A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER EIGHT

Matthew 8, Mark 3–4 (continued), and Luke 7–8 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

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2026

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke through their eighth chapters. Chapter eight is the most narratively eventful volume in the harmony so far, gathering together a remarkable concentration of miracle stories, a pivotal controversy with the Pharisees over the source of Jesus's power, a rich cluster of parables including the Parable of the Sower, and the great nature miracle of the stilling of the storm.

The chapter divides into four movements. The first draws from Luke 7 and Mark 3: the anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman, and the Pharisees' accusation that Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebub. The second presents Jesus's response to that accusation and his teaching on the unpardonable sin. The third covers the Parable of the Sower and its explanation, along with related parables of the lamp and the measure. The fourth gathers the great miracles of Mark 4–5 and Matthew 8: the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Each section is identified by its source Gospel in brackets:

[Matt] = Matthew

[Mark] = Mark

[Luke] = Luke

[Matt / Mark], **[Matt / Luke]**, **[Mark / Luke]**, or **[Matt / Mark / Luke]** = parallel passages

The translation throughout is the **American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)**, a public domain text of high scholarly accuracy. No words are invented or paraphrased; all text is drawn directly from the ASV.

Chronological ordering follows the scholarly consensus of A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1922), Kurt Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, and Orville Daniel's *A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (2nd ed., 1996).

Part Seven: The Anointing, the Beelzebub Controversy, the Parables, and the Storm

Section 75 — The Sinful Woman Who Anointed Jesus [Luke 7:36–50]

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on.

A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?

Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins?

And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Section 76 — Women Who Ministered to Jesus [Luke 8:1–3]

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.

Section 77 — The Beelzebub Accusation [Matt 12:22–24 / Mark 3:22–27 / Luke 11:14–15]

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the dumb man spake and saw.

And all the multitudes were amazed, and said, Can this be the son of David?

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons.

And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the demons casteth he out the demons.

Section 78 — Jesus Answers the Accusation [Matt 12:25–37 / Mark 3:23–30 / Luke 11:17–23]

And knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?

And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you.

Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Section 79 — The Sign of Jonah [Matt 12:38–42 / Luke 11:29–32]

Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Section 80 — His True Family [Matt 12:46–50 / Mark 3:31–35 / Luke 8:19–21]

While he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee.

But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Section 81 — The Parable of the Sower [Matt 13:1–9 / Mark 4:1–9 / Luke 8:4–8]

And on that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach.

And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them: and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

He that hath ears, let him hear.

Section 82 — Why Jesus Speaks in Parables [Matt 13:10–17 / Mark 4:10–12 / Luke 8:9–10]

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.

Section 83 — The Explanation of the Sower [Matt 13:18–23 / Mark 4:13–20 / Luke 8:11–15]

Hear then ye the parable of the sower.

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side.

And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.

And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Section 84 — The Lamp Under the Bushel [Mark 4:21–25 / Luke 8:16–18]

And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand? For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light.

If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you; and more shall be given unto you. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Section 85 — The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly [Mark 4:26–29]

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

Section 86 — The Parable of the Mustard Seed [Matt 13:31–32 / Mark 4:30–32]

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Section 87 — Jesus's Use of Parables Fulfils Scripture [Matt 13:34–35 / Mark 4:33–34]

All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

But privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.

Section 88 — The Stilling of the Storm [Matt 8:23–27 / Mark 4:35–41 / Luke 8:22–25]

And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side.

And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him.

And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?

And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?

And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Eight

On the Anointing at Simon's House

The anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman (Section 75) is one of the most tender scenes in the Gospel narrative. Luke places it at the home of Simon the Pharisee, explicitly distinct from the later anointing at Bethany (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8). The woman is unnamed in Luke. She has heard that Jesus is dining in the city, and she comes — uninvited, carrying her alabaster flask — and stands behind him at his feet, weeping. In the reclining posture of a first-century Jewish meal, the feet would extend away from the table, making her act of washing his feet with her tears physically plausible.

The parable of the two debtors that Jesus tells Simon is elegant in its simplicity: the one who is forgiven more loves more. The application is devastating: Simon, the host, has performed none of the ordinary courtesies of hospitality — no water for the feet, no greeting kiss, no anointing oil. The woman, the uninvited sinner, has provided all of them, in excess and in tears. "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." The logic is not that love earns forgiveness but that the magnitude of one's love reveals the depth of one's awareness of how much one has been forgiven. The Pharisee's coolness toward Jesus reveals how little he imagines himself to need.

On the Women Disciples

Section 76 — Luke's note about the women who traveled with Jesus and the Twelve and "ministered unto them of their substance" — is one of the most historically significant verses in the Gospel narrative. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others are named or acknowledged as part of the traveling company supporting Jesus's ministry financially. This detail, unique to Luke, underscores his consistent attention to women in the Gospel story and provides a concrete historical account of how the itinerant ministry was sustained. Mary Magdalene appears here for the first and only time before the passion narrative, identified as one from whom seven demons had gone out.

On the Beelzebub Controversy

The Beelzebub accusation (Sections 77–78) represents the sharpest formal conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities up to this point in the narrative. The accusation is not that Jesus lacks power but that his power has a demonic source. Jesus's response operates on three levels. First, the logical argument: a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; if Satan casts out Satan, his domain is already finished. Second, the challenge: by what power do the Pharisees' own exorcists work? They cannot claim that all Jewish exorcism is demonic without condemning their own practice. Third, the positive claim: if Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has arrived.

The teaching on the unpardonable sin — the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit — emerges directly from this controversy. Jesus has just performed a healing that the crowd interprets as messianic and the Pharisees attribute to Satan. The blasphemy against the Spirit is specifically the act of attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan — the deliberate, eyes-open reversal of good and evil at the deepest level. Every other sin and blasphemy, including speaking against the Son of Man himself, is forgivable; this is not. The warning is absolute and the severity of its language in all three Synoptics is consistent.

On the Parables

Chapter eight marks the major parable discourse of the Galilean ministry. Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 all present the Parable of the Sower as the foundational parable — the key that unlocks the parabolic method itself. Jesus explains this in his answer to the disciples' question (Section 82): the parables simultaneously reveal truth to those who are ready to receive it and conceal it from those who are not. The language he quotes from Isaiah 6:9–10 is the same passage that Paul will later apply to the Jewish response to the gospel (Acts 28:26–27). The parable is thus not merely a pedagogical technique but a fulfillment of the prophetic pattern in which God's word divides those who hear it.

The explanation of the Sower (Section 83) is the only parable in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus explicitly interprets in full detail, making it the reader's primary guide to understanding all the others. The four soils — the path, the rocky ground, the thorny ground, and the good soil — correspond to four ways of receiving the word of the kingdom. Only the fourth bears lasting fruit; the first three all begin with hearing and all fail at different stages and for different reasons: immediate theft by the evil one, immediate joy without depth, and gradual choking by worldly cares and deceitfulness of riches.

On the Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly

The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (Section 85) appears only in Mark and is one of the most overlooked parables in the Synoptic tradition. Its central point is the hiddenness and autonomy of the kingdom's growth: the farmer sows and then sleeps and rises while the seed grows through stages he cannot see or control. The Greek *automatē* — "of herself," used of the earth producing fruit — is the word from which our word "automatic" derives. The kingdom is not the product of human industry; it grows by its own divine life. The farmer's role is to sow and to harvest; the growing happens without him.

On the Stilling of the Storm

The stilling of the storm (Section 88) is the first nature miracle in the Synoptic narrative and one of the most vivid scenes in all four chapters of Mark's account used in this harmony. Three details in Mark's account carry particular weight. First, Jesus is asleep "on the cushion" — a specific, eyewitness-quality detail that appears only in Mark, suggesting Petrine testimony. Second, the disciples' rebuke — "Carest thou not that we perish?" — is more emotionally raw than Matthew's "Lord, save us; we perish." Third, Jesus's response to the calmed sea uses the Greek *siōpa, pephimōso* — "Be silent, be muzzled" — the same formula used in his rebuke of the unclean spirit in Capernaum (Mark 1:25), treating the storm with the same authority as a demonic force.

The disciples' question at the end — "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" — is the question the entire narrative of chapter eight has been building toward. Every miracle, every parable, every controversy has been press-ing toward this question of identity. The disciples have been with him; they have watched everything; and they still do not fully know who he is. Their question is not rhetorical — it is genuine, and it echoes through the rest of the Synoptic narrative until Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.

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