A HARMONY OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS — CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Matthew 20–21, Mark 10–11, and Luke 18–19 Woven Into One Continuous Narrative

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

2026

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Preface: Continuation of the Harmony

This volume continues the harmony through the final approach to Jerusalem, the Triumphal Entry, and the first days of the Passion Week. Chapter thirteen is one of the most narratively charged in the harmony, moving from the healing of blind Bartimaeus on the road to Jericho, through the encounter with Zacchaeus, to the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple, the cursing of the fig tree, and the great controversies in the Temple courts that occupy Jesus's final days of public teaching.

All three Synoptics are fully engaged throughout this chapter. The triple tradition is dominant for the entry and Temple events; Luke contributes the unique story of Zacchaeus and the parable of the Pounds; Matthew provides the parables of the Two Sons and the Wedding Banquet that fill out the Temple controversies.

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 Twelve: Jericho, the Entry, and the Temple

Section 137 — Blind Bartimaeus [Matt 20:29–34 / Mark 10:46–52 / Luke 18:35–43]

And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

And Jesus answered him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.

And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way.

Section 138 — Zacchaeus the Tax Collector [Luke 19:1–10]

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.

And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Section 139 — The Parable of the Pounds [Luke 19:11–27]

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us.

And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.

And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more. And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds. And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities.

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?

And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him. But these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Section 140 — The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem [Matt 21:1–11 / Mark 11:1–11 / Luke 19:28–44]

And when they draw nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him back hither.

And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door without in the open street; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had said: and they let them go.

And they bring the colt unto Jesus, and cast on him their garments; and he sat upon him.

And many spread their garments upon the way; and others branches, which they had cut from the fields. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David: Hosanna in the highest.

And as he was now drawing nigh, even at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen; saying,

Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

And some of the Pharisees from the multitude said unto him, Teacher, rebuke thy disciples.

And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.

And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Section 141 — The Cleansing of the Temple [Matt 21:12–17 / Mark 11:15–19 / Luke 19:45–48]

And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he saith unto them,

It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple: and he healed them.

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were moved with indignation, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these are saying?

And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

And he left them, and went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.

Section 142 — The Cursing of the Fig Tree [Matt 21:18–22 / Mark 11:12–14, 20–25]

Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree by the way side, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only; and he saith unto it, Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away.

And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How did the fig tree immediately wither away?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

And whenever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Section 143 — The Authority of Jesus Questioned [Matt 21:23–27 / Mark 11:27–33 / Luke 20:1–8]

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one question, which if ye tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; we fear the multitude; for all hold John as a prophet.

And they answered Jesus, and said, We know not.

He also said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Section 144 — The Parable of the Two Sons [Matt 21:28–32]

But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Which of the two did the will of his father?

They say, The first.

Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him.

Section 145 — The Parable of the Wicked Tenants [Matt 21:33–46 / Mark 12:1–12 / Luke 20:9–19]

Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner.

But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.

When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,

The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Section 146 — The Parable of the Wedding Banquet [Matt 22:1–14]

And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come.

Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise: and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them.

But the king was wroth; and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore unto the partings of the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage feast. And those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless.

Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few chosen.

Section 147 — Render unto Caesar [Matt 22:15–22 / Mark 12:13–17 / Luke 20:20–26]

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk.

And they send to him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest not for any one: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a denarius.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

They say unto him, Caesar's.

Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

And when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went away.

Section 148 — The Sadducees' Question on the Resurrection [Matt 22:23–33 / Mark 12:18–27 / Luke 20:27–40]

On that day there came to him Sadducees, they that say there is no resurrection: and they asked him, saying, Teacher, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first married and deceased, and having no seed left his wife unto his brother; in like manner the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And after them all, the woman died. In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven?

But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven.

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

And when the multitudes heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

Section 149 — The Great Commandment [Matt 22:34–40 / Mark 12:28–34]

But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, trying him: Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?

And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets.

And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

Section 150 — David's Son and David's Lord [Matt 22:41–46 / Mark 12:35–37 / Luke 20:41–44]

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?

They say unto him, The son of David.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying,

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet?

If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?

And no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

Appendix: Notes on Chapter Thirteen

On Blind Bartimaeus

The healing of blind Bartimaeus (Section 137) is the last miracle in the Synoptic narrative before the Passion. Mark's account is the most detailed, preserving the man's personal name — Bar-Timaeus, son of Timaeus — and the vivid detail that he threw off his cloak before springing up to come to Jesus. The cloak was likely spread before him to collect alms; throwing it aside is an act of abandonment, a leaving behind of the only security a roadside beggar possessed. His address — *"Rabboni"* (a heightened form of Rabbi, meaning "my great Teacher") — appears only here and in John 20:16, where Mary Magdalene addresses the risen Jesus. Bartimaeus then follows Jesus "in the way" — the same Greek word used throughout Mark for the road to Jerusalem, carrying the double meaning of the literal road and the way of discipleship.

On Zacchaeus

The story of Zacchaeus (Section 138) is unique to Luke and is one of the most narratively memorable episodes in the Gospel tradition. Zacchaeus is not merely a tax collector (*telōnēs*) but a "chief tax collector" (*architelōnēs*) — a term found nowhere else in ancient Greek literature — suggesting he was the regional superintendent of the tax-farming system, wealthy precisely because he supervised the extortion of others. He is short; the crowd blocks his view; he runs ahead and climbs a sycamore fig tree. Jesus looks up, calls him by name, and invites himself to the man's house.

The crowd murmurs: *"He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner."* Zacchaeus's response — half his goods to the poor, fourfold restitution for any wrongful exaction — is either a present tense statement of current practice (he already does this) or a pledge of future action. Most interpreters take it as a genuine conversion response. Jesus's declaration — *"To-day is salvation come to this house"* — is the key word: salvation (*sōtēria*) has arrived not after Zacchaeus has performed penance but at the moment of his reception of Jesus. The restoration of Zacchaeus to the covenant community (*"he also is a son of Abraham"*) anticipates the gospel's reach to all who are lost: *"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."*

On the Triumphal Entry

The Triumphal Entry (Section 140) is the most explicitly messianic public act of Jesus's ministry. The deliberate arrangement — the instruction to find the colt, the specific animal on which no man had yet sat (echoing Numbers 19:2 and Deuteronomy 21:3, which require untouched animals for sacred purposes), the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 ("Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and riding upon an ass") — is a carefully staged prophetic enactment. Jesus is not receiving an accidental acclamation; he is orchestrating a prophetic sign.

The crowd's cry of *"Hosanna"* — from the Hebrew *hoshi'ah na* (save now, Psalm 118:25) — has become a liturgical exclamation of praise rather than petition, but its original content is a prayer for deliverance. The Pharisees' discomfort — *"rebuke thy disciples"* — and Jesus's answer about the stones crying out establishes the necessity of the proclamation: the moment of divine visitation cannot pass in silence.

Luke alone records the weeping over Jerusalem (Section 140): Jesus looks at the city and weeps — the Greek *eklauses*, a word for audible weeping — and speaks the most tragic prophetic lament in the Gospel narrative, foreseeing the city's destruction with precision. The description of enemies casting up a bank (*charax*, a siege work) corresponds to the Roman siege works used by Titus in 70 C.E. with striking exactness.

On the Cleansing of the Temple

The Cleansing of the Temple (Section 141) is one of the few acts of physical force attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and it represents the single most provocative public act of his Jerusalem ministry — more dangerous even than the Triumphal Entry, because it directly confronted the economic and religious interests of the high-priestly establishment. The Temple courts during Passover were the site of a vast commercial operation: money-changers converting Roman and foreign coinage into the Tyrian silver required for the Temple tax, dove-sellers providing animals for sacrifice. Jesus's action — overturning the tables, driving out the sellers — cites Isaiah 56:7 (*"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"*) against Jeremiah 7:11 (*"a den of robbers"*). The juxtaposition of the Temple's intended universality (Isaiah) and its actual corruption (Jeremiah) is the prophetic indictment.

On the Fig Tree

The cursing of the fig tree (Section 142) is the only destructive miracle in the Synoptic tradition and the most discussed in terms of its meaning. Mark places the cursing on the way to the Temple and the discovery of the withered tree the next morning — framing the Temple cleansing between the two halves of the fig tree story in his characteristic intercalation technique. Matthew compresses the two events into a single morning. The fig tree in leaf but without fruit is a natural image for Israel's Temple establishment: the appearance of religious vitality without the fruit of genuine justice and mercy. The miracle is an acted parable of judgment, not an act of petulant frustration.

On the Temple Controversies

The Temple controversies of Sections 143–150 represent the most sustained theological debate in the Synoptic tradition. A sequence of adversaries — chief priests and elders, Pharisees and Herodians, Sadducees, a scribe — bring successive challenges, each of which Jesus answers and then turns back on the questioners. The pattern culminates in Section 150 with Jesus's own unanswerable question about Psalm 110:1: if David calls the Messiah "Lord," how can he be merely David's son? The question silences all opposition: *"No one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."*

The question about Caesar's coin (Section 147) is the most politically charged of the controversies. The trap is elegant: to say "pay tribute" conciliates Rome but alienates Jewish nationalists; to say "do not pay" is sedition against Rome. Jesus's answer — *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"* — refuses both horns of the dilemma. His questioners have already implicitly conceded the answer by possessing the coin with Caesar's image: if you use Caesar's currency in Caesar's economy, you are already in the web of obligation. The deeper question — what belongs to God — is left for the questioners to answer for themselves.

The Great Commandment (Section 149) appears here in Matthew and Mark as an adversarial question, though the scribe who asks it in Mark is commended for his answer. In Luke (Section 122 of the preceding chapter), the same exchange introduces the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The two uses of the same tradition illustrate how the same teaching of Jesus could function in different narrative contexts without contradiction.

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