A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER TEN

Matthew 15–16, Mark 7–8, and Luke 9 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

Based on the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) — Public Domain

2026

Table of Contents

Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke through their tenth chapter equivalent in the narrative sequence. Because the canonical chapter numbering of the three Gospels diverges significantly at this point — Matthew's tenth chapter is the Mission Discourse already covered in Chapter Nine of this harmony, while the narrative sequence picks up in Matthew 15 and Mark 7 — this volume harmonizes the events that follow the walking on the water through Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi and the Transfiguration.

This chapter contains some of the most theologically pivotal moments in the entire Synoptic narrative. It opens with the controversy over clean and unclean, moves through the healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter, the feeding of the four thousand, the demand for a sign from the Pharisees, Peter's confession, the first passion prediction, and closes with the account of the Transfiguration — the supreme moment of divine disclosure in the Synoptic Gospels, in which Jesus appears in heavenly glory before three of his disciples.

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 Nine: Controversy, Confession, and the Transfiguration

Section 100 — The Tradition of the Elders: Clean and Unclean [Matt 15:1–20 / Mark 7:1–23]

Then there come to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

And he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.

Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?

But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.

And Peter answered and said unto him, Declare unto us the parable.

And he said, Are ye also even yet without understanding? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever goeth into the mouth passeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man.

Section 101 — The Syrophoenician Woman [Matt 15:21–28 / Mark 7:24–30]

And Jesus went out thence, and withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.

But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

But he answered and said, I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

And he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.

But she said, Yea, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Section 102 — The Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man [Mark 7:31–37]

And again he went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him.

And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Section 103 — The Feeding of the Four Thousand [Matt 15:32–38 / Mark 8:1–9]

In those days, when there was again a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; and some of them are come from far.

And his disciples answered him, Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place?

And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

And he commandeth the multitude to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he brake, and gave to his disciples, to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. And they had a few small fishes: and having blessed them, he commanded to set these also before them. And they ate, and were filled: and they took up, of broken pieces that remained over, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand men.

Section 104 — The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees [Matt 16:1–12 / Mark 8:10–21]

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and trying him asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

But he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the heaven is red and lowering. Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah.

And he left them, and departed.

And the disciples came to the other side and forgot to take bread. And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread.

And Jesus perceiving it said, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Section 105 — The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida [Mark 8:22–26]

And they come to Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him. And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Seest thou aught?

And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking.

Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly.

And he sent him away to his home, saying, Do not even enter into the village.

Section 106 — Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi [Matt 16:13–20 / Mark 8:27–30 / Luke 9:18–21]

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

Section 107 — The First Passion Prediction [Matt 16:21–28 / Mark 8:31–9:1 / Luke 9:22–27]

From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds.

Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Section 108 — The Transfiguration [Matt 17:1–8 / Mark 9:2–8 / Luke 9:28–36]

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light.

And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only.

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead.

Section 109 — The Question About Elijah [Matt 17:9–13 / Mark 9:9–13]

And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things: but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them.

Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Section 110 — The Healing of the Epileptic Boy [Matt 17:14–21 / Mark 9:14–29 / Luke 9:37–43]

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a man, kneeling to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is epileptic, and suffereth grievously; for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft-times into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

And Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? bring him hither to me.

And Jesus rebuked him; and the demon went out from him: and the boy was cured from that hour.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast it out?

And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Ten

On Clean and Unclean

The controversy over the washing of hands (Section 100) goes to the heart of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. At stake is not mere hygiene but the authority of the Oral

Torah — the tradition of the elders that the Pharisees regarded as equally binding with the written law. Jesus's counter-argument is devastating: the tradition of Corban (a vow dedicating resources to God that effectively released children from supporting aging parents) allowed a man to violate the written commandment to honor father and mother. The tradition, in this case, had become a mechanism for nullifying God's actual word.

The teaching that follows — what goes into the mouth does not defile; what comes out of the heart does — is among the most radical statements in the Synoptic tradition. Mark's version (7:19) adds the editorial note that Jesus thereby "made all meats clean" — a conclusion with enormous implications for the Gentile mission and one that the Jerusalem church did not immediately or easily absorb, as Acts 10–11 and Galatians 2 both attest.

On the Syrophoenician Woman

The exchange with the Syrophoenician woman (Section 101) is the most theologically unsettling dialogue in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus initially refuses to respond; when pressed, he states that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel; when pressed further, he uses the word "dogs" — a conventional Jewish term of contempt for Gentiles. The woman does not contest the characterization. She accepts it and turns it: even the dogs eat the crumbs from the master's table. Jesus's response — "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt" — is the second time in the Gospel narrative that he has commended Gentile faith as surpassing anything found in Israel (the first being the centurion of Section 70).

The exchange has generated enormous interpretive discussion precisely because of its difficulty. The most honest reading is that Jesus is testing the woman — using the conventional language of ethnic boundary to see whether her faith will transcend it. She passes. Her daughter is healed.

On the Two-Stage Healing at Bethsaida

The healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (Section 105) is unique in the Synoptic tradition as the only miracle in which Jesus's healing works in stages — the man first sees indistinctly ("I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking") before full sight is restored. The detail is so theologically awkward — suggesting a limitation in Jesus's healing power — that it is difficult to account for except as historical reminiscence. Mark is the only evangelist to record it. Many commentators read the two-stage healing as a deliberate echo of the disciples' own two-stage coming to see who Jesus is: they have some sight, but not yet clear sight. The positioning of this miracle immediately before Peter's confession supports that reading.

On Peter's Confession

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Section 106) is the structural turning point of the entire Synoptic narrative. Everything before it — miracles, controversies, parables, discourses — has been pressing toward the question: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And Peter's answer — "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" — is the first unambiguous human confession of Jesus's full identity in any of the three Gospels. Jesus's response to Peter is among the most debated passages in the New Testament, particularly the saying about "this rock" on which the church will be built and the "keys of the kingdom of heaven." Catholic tradition has read "this rock" as Peter himself; Protestant exegetes have commonly read it as the confession

just made; the Greek (*petros/petra*) supports some ambiguity. What is not ambiguous is that the authority to bind and loose is real and formal.

On the First Passion Prediction

Immediately following the confession, Jesus makes the first explicit prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection (Section 107). The sequence — confession followed immediately by passion prediction — is theologically deliberate in all three Synoptics: the moment the disciples acknowledge who Jesus is, he begins to tell them what he has come to do. Peter's rebuke — "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee" — and Jesus's response — "Get thee behind me, Satan" — represent the sharpest recorded confrontation between Jesus and any of his disciples. Peter has just received the highest commendation in the Gospel narrative and thirty seconds later receives the harshest rebuke. The contrast is intentional: the confession was revelation; the rebuke was the natural human mind rejecting the theology of the cross.

The call to take up the cross and follow (Section 107) is the first occurrence of cross-bearing language in Matthew and Mark. It cannot have been metaphorical to the disciples in the context of first-century Judea, where crucifixion was a familiar sight. The cross was the Roman instrument of execution; taking it up meant walking to one's own death. Jesus redefines discipleship as a willingness to do precisely that.

On the Transfiguration

The Transfiguration (Section 108) is the supreme moment of divine disclosure in the Synoptic Gospels, surpassing even the baptism — where only Jesus and John witness the divine voice. Here three disciples witness the transformation of Jesus's appearance, the appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the divine voice from the cloud. The Voice speaks the same words as at the baptism — "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" — with the addition of a single command: *"Hear ye him."*

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets — the entirety of Israel's scriptural heritage — now appearing in conversation with Jesus. Luke alone tells us what they spoke of: "his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" — using the Greek word *exodos*, deliberately evoking the Exodus from Egypt. The conversation on the mountain is about what is about to happen in Jerusalem.

Peter's instinct to build three tabernacles — to make the moment permanent, to house all three equally — is interrupted by the cloud and the Voice before he can finish speaking. The command is not to tabernacle the vision but to hear Jesus. When the cloud lifts, Moses and Elijah are gone. "They saw no one, save Jesus only" — a phrase that functions as a theological summary of the entire scene.

The descent from the mountain immediately raises the question about Elijah (Section 109) — prompted by the disciples having just seen him. Jesus confirms that Elijah has indeed come, and was treated as they listed. The disciples understand: John the Baptist.

On the Epileptic Boy

The healing of the epileptic boy (Section 110) follows the Transfiguration immediately and deliberately in all three Synoptics — the descent from the mountain of glory straight into the failure of the nine disciples left below to cast out a demon. The contrast could not be more stark: Moses and Elijah above; faithless and perverse generation below. The father's anguished account — the boy falling into fire and water, the disciples' failure — evokes a helplessness that Jesus meets with a rebuke not of the father but of the generation in which they all stand.

His word to the disciples about their failure — "Because of your little faith" — and his saying about faith as a grain of mustard seed moving mountains are given only to the disciples privately. The same image of the mustard seed used in the parable (Section 86) of the kingdom's tiny beginning producing enormous growth is here applied to the tiny beginning of genuine faith producing what appears impossible. The connection is intentional: faith in the kingdom and faith as the means of kingdom power are facets of the same reality.

Scripture Index — Chapter Ten

Section

Event

Matthew

Mark

Luke

100

Tradition of the Elders: Clean and Unclean

15:1–20

7:1–23

—

101

The Syrophoenician Woman

15:21–28

7:24–30

—

102

Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man

—

7:31–37

—

103

Feeding of the Four Thousand

15:32–38

8:1–9

—

104

Leaven of the Pharisees; Sign of Jonah

16:1–12

8:10–21

—

105

Blind Man at Bethsaida (Two Stages)

—

8:22–26

—

106

Peter’s Confession at Caesarea Philippi

16:13–20

8:27–30

9:18–21

107

First Passion Prediction; Take Up the Cross

16:21–28

8:31–9:1

9:22–27

108

The Transfiguration

17:1–8

9:2–8

9:28–36

109

The Question About Elijah

17:9–13

9:9–13

—

110

The Epileptic Boy

17:14–21

9:14–29

9:37–43