A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER ELEVEN

Matthew 17–18, Mark 9, and Luke 9–10 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 eleventh chapter equivalent in the narrative sequence. The material covered spans Matthew 17–18, Mark 9 (continued), and Luke 9–10, and represents a transitional section of the Synoptic narrative: the Galilean ministry is drawing to a close, and the shadow of Jerusalem begins to fall across the narrative.

The chapter divides into four movements. The first gathers the closing events of the Galilean period: the second passion prediction, the temple tax incident, and the great discourse on humility and forgiveness that Matthew 18 records as the fourth of his five major discourses — the Discourse on the Church. The second movement covers Luke's unique material on the Samaritan mission and the sending of the Seventy. The third contains the cluster of teachings from Luke 10: the Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, and the shorter form of the Lord's Prayer. The fourth brings Luke 9 to its close with the sayings on the cost of discipleship and the would-be followers.

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 Ten: The Close of the Galilean Ministry and the Journey Toward Jerusalem

Section 111 — The Second Passion Prediction [Matt 17:22–23 / Mark 9:30–32 / Luke 9:43–45]

And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men; and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up.

And they were exceeding sorry. But they understood not this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

Section 112 — The Temple Tax [Matt 17:24–27]

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel?

He saith, Yea. And when he came into the house, Jesus spake first to him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers?

And when he said, From strangers, Jesus said unto him, Therefore the sons are free. But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

Section 113 — Who Is Greatest? [Matt 18:1–5 / Mark 9:33–37 / Luke 9:46–48]

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Section 114 — He That Is Not Against Us Is for Us [Mark 9:38–41 / Luke 9:49–50]

John said unto him, Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us.

But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Section 115 — Warnings Against Causing Stumbling [Matt 18:6–9 / Mark 9:42–48]

But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!

And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire.

Section 116 — The Parable of the Lost Sheep [Matt 18:10–14]

See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Section 117 — On Brotherly Correction and Forgiveness [Matt 18:15–22]

And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

Verily I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Then came Peter and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

Section 118 — The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant [Matt 18:23–35]

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, that owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred shillings: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was owed.

So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was owed. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

Section 119 — The Cost of Discipleship: Three Would-Be Followers [Matt 8:19–22 / Luke 9:57–62]

And as they went on the way, a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

And another of the disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead.

And another said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Section 120 — The Face Set Toward Jerusalem; Samaritan Rejection [Luke 9:51–56]

And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?

But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village.

Section 121 — The Sending of the Seventy [Luke 10:1–20]

Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come. And he said unto them,

The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and salute no man on the way.

And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we wipe off against you: howbeit know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh.

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me.

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Section 122 — The Lawyer's Question: The Great Commandment [Luke 10:25–28]

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Section 123 — The Parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 10:29–37]

But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.

Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?

And he said, He that showed mercy on him.

And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Section 124 — Mary and Martha [Luke 10:38–42]

Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Eleven

On the Second Passion Prediction

The second passion prediction (Section 111) is deliberately less detailed than the first. Jesus says only that the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men, killed, and raised. The disciples' response — "they were exceeding sorry" and "it was concealed from them" — reflects the genuine incomprehension that the Synoptic Gospels present as characteristic of the disciples throughout the central section of the narrative. They know something terrible is being announced; they do not yet have the categories to understand it.

On the Temple Tax

The temple tax incident (Section 112) appears only in Matthew. The half-shekel (*didrachmon*) was the annual temple levy required of every adult Jewish male, based on Exodus 30:13. Jesus's response to Peter works by analogy: earthly kings do not tax their own sons, only foreigners; therefore the Son of God is free from the tax levied for his Father's house. But he pays it nonetheless — "lest we cause them to stumble" — from the coin found in the fish's mouth. The miracle is recounted with the utmost brevity; Matthew does not describe Peter finding the fish or the coin, only Jesus's instruction to do so. The detail of specifying the coin — a shekel, enough for two — is characteristically precise.

On the Discourse on the Church

Matthew 18 (Sections 113–118) is the fourth of Matthew's five great discourses and the only one explicitly about the internal life of the community of disciples — what Matthew uniquely calls the *ekklēsia*, the "church." It contains four major units: the call to become as little children (greatness through humility); warnings against causing little ones to stumble (millstone, severed hand and eye); the parable of the lost sheep applied to the community's care for straying members; and the procedure for brotherly correction culminating in the unlimited forgiveness of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

The procedure of Matthew 18:15–17 — private correction, then two or three witnesses, then the church — is the New Testament's most explicit governance instruction for the Christian community. It draws on Deuteronomy 19:15 (the two-or-three-witness rule). The saying about two or three gathered in Jesus's name with his presence in their midst (verse 20) has been one of the most widely quoted verses in Christian communal life for two thousand years.

On the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Section 118) is the culminating parable of Matthew 18 and one of the most structurally perfect in the Gospels. The contrast in debt is deliberately staggering: ten thousand talents was an almost incomprehensible sum — the equivalent of many millions of working days' wages, exceeding the annual revenues of entire kingdoms — while the hundred shillings owed by the fellow servant was a manageable debt. The first servant has been forgiven an impossible debt and immediately imprisons a fellow servant over a trivial one.

The parable makes the theological logic of forgiveness stark and inescapable: those who have received unlimited forgiveness from God have no standing to withhold finite forgiveness from human beings. The closing verse — "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts" — connects directly back to the Lord's Prayer's sole conditional petition (Matthew 6:12): forgive us as we have forgiven.

On Setting the Face Toward Jerusalem

Luke 9:51 — "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" — is one of the most significant transitional verses in the entire Synoptic narrative. The Greek *estērixen to prosōpon autou* (he set his face firmly) is language drawn from the prophetic tradition, particularly Ezekiel's prophetic resolve (Ezekiel 21:2) and the Servant of Isaiah (Isaiah 50:7: "I have set my face like a flint"). From this point forward in Luke's Gospel, the narrative is structured as a journey toward Jerusalem — a journey that occupies the entire central section of Luke's Gospel (9:51–19:44) and is unique to his narrative design. Matthew and Mark do not organize their central section around this journey motif.

The Samaritan rejection (Section 120) immediately tests the resolve of the disciples. James and John — whom Mark tells us Jesus had named Boanerges, "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17) — request permission to call down fire from heaven, echoing Elijah's act at Mount Carmel (2 Kings 1:10–12). Jesus rebukes them without explanation. The contrast between the disciples' instinct for divine destruction and Jesus's patient redirection to the next village captures in miniature the entire reorientation of messianic expectation that the journey to Jerusalem represents.

On the Sending of the Seventy

The sending of the seventy (Section 121) is unique to Luke and represents a commissioning larger than the Twelve — extending the mission beyond the apostolic core. The number seventy (some manuscripts read seventy-two) may echo the seventy elders of Israel appointed by Moses (Numbers 11:16–17) or the seventy nations of Genesis 10, suggesting a mission that anticipates the universal scope of the gospel. The instructions parallel those given to the Twelve in Matthew 10 but with several distinctive elements: the prohibition against greeting anyone on the road (urgency of mission), the peace that rests on houses ready to receive it, and the eating of whatever is set before them — a rule that implicitly relaxes the dietary boundaries that would otherwise separate Jewish missionaries from Gentile hosts.

The report of the seventy — "even the demons are subject unto us in thy name" — prompts Jesus's most visionary saying in Luke: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." The

aorist tense (*ethearoun*, "I was beholding") suggests a heavenly vision of Satan's defeat already underway in the mission of the seventy, though the final victory lies ahead. The saying about authority to tread on serpents and scorpions echoes Psalm 91:13 and looks toward the ultimate subjection of all hostile powers.

On the Good Samaritan

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Section 123) is unique to Luke and is the most culturally and ethically complex parable in the Synoptic Gospels. The lawyer's question — "Who is my neighbor?" — is a genuine legal question in Second Temple Judaism; the boundaries of the love-command of Leviticus 19:18 were contested, with some interpreters limiting "neighbor" to fellow Israelites. Jesus's answer demolishes the boundary question entirely by reframing it: the issue is not the identity of the neighbor (the victim) but the practice of being a neighbor (the Samaritan's action). He then makes the Samaritan — a figure of ethnic and religious contempt in Jewish society — the moral exemplar of the parable.

The priest and Levite pass by on the other side. The possible reasons — ritual defilement from a possibly dead body, concern for their Temple duties, simple fear of bandits — are not specified; their professional religious status makes their failure more pointed, not less. The Samaritan's acts are enumerated with deliberate detail: moved with compassion; came to him; bound up wounds; poured on oil and wine; set him on his own beast; brought him to an inn; took care of him; paid the innkeeper; promised to return and pay whatever more is needed. The generosity is not abstract; it is specific, costly, and complete.

On Mary and Martha

The Mary and Martha story (Section 124) is Luke's final pericope in this section of the harmony and is unique to his Gospel. It has generated more interpretive controversy than its brevity might suggest. The traditional reading contrasts the active life (Martha's service) with the contemplative life (Mary's sitting at Jesus's feet) in favor of the latter. A more careful reading notes that Martha's problem is not service itself but anxiety about service — she is "cumbered about much serving" and has lost the capacity to be present to the Guest she is serving. Mary, sitting at the Rabbi's feet in the posture of a disciple, has chosen "the good part which shall not be taken away from her."

The address — "Martha, Martha" — with its doubled name (paralleling "Simon, Simon" in Luke 22:31 and "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" in Matthew 23:37) carries a tone of tender rebuke rather than harsh condemnation. Jesus does not disparage hospitality; he diagnoses anxiety. The story is placed by Luke immediately after the Good Samaritan — a parable about active mercy — perhaps to show that action and receptivity are both necessary and that the order matters: one must first receive before one can rightly give.

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