (*kardia* +) has become overlaid with fat, *pachuno*. All three are characterized by weightiness which cripples movement both physically and the ability to perceive.

*Mepote* or “least” signifies a tenuous state where the people can go either way. Hopefully they will make the transition with regard to the two senses and heart. However, first must come *epistrepho* or literally to turn upon (*epi-*) resulting in being healed, *iaomai* (S ‘asa’ +). The original capacity of the two senses and heart will be restored: eyes → see, ears → hear and heart → understand.

The Hebrew text of Isaiah runs as follows:

Vs. 9-10: “And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.” Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

Isaiah pretty much knew in advance what the Lord was going to ask of him, so the words that follow here come as no surprise. “This people” conveys a slightly veiled contempt. Note the double use of hear (*shamah*) with respect to understand and see (*byn* and *ra’ah*) with respect to perceive (*yadah* or to know). Even though Isaiah was ready and willing to obey, when he heard the Lord’s words in vs. 10 he must have been dismayed. Already the people had become dull and insensitive to things divine, so how bad could it get? No small wonder that in the next verse he asks, “How long?” He has in mind the threefold negative of perception by the people, if you will:

1) The singular heart (*lev*) belonging to the plural people reveals their collective nature whether concerning good or in evil. This faculty will become fat or *shaman* which means that Isaiah will have a tough job of it, for already the people have come far along that path.

2) The people’s ears will become heavy or *kaved*, almost as though being filled with ear wax.

3) Their eyes will be shut or *shahah* which means to look around as well as to be smeared over.

The opposite of these three are see, hear and understanding as noted in the previous verse. However, the Lord adds “turn and be healed” or *shuv* and *rapha’*, the latter fundamentally meaning to sew together or to mend.

Vs. 16 opens with the small yet vital *de +* or “but” to contrast the words of the venerable Isaiah with what Jesus says about himself though he puts it somewhat indirectly. Perhaps not everyone grasps his words at once, for they require that close attention noted by the prophet which had been lacking among the people of his day, that being true now as well. Jesus calls those listening to him blessed or *makarios* (S *tuv*, both +), rather their eyes which see and their ears which hear. That is to say, those present are exactly the opposite to the ones Isaiah had addressed. However, human nature is the same at regardless of the time frame involved. Jesus is speaking of those few...very few...who right now are paying attention to him.

In vs. 17 Jesus uses the particle *amen* translated as “truly,” a strong affirmation of what he had just put forth about himself in light of Isaiah. He speaks of many prophets, obviously with Isaiah in mind, along with those who were righteous or *dikaios* (S *zadequ*, both +) who had longed to see and to hear what those right now in Jesus’ presence are privileged to be doing. This is the third time emphasis is upon sight and hearing. Yet they have a collective yearning or *epithumeo* (S *rega’*, both +) where emphasis is on the *epi-* or upon, indicative of intense *thumos* +. There comes to mind the verse from Hebrews 11.39-40 with regard to such individuals: “And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised since God had foreseen something better for us.”

After this rather lengthy interlude with regard to the parable of the sower, Jesus decides to flesh out the meaning which begins in vs. 18. Note that the verb “sown” is used for the four different types of seeds compared with the parable itself where emphasis is put upon the seed falling. I.e., we have a contrast between almost casual dropping of seed and the deliberate planting of it. As Jesus begins, the disciples and anyone else attentive enough had learned to keep quiet why he is speaking to the people in parables (cf. vs. 10). Now Jesus can continue without interruption, for the people were more disposed to this form of teaching. Actually Jesus resumes with the parable of the sower, feeling a need to flesh out his original words. Yet again he stresses the importance of hearing, for such is the way any teaching can be internalized and then be comprehended by others. He uses the verb *akouo* + or to hear a second time...right away...with regard to the *logos* + or the word of the kingdom. Jesus speaks of *basileia* + without reference to heaven or the like. In a way, *logos* and *basileia* are one and the same, an association he would like to have people keep in mind.

So when explaining the parable, Jesus refers to *akouo* or hearing in each of the four examples. The first hearing concerns the unity of the just mentioned *logos* and *basileia*. Failure to comprehend it (*suniemmi* +; S *sakal* or to perceive, recognize) gives reason for the evil one to approach and to snatch away whatever is sown. The adjective *poneros* + acts as a name for Satan, also as worthless, degenerate. Since sowing is the fundamental image here, it comes home in an intimate way when Jesus speaks of the heart or *kardia* +. It is precisely there that the one who is evil fixes his intent in order to snatch what had been sown, *harpazo* +. Keeping in mind the parable itself, this would imply

the good soil which brought forth grain in three large quantities. Jesus ends his remarks by saying that the seed at hand is that which had fallen by the path. If we keep in mind vs. 4, that means the seed which the birds had swooped down and gobbled up.

In vs. 20 Jesus speaks of the second instance of *akouo* with regard to rocky ground (cf. vs. 5, lack of good soil). That is, it pertains to a person who has heard the *logos* + and receives it at once with joy, *euthus* and *chara* (both +), this reception being, of course, the kingdom. Despite the ground being rocky, it contains enough soil for the seed to take root. However, it lacks the ability to put down roots and to be anchored in the meager soil. That means when trials or persecution arise because of the *logos*, at once (*euthus* again) one is scandalized, *skandalizo* (S *kashal*, both +) or literally tripped up.

Vs. 22 has the third example of *akouo*, seed sown among thorns, symbolic of cares of the world and taking delight in riches, *merimna* and *apate* (also as deception, deceitfulness). Both work together to choke the *logos* + making it unfruitful. Thus one ends up with a *logos* that doesn't produce anything but essentially remains sterile.

The fourth and last example of seed is in vs. 23, that which falls on good (*kalos* +) soil. As for the seeds in and by themselves with regard to these four examples, they are the same and have the potential for growth. Their development depends upon the person receiving them. In addition to hearing the *logos*, a receptive person understands it (*sun-emi* +) or being-with (the preposition *sun-*) is the key and what separates him from the first three. As with vs. 8, he yields three large harvests. Thus all in each instance a person receives the same type of seed where it germinates for a while, after which external circumstances manifest the type of fruit it will produce.

After having given a parable followed by spelling it out in detail, Jesus presents a second one in vs. 24. Actually it continues the theme of sowing seed. He feels it's an important image and wants to make the most of it even though as noted earlier he was doing this by the sea where perhaps it would have been more appropriate to use an image based upon fishing and related industries. That's what the locals were most familiar with. Still, they had to make a living, the other option primarily as by sowing and cultivating various crops. As for this second parable, Jesus presents it by of comparison, that is, *paratithemi* or to place

along side (*para-*) as with the first one. It's almost as though he was setting before his listeners a plate on a table. Here the kingdom noted last in vs. 19 is amplified, if you will, by addition "of heaven" though obviously it's the same thing. As for this phrase, we find it for the rest of the parables in this chapter.

Now Jesus compares or makes the parable like (*homoioo*, S *dama'*: to resemble) a man who sows good seed in his own field. Again, *kalos* + is the adjective which as beautiful suggests that despite being so tiny, this seed has the capacity to grow into something really stunning. All very well, but one night his enemy came, *echthros* being an adjective describing as someone who is hated. This person sowed weeds and slipped away into the darkness. Indeed he was patient, for it would take some time to distinguish between weeds and wheat, that is, several months. In the meanwhile, the person who is *echthros* may have visited the man a number of times, not even remotely letting in as to what he had done, the ruin of his harvest.

Some time before harvest or when plants began to sprout, the man who owned the field had servants go out and inspect it, *doulos* (S *havda'*, both +) more as a slave. Right away they brought to his attention that weeds were springing up along with the wheat. He didn't hesitate at all to acknowledge that an enemy was responsible. The way he phrases it intimates that he knows the man but hasn't sufficient proof to bring a charge against him. Then he makes a decision. Let the wheat and harvest grow together for the rest of the season. Separate them but only then. If the weeds were uprooted now, the wheat would be lost. Better to save as much as possible by preventative action. After this discovery the owner of the field had a sufficient amount of time to do some detective work and find out who was responsible, something the parable omits but infers. Jesus says nothing further, letting his listeners figure out how this man will deal with essentially an unknown enemy who came in the dead of night trying to destroy his livelihood.

In vs. 31 Jesus presents a third parable, one more dealing with seeds. Actually he comes off with it immediately after the second one, giving no time for those listening to digest what he has said thus far. Here the seed is specified as mustard which supposedly could grow as high as three meters. In other words, Jesus infers that something so small has the potential of growing big, really big. Not only that, birds are attracted to it and make their homes there, the verb being appropriate for building a nest, *kataskeuazo* meaning to make ready or to

prepare. Note that Jesus says “birds of the air” which doesn’t distinguish between varieties. One can’t but help compare this parable with “In my Father’s house are many rooms” [Jn 14.2]. That is, within this *oikia* or house are *mone* in abundance which also means a state of remaining (from *moneo*, to remain).

In vs. 33 we have the fourth parable, short and sweet as the one before it. It’s good to keep in mind the relative shortness of these parables as Jesus presents them, one after another. If they didn’t deal with things familiar to people in everyday life, they would be difficult to remember and pass on. Such is the important insight Jesus has and the reason why after having done so much teaching he has opted for this approach. Most likely he looks back and wishes that he had begun with parables.

The fifth parable in vs. 33 is very short, a woman who put leaven in three measures of flour, thereby causing the bread rise. Note the verb *egkrupto*, literally to put out of sight; the Syriac *tamar* means the same. Leaven obviously is crucial for bread to rise except at Passover. However, the woman doesn’t want anyone to know how much she uses so decides on maintaining secrecy so as not to reveal her recipe.

Jesus decides to take a break...a pause...vs. 34 beginning with “all this” which refers to the kingdom of heaven. His shift from teaching as just noted undergoes a definitive change, that is, from now on he speaks only in such a way which is both plain yet simultaneously enigmatic. Jesus didn’t take this on his own initiative. Something inside him or his relationship with the Father told him to use parables in order to fulfill what was spoken (*pleroo* and *rhethen*, both +) through an unmentioned prophet, actually a quote from Ps 78.2. Both the verse at hand is presented followed by the Hebrew original which contains vs. 3:

“I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”

Parable is in the plural. *Ereuyomai* means to express both forcefully and in an intelligent fashion. This makes sense when it comes to things hidden (*krupto* +) from the world’s foundation or *katabole*, literally a casting down (*kata-*). Such things the psalm spells out not in accord with the physical organization of the world but with regard to Israel’s unfaithfulness to God despite all he has done

from them. If they had a choice in the matter, the people would maintain that such things are best left hidden.

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known that our fathers have told us.”

The following remarks on the verse at hand come from a document also posted on this homepage.

The psalmist assumes the person of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs (vs. 1): “Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice?” A parable or *mashal*, as the verbal root intimates, draws comparisons in short, easy to remember expressions which is essentially the composition of Ps 78. The noun for dark sayings or *chydah* (singular) suggests a song: “I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre” [Ps 49.5]. *Chydah* also means an oracle: “With him (Moses) I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord” [Num 12.8]. Such indirect speech is needed for the people in general who are insensitive to a divine revelation similar to Moses.

As for vs. 3, it contains the dynamics of tradition in a nutshell: hear and make know (*shamah* and *yadah*), both of which are preceded by telling (*saphar*, basic meaning is to write) which is traced to earlier generations. Thus knowledge comes from hearing...and that comes from telling.

Vs. 36 brings to an apparent end Jesus’ use of parables but in essence is an extended pause, for he left the crowds and entered a house which isn’t specified as belonging to anyone in particular. This leaving, however, doesn’t mean the crowds had dispersed. Most likely they milled around waiting for Jesus to come out. As a group, the disciples put considerable importance on the parable of the weeds in the field, that is, their growing up along with the wheat. What bothered them was that the man responsible for this hasn’t been discovered.

The same concern applies to the wheat. Early on when the discovery of weeds was made the disciples thought they would be pulled up then and there. And so the parable reflected their impatience and desire to get back at anyone who is their enemy, that *echthros* of vs. 25. So a lot was riding on their request for Jesus to explain all this to them. *Diasapheo* (S *pashaq*: to make plain or easy) is the

verb where the preposition *dia-* as through is suggestive of thoroughness. In essence, this verb reveals the inner turmoil of the disciples triggered by the parable.

In vs. 37 Jesus complies with his disciples' request and begins with identifying himself as the Son of man using this phrase as though he were speaking of another person. He is sowing the seed which is *kalos* + or beautiful or with the potential to become beautiful as described above. No surprise there, really, as to Jesus' identity, for the disciples felt this was the case all along. As for the breakdown of the parable, it contains seven elements which run as follows:

- Son of man = the sower
- Field = world or *kosmos* (S *halma'*), the sum total of all things, also as adornment
- Seed which is *kalos* + = sons of the kingdom (of heaven)
- Weeds = sons of the evil one, *poneros* +
- Enemy who did the sowing = the devil, *diabolos* + (S *satana'*)
- Harvest = close of the age, *sunteleia* or completion of a duration along with *aion* +
- Reapers = *aggelos* + or angels

As for the angels, they will be quite busy at the close of the age, for Jesus as Son of man will send (*apostello* +) them on a mission, *apostello* being integral to the very nature of an angel or one-who-is-sent. As for the number of angels, we have no information but figure quite a few are involved because of the situation at hand. At least the angels will be operating in familiar territory and won't have to go far because the territory consists of the kingdom. To them it will be like putting their household in order. There they will be engaged in a twofold gathering (*sullego* connotes gathering by plucking or picking). This will be not so much evil but its causes, *skandalon* (S *kashal*, to stumble; both +) or that which causes offense and with those who do evil, *anomia* + (S *haqal*), literally as without law (*nomos* +). In a way, removal of the causes of evil and those who do it will make the kingdom secure but less inclusive. Before this removal the kingdom was big enough to contain such persons as well as its sons (cf. vs. 38).

In vs. 42 which flows from the previous verse as an extended sentence, the angels will cast both the causes of evil and evildoers into a furnace or *kaminos*, also an oven. It's presumed that flames will not consume them but eat at them

while they are weeping and gnashing their teeth. Once this has been accomplished—and there's no time span mentioned as to how long it will take—the righteous (*dikaios* +) will shine in the Father's kingdom, this being the first time the two are identified. The verb is *eklampeo* or to shine out (*ek-*). Because of the supreme importance of what's involved, Jesus concludes with the exhortation to hear (*akouo* +) or more specifically, those who have ears (cf. vs. 9). Implied are some people who do not have spiritual ears and are unable to hear.

Vs. 44 resumes with another parable, this being the sixth one which is short along with the remaining two. Now Jesus speaks of a treasure or *thesauros* + hidden in a field which a man had discovered possibly while out plowing. Despite the parable being short, it's a bit strange. The man doesn't remove the treasure but buys the field. He had to approach the owner of the field feigning a certain indifference so as not to reveal what he had discovered. After all, he was willing to sink all in his possession for it. By all means he kept this quiet from the current owner. If the person who owned the field discovered this, he'd know something fishy was up. As for the treasure's contents, it must have been significant, otherwise never would he have put forth everything he had for it.

Jesus introduces the seventh parable in vs. 45 with *palin* + or again due to the shortness of the remaining ones. Here we have a merchant (*emporos*) looking for fine (*kalos* +) pearls, the verb being *zeteo* +. This could be at a market or by the sea where he had direct access to those whose business is to harvest pearls. Like the man who had discovered the treasure in the field, the merchant sells (*piprasko*) everything in his possession for a pearl of great value, *polutimos* literally much honor or dear. Obviously he has no intent of hanging on to this special pearl but waits for an occasion to sell it for an even greater price. Perhaps this is his how he makes a living, moving from one market to another investing all he has in order to gain even more. While he may be gaining wealth, at the same time he's constantly taking risks. It all could backfire in a moment's notice.

As in the case of vs. 44, vs. 47 begins with *palin* + or again for the same reason as noted there. Now for the eighth and last time Jesus uses a parable where he likens the kingdom of heaven to a net cast into the sea which draws in all sorts of fish. At last, the disciples said to themselves, Jesus is speaking language familiar to us. Easily they can picture themselves sorting out the good from the

bad fish, etc, on the shore. Chances are they felt a certain nostalgia for the recent past and may even have been tempted to go back to their work, let alone their families which they have abandoned pretty much on the spot. Once more the two words *sunteleia* and *aion* are used, the close of the age, the root of the former suggestive of attaining completion. Again the angels will come out, *exerchomai* + implying that they are remaining in their stations ready to spring into action at any moment. Their task will be to separate the *poneros* from the *dikaios* (both +) or the good from the righteous. Jesus also uses the image of a furnace or *kaminos* + into which the former will be cast and consumed by fire along with weeping and gnashing of teeth. The second mention of this implies that weeping and gnashing are more painful than the flames themselves.

After having spent considerable time and effort expounding these eight parables, in vs. 51 Jesus asks—and it could be the crowds or disciples or both—if they have understood what he had said, *sunimi* +. As one voice they replied simply “yes.” However, we have to qualify it somewhat. In several places Jesus had to explain what he meant, so the positive response may include more time explaining than inferred.

In vs. 52 Jesus uses the positive example of a scribe, positive in that such a person is part of the religious establishment at odds with Jesus. However, the scribe at hand had undergone training or *matheteuo* (S *lamad*) or to be a pupil or disciple for the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is using this wording to characterize a scribe trained in the *Torah*. Not only does he speak of a scribe as such but as someone who mirrors a householder who brings forth from his treasure both the old and the new. Again we have *thesauros* as having been hidden in the field (cf. vs. 44) but here it can mean a storeroom. Making sure it is well stocked is the responsibility of an *oikodespote* who could be a trusted slave. He does this not for his own benefit but for that of the family for whom he works as well as the household which is considered an extension of the owner’s family.

Vs. 53 has Jesus doing two actions at once: finishing with parables and departing from where he had been delivering them. The two verbs are *teleo* + as bringing to completion and *metairo*, *airo* being the root prefaced with the preposition *meta-* or after signifying a more permanent departure. He felt that speaking in parables was enough in that those hearing them grasped their significance as best as possible. Now it was time to return to his own land or *patris*, more along the lines of fatherland, familiar territory, together with the

people who lived there. This is stated in vs. 54 which begins with the conjunctive *kai* (vs. 53 begins with it as well) to show that he had made the move without delay.

Upon arriving in his home territory—which doesn't necessarily mean he stayed put at Nazareth—Jesus doesn't miss a beat but begins teaching (*didasko*, S *yalaph*; both +) in the local synagogue. As for this teaching, apparently it was not in the form of parables. Jesus may have thought it best to revert to an approach familiar to the people, that is, more along the lines of what rabbis were doing. It didn't take long for the congregation to ask about him. Actually they have a certain hostility toward Jesus and come off with six rhetorical questions in rapid fire, referring to him as “this man” which is somewhat derogatory:

- Where did he get such wisdom and mighty works, *sophia* and *dunamis*, both + (S *chakma'* and *chayel*)?
- Isn't “this” the carpenter's son? with *houtos* again somewhat derogatory.
- Isn't his mother called Mary? If those who were somewhat older had been present, they'd recall her doubtful pregnancy.
- Aren't his brothers which are names as four familiar to us?
- Aren't his sisters with us or in the synagogue? By including them, the people are question every aspect of Jesus' family.
- Where did “this” man get all this? which is similar to the first question.

Vs. 57 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” which follows immediately after this disdainful questioning of Jesus who clearly must have gotten wind of it. He could tell his audience was murmuring against him by the way they'd cast furtive looks now and again plus the way they'd gather in small groups. Most present were far from strangers. As some of the questions reveal, they had thorough knowledge of Jesus. He was fully aware of this, but it didn't prevent him from going ahead with speaking in the synagogue. One wonders what kind of introduction the leader gave the congregation. Indeed, a very awkward moment, but one thing is for certain. The silence was deafening. You could literally hear a pin drop. And so the attitude of all is summed up by the verb *skandalizo* noted earlier but better rendered in the literal sense of being tripped up.

Jesus came off with a response which was the only one suitable for this occasion. A prophet isn't welcomed in both his own land and house, *patris* and

*oikia* (both +). *Atimos* (S *ysaher*: to despise, disgrace) is the adjective, lacking both honor and respect. Thus Chapter Thirteen comes to a conclusion with the last verse beginning with the conjunctive *kai*, indicative of Jesus' response. He didn't do many mighty works (*dunamis* +) by reason of the local population's *apistia* or lack of belief. Nevertheless, Jesus had performed some which go unspecified and most likely consisted of various types of healing.

While his disciples were present and saw all this, they took some comfort in at least not being from the neighborhood but were outsiders from the Lake of Galilee area. They had just arrived from there with Jesus who had taught the locals through parables. In the meanwhile, the disciples were paying close attention to the two methods Jesus employed for teaching, the parables just noted and now as in the synagogue most likely expounding on a passage from scripture.

Because the people present had so much up on Jesus, they were quick to express their mixed emotions. On one hand some felt awkward at being associated with him while others sympathized with him not being accepted by his own. The disciples could echo the same sentiments but by reason of their association with Jesus, they refrained from speaking publicly. That, at least is to their credit.

## Chapter Fourteen

The observations pertinent to this chapter are relatively brief. The reason? The text is straight-forward by nature and consists of two basic parts, Herod the tetrach with regard to John the Baptist's beheading and the feeding of the five thousand followed by the second incident of a storm on the lake. Obviously both are full of meaning and need to be fleshed as with the other examples.

"At that time" or at that *kairos* (S *zavan*, both +) is the same phrase that begins Chapter Twelve. Here it has an ominous air to it by reason of Herod the tetrach or Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Thus "at that time" or *kairos* implies a series of events that this ruler will set in motion and have far reaching repercussions. For word to reach the highest political level in the land indeed says something of how news about Jesus spread, chiefly through reporting done by the scribes and Pharisees. As for the word fame, *akoe* means the faculty of hearing, listening. In addition to this, all the rumors about healing, miracles and

expulsion of demons were bound to catch notice. The Roman authorities, obviously, would be the next stop which would cause big problems. This, of course, is from the political point of view. We can be certain that Jesus was aware of his *akoe* if not directly then by his disciples or other followers.

Herod was prompted to say to his servants—his flunkies all too ready to take in anything he said—that in actuality Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead. For this reason powers are at work in him, *dunamis* + and *energeo* also as to operate. As far as the text goes, John did no such works, presumably miracles. Despite the more reliable reports from first hand witnesses as the scribes and Pharisees, Herod chose to confuse the identity of the two. No one, of course, dare contradict him, so they let him believe what he wanted.

Vss. 3-12 are a kind of flash-back to when Herod had arrested John the Baptist and beheaded him. Jesus was well aware that Herod might do the same to him or in his distorted mind, do again to John. Herod must have thought that beheading John was sufficient to keep him dead, but apparently it was not. This time around he'd had to do something like incinerate John to prevent him from yet another return to life. Despite wanting to put John to death, Herod feared the people, that is, all those who had gone out to him for baptism. In their mind this made John to be a prophet.

The familiar story continues with the daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod, she be prompted by her mother to ask for John's head, the verb being *probibazo* (S *yalaph* +), literally as to cause to come forward. What's interesting here are the multiple occurrences of the conjunctive *kai* as "and" (that is, ten of them) which shows the fast succession of events between vss. 9 and 12. They are listed as follows:

- kai* the king was sorry
- kai* his guests
- kai* (not translated in **RSV**) he sent
- kai* his head was brought
- kai* was given to the girl
- kai* she brought it to her mother
- kai* his disciples
- kai* took the body
- kai* buried it

-*kai* told Jesus

Such a heinous deed was bound to get out and spread like wildfire. Some of John's disciples made it a point to run and tell Jesus, warning him to go into hiding or leave the area. For Jesus to do so would be to abandon the people as well as his disciples. Instead, he chose to withdraw (*anachoreo* +) temporarily by getting into a boat and head for a lonely place. The adjective *eremos* (S *charev*: waste, uninhabited) also means desolate and goes unspecified but most likely a spot he had frequented fairly often. It seems that Jesus does this unaccompanied by his disciples which means he was quite shaken by the news. It'd come as no surprise that he had doubts as to what he was doing because now he is a man with a bounty on his head, confused with John the Baptist.

As expected, the crowds are always hovering in the background, this time most likely talking about Herod confusing Jesus with John. They knew better but were powerless to change the situation. Still, what was top-most in their minds was to be cured of their various ills. Many were familiar with Jesus withdrawing by himself which includes knowing his favorite spots. Although they weren't on the other side of the lake, they were relatively close by which is why they hastened there on foot. At the same time they kept an eye on Jesus just in case he changed his mind. Jesus too kept an eye on the people with that sinking feeling of no escape.

So Jesus ended up where he often found himself, in the minds of a great *ochlos* + and healed their sick out of compassion, *splagchnizomai* (S *racham*, both +). In the meanwhile the disciples were off on their own when word reached them about how Jesus withdrew and ended up doing his customary healing, etc. They must have felt sorry for their master being so hounded, by now accustomed to him having cured so many people. The disciples wanted to be alone with Jesus and asked him to dismiss the crowds to go off and buy bread. This, of course, was not out of sympathy but simply to get rid of them. Jesus saw through them and objected. Instead, he told the disciples bluntly to feed the people themselves. Later on when they had gone off to found various churches they must have looked back on this with some regret. It was the directness of the situation that made a lasting impression, this having become a cautionary tale as how not to treat members of the new communities which required constant support.

When the disciples said they had meager rations...enough for their own use...Jesus told them to bring them to him. Knowing from past experience that Jesus would multiply what they had, at once they handed it over to him. Part of the reason was that perhaps they could not do the same and for this reason they paid close attention. It was getting on toward evening yet no one thought of leaving. If Jesus was going to remain where he was, so would the people. Once the disciples managed to have the people sit down, Jesus looked up literally into (*anablepo* with *eis*) heaven and blessed the five loaves and two fish, *eulogeo* or literally, to speak well (*eu-*) of.

And so the “great throng” of vs. 14 ate and was satisfied. Actually it’s next to impossible imagining the bread and fish being reproduced. The next best thing is that some kind of improvised table was arranged. As soon as the disciples took the fish off, more appeared and so forth until every one of the five thousand men had enough. Commentators are fond of mentioning this number and adding that women and children aren’t counted which would make the crowd far larger. Indeed, that was a lot of multiplying. Interestingly Matthew leaves off this incident with the people strewn all over the grass not making a move despite the approach of night.

We have to keep in mind that according to vs. 15 all this activity was taking place in a relatively short period of time shortly before darkness set in. Now in vs. 22 Jesus made the disciples get into the boat, that is, to go off on their own without giving an explanation. They knew that he came to this place to be alone and figured he wishes to do so if possible. The verb is *anaghazo*, a rather forceful word meaning to compel. It’s amplified by the adverb *eutheos* + or immediately.

Jesus preferred to be left alone as he dismissed the crowds, *apoluo* + more as a loosening. Chances are that by now it’s completely dark which means the crowds decided to remain where they were until dawn. After all, everyone had been fed, made camp fires and simply enjoyed themselves. It provided a perfect opportunity for Jesus to make good his escape to a nearby mountain. There he would do what he had set out to do, namely, to pray, *proseuchomai* (*S tsalal*: to intend, lean toward). Vs. 23 says with some satisfaction, that “he was there alone.” The same verse mentions evening, so this must have been very late or just prior to complete darkness.

Vs. 24 follows uninterrupted as part of the preceding verse, again keeping in mind that by now darkness had descended. Despite the fact that Jesus yearned to be alone and pray, the disciples who had set out on a boat were being swamped by waves. This is the second incident of the disciples being tossed about on the lake, the first having been associated with a “great storm” [8.24]. Here, however, there’s no mention of such a storm except waves and wind. What makes the situation at hand just as bad if not worse is that it was night. Vs. 24 says the disciples were some distant from the land.

The weather kicked up shortly after the disciples left Jesus or as vs.22 has it, Jesus compelled them to leave. Being seasoned fishermen with intimate knowledge of the lake, something told them no. nevertheless, they obeyed. Here we have insight that Jesus foresaw what would happen and provide a chance to test their faith in him. In the meanwhile the twelve couldn’t help but recall what happened to them in the other storm, now desperate because Jesus wasn’t with them. The weather remained foul most of the night, for on the fourth watch or the watch prior to dawn Jesus came walking on the water toward them. In other words, the storm had lasted most of the night. Obviously those in the boat couldn’t see Jesus, thinking him to be a ghost or *phantasma* (S *chezoa*: appearance, form, figure) also as an apparition.

Not only that, Jesus was walking as between valleys produced by the waves. He’d be seen one second and disappear the next. All this continued in the pre-dawn dim light making what they beheld all the more frightening. Finally...at long last...Jesus spoke up. Note the common verb *lego* +, no drama with his voice being heard over the sound of the waves, this being a miracle in and by itself. Jesus simply said “Take heart” or *tharseo* (S *lavev*, also to console), also as to be resolute. He had no need to identify himself other than say it was he followed by no reason to fear.

In vs. 28 Peter has some doubts as to Jesus saying “It is I.” If it is truly Jesus, he asks for the ability to approach him on the water. This situation suggests that while Jesus’ words could be heard, he remained some distance from the boat. After Peter gets out and starts walking he sees (*blepo* +) the wind. Of course you don’t see the wind but the water being whipped up by it. This is what caused Peter to be fearful, crying out to Jesus for help. Jesus responds, calling Peter a man of little faith, *oligopistos*. Such are the words Peter heard as he was about to drown, words he will never forget.

Once Jesus and Peter got on board—and Peter still had to walk on the water—the disciples worshiped Jesus, *proskuneo* + (S *saged*) more as to express reverence. The verbal root fundamentally means to kiss, the preposition *pros-* it signifies direction towards-which. Such reverence took the form as acknowledging Jesus not as Son of man but as Son of God. This is the first time we find such words which previously the devil had addressed Jesus during his temptation after having been baptized by John.

After this dramatic incident the text doesn't say that the waves and wind ceased but presumably such was the case, the time now being dawn or close to it. Due to conditions on the lake, they ended up at Gennesaret which doesn't seem to be intentional, this being near Capernaum. Since Jesus had spent time there, as soon as the boat reached shore, the locals recognized him, *epiginosko* (S *yadah*, both +). As expected, people fanned out with the intent of bringing their sick to him for healing which he did though it's not mentioned explicitly. Instead, we have they wanting to touch (*hupto* and S *qarev*, to be near; both +) just the fringe of his garment which did the trick. In a way, that was far easier though Jesus ran the risk of being manhandled.

## Chapter Fifteen

*Tote* + or “then” begins this new chapter and functions like a conjunctive which in this instance shows a close connection between what had happened in the close of the previous chapter (Jesus and his disciples at Gennesaret) and the Pharisees and scribes who had come to Jesus. Note that they came from Jerusalem suggests that their agents reported Jesus' arrival which prompted them to make haste as quickly as possible. Being from the capitol infers that such men have a certain respect but that's pretty much it. Obviously they were eager to get a first hand look at Jesus and his activities. At least their impending arrival gave some interval time which isn't disclosed. This delegation didn't mince words. Immediately they asked what had been bothering them all along, namely, why does Jesus and his disciples transgress their elders' tradition? Note the two verbs prefaced with the preposition *para-* or beside: *parabaino* and *paradosis* (S *havar* or to pass over or by and *mashlmanutha'* or a delivering), a stepping beside and the handing over or surrender of something such as

information. Actually this is the first time both words are mentioned in this Gospel.

Without missing a beat the Pharisees and scribes throw out more precisely what had preoccupied them. They noticed that Jesus' disciples (note focus on them, not Jesus) don't wash their hands when eating. To make such a statement means they had an eagle eye waiting and watching if not directly then through their strategically placed agents...in other words, religious police. To focus on that must have both amused and saddened Jesus. However, it was a warning he took to heart. Both the eyes and the ears based in Jerusalem were quite concerned. As for the disciples, this scrutiny put them under the microscope as well, something to which they were unaccustomed.

Without realizing it, the Pharisees and scribes have walked into a trap, the same one they've attempted to set. The Greek text has the fairly typical "answered and said," the second usually not translated but added for emphasis. For example, the last time this occurs is 14.28. It'd be more accurate to say that Jesus doesn't respond but responds at once using the same two terms, *parabaino* and *paradosis* with regard God's commandment, the noun being *entole* + (S *puqeydana*) also as a mandate. Actually he doesn't bring up the issue of washing hands, figuring it's too lame. Instead, he decides to challenge these apparently educated men by citing two verses from the prophet Isaiah with respect to honoring one's parents. First we have the original followed by the verses at hand, Ex 20.12 and 21.17 respectively:

"Honor your Father and your mother that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you." The verb *kavad* or to honor fundamentally means to be heavy, the idea being to give weight, if you will, to the person so esteemed. Note that it has an end in mind indicated by *lemahan* + or "in order that." This serves to make the transition not so much to a long life in and by itself but one on the land which the Lord is giving, 'adamah more as soil, the physical land itself. Thus parents and land are the vital connection for one's personal identity.

"Honor father and your mother." The verb is *timao* (S *yeqar*, both +).

"Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death." *Qalal* or to curse is the exact opposite of *kavad*. As pertaining to one's parents, it merits

being put to death. Note absence of land. So to perform such a terrible crime automatically precludes not being associated with the ‘*adamah* or land which in a sense is a nourishing mother.

“He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him surely die.” *Kakologeio* or to speak evil consists of *kakos* and *logeio* or evil and to speak, both + (S *tsacha*’).

Both the **RSV** and **NIV** point to Mk 7.11 in reference to vs. 5 which deals with the same issue. That is to say, the issue of Corban as found there, a religious vow which an irresponsible Jewish son could use to dedicate to God his earnings that otherwise would go to support his parents. Jesus applies this to his accusers, the Pharisees and scribes, that they’ve made void the divine word or *logos* + for the sake of tradition. The verb is *akuroo*, also as to cancel or to set aside. So this tendency to focus upon minutiae of religious observance can lead to all sorts of contortions as well as distortions. It’s especially dangerous when dealing with the divine *logos*.

Jesus comes right out and calls the Pharisees and scribes what they truly are, hypocrites of whom Isaiah not just prophesied but did so in a manner which literally is *kalos* +. First comes the Hebrew text followed by the one at hand, that is, Is 29.13:

“And the Lord said, ‘Because this people draws near with their mouth and honors me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote.’” Actually this verse continues into the next as an extended sentence worth noting: “therefore, behold, I will again do marvelous things with this people, wonderful and marvelous, and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hid.”

As for the first verse from Isaiah above, it begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” following a vision resembling words of a book that’s sealed and unable to be read. That alone would be enough as pertaining to the Pharisees and scribes. However, the text at hand speaks of two distances, if you will: to draw near and to be far off, *nagash* also as approach and *rachaq*. Also the verb *kavad* + or to honor is thrown in which here is the same as *rachaq*. To the first belongs the mouth and lips and to the latter, heart or *lev* +, that is to say, external vs. internal. Because it’s not possible to live this contradiction over a

period of time, fear (*yir'ah*) of the Lord or as the text puts it directly, “to me,” is a command or *mitsvah*. On the human level that enables it to be learned by rote or literally “instruction (*melumadah*, from *lamad* +) of mortals.”

“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

*Timao* + and *sebomai* (S *yeqar* and *dachel* or to fear) or to honor and to worship (as through rites and gestures) here are taken in a superficial or external manner. As for the verb *apecho* or to be far, it's prefaced with the preposition *apo-* or “from” along with the same preposition as “from me;” i.e., a double “from” if you will. While at this distance from the Lord the people, that is, the nation of Israel, are teaching human precepts as though there were doctrines. Note the verb *didasko* (S *yalaph*, both +) and noun *didaskalia*, the latter derived from the former. *Entalma* or commandment is used in the sense of officially binding. Thus what's external (lips and heart as far) is being handed down to another generation.

In vs. 10 the scene shifts at once, almost as though Jesus turned his head from dealing with the Pharisees and scribes to the people. Note that they didn't seem to be present, for he had to call them, *proskaleo* (S *qara'*, both +), the preposition *pros-* indicative they're in for a sharp rebuke. The recent unpleasant encounter does have the possibility of providing a teaching opportunity when he begins with the exhortation to both hear and to understand, *akouo* and *suniemai* (S *sakal*, both +). Jesus makes a distinction between *eiserchomai* + and *ekporeuomai* (that is, *eis-* and *ek-* or into and from), the latter as defilement, the verb *koinoo* (S *shov*) literally to make common which suggests being reduced to a low level. Such a lesson requires no further explanation which is evident from the situation at hand.

The disciples take Jesus aside, posing a question so obvious that it seemed close to being ridiculous while at the same time it reveals a certain naivete on their part. They assumed Jesus as unaware of the Pharisees (they don't mention the scribes) being offended at his use of the verse from Isaiah, *skandalizo* and *logos* (S *kashal*, both +). Surely he did his best to refrain his astonishment at their naivete but decided on the spot to use it as a take off point for their instruction. Jesus responds in vs. 13 with the example of a plant or *phuteia* being the generic such term. Those plants not put in the ground by Jesus' heavenly Father will be

uprooted. Use of the first person singular ('my') with regard to the Father makes this personal. Also it serves to highlight the violence inferred by *ekrizoo*, a strong verb more along the lines of tearing out or better, from (*ek-*). Given the disciples naivete, they may have wondered who was responsible for those plants not put in the soil by the Father even though it was in the context of Jesus dealing with the Pharisees.

In the spirit of the parable of letting the wheat and weeds grow together (cf. 13.24-30), Jesus comes off with the best advice yet for his disciples. Don't force anything but simply let the Pharisees alone, *aphiemi* +. Despite the fact of being guides (*odegos*), they are blind. This hits home even more since according to vs. 1, the Pharisees (and scribes) are from Jerusalem and therefore are assumed to have greater authority. So if a blind guide is responsible for leading someone equally blind, invariably both will fall into the same pit.

It may seem difficult to believe, but shortly afterwards in vs. 15 Peter asks Jesus to explain the parable. Actually what Jesus just stated is quite brief and doesn't seem to merit that designation. Again, a manifestation of naivete which for Jesus had a certain charm yet bull-headedness. No small wonder that he exclaimed "Are you still without understanding?" or *asunetos* which also could be rendered void of understanding, *sunieti* + (S *sakal* + with the negative). It's intensified by the addition of the adverb *akme* or "still," alternately as "even yet."

Not only this, but Jesus adds a rhetorical question more as an exclamation revealing his frustration. Note here the alternation between in and out (*eis* and *ek*) as found in vs. 11, *eiserchomai* and *ekballo*, both +. That is to say, what goes into (*eis*) one's mouth passes into (*eis*) stomach comes out the other end. That is to say, the *ek* of *ekballo* goes into (*eis*) the drain or *aphedron*.

In contrast we have in vs. 18 *de* + or "but" and a fourfold use of the preposition *ek*: that which goes out from one's mouth has its source in the heart or *kardia* +: *ekporeuomai* + → *ek* (mouth) → *exerchomai* + → *ek* (*kardia*). The list of seven sources of defilement coming from this fourfold *ek* is as follows: evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness and slander. The verb signifying defilement is *koinoo* +, not eating with unwashed hands.

Vs. 21 begins tellingly enough not only with Jesus leaving Gennesaret (cf. 14.34) but withdrawing (*exerchomai* and *anachoreo*, both +) some distance to the district of Tyre and Sidon. In other words, both verbs intimate that Jesus was quite disgusted with his encounter with the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem. Why he went to this area isn't stated but perhaps because he wanted to disappear for a while and let things quiet down. Shortly the true reason for him being there will be revealed, his encounter with a woman begging on behalf of her daughter. It'd come as no surprise that he took this opportunity to explain how he as well as his disciples are to relate to the religious authorities. While the danger has passed, it was only temporary. For sure they'd be back.

Vs. 22 begins with *idou* + or "behold" to show the sudden appearance of the Canaanite woman. Her identity as from Canaan or the local area is deliberate, that she isn't an Israelite though has her roots from among the original inhabitants of the land. Not only did she come out (*exerchomai* +) but cried out to Jesus, *krazo* (S *qara'*, both +) which also means to shriek. At first she gave the impression that something might be wrong with her, but she was desperate over the condition of her daughter. Right away she blurts out for Jesus to have mercy on her, *eleo* (S *racham*, both +). She figured by using the formal title Son of David in an area designated as Canaan he would comply more readily. The last time it's found in 9.27 by two blind men and before that, by the angel which appeared to Joseph (cf. 1.20). The more precise reason for this woman being so distraught is that her daughter is not just possessed by a demon, *daimonizomai* + but severely so, the adverb *kakos* +. The Syriac has the verb *davar*, fundamentally as to lead with the adverb *beysha'yth* (badly) and noun *shi'ra'* for devil or demon.

Vs. 23 adds to the drama at hand in a kind of indirect way, namely, that Jesus didn't respond with a single word or *logos* +. On top of this his disciples came, this implying that they may have not been with Jesus but were elsewhere and attracted by the commotion. When they arrived they took one look at this foreigner...and woman...begging Jesus to dismiss her, *apoluo* + which is more as to loosen in the sense of to shake off. It seems they were more bothered than he by her incessant *krazo* +. Jesus responds but intentionally within the woman's ears that he was sent exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the verb *apollumi* + or to experience complete destruction. Note the emphasis upon "was sent" which by now the disciples knew Jesus was referring to the Father. The image of sheep, implies that those killing members of the house of Israel

are wolves, perhaps the occupying power of Rome. Again, Jesus is saying this in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon at some distance from the capitol Jerusalem.

You have to admire the simplicity and earnestness of this woman as recounted in vs. 25. She was undeterred both by Jesus and the disciples (we can add those looking on at this spectacle), came up and knelt before him *proskuneo* (S saged, both +. Her request is put in one word only, *boetheo* or help, to furnish aid. Still Jesus rebuked her by saying it isn't fair (*kalos* +) to cast the bread of children to the dogs. The woman agreed, but responds at once by saying that even dogs eat crumbs thrown to them. When speaking in this brusque, even crude manner Jesus knew that he was beaten. Both he and the woman were playing out a dialogue they both knew was in a way not pertinent to the situation but intended for the benefit of the disciples and others present. Her pluckiness shows that she'd be an ideal follower of Jesus; even before he had come on the scene she was as such which is why essentially Jesus had gone to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

In vs. 28 Jesus said that the woman had great faith and that what she wanted will be done. He doesn't do it in person, that is, heal the daughter possessed by a demon. Rather, he does it from a distance. While this is the reason why the woman approached Jesus—and being possessed is no small matter—it's secondary to the dialogue that just took place. We can imagine the expression of joy and satisfaction on the face of Jesus and the woman which was one and the same. Because of this she could hasten home with confidence and a desire to spread news about what Jesus had done for her.

In vs. 29 Jesus leaves the Tyre and Sidon region and heads for the Sea of Galilee. Indeed, it was worth the effort to have gone to this area simply to have that encounter with the woman who was a Canaanite, not an Israelite. The disciples never said a word throughout all this but kept silent. They were essentially engaged in a learning process, sometimes painful to absorb, for their future work of founding churches, etc. They may have not had a clear idea this was the intent but are to be credited for remaining with Jesus.

Jesus decides to ascend a mountain, perhaps the same mountain as in Chapter Five. Vs. 29 simply says that he sat there, but far more is involved because great crowds—that ever present *ochlos* +--was right behind him. Again, they brought those with various afflictions which must have taken a supreme effort

ascending the mountain. You'd think that Jesus was insensitive to their needs, fully realizing the almost super-human effort involved. Yet he was on the mountaintop for a specific reason not made explicit but intimated. Jesus needed to be in an elevated spot for the same reason why the Lord appeared on a mountain to Moses. If it were on a flat plain or valley, the sense of drama and exercise of authority would be completely absent. At the same time the *ochlos* wasn't phased one bit, and Jesus was fully aware of this fact. For them and despite carrying up those so physically burdened, it was as though the mountain didn't exist.

Once Jesus had sat down he waited for people to assemble, taking in the incredible scene of lame, crippled, blind people along with untold illnesses slowing making their way up to him. In the previous instance all this was brand new to Jesus, his disciples and those in attendance. Now everyone had an idea what to expect, that Jesus would continue to teach and to heal, hopefully with emphasis upon the latter. Thus the *ochlos* brought the sick and laid them at (*para* or beside) Jesus' feet. As before, space on the mountaintop is severely limited, so these people must have been draped around the summit. As soon as everyone was settled, Jesus simply healed (*therapeuo* and S 'asa'; both +) everyone. It seemed he did this at once, with a gesture and perhaps a few words, nothing more.

In vs. 31 we have the *ochlos* wondering or *thaumazo* +, something the text doesn't mention earlier. Perhaps they were astonished at the suddenness with which so many people had been cured, that is those who were dumb, maimed, lame and blind as for emphasis. The mountain must have resounded with a cacophony of delight by those so healed that it could be heard for miles around. Most importantly—and this must have delighted Jesus—this took the form of glorifying not just God but the God of Israel, *doxazo* + (S *shavach*).

We can assume that in vs. 32 Jesus moved throughout the recently cured people who were glorifying God. The text says that some three days had passed meaning everyone was camped out on an exposed height without having sufficient food and shelter. Despite this, they wanted to stay which is why Jesus has compassion on them, *splagchnizomai* (S *racham*, both +). He doesn't want to dismiss so many people without taking care of them even though the situation now had greatly improved because no one was left who wasn't cured. Jesus was thinking aloud at this time which prompted his disciples to ask where they can

get enough bread to feed everyone. The miracle about to happen is secondary. What's at stake here is the complete forgetfulness of the disciples. They had forgotten the earlier experience recounted in 14.14+, the multiplication of loaves and fish. However, the people had one up on the disciples. They had heard of how Jesus provided food for the others and trusted that he would do the same.

And so this chapter concludes with the multiplication of loaves and fish. Note that vs. 36 has Jesus giving these to the disciples who in turn handed them over to those present. Thus the disciples were caught in between, as it were, which must have been quite embarrassing. At the same time they dare not utter a word as to this miracle even among themselves. Jesus, in turn, remained quiet. Thus the last verse has him sending the crowds away while he got into a boat headed for the region of Magadan south of Capernaum. However, the text doesn't say if the disciples accompanied him. If they did, they figured it was better to go in a separate boat. Perhaps Jesus getting in this boat was a deliberate ploy on his part. He knew the disciples would remember the two instances of being on the lake during a violent storm. In one Jesus was on board and in another, he came to them walking on the water. So the lesson at hand is to be mindful of past events where Jesus had intervened and never forget them.