

## 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 remained 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 someone fairly well off, the owner knowing that Jesus would have his customary retinue in tow.

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 before Jesus began to address the people slightly off shore 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. Most likely 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. 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 vaguely 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 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 at the time of sowing they didn’t appear.

-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 man 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 unmanifest 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 would 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 have" against "they don't have." 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 or where it can be used in the sense of being initiated. 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 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 *sunemi*, 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:

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, standing in for “indeed” whereas the latter is to see in the sense of having the power of sight. Their opposites: *sunemi* 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 runs as follows:

9) “And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: “Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.” 10) 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 both times. 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 at the same time 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 (*suniami* +; 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 contained enough soil for the seed to take root. However, it lacks the ability to put down roots and 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 (*suniami* +) 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 in all its tiny-ness, 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, this 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. 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 is saying 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 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 and expected to be in bread 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 construction 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 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:

- Again, 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. 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 (*dikaïos* +) will shine in the Father’s kingdom, this being the first time the two are identified. The verb is *eklampō* 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 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. 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 have he 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.

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. They can just 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. Again 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 with 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, *suniemī* +. 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 be tinged with some fear and embarrassment the people tried to cover up.

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 may be using this wording to characterize a scribe trained in the *Torah*. Not only does Jesus 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*, a paterfamilias. He does this not for his own benefit but for that of his family as well as household which is considered an extension of his 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* 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 native land—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 his 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.

Because the people present had so much up on Jesus, they were quick to express their mixed emotions. On one hand they felt awkward at being associated with him while on the other hand they sympathized with Jesus not being accepted by his own. The disciples could echo the same sentiments but by reason of their association with Jesus, 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. Although both are full of meaning, in a way they don't lend themselves to being fleshed out easily as in other instances.

“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 the mention 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 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 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 an *dee* 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 ever 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. Certainly they weren't on the other side of the lake but 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* + where he 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 remained quite fragile.

When the disciples said they had meager rations, enough for their own use, Jesus told them to bring it to him. Given their familiarity with what Jesus could do, right away they sensed he would multiply the food to satisfy the crowd. Perhaps they could how to do the same, so 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 imaging 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 (not including women and children) had enough. 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 100% darkness.

Vs. 24 follows uninterrupted as part of the preceding verse, again keeping in mind that by now it was total darkness. 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] whereas here 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 and 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. This gives a hint that he foresaw what would happen and provide a chance to test their faith in him. 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. Thus the storm lasted most of th night. Obviously those in the boat couldn't see Jesus, thinking him to be a ghost or *phantasma* (S *chezoo'*, appearance, form, figure) also as an apparition.

Not only that, Jesus was walking as between mounds, that is, waves where he would 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 does get out and start 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 does so, 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 and with 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 they use 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 (*hapto*, 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 are highly respected and that superiors got wind of 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. Jesus' disciples (note focus on them, not Jesus) don't wash their hands when eating. To make such a statement means the two groups have had an eagle eye waiting and watching if not directly then through their strategically placed agents or 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.

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 blows back 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 that'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.” *Kakologeo* or to speak evil consists of *kakos* and *logeo* 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 leaned 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 has 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, if you will. The recent unpleasant encounter does have the possibility of providing a teaching opportunity when he begins with the exhortation to both hear and understand, *akouo* and *suniemmi* (S *sakal*, both +). Jesus makes a distinction between *eiserchomai* + and *ekporeuomai* (that is, *eis-* and *ek-*), 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, *aphiemmi* +. 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 +) implying 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 that Jesus have mercy on her, *eleeo* (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 *beysa'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 love 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 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 didn't have to hasten home but make her way there at her leisure.

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 not abandoning 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 gathering around 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*, 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. 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 not 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.

## Chapter Sixteen

Use of the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” gives a clear impression that this new chapter flows immediately from the conclusion of the last one where Jesus gets into a boat and lands at Magadan. It is as though the almost inescapable presence of the Pharisees and scribes climbed into the same boat with Jesus, they being impossible to avoid. While not true literally, this seems to be an essential part of the story which Matthew wishes to convey.

This time both groups (whether or not they came from Jerusalem as in 15.1 isn't specified but could be presumed) have the intention of testing Jesus, *peirazo* (S *nasa'*, both +). This verse is noted last with regard to the devil who actually goes by that name as in 4.3. With that in mind, we could say that the Pharisees, scribes and devil/tempter are similar and perform the same function. Here the temptation takes the form of asking not just a sign or *semeion* (S '*ata'*, both +) but one from heaven which means they expect it to come down to earth from above right away.

Instead of acceding to their request as he had done with the devil, Jesus turns the tables on them. He gives an example familiar to everyone with regard to telling the weather reflected in the ditty “Red sky in morning, sailors take warning. Red sky at night, sailors' delight.” In the case at hand, when it's evening = fair weather and morning = storming weather, both depending upon the color in the sky. Jesus continues by saying that yes, the Pharisees and scribes can interpret the sky's appearance, *diakrino* (S *baqa'*, to examine, inquire) literally as to judge through (*dia-*).

This ability based upon common sense fails, however, when applied to signs of the times, *seimeion* and *kairos* (S '*ata'* and *zavan*, all +). Jesus equates this failure to the current generation being evil and adulterous, *poneros* and *moichalis*, both + (S *byesh* + and *gor*). Actually this is the second time Jesus describes the current generation, the first being in 12.38. To be evil is one thing but adulterous is another...worse...a fact which wasn't lost on the Pharisees and scribes. We can assume they or some of their party were the same addressed earlier. As for the sign, only one applies, that of Jonah. Jesus didn't have to elaborate because it was so obvious. Also it was driven home by the fact of Jesus both leaving and departing, *kataleipo* and *aperchomai* +. Note the two prepositions: *kata-* or down and *apo-* or from.

The departing and leaving of vs. 4 carries over into the next verse with the disciples having gotten into a boat, their destination being the other side of the lake. Nothing

is said about Jesus accompanying them. The point stressed here is how to escape from the Pharisees and Sadducees as quickly as humanly possible. The same applies to the destination. This hasty departure is enhanced by the fact that the disciples forgot to bring along any bread. Jesus knew this from the outset but said nothing. It would provide an occasion to perform not so much a miracle but a teaching moment for the disciples away from the Pharisees, scribes and crowds. Upon disembarking, Jesus reminded the disciples of the recent encounter with the religious authorities. He bade them to both take heed and beware of the leaven belonging to them. The verbs are *horao* and *prosecho* (S *chaza'* and *zahar*, all +), a kind of double warning all the more meaningful due to the passage across the lake. That, if you will, gave time for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees to rise in the sense becoming a warning. Surely thoughts of that encounter had to be held in check else it would poison the minds of the disciples.

The disciples had discussed among themselves their failure to bring along bread, *dialogizomai*, the preposition *dia-* suggestive of through-ness. In other words, they were bothered and accusing themselves and one another. In the course of their *dialogizomai* they must have brought up the two instances when Jesus provided bread for huge amounts of people. That was fine for such a multitude, but for us? This caught Jesus' attention which made him exclaim that they had little faith, *oligopistos* +. At the same time the disciples must receive due credit as with many earlier occasions when they bumbled. They continued to remain with Jesus even though it must have been painful at such occasions.

Jesus confronts the disciples with five rapid-fire rhetorical questions they couldn't answer, not so much to shame them but to teach them. Afterwards again he warns them to beware (*prosecho* and *zahar*, both +), something he can't drill home enough:

- Why are the disciples engaged in this *dialogizomai*.
- Don't they perceive or *noeo* (S *sakal*, both +).
- Don't remember (*mnemoneuo*; S *hehad*) the five loaves Jesus had multiplied.
- Mnemoneuo* also applicable to the seven loaves which Jesus had multiplied.
- How the disciples failed to perceive (*noeo* and S *sakal*, both +) that Jesus didn't speak about bread.

To round out the importance of all this with regard to the relationship of Jesus and his disciples vis-à-vis the Pharisees and Sadducees, vs. 12 concludes with a straightforward observation. In essence it said that the disciples got Jesus' message.

There seems to be an unspecified time gap between Jesus' location and his coming into the district of Caesarea Philippi noted in vs. 13. Now he asks his disciples what they think about his identity as the Son of man. Note that he's specific, the generic "men" asking this question. Although the title is used a number of times, we can trace it back to people in general or in 11.19 in connection with John the Baptist. Perhaps some of the disciples weren't quite sure as to his identity even though Jesus had been with them for some time now. Despite this, they held him in respect and were fearful to probe too much. The same must have applied among themselves. They didn't want to get nosy but by reason of their closeness to Jesus, they had to have a clearer identity of him.

In one accord in vs. 14 the disciples put forth their response, John the Baptist being chief among them followed by Elijah and Jeremiah. They throw in "one of the prophets" which means at least they regarded Jesus in a prophetic role. Although afraid to admit, the disciples were just as blind as everyone else. Although Jesus was asking about what people thought of him, he was equally curious to get his disciples' opinion. They knew, of course, this was coming and felt they were put on the spot. While the others held their silence, Peter pipped up, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Note that he recognizes Jesus as Christ or Messiah, not one of the prophets as several of the disciples had proposed. Addition of "living" (*zao*, to live physically speaking) suggests immediacy. How Peter came to this realization isn't stated, just given. It's one of those mysterious instances we're left with something important and must figure it out for ourselves, that is, how it can relate to our own lives.

Jesus responds at once, delighted that Peter had made this confession, "blessed" or *makarios* (*S tuv*, both +) being the first word out of his mouth and rightly so. Between that response and Jesus having called Peter in 4.18 there's a nanosecond where time has collapsed. Jesus knew when calling Peter that he would respond accordingly. This was true even though awareness of his response was far dimmer. Now regardless of the various exigencies bound to follow, Jesus' mission was on solid ground. He can take comfort that from now on his mission will take root after Pentecost and beyond.

As for Peter's confession, Jesus puts the matter up front and center so it will be clear not just to Peter but to the other disciples. Flesh and blood had not revealed this, that Jesus is the Christ and Son of the living God, *apokalupto* (*S galal*, both +) implying the uncovering of a reality that always has been present but not recognized. Actually Jesus attributes such uncovering to his Father who is in heaven even though he was

fully aware of this. As for Peter, if we could slow things down, he would feel a peeling-away of several layers of ignorance. Once done, the other disciples couldn't help but be aware of it as though as yet they had not the same revelation or uncovering. That would have to wait for Pentecost. At the same time, they must have been jealous because Jesus had favored Peter over the rest of them. Even if Jesus had picked someone else, jealousy would have been unavoidable.

In response to Peter's confession, in vs. 18 Jesus calls him *Petros* or rock (*petra*) upon whom he will build his church. The verb is *oikodomeo* or more literally, to build or construct a house, *demo* + *oikos*. That house, if you will, will be called an *ekkleseia* (S *hedtha'*) which connotes a calling from, *ek* + *kaleo*. Incidentally, vs. 18 is the first mention of *ekklelesia* in the New Testament. Those within it will be recognized as having been summoned to this place where they will take up permanent residence. As for the act of building, Jesus says that it doesn't take place now but in the indeterminate future which must have disappointed Peter. Naturally he'd like to know right now, being the literal foundation of this new entity. Also Jesus calls this building *ekklelesia*, not a synagogue nor even a temple, terms familiar to the disciples. Since its members will be called-from in the literal sense, it will be an order wholly different from anything in existence at the present. As far as Peter goes, it could even include political elements, an organization that could challenge and overcome Roman authority.

As for the ever-present Roman influence in the political sense, Peter's ears as well as those of the other disciples must have perked up when Jesus said that the powers of death won't prevail against it or literally, the gates of Hades. What could be better than that? As for the gates or *pule*, this noun more specifically means one side of a double gate, not one. Such double-doors suggest a formidable concealed power laying on the other side. It's waiting to burst through and overcome the *ekklelesia* which appears defenseless, for Jesus doesn't speak of any matching fortifications. The verb for this pressing against by the gates of Hades, if you will, is *katischuo* (S *chasan*, to be strong, to subdue), *ischuo* or to be strong prefaced with the preposition *kata-* which here means down or against.

While Hades has (defensive) gates and *ekklelesia* lacks such fortification, the latter's ability to prevail rests not on the display of might but upon the authority of Jesus Christ symbolized by the keys. While they don't belong directly to the *ekklelesia* proper, they do belong to the kingdom (*basileia* +) of heaven, and the very nature of a *basileia* suggests fortification which isn't disclosed. That's deliberate, a way to keep the enemy guessing. Peter is to use these keys for binding loosening, *deo* and *luo* (S

‘*esar* and *shara*’) on earth. As soon as he does one, its effect will reverberate at once in heaven. Obviously Peter hadn’t a clue what this meant. As noted several times earlier with regard to difficult-to-understand things, it will have to wait until Pentecost. One thing he does know, that the gates of Hades are ever present as they press against that realm to which he has keys. Much of his *deo* and *luo* will depend upon how hard those gates will press against the *ekkleisia*.

After this rather sudden and unexpected occasion but one Jesus had anticipated for a long time and now was glad it has been done, he strictly charges his disciples to keep quiet as to his identity of being the Christ. That would be equivalent of making him known as Messiah and thrust him into the political realm which he wants to avoid at all costs. However, he knew the vast majority of people would see it otherwise. The verb used to drill this home is *diastello*, to make in no uncertain terms as by the preposition *dia-* as through. This must have struck fear into the disciples, Peter included, especially since he had just uttered his confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ. So if Jesus is the Christ, how and when will this be made public...or will it? That was the burning question in their minds.

In vs. 21 Jesus continues to get down to business with his disciples. This is conveyed by the verse’s opening words which read literally as “from that then” or *tote +*. With the new *ekkleisia* out of the way at least temporarily which essentially means for the rest of Jesus’ ministry, he speaks of the need to go to Jerusalem. Apparently to date neither he nor the disciples had gone there but had less than pleasant encounters with religious representatives from the capitol. That’s part of why Jesus uses the verb *deiknumi* (S *chua*’: also to manifest, both +) instead of saying of speaking. *Deiknumi* connotes far more than presenting information no matter how precise or meaningful it might be. It’s more descriptive which here involves details of the suffering Jesus is going to endure.

While Jesus doesn’t water down his words, he presents what will happen in clear enough terms that the disciples will be able to grasp. The part that really spooked the disciples was Jesus not saying but again showing how he will be put to death and rise on the third day. Apparently this is the first time they’ve heard about the resurrection and admittedly were clueless as to what Jesus meant. This and other related matters don’t seem to have been part of any discussions between Jesus and the twelve. Throughout it all the master-disciple relationship endured where the latter doesn’t question the former.

Emboldened by Jesus having acknowledged him as the foundation of this new yet barely understood entity called church or *ekklesia*, Peter begins to take Jesus aside, *archo* here as to take the initiative in speaking. This along with the preposition *pros-*, indicative of direction towards-which prefaced to the verb *proslambano*, serves to intensify the sense of being rebuked (S *maka'*: to humble, to lay down). Also it's a clear sign of Peter's impulsiveness. He throws in the adjective *hileos* usually rendered as merciful and here forms part of his address where he wishes the Lord well. This word, politely inserted, disguises Peter's real fear. Should something happens to Jesus, the same would befall him and the other disciples. The verb *epitimaō* (S *ka'a'*) or to rebuke has the preposition *epi-* prefaced to the verbal root (*timaō*: to estimate, to hold in honor or to regard), another sign of the intensity involved. Surely more words were uttered in rapid succession but not recorded here.

Just as quickly as Peter began his rebuke, Jesus wastes not a second as indicated the verb *strepheō* or to turn around. This verb implies that Jesus had his attention directed forward, if you will, with Peter coming up from behind. Given the context as in vs. 21, we could say that Jesus was focused upon what would happen to him in Jerusalem. All at once Peter came up from behind as if to stop him in his tracks. However, it didn't surprise Jesus who outrightly calls him Satan or more accurately, that Peter get behind him. Actually Peter had been walking behind Jesus for some time but now Jesus meant that he get way, way behind.

Jesus couldn't help but be reminded of his temptation: "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Jesus continued by saying that Peter was a hindrance to him, *skandalon* + (S *tuqalta'*) or a cause for tripping or snare. Then he throws out words which must have devastated Peter, so contrary to being lavishly praised a moment ago. That is, Peter is not on the side of God but of men. The verb *phroneō* + (*raha'*, both +) or to think, to understand is used, that Peter thinks just like any other person despite his confession that Jesus is the Christ.

Obviously the other disciples heard Jesus rebuke Peter and if they were honest enough, would admit to taking a certain delight in it. Now Peter had been cut down to size as he has deserved, so they thought. At this point (vs. 24) Jesus tells them all to take up their respective crosses if they wish to follow him. This, of course, makes sense in Jesus going to Jerusalem but doesn't to those close to him. Chances are they had passed several crucifixions along the way, nothing really new to them despite the horror involved. Jesus elaborates on these words for the rest of this chapter. Perhaps



Peter felt some consolation for his recent interjection in that he along with his fellow disciples were put in their places.

Vs. 25 has Jesus put this talk about a cross in perspective. He offers two sets which contradict each other deliberately so: saving one's life = losing it and losing one's life = saving it. The three verbs are *sozo*, *apoluo* and *heurisko* (S *chaya'*, 'evad and *shakach*, all + except the last Syriac verb): save, lose and find. The first or *sozo* is presented in a negative sense almost as hoarding. This has the immediate opposite effect to which we can be blind, *apoluo*. This verb fits in well in that it connotes a loosening-from, *apo-*. On the other hand, *apoluo* freely done results in its opposite, *heurisko* with regard to one's life. All this does not make any sense except when it comes to Jesus, that is, "for my sake."

In vs. 26 Jesus seeks to clarify this by asking two rhetorical questions:

The first consists in asking what profit a man would have if he gains the entire world while at the same time forfeiting his life. Note the interplay of the three verbs: *opheleo*, *kerdaino* and *zemioo* (to benefit or to help, to win or to profit and to suffer confiscation; S *hana'*, *qana'* and *chasar*). Focus can be on the second or to profit which automatically results in the third, the taking away of one's very life or *psuche* +, soul. It'd come as no surprise that while saying this Jesus thought of another temptation by the devil, that is, when he was shown all the kingdoms of the world. The devil would grant this provided he worship the devil (cf. 4.10-11). At the time Jesus quotes Dt 6.13, that what counts is to worship the Lord God.

The second rhetorical question in the same verse pertains to what a man will give in return for his life or *psuche* +, *antallagma* being the noun. Because *psuche* is one's very existence, there can be nothing worth giving for it except in the context at hand, *heneken enou* +, "for my sake" of vs. 25.

After these sobering words to his disciples, in vs. 27 Jesus shifts his tone where he speaks of himself objectively, again as Son of man. He had just used this phrase to his disciples which prompted Peter to respond by saying that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God in vs. 16. Surely those words echoed strongly in Peter's ears. Jesus says that he will come with his angels in the glory or *doxa* (S *shuvcha'*: also pride, pomp; both +) of his Father. That is, he won't come alone but be accompanied by these ministering spirits. However, Jesus doesn't give a time frame or more precisely, comes close to teasing the disciples by saying that some standing there with him won't taste death. Despite the immense appeal of such words, to a man the

disciples didn't fathom what he meant. Each one thought, will what Jesus had said apply to me and not the others? Who among us will be so privileged? As for seeing this coming or *erchomai* +, most likely it refers to the Transfiguration to be described in the following chapter. Again with reference to Pentecost as the most important event for bringing into focus all what Jesus had said, at that point the disciples can look back and say that all Jesus' words fit in perfectly. It was our inability to grasp them that caused the confusion.

## Chapter Seventeen

This chapter begins with the conjunctive *kai* ('and') along with an interval of six days or after the remarkable words concluding Chapter Sixteen. That is to say, Jesus claims that some who are now with him will not taste death. Although the twelve disciples remained with him, we can be assured that they dare not ask him as to what he meant. Secretly, of course, they hoped to be counted among that group. Jesus, of course, knew what they were discussing along with Peter's new role as the foundation of this new unheard of entity called *ekklesia* or church. By reason of his position most likely the eleven would give precedence to his opinion even if they disagreed with him.

Without any explanation Jesus decides to take Peter, James and John up a high mountain, the verb being *paralambano* + where the preposition *para-* or beside connotes special-ness along with the phrase *kat' idian* literally as "according to own." Unlike other the other reference to the mountain where Jesus had preached to the crowds and did some healing, the one at hand is "high" (*hupselos*) and not identified. The text gives no reason why Jesus chose these three disciples nor why the other nine were left alone, let alone giving them instruction as what to do or how long he'd be absent. Again, it may be because of Peter; also James and John are brothers. After all, the three had in common that they were fishermen.

The disciples were used to being accompanied by people in need of healing which wasn't the case at hand. Actually it was a relief to enjoy this freedom, albeit temporarily. Besides, the mountain was high, perhaps way too high for such people to lug up the ill and disabled. On this mountaintop Jesus would be holding forth with Moses and Elijah followed by his Father's voice saying that he was his beloved son. The height prevented the nine disciples below from hearing it which at the stage of the game would be too much.

Since Jesus recently had spoken about “some standing here” [16.28], the three thought that this might be an occasion when they along with Jesus would be assumed into heaven like the prophet Elijah. If that were true, the high mountain would make perfect sense. They could practically see the chariot waiting just above.

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *kai* where Jesus gets right down to business, not allowing the three with him to linger once on the mountain top. The text simply says that he was transfigured, *metamorphoo* (S *chalaph* also to change, to exchange). Literally it means to change after (*meta-*) or to alter the fundamental character of something. Regardless of our familiarity with the English word, it’s one of those mysteries difficult to comprehend let alone articulate. Jesus takes pains to be transfigured before (*emprosthen*) Peter, James and John. It’s more along the lines as in front of them or literally, to place his (human) form after or *meta-*. In this way Jesus assumes a new one or better, one that he already is yet not made visible until now.

The clearest indication that Jesus is putting his human form after, if you will, is that he face shone as the sun, *lampo* (S *nahar*: to be light, to shine) or to gleam in the sense of emitting rays of light. Similarly his garments became white as light which seems to be the same whiteness associated with the sun. The text gives no time frame as to how quickly this *meta-* took place, but we can assume it was instantaneous. Reading into it, we could say that Jesus felt relieved in the sense that he could be...to be in the precise sense...himself without a human *morphe*.

Because of the naturalness of being as such, it was equally natural that Moses and Elijah appear in a similar state although we have no details as their respective appearances. They did so suddenly as inferred by *idou* + or “behold” with regard to the verb *horao* + here in the sense of to catch notice. Thus all three were speaking with each other, *sullaleo* also as to hold converse with. Since Moses is present, there comes to mind the way he used to speak with the Lord as in Ex 33.11: “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” This reads literally and somewhat humorously as “faces to faces” which is suggestive of an intense, familiar free-for-all.

Matthew gives no hint as to the subject of the discussion taking place in blinding white light, if you will. Although the verb *sullaleo* for speaking is used, there was no exchange of words because Jesus, Moses and Elijah were transfigured which means keeping in line with the verb *metamorphoo*, had their physicality put after or *meta-* their inherently divinized form. Peter decides to barge in on this conversation despite the fact that he couldn’t hear a word being spoken. He asks Jesus to make

three booths, *skene* or tent which infers a temporary dwelling simply because it's good (*kalos* + or beautiful) to be where they are. The problem with building tents is that they are on a high mountain and couldn't get the proper material. Perhaps that was a delaying tactic on Peter's part, that Jesus, Moses and Elijah wouldn't mind waiting. If so, he could milk the situation for what it's worth.

No doubt, the three didn't pay attention to Peter butting in. They tolerated him by reason of his newly established position as head of the church. Jesus had to explain what that meant to Moses and Elijah since it was a new reality with which they weren't familiar but had premonitions of during their lifetime. At this juncture a bright (*photeinos* also as shining, radiant) cloud came over the three. Most likely Moses asked for this, he being very familiar with a cloud as a place for intimate communication with the Lord. Also the cloud had the benefit of excluding Peter's prying eyes. Even if he could understand the heavenly conversation, he wouldn't have a clue as to what was being communicated.

Chances are the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah continued on a more intense level within the cloud. Finally they decided it was time to let in the three disciples as to what was going on. After all, Jesus was responsible for having brought them to the summit of this high mountain no so much for their personal benefit but for his future church. So why not all twelve? That sounds ideal, but something of the order of the transfiguration can be communicated only to a select few. They had the responsibility not of explaining but of teaching it at a later time. Hence's it's fully appropriate for them to hear an unidentified voice saying that this man Jesus is my son who is beloved or *agapetos* + (*S tava'*: to make ready, to prepare). They knew this unidentified voice (*phone*) was the Father of whom Jesus spoke so often simply by calling him son. Certainly Moses and Elijah concurred as what the Father had just said. In essence it was what they had been teaching all their lives.

The disciples' response to hearing this voice? Fear and adoration equally combined or the verb *phobeo* along with the adjective *sphodros* (both +) which connotes that which is excessive. While flat on his face Peter must have wondered if he was going to be rebuked or even put to death by reason of being so importune. Jesus saw this as an opportunity to step outside the cloud, if you will, and approach the three disciples. However, first it was necessary to bid farewell to Moses and Elijah who undoubtedly would keep a keen eye on future events. Surely their conversation continued or rather, is continuing.

Without knowing it, Jesus touched Peter, James and John, the verb being *hapto*; *qarev* is the Syriac verb meaning to be near and also as “came,” both +. He said what the situation demanded, namely, not to fear. Their response? Vs. 8 says that they lifted up their eyes, *epairo* (*epi-* or upon). This is the second verb with regard to lifting up, the first being *egeiro* in vs. 7 meaning to rise. Implied is that the three remained on the ground but partially as such or in the act of getting up. When they did stand on their two feet they saw no one but Jesus. The text leaves it as that but we can assume they must have missed Moses and Elijah and obviously were too afraid to ask about them.

Vs. 9 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” to show the close connection of what had transpired on the mountain top and how their relationship with Jesus had changed. Surely it had been transfigured...that Jesus’ human *morphe* or form had been put after or *meta-* which is accurate but in a way awkward to express, but they were at a loss to express it adequately. In the course of their descent Jesus knew that Peter, James and John were confused. It was obvious by the expression on their faces. He commanded them (*entello*; S *paqad*, also to entreat, to visit; both +) not to broadcast this vision or *horama* (from the verbal root *horao* +) which humanly speaking was impossible. Jesus makes it conditional, if you will, by the word *eos* + or “until” which suggests duration, that being when the Son of man is raised from the dead. This really threw them for a loop. It’s one thing to enjoin a close to impossible command, but raising from the dead? How can the three keep this from the other disciples whom they were about to meet? Obviously they would press them with all sorts of questions.

The three don’t know how to respond adequately but ask Jesus about Elijah, having recourse to what the scribes claim, that he must come first. It’s no co-incidence they bring him up after their encounter with him on the mountain. Interestingly they are silent with regard to Moses. After all, Elijah was assumed into heaven while Moses died as is the case with any other person. As for Elijah, the scribes had taught what the three echoed about his return. This is in reference to the conclusion of the Book of Malachi at the threshold of the New Testament. The last two verses (4.5-6) run as follows: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." The excerpt begins with *hineh* or “behold” which serves to introduce the prophet Elijah before the day of the Lord described as being great and awesome (*gadal* and *yare’* +, the latter as to fear). When it arrives, the Lord will turn the hearts (*shuv* also as to return and *lev* +) of fathers to their children and their hearts to their fathers. And so

Malachi concludes with a rather sudden ending and threat of a curse. Should the people not convert, the Lord will strike the land with a curse, *cherem*.

To this question posed by the three disciples—after all, it's rooted in Jewish tradition—Jesus responds that indeed, Elijah does come. The present tense of *erchomai* + is used but with the intent of restoring all things. Compare with the future tense of the same verb in the next verse. The second verb is *apokathistemi*, the root *histemi* + or to stand prefaced with two preposition, *apo-* and *kata-* (from and according to)...to stand-from-in-accord-with. Implied is that all things (*ta panta*) will stand first from or *apo-* and then (or simultaneously) with *kata-* or in accord. To the limited minds of the disciples this applies to the restoration of Israel, but it seems Jesus has a much larger picture in mind.

Perhaps this talk about Elijah is while Jesus and the three, Peter, James and John are still descending from the mountain and have not yet come to the other nine down below. However, Matthew is fuzzy on this point. Despite Jesus' asking the three to keep quiet as noted in vs. 10, most likely he wouldn't mind if all twelve knew about it. After all, they will share in the same mission as time goes on.

Jesus continues speaking about Elijah, again Moses left behind which may sound as though he were left in the dust. Although Moses is the most important of Israel's holy men, it is Elijah who has captured the popular imagination down through the ages due to a chariot whisking him off into heaven. Jesus capitalizes on this by applying it to himself, namely, that Elijah has already come, the past tense of *erchomai* + compared with the present tense of the same verb in vs. 11. Indeed such talk must have been confusing. Even though he had come (in the person of Jesus), people did not know him, *epiginosko* (S *yadah*, both +) where the preposition *epi-* upon suggests more intimate knowledge. To have this *epi-* prefaced to *ginosko* suggests that people would recognized Jesus as fulfilling the role of Elijah, something even his close disciples failed to do.

As a result of the lack of *epiginosko*, people pretty much manhandled Elijah. The same will happen to the Son of man, that is, he will suffer (*pascho*) at the hands of the same people. This is followed in vs. 13 by the important connective *tote* + or "then." It serves to clear up any confusion the disciples had with Jesus and Elijah. Although Jesus didn't say so directly, they understood (*suniami*; S *sakal*, both +) that he was speaking of John the Baptist. In other words, they were able to put together...the *sun-* or "with" prefaced to *hiemi* or to put into motion) the relationship just presented. Obviously Jesus, Elijah and John the Baptist are three distinct persons. Jesus is alive,

Elijah had been assumed into heaven a long time ago and John recently was beheaded. That means Elijah is just as much alive as Jesus, the two sharing the same plane of existence with Moses as indicated by their presence and free exchange that took place on the mountaintop.

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *kai* where we have a complete shift in the action, that is, Jesus and his disciples coming to the crowd or *ochlos* +. Actually *kai* as well as *de* + both translated as “and” occur a lot in this incident dealing with the epileptic child. It’s a way of showing the fast-paced action as well as Jesus’ frustration with regard to those whom he’s addressing, a “faithless and perverse generation.” Apparently they had managed to escape being surrounded by people wanting to be cured, etc., for 15.32 is the last time *ochlos* is mentioned. The way vs. 14 is presented you get the impression that yes, Jesus and three of his disciples had withdrawn to the mountaintop. Perhaps their coming (*erchomai* +) is with respect to the base of the mountain where the nine disciples remained and had attracted people looking for Jesus. They had taken great pains to restrain anyone from ascending the mountain, even threatening them by reminding of what would happen if they tried to break through. This they did by citing Ex 19.12: “Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.” An exaggeration of sorts but a useful ploy to safeguard Jesus.

Also in vs. 14 a man approached Jesus, the *pros-* of *proserchomai* + suggesting that he had seen Jesus before the rest of the crowd. Jesus knew right away that he sought to be healed of some illness or was making intercession on behalf of another person. It turned out the latter, a father pleading for his epileptic son, asking Jesus to have mercy on him, *eleeo* (S *racham*, both +). The noun epileptic is rendered by the verb *seleniazomai*, literally to be moon struck. The Syriac is the noun ‘*egara*’ or stretching out on a rooftop. The idea comes from worshipping such demons on the rooftop, the moon above being implied. With regard to the illness at hand, the father’s added words seem irrelevant, “he suffers terribly,” the verb being *pascho* and the adverb *kakos*, both +. He does this by falling into fire and water.

In vs. 16 the father claims to have approached the disciples who were unable to heal the boy, *therapeuo* (S ‘*asa*’; both +). That must have made them feel quite inadequate in light of Jesus having earlier commissioned them to go out to teach and heal as he had been doing. Their inability to help the man and his son made Jesus exclaim aloud using two rhetorical questions intended for everyone around him to hear. He wonders how long can he be with the current generation which is both faithless and perverse. That really hit home with the disciples, for it must have embarrassed them

to no end. Again, they are to be credited with not leaving but remaining with Jesus. The adjective *apistos* and participle of *diastrepho* are used (S the verbal root 'eman with negative and *haqal*). As for the latter, it is the verbal root *strepho* + or to turn around prefaced with the preposition *dia-*, through and connotes turning from an accepted standard.

The second rhetorical question also in vs. 17 uttered with frustration is how long will Jesus be able to bear with this generation, *anecho* literally to lift up. Right after both questions he asks that the epileptic boy be brought to him. Apparently the father approached Jesus without his son, preferring to leave him in the custody of others so he won't hurt himself. The time waiting for the boy to be brought must have dragged on, putting everyone in an awkward position. In the meanwhile we have the father waiting along with bystanders trying to absorb Jesus' harsh words. They couldn't wait until the boy had come to get this over with. However, Jesus said nothing about healing.

We get a sense of Jesus' frustration in vs. 18 when he rebukes the child, *epitimaō* (S *ka'a'*, both +) in order to expel the demon or *to daimonion* + (S *sha'da'*) within him. At the same time he wishes to expel those of little faith, a fact which had been bothering him for some time and now comes to light. We could take this as a kind of "defect" (for lack of better words) in Jesus who had just been transfigured or reverted temporarily to his native state. Now he was back in his "human form" (again for lack of better words) and hence naturally felt frustrated by those around him which started to get at him. Perhaps he saw in the epileptic child something of what it means to be in the form of a human being while at the same time being divine. St. Paul would reflect on this later, for example, Phil 2.6-7: "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself." As for the epileptic child, he was healed (*therapeuo*, S 'asa'; both +) instantly or literally, "from that hour."

Vs. 19 begins with *tote* + or "then" which is equivalent to a connective. The way it's presented is that the disciples, obviously present, were waiting for a chance to chime in with regard to his harsh words. The child had been cured, the demon expelled, and the child went home with his father whose response is unrecorded but presumably overflowing with gratitude. The disciples had been bothered...very much so...ever since the father brought his epileptic son to them and they were unable to cure him. If they were honest enough, cure of the child was secondary. What really got under their skin was their inability to show off which led to public embarrassment. Also the father, despite his son having been healed, would return home and spread the



word about the disciples' inefficiency. Their state of mind was reflected on their faces as they watched the father walk away with his son, both with huge smiles on their faces.

This attitude of the disciples which they tried to keep hidden from others is as clear as could be by their eagerness to ask Jesus why they were so impotent. In fact, they took pains to approach him nonchalantly so as not to draw attention. The directness of *pros-* prefaced to *proserchomai* and the phrase *kat' idian* (both +) say a lot. Jesus could read their faces before speaking with him as clear as could be. He responded to their question as to why they couldn't cast out (*ekballo* +) the demon because of having little faith, the noun being *oligopistia*. Jesus then expounds on this, seeing a valuable opportunity for teaching since the disciples will be engaged in healing, teaching as well as passing both on to their successors once they've founded churches. All that, however, wasn't on their minds right now.

As for the example countering *oligopistia*, Jesus speaks of a grain of mustard seed, this being the second reference, the first found in 13.31-32 which grows so big that birds can build their nests in it. In the process of recalling it the disciples began to cut off, as it were, the *olig-* from *pistia*. Not only did they restore it but enhanced it. Jesus continues by saying that such faith has the capacity to move mountains. Note the way he articulates this. Obviously there are no records of such a miraculous event. Rather, attention is to be put on the spontaneous, almost child-like exaggeration when it comes to faith confronted with an impossible situation symbolized by a mountain. It is precisely this spontaneity that Jesus wishes to convey and restore confidence to his disciples. Thus nothing will be impossible (*adunateo*, lacking *dunamis* + or the capacity to do something). With the example in mind, it will allow a person to do the *meta-* of *metabaino* + or the going-across from one place to another.

While various places are secondary to Jesus' mission, vs. 22 shifts location to Galilee, Caesarea Philippi in 16.13 being the last specific place mentioned. Here the text says that the "they" were gathering, *sunstrepho* literally as to turn with (*sun-*), presumably the disciples along with Jesus. Implied is that each of the twelve had gone separate ways, perhaps to their families where they had a lot of explaining to do. Some may have been met with hostility and found that like Jesus, they had no where to go. Thus their lot was cast with him in a certain irrevocable manner.

A bit later the disciples were hit with more unpleasant news from Jesus who spoke of himself as of another person, namely, that the Son of man will be handed over to men. The preposition *eis* is used which makes this *paradidomai* + all the more

ominous, “into the hands of men.” Such men are unidentified but given what the disciples had heard in 16.21, Jesus’ message was clear. However, he will be raised on the third day. The response? The disciples were “greatly distressed, *lupeo* also connoting sadness along with the adverb *sphodra*. The Syriac verb *karah* means to fall sick, to suffer pain and *tav +* means good or great which implies like the Greek, connotes excessive-ness. End of story. Jesus must have broken this off at once without giving any explanation or consolation, somewhat concerned that Peter again might try to rebuke him. We don’t have his reaction but judging by the harsh look on Jesus’ face, we can assume that he held his anger in check.

Beginning with vs. 24 through the end of Chapter Seventeen we have a different twist in the narrative thus far which involves paying the temple tax. At Capernaum a collector of the half-shekel tax approached Peter, asking if his master (*didaskalos +, S ravuna’*) pays the tax or not. This man must have known Peter or at least knew about him as having a certain prominence among the twelve disciples. Note that he didn’t ask Matthew, the former tax collector. Although Matthew had worked for the Roman authorities while this man was in the service of religious ones, the two don’t seem to have had an occasion to meet earlier on. Right away Peter responded in the affirmative, presumably knowing that Jesus had paid the tax. The conversation ends here. Perhaps it was time or near the time to pay the temple tax or perhaps the man was tempting Jesus through Peter to see where he stood on this matter. Actually he could have been in cahoots with the Pharisees and told to act accordingly.

Note that vs. 25 has Peter coming home. Given the earlier encounter with his mother-in-law and wife, the two weren’t present or had moved away, not wanting to see someone who essentially had abandoned them. There Jesus asked Peter about his encounter with the tax man. The question he posed was whether or not those in authority demand toll or tribute from their sons or from those who aren’t family members. Peter knew Jesus was getting at something deeper by posing this simple question, fearful to blurt out irresponsible words as he had done a short while ago when Jesus was speaking of being handed over to be killed.

In order to test Peter, Jesus bade him to go to the sea and after having caught the first fish, he will find a coin in its mouth to pay the temple tax. Nothing more about this is said. Presumably Peter complied, found the coin and paid the tax. He did this all in silence, having learned his lesson but still bothered by the fact that Jesus spoke a second time of his impending arrest, death and resurrection. It was simply a lot to take in not only for Peter but for the other disciples.

## Chapter Eighteen

This chapter begins with “at that time” found last beginning Chapter Fourteen along with the noun *kairos* which is indicative of a special event. The text at hand has *hora* or hour, an unidentified period of time in a given day. With this in mind, what takes place now is at Capernaum (cf. 17.24) or right after the incident of paying the temple tax. Vs. 1 has the disciples coming to Jesus, attention being upon the *pros-* (direction towards-which) of *proserchomai* which suggests they may have been scattered but in were close proximity with each other.

Ever since Jesus chose Peter to be head of this new religious body call a church (*ekklesia*) in 16.19, the disciples kept quiet but count on it. Underneath they were stewing with jealousy. Finally what was foremost on their minds burst forth. While knowing that Jesus had favored Peter—and Peter had a hard time since then relating to his fellow disciples—they wanted in on a piece of the action. To them position is out of the question. What counts is who is greatest in that kingdom.

Jesus, of course, knew it was futile even trying to respond to this question and as soon as the twelve saw him reaching for the nearest child, they knew that they never should have asked the question. Actually Jesus calls a child (*paidion*) to him, *proskaleo*. It’s as though the *pros-* in this verb is intended to counter the *pros-* of *proserchomai* noted above. To make it worse from the disciples’ point of view, Jesus puts this child in their very midst, *mesos* +. This is as uncomfortable as it can get. We can assume that the child’s parents concurred at once, pleased that Jesus should single him or her out. What did that child think later in life? It must have profoundly affected those who heard of the incident. Did her or she or the parents eventually become what was later call Christians?

Jesus seems to be enjoying himself here, milking this for what it’s worth but having in mind an opportunity to teach a valuable lesson to his closest followers. He begins with the solemn words “Truly I say to you” which contains the word *amen*, a strong affirmation found last in 17.20 with regard to the disciples not being able to cure the epileptic boy by reason of their little faith. As for the solemn declaration at hand, Jesus speaks of the necessity of turning or *strepheo* +(S *haphak*). The intent, of course, is to become as a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. The verb is *eiserchomai* + with the preposition *eis*; i.e., a double *eis* or double into.

So this *strepho* or turning is to be directed not so much to imitate a child be as the text says, like a child and certainly not in a feigned sort of way. Actually it's more along the lines of a transformation to a permanent way of behaving. Such is how Jesus conceives humility, *tapeinoo* (S *mak*, to lay prostrate) also as to lose prestige or status, the chief prerequisite of becoming free. As soon as this *tapeinoo* kicks in, one ends up—almost without knowing how or why—to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, *meizon* being the adjective.

Not only does that happen, whoever receives (*dechomai* +) in the sense of welcoming a guest such a child is receiving Jesus provided this *dechomai* is done literally upon (*epi*) his name. That name would be Son of man. This can be outlined briefly as such: *dechomai* → a child → *dechomai* → Jesus. The two instances of *dechomai* work as one, that one being not a fusion of Jesus and the child but one as respecting each as a person. The requirement for such *dechomai* is being like or after the manner of a child, and if one is like a child, one is like Jesus himself. While there's an obvious difference between Jesus and a child on the physical level, on the spiritual level both are the same. Jesus has more to say about this, but now the disciples have learned the hard way that they've been put in place. That shouldn't be forgotten because it's to their credit for both having stuck it out with Jesus and continuing to remain with him.

Vs. 6 is a continuation of the previous verse, the two forming one extended sentence. The importance of “but” or literally “who yet ever or if” serves to introduce a dire warning—the opposite of *dechomai*—with regard little ones (*mikros*), another way of speaking of a *paidion* or child. That warning pertains to causing *skandalizo* (S *kashal*, both +), literally to stumble. Because a child is involved, this stumbling is severe and unfortunately could involve sexual abuse. Actually the *mikros* at hand is not a *paidion* but represents a person who believes in Jesus, literally “into (*eis*) me.”

Jesus says it would be better for a person responsible for *skandalizo* to have fasted around his neck a great millstone (*mulos*) hung around his neck and cast into the sea. *Mulos* in and by itself is huge. To it he adds two more characteristics:

- 1) The adjective *onikos* makes it far worse because it means anything referring to a donkey or ass which moves the millstone round and round.
- 2) *Pelagos* translated as depth but means more the open sea compared with *thalasse* which is a more general term. Combining the two, and you get an image of complete or total disappearance with regard to the person responsible for *skandalizo*.

This image of mistreating a child is more than the usual circumstances that come to mind. Rather, a child represents a believer in Jesus which makes the situation far worse. Because of this, it leads Jesus to continue this theme in vs. 7 which begins with *ouai* or “woe,” an interjection also indicates pain as well as distress. Here it isn’t directed as one would suspect to an individual responsible for tripping up a child-like believer in Jesus. Instead, it’s toward the world or *kosmos* (*S halma’*, both +) which is as general as it gets. Instead of thinking this as too vague in actuality it’s all-inclusive by reason of the gravity of what’s involved. The **RSV** has “temptation to sin” whereas the Greek reads literally “from the snares it is necessary to come snares, the noun *skandalon* as derived from the verbal root *skandalizo*. In the same breath Jesus adds that *ouai* or woe applies to whomever is responsible for such *skandalon*.

Vs. 8 gets down to the nitty-gritty details about causing scandal or tripping up as Jesus had just presented it. Here he speaks of cutting off one’s hand or foot if circumstances should lead to this. The **RSV** uses the word “sin” but the Greek text has *skandalizo* which as noted just above, is more to the point. To preserve the integrity of a person with child-like faith in Jesus radical surgery is required even should it result in being maimed or lame. Such permanent physical injury is far better than not being able to enter life or *eis ten zoen*, literally “into life,” *zoe* +. This noun refers to life in the physical sense which has a direct correspondence to life as in the kingdom of heaven.

The first thought that comes to mind when speaking of children is, as noted above, some sort of sexual molestation. While that may be part of what Jesus is saying, the *skandalizo* at hand is a tripping up of belief in Jesus by a person with child-like faith. Implied is such persons already are *eis ten zoen*, “into life.” While we have two very different types of persons, victim and perpetrator, ultimately Jesus wishes to bring the two together. This is far more preferable than ending up in the fire of Gehenna +. Note that it reads literally “into (*eis*) the fire of Gehenna,” this *eis* being the opposite of the *eis* with regard to entering life.

Vs. 10 continues with Jesus speaking of the so-called little ones (*mikros* +) which means it’s of great importance to him. We can imagine the disciples listening in both in awe and fear. They are being taught a vital lesson for later when they will be leaders of local churches. Now Jesus moves from tripping up the so-called little ones to not despising them, *kataphroneo* + (*S basa’*, also to neglect). While this doesn’t fall under the same category of tripping them up, it can have more long-term harm by reason of not paying attention to them. After all, among all those following Jesus they are the most dear. This warning not to have an opinion nor to form a judgment

(the root *phroneo* +) which is down (*kata* +) is of special importance. *Aggelos* +, of course, means messenger which means that each little one has such a messenger assigned to him or her whose function is to deliver information from one place to another. Thus they're bridging two realities as they shuttle back and forth. All the while their focus of attention (*blepo* +, the common verb to see) is upon the face of the Father. This focus isn't one way. The Father in turn has his *blepo* upon the messengers, reading their reports as they come in or as they enter heaven.

In vs. 12 Jesus stops for a moment to insert a rhetorical question, asking his disciples what they think about all this, the verb being *dokeo* + (S *chaza'*, also to see) which here leans more in the direction of supposing. He doesn't wait for a response because he knows they can't give one so moves on with an example relative to the subject at hand. Jesus speaks of one sheep that has gone astray or *planao* which means more to wander and has a connotation of being deceived, that is, deceived to leave the flock. In other words, what's left unsaid is that something has attracted this sheep to act accordingly. And so the shepherd abandons the ninety-nine. He's curious to know what caught this sheep's attention. He knows they can be trusted or perhaps aren't as smart as the one at hand. Hence, there's no need for protection while he goes off tracking down the lost sheep.

Interestingly, vs. 13 begins with "if" ...if the shepherd finds the lost sheep, leaving open the possibility that he may not. However, he does which prompts Jesus to use *amen* + or "truly" which captures his joy, *chairo* (S *chada'*, both +). Not only that, Jesus takes pains to say that he rejoices over this lost sheep more than he does with the ninety-nine. However, that doesn't forebode well for the lost sheep once back in the pen. How they will treat this so-called prodigal son is left to our imagination. Jesus now brings in his Father who obviously is the shepherd at hand. It's his will (*thelema* +) that this sheep and the others do not perish, *apollumi* (S '*evad*) connoting complete and utter destruction). And so this lost sheep represents one of the little ones, *mikros* +. When using such a word as *thelema* it refers to a faculty belonging to a person which in this case is the Father. It's a more direct and personal way of speaking of him that if Jesus says "My Father in heaven wills" (etc.).

In vs. 15 Jesus goes into some detail with regard to sin on a personal level, the verb being *hamartano*. The Syriac verb is *sakal* mentioned a number of times earlier with several different meanings. Both the Greek and Syriac bring this home more directly by the preposition *eis* (S *b-*) literally as "into you." Jesus proposes handling it in three ways, but before getting into that he proposes a one-on-one contact. He lays this out through the verb *elegcho* and the adverb *metaxu*, to cross examine or to question and

between. In other words, Jesus is encouraging the need for dialogue. Whether or not this *elegcho/metaxu* works is described by an outline of the following three verbs. They are presented as such in order to obtain a better handle on what Jesus is communicating, especially because it's so familiar:

-*Akouo* + or to hear. The successful outcome put in terms as "if," depends upon not just hearing but taking to heart. The result? Through a one-on-one contact you have gained your brother, *kerdaino* (S *yetar*, both +) as to acquire.

-*Akouo* + or in this instance, not to listen. This is another instance of the contingency signified by "if." Failure to listen requires taking one or the others, *paralambano* +. Hopefully this *para-* or being-beside will serve to confirm not just the word (*rhema* +) but every word of those who are *para-*. The verb is *histemi* (S *qum* both +), basically to stand. Jesus is quoting in part from Dt 19.15: "A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained (the Hebrew verb is *qum* much like the Syriac)."

-*Parakouo* or to refuse, the *para-* here suggesting that one is beside the hearing or *akouo*, not present with it. Such refusal necessitates bringing in the church or *ekklesia* +. It's helpful to be reminded that type of assembly is brand new, actually revolutionary. The person so accused will be as a tax collector or Gentile should he not listen to the *ekklesia*, that is, he will be a foreigner...an outsider...with regard to this body. Still, *ekklesia* will take some time getting used to in light of the Jewish synagogues, etc.

In vs. 18 Jesus begins with *amen*+, another indication of what he's about to say is of great import. He uses the same words as he did with Peter in 16.19 regarding the keys to the kingdom of heaven though he doesn't mention keys. In the verse at hand Jesus seems to be shifting the *deo* and *luo* (both +) or binding and loosening to the other disciples, that is, by way of participation. While all twelve have equality, Peter is inferred as holding the keys with regard to heaven.

As for the *deo* and *luo*, both are to be seen with regard the threefold way of handling difficult relationships discussed above. This gets a bit fuzzy here, for Jesus seems to extend the *deo* and *luo* to the *ekklesia* as a whole though doesn't mention it. That is to say, in vs. 19 he speaks of two or three "of you." If they agree on anything, this being literally "upon (*epi*) earth," such upon-ness will be transferred immediately to the Father or *para* (beside) the Father in heaven. In sum, the *sumphoneo* (S *shaqa'*, also to be even, sufficient) at hand which is a fitting or more accurately a matching of (*sum-*,

with) sound unites earth and heaven. Jesus stresses this further by saying that even when such a small number is assembled, he will be in their midst, *mesos +*. The verb is *sunago +* and has application to the church or *ekklesia*.

*Tote +* or “then” which opens vs. 21 is a loaded word insofar as it introduces Peter who proceeds to act in his typical impulsive manner. This is backed up by the *pros-* (direction towards-which) of *proserchomai +*. Peter had just heard the threefold way of handling problematic relationships and seemed quite bothered by it. Keep in mind too that he just heard Jesus repeat words of binding and loosening not so much in reference to him but to the other disciples. Most likely that’s what is behind his question as to how often he’s to forgive “my brother,” this phrase implying membership in the *ekklesia*. Thus Peter is interpreting or better, misinterpreting binding and loosening in terms of forgiveness. So, he says to himself, where does this *deo* and *luo* stand with regard to me? Jesus knows Peter quite well by now, so he came off with a spontaneous seventy times seven. It’s an astronomical number pretty much telling Peter to back off. The other disciples couldn’t agree more but kept it to themselves not discussing it with Peter in their midst.

Vs. 23 begins with *Dia touto* or “therefore,” literally as “through this” to show that Peter’s sudden yet typical way of butting in uninvited enabled Jesus to present an important lesson. While reading this, it’s helpful to keep in mind that binding-on-earth and loosening-in-heaven a few verses ago. The parable of a king settling accounts with his servants fits in quite nicely because Jesus straightaway compares it with the kingdom of heaven. Obviously that imagery was on top of the disciples’ minds, eagerly wanting to know how the king would act. Would he bind or would he loosen? Indeed, the way it goes would give insight into the mind of their master. *Sunairo* or literally to raise with (*sun-*) and *logos +* mean to settle accounts (*S nashav* or to take, receive and *chushvana’* or money with regard to computation). *Logos* is appropriate here, for it means more than just a transaction but an issue of a personal and pressing nature.

Jesus takes his time, wanting his disciples to be attentive to every word which is why vs. 24 starts off the parable with “When he (the king) began his reckoning,” *archo* as to take the initiative and *sunairo* (both +). Will it work? Superficially no by reason of human weakness. However, their collective memory was strong enough not just here but with all the other things Jesus had said in order to pass it on to future generations. As for the parable itself, a servant who owed the king a huge amount of money is brought in but gets off Scott-free from being sold as a slave along with his family, etc. The king must have known or knew about him, so why not give him a



chance? The servant was cunning and if he play his cards right by appealing to the king's merciful side, his debt would be canceled. The verb for showing mercy here is *splagchnizomai* (S *racham*, both +).

The next verse (28) begins ominously with “but” or *de* + where the servant promptly forgets the mercy shown to him and his family, going out and throttles a fellow servant who owed him a pittance by comparison. Despite the plea for patience, the single-minded servant throws him into prison. By no means did this escape notice. Virtually everyone got wind of what had happened, including the king, *lupeo* + (S *kara'*, to be short, narrow) signifying great distress and grief. Actually the way Jesus presents this is quite distressful, almost hard to read.

Immediately the king summoned the servant, the *pros-* or *proskaleo* + indicative of this urgency, calling him wicked or *poneros* +. Note that the king makes him remember when he had besought him, *parakaleo* +, the *para-* or beside contrasting with the *pros-* of the same verbal root. First the king throws out in justified anger a rhetorical question as to showing mercy (*eleo* +) and then dispatches him to prison. Yet there's a glimmer of hope even for this man. Vs. 34 says that he'll remain in prison until he pays his debt. The time frame isn't given, presumably very long, but still there's light at the end of the tunnel. The conclusion? Jesus looks his disciples in the eye and speaks directly to them. The king represents the Father described as heavenly or *ouranios* + instead of being in heaven will do the same if you...each disciple...don't forgive your brother (again, one who belongs to the new entity called the *ekklesia*) from your heart or *kardia* +. End of discussion. Both Jesus nor his disciples can add any further to something which is so clear.

## Chapter Nineteen

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “now” to show as it usually does the close connection between an action just completed and one about to take place. The verb *teleo* (S *shelam*, both +) or to end has the sense of bringing to completion with regard to Jesus' *logoi* or plural of *logos* +. That's an understatement of sorts because he concluded with a harsh parable about the servant pardoned by his king who did not show it in return to a lesser servant. Surely these words will echo in the ears of the disciples more than most of what Jesus had communicated to them thus far.

Jesus now leaves Galilee for Judea beyond the Jordan, the reason for which isn't given. When reading this Gospel account or the other three we get the idea that he

has no battle plan laid out...that's secondary...as long as people hear what he has to say. He's counting both on some of them and his disciples to keep a record which they do resulting in the four Gospels. This time larger crowds (*ochlos* +) followed him. The impression from the previous chapter is that Jesus had withdraw from them, but as always they were hovering nearby. How he managed to control them isn't spelled out, but the people generally held him in respect and left him along when he wanted it. Vs. 2 simply says that upon arriving in the region of Judea he healed them, *therapeuo* (S 'asa'; both +).

Just as ever present as the crowds, so are the Pharisees. Vs. 3 says that they came up to test him, *peirazo* (S *nasa'*, both +), having gotten word of Jesus' whereabouts by their agents who were tracking his every move. Easily we can imagine them trying to listen in when Jesus was speaking with his disciples, trying to decipher what he was saying from watching the expression on their faces. In the meanwhile, they were busy jotting down every bit of information to bring back to their superiors in Jerusalem. If these observations and notes could be collated and worked into an account of Jesus' words and actions, we'd have something of a anti-Gospel or record contrary to what was noted above. Still, we'd consider it valuable information.

This time the Pharisees caught Jesus just after he had done some healing and asked about divorcing one's wife. Note that they threw in the words "for any cause," *aitia* being a broad a terms as it gets. As for the verb, *apoluo* + is more telling: to loosen (*luo*) from or *apo-*. Without missing a beat Jesus quotes the most fundamental scriptural verse pertaining to marriage, first putting it as a rhetorical question ('Have you not read?') as a means to shame the Pharisees on the spot. With reference to the creation of the first man and first woman Jesus is careful to add that God (not mentioned except as 'he') has made them from the beginning or *arche* (S *reysheytha'*) which is the first principle of anything. That is to say, this *arche* consists of two genders, part of what Jesus says being a quote from Gn 1.27 which runs in full as: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Here, of course, is the single "man" or '*adam* followed by the two genders. Note the word *tselem* or image found twice in succession, "in his own image" and almost speaking as though this *tselem* belonged to God in the objective sense, "in the image of God."

So right away the Pharisees were faced with something they were powerless to refute. We don't know if they or some of them had encountered Jesus before, but if so, they would have warned their compatriots that Jesus would simply walk all over them. Jesus then adds a verse from Gn 2.24 which runs in full as "Therefore a man

leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” The two operative verbs conveying a sense of immediacy are *hazav* and *davaq*, to leave in the sense of abandon and to cling; the Greek words are *kataleipo* + and *kollao*, the latter implying a glue-like adhesion. For emphasis, in vs. 6 Jesus repeats the fact that the two become one flesh.

Jesus has just recounted one of the most basic tenets of marriage by attributing the *hazav* and *davaq* of Gn 2.24 as being rooted in God. This leads to a marital bond designated as *sunzeugnumi*, literally a yoking-with which human intervention cannot break, *chorizo* or separating, parting (S *zaoeg* and *parash*). The Pharisees saw an opening here. They cite the provision for divorce established by Moses, the reference being Dt 24.1-4: quoted in full as one extended sentence: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt upon the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.” Two things are striking. First, blame is upon the woman, not the man. Secondly, the provision of divorce and remarriage (the latter to the first husband) is tied up with a third marital partner if we may put it as such. That consists in the necessity to preserve the integrity of the land or *‘erets* which is more than a physical place but the nation which lives upon it. Thus husband, wife and *‘erets* are intimately connected.

By no means were the Pharisees ready to concede. In vs. 7 they posed another question as to the certificate of divorce as it pertains to the unceremonious words putting away the wife, *apoluo* +. No luck yet again, for in vs. 8 Jesus comes down upon them with the plain, unvarnished truth referring to your hardness of heart, *sklerokardia* being an exceptionally vivid noun whose root is *kardia* + prefaced by the adjective *skleros*, rough, difficult to the point of being impossible (S *qashyuth* and *lev* +). It is precisely this *sklerokardia* that prompted Moses to allow divorce though from the beginning or *arche* + it wasn't the case. Jesus of course is referring to the Genesis quote above, especially with regard to the binding force of *davaq* or the man and wife clinging to each other. Moses had to contend with this *sklerokardia* all the time and unfortunately seems part of the human condition as depicted in Ex 32.9 when the

Lord himself addressed Moses: “I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.” The adjective is *qashah*, also as severe, fierce.

In his concluding remarks to the Pharisees intended to put them in their place but done so while appealing to tradition, Jesus uses the solemn words not unlike *amen*, “I say to you.” Again in accord with what Moses had laid down (this coming from the Lord), divorce is permitted only in the case of unchastity, *porneia* (S gor+) also as fornication or prostitution.

In vs. 10 the disciples don't waste a second responding to Jesus, presumably after the Pharisees had departed. What bothered the disciples was that if such difficulty is part and parcel of marital relations, it seems best not to marry at all, the verb being *sumphero* (S *paqach*, also to be advantageous) literally as to bear or to carry with. Obviously they were thinking of their own situation, most of whom presumably were still married. What troubled them or rather, continues to trouble them is that they have left their wives to follow Jesus. These women are essentially abandoned and left to their own devices even though their husbands may pop in now and again. Talk about strained marital relationships.

Jesus expands upon the disciples' question knowing that for them it has personal ramifications, he being fully aware of having called them from their families and livelihoods. He gives a kind of warning which understandably not everyone can accept, the verb *choreo* or to make room which is put quite vividly along with regard to *logos*, word-as-expression (both +). The Syriac has *saphach* or to suffice, to be capable with the noun *malal* +. Because Jesus realizes that *choreo* represents a gap that has opened up and unable to be filled, he used the passive of *didomai*, “it is given.” The Greek text lacks “only” as in the **RSV**. That means the hole of *choreo* can be filled only by non-human intervention put here as inferred by divine grace.

Jesus gives the example of eunuchs made by men compared with those who have made themselves as such. Although such words run the risk of being taken literally, making oneself a eunuch means refraining from marriage on a voluntary basis, not coerced. The only goal is for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus realizes the difficulty involved and concludes his words on the subject with a certain give-it-or-leave-it approach. He uses the verb *choreo* + which as noted above with regard to refraining from marriage, suggests making room. That means living with the decision once it's made, simple as that.

Vs. 13 shifts gears to children which are brought to Jesus most likely due to how word got out when earlier he took the initiative of setting one in the midst of the disciples (cf. 18.2+). Perhaps people discovered a new-found peacefulness about this child and knew it was from having come in contact with Jesus. In the verse at hand parents wanted Jesus to lay his hands upon them as well as to pray, *proseuchomai* (S *tsalal*, to intend, lean toward, both +). No specifics are given with regard to this praying, most likely a blessing. It'd be interesting to interview these children later in life to get their take on the experience. Also, how many, if any, did join the church?

The disciples recall the last incident where a child had set the standard for entering the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, they recalled Jesus placing him or her in their midst (*mesos* +) and were smarting from this embarrassment ever since. However, they were too chicken to reveal it to Jesus. Everything would have been fine if Jesus hadn't reminded them of this, indirectly of course, which prompted them as a group to behave as immature bullies by rebuking *epitimao* (S *ka'a'*, both +) those who brought the children out of ear-shot of Jesus. The parents must have been taken by surprise, even dismayed that followers of Jesus were behaving unlike their master. They were quick to inform him which must have made him felt as being put on the spot. In actuality the twelve were taking out on others a deficiency they had seen in themselves.

However, in vs. 14 Jesus intervenes by having read what was on their faces as plain as day. This is what today would be called a nightmare in personal communication. Now he Jesus says with some anger that the children should be left to approach him without hindrance, *koluo* +. (S *kalal*). The reason is obvious though seems to have been lost on the disciples, namely, that to such children belongs the kingdom of heaven. As in vs. 13, Jesus lays hands on them and leaves apparently by himself with the disciples holding the bag. Again they had to face the angry parents who took some delight at Jesus having publicly rebuked those closest to him. At least they knew when to back off and for now to leave Jesus alone.

As for this talk about children and the kingdom of heaven, all is not lost for the disciples. While on occasion they did have to suffer rebuke, often publically, at the hands of Jesus, by no means all was not lost. By nature the twelve were locals who lived pretty much from mouth to mouth. They were close to the soil and in some cases, the water by reason of being fishermen. While essentially poor, they had a built-in humility and no nonsense approach to life that enabled them to adapt more readily to being chastised when it was needed. That was an essential bond between

them and Jesus though it may not have come up in any discussion. Most likely it came closer to the surface later when the disciples had founded churches, etc.

Vs. 16 begins with the conjunctive *kai* where the action shifts to an unidentified person who approaches (*proserchomai* +) Jesus, having been attracted by him interacting with the children brought to him. Apparently he had some familiarity with Jesus' preaching which compelled him to ask about what good deed is necessary for eternal life, the adjective *agathos* (S *tav*, both +). Surely his intent was sound, but instead of receiving a response he got a rebuke of sorts. Jesus asks why he has posed such a question followed by the claim that one (person) alone is good. There was no need to identify this person because it was clear that Jesus was speaking of the Father. Then Jesus simply says that in order to have eternal life one is to keep the commandments, *tereo* also as to keep watch or guard with respect to *entole* (S *natar* and *puqeydana'*, both Syriac words +).

This brusque response didn't deter the man who in vs. 18 asks which commandment he's to keep. Jesus comes off with a litany of prohibitions right from the Ten Commandments of Ex 20.12-16. However, it's minus vs. 17 which is about coveting one's neighbor's house, wife, etc. As for the first (honoring one's parents), Jesus puts it as last in vs. 19. Then he adds one commandment from Lev 19.18, the most important of them all which reads in full as "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." The Greek *agapao* + (S *chav*, also as to kindle, to set on fire) is the equivalent for the Hebrew '*ahav* +, to breathe after. Although Jesus doesn't mention the concluding words, surely he had them in mind.

Jesus continues his discussion with this person who now in vs. 20 is identified as a young man, *neaniskos* which also can be taken as a servant. He responds quickly and confidently (and somewhat naively) that he has observed all which Jesus had quoted from Deuteronomy and Leviticus, *phulasso* (S *natar* +) or to protect in the sense of keeping guard. Not only that, he asks if he's lacking in anything, *hustereo* (S *chasar* +) or to miss out on something.

In order to fill up this *hustereo* Jesus says that to be perfect (*teleios* +, S *gamar*) requires selling one's possessions and giving them to the poor. Right away this will result in having treasures or *thesauros* + in heaven. Such is the condition for following (*akoloutho* +) Jesus. Unfortunately the young man's eagerness dissipated on the spot. He leaves in sorrow (*lupeo* +) because he was well off or as the text puts it more vividly, has many possessions. The disciples possibly looked at this man

with a certain smugness which they didn't reveal because they were relatively poor and had nothing to lose when Jesus had called them. This is an important contrast, namely, instead of approaching Jesus voluntarily or freely, he had called them.

Jesus was aware of this rather lengthy dialogue's effect upon his disciples whom he addresses in vs. 23 and continues to do so to the end of this chapter. He begins in solemn fashion with *amen* +, that he means business. Actually this is the first time a rich man (*plousios*) had approached Jesus with the possibility of following him...more than that, it is the first example of anyone doing so. Thus the incident was something novel both for him and for the disciples. However, it wasn't a good track record, given that to this point Jesus has done a lot preaching and healing. No small wonder, then, that Jesus uses *amen*. And so what follows is more out of the ordinary since it doesn't pertain to most people with whom Jesus interacts. He gives the example of it being easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than someone who's rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. An exaggeration, of course, and admittedly rare for anyone entertaining the idea of being disciple of Jesus.

Such an example evokes astonishment by the disciples, *ekplesso* (S *tahar*, both +) where the last example in Chapter Seven speaks of the preposition *ek-* or "from." As prefaced to the root *plesso* (to strike) bit rings this home in a forceful manner. It prompts them to ask spontaneously, who can be saved (*sozo* and S *chaya'*, both +). Actually they shouldn't be so surprised, this being a case pretty much out of the ordinary.

Jesus responds in vs. 26—actually he does more than respond—by looking straight at the disciples, *emlepo* (S *chor* +), the preposition *em-* or "in" clearly intended to penetrate them. In sum, with God everything is possible, the exact opposite when it comes to human intervention. The verse is a play on *adunatos* vs. *dunatos*, the verbal root *dunomai* meaning to be able or to show the capacity for something. The preposition *para* which connotes being beside is used with regard to both God and man to show how these two words operate.

Vs. 27 has another intervention by Peter but this one sanctioned, if you will, by his fellow disciples. Using the first person plural he says and rightly so that we have left everything for Jesus and asks bluntly what we will have. It seems that he was barely away of having been entrusted with the keys to the kingdom of heaven. In other words, Peter as well as the eleven had short term memory in the extreme. Yes, they were witnesses to all sorts of miracles and healings but still that left them insecure.

To Peter's request Jesus uses a phrase new for the first time, that is, "new world" or *paliggenesia* (*halma'* + modified by *chadeth*) or better, a state of being renewed, a complete change along the lines of rebirth, the first part of the word being *palin*, "again." That along with *ekkllesia* must have unnerved the disciples to some degree, for to them both don't tie in with their experience of conservative Judaism. Not just that, they are essentially peasants compared with those living in Jerusalem.

Within this *paliggenesia* the Son of man will sit on his throne which Jesus describes as glorious, literally "throne of glory" or *doxa* +. Again, Jesus is speaking of himself as another person something by now which the disciples are familiar. Now the disciples' ears perk up. Jesus says that they too will sit on similar thrones. Since they number twelve, they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. While such words are indeed heady, they are being informed more as to what their role will be in the *paliggenesia/ekkllesia*.

To top this off, Jesus says that everyone...presumably he has others in mind who go unrecorded...who has left possessions and more importantly, family, will receive far more than they could imagine. Not only that, they will inherit eternal life. However, Jesus concludes this with a caveat, the last verse in Chapter Nineteen. Those who are first will be last and visa versa. Perhaps this is in reference to Jews vs. Gentiles. Regardless, attention should be on *kleronomeo* or inheriting. That means both already have a share in eternal life, theirs by right before entering it. In other words, a done deal.