

Lesson 28 – During Spring and Summer of 29 AD South toward Galilee, Capernaum and Jerusalem.

In the last lesson we saw Jesus take James, John, and Peter to the top of Mt. Hermon. There He had been transformed in the brightness of His face and clothing. He had also talked with Moses and Elijah. Afterward, as the disciples were coming down the mountain, Jesus had corrected the disciples' confusion about Elijah and John the Baptist. They had not understood that Elijah's return would be before Christ's Second Advent. John the Baptist had been the one to come before His First Advent. After they came down the mountain, they found the other nine disciples, which included Judas Iscariot, surrounded by a crowd.

Matthew 17:14a **When they came to the crowd,**

Mark 9:14 **When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.**

Luke 9:37 **The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.**

Among the crowd which surrounded the disciples were unbelieving teachers of the Law. They were attacking what the disciples had been taught by Jesus. The rest of the crowd was also full of unbelief. Even the father who had brought his son to be healed had little faith. Consequently, these nine disciples had let their weak faith become even weaker. No doubt, part of their problem was that they had waked up two days before to find the Lord and Peter, James and John gone. No doubt they were feeling sorry for themselves and wondering why the Lord had left them to face this test alone.

This scene was probably typical. That is, as soon as the presence of Jesus in an area was known, a large crowd would congregate. This crowd had probably begun to gather even before Jesus and His three disciples had slipped away to ascend Mt. Hermon. Along with the predictable crowd, who were mainly seeking miracles, there were also the usual spies from the Pharisees who had attached themselves to the gathering. In the absence of Jesus, the remaining disciples were trying to deal with this crowd.

Mark 9:15 **As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.**

This comment about the reaction of the crowd is unique to Mark. We are left to ask what it was that caused the people to be "overwhelmed with wonder." Perhaps, like Moses coming off Mt. Sinai,¹ Jesus' face and raiment still shone a little with the glory that had been revealed on the mountain.

¹ *Exodus 34:29-35*

The description of the movement of the crowd in these passages seems to indicate that while some of them were gathered closely around the nine disciples, many more were more broadly scattered in the general area looking for Jesus.

Matthew 17:14b-16 a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

Mark 9:16-18 “What are you arguing with them about?” he (*Jesus*) asked. A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Luke 9:38-40 A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”

Evidently, the current crisis, with which the disciples had failed to deal, was their attempt to cast out a demon. This is a little puzzling since, not long before this, they had come back from their successful two-by-two mission of healing and casting out demons. On this day, they had tried to cast out another demon, but could not. We aren’t told whether or not they had been successful with any other healings that day before they came to this one. Certainly, the plight of this father was extreme. The symptoms of demon possession were about to kill his young son.

Matthew 17:17 “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.”

Mark 9:19 “O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Luke 9:41 “O unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

We should consider that when there was a lack of faith in the crowd, even Jesus did not perform many miracles:

² *This was the last of Jesus’ ministry in the northern areas of Gaulanitis and Decapolis. He would next travel south through Galilee and pass into Judea, where the focus of the remainder of His ministry would be.*

Matthew 13:58 “And he did not do many miracles there (Nazareth) because of their lack of faith.”

So, this rebuke may have been more for the gathered crowd than for Jesus’ disciples. The Greek word translated “unbelieving” is ἄπιστος {ä'-pē-stos}. It means “without the faith.” The Greek word translated “perverse” is διαστρέφω {dē-ä-stre'-fō}. It means “to turn aside.” Together, these two words describe the fact that these Jews had turned aside from the truth. I think Jesus’ further comment reflected His frustration that these people were still more interested in His miracles than His Word. His Word was of eternal value. The miracles were only of any lasting value if they turned the people to His Word.

Nonetheless, Jesus had compassion on the man and told him to bring his son.

Matthew 17:18a **Jesus rebuked the demon,**

Luke 9:42a **Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion.**

Mark 9:20-25 **So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,”³ he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene,⁴ he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”⁵**

Only Mark has an extended account of what happened when the boy was brought before Jesus. Mark also has the only account of Jesus’ exchange with the father. When the father first addressed Jesus he expressed doubt in Jesus’ ability to do anything. Jesus assured him that there was nothing that was impossible for one who lived his life by faith. The father, who had come primarily for the miracle, said in essence that he would do anything that Jesus required to get the miracle for his son, but that he would need help with his unbelief. Hopefully, the father of the healed demoniac lived up to his words and accepted the help of the Holy Spirit in acquiring

³ This indicated that the boy had suffered from the condition all during the two years that Jesus had been healing nearby. Yet his father had not brought him to be healed until this moment.

⁴ This shows that there was an even larger crowd in the area than the crowd immediately surrounding the other disciples. Remember, this wasn’t that far from where Jesus had fed the five thousand a few months before.

⁵ This is the only occasion recorded in the New Testament that Jesus prohibited an evil spirit from reentering.

a real faith. If he did, that was a greater gift than the healing of his son. The immediate healing that followed wasn't because of the man's faith, but because of Jesus' compassion.

He did this healing quickly and left. His remaining ministry would be in the south, and He wanted to avoid drawing any unneeded attention to Himself until He got there. Until He got to Jerusalem, He seemed to have concentrated on teaching His smaller coterie of loyal disciples (Mark 9:30).

Matthew 17:18b and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

Luke 9:42b-43a But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Mark 9:26-27 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

The demon gave up his fleshly dwelling with great reluctance and almost killed his former host on departing. However, Jesus then restored his physical health and stood him on his feet.

Matthew 17:19-21 Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."⁶

Remember, the word translated "faith" here is πίστις {pē'-stēs}. It can refer to the mental attitude of faith or trust with an attached implication that actions based on that trust may follow. However, more often than not, it refers to the Christian system of belief and understanding of God's Word. I think that is the meaning here. If you are praying according to God's plan, all of God's power is available and nothing is impossible. Of course, moving a mountain for purely selfish reasons is never part of God's plan.⁷ Our prayers must reflect God's will to reflect His power.

⁶ In Matthew 17:21 the phrase: "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting," only appears in the Textus Receptus, not in the Alexandrian Text of the Codex Sinaiticus. Notice that in Mark 9:29 Jesus says only "This kind can come out only by prayer."

⁷ There is a story among the Coptic Christians of Egypt that in the 10th Century AD they were challenged on this promise (Matthew 17:20) that they could move a mountain by prayer. The challenge was issued by the reigning Muslim Caliph in Egypt. He threatened the Coptic community with death if they couldn't move a mountain (hill) that stood outside of Cairo. After much prayer they are said to have seen the LORD move the mountain. There is currently an ancient Coptic monastery on the site celebrating the miracle.

Mark 9:28-29 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”⁸

I think Jesus’ comment to the disciples tells us that the disciples had forgotten that they weren’t the ones who were casting out the demons. It was God. Casting out any demon required the humility before God which was created by prayer and fasting. I believe that “fasting” can be defined as any exercise whereby you set aside your own legitimate desires and use the time instead for the pursuit of God.

Luke 9:43b-45 While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, “Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.” But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Evidently, at that time, just before they left for Galilee, He began to instruct them more closely about what would happen to Him within about six months. Here He merely described His betrayal although he didn’t tell them it would be one of the twelve. Even so, they couldn’t believe it.

Matthew 17:22a When they came together in Galilee, he said to them,

Mark 9:30a-31a They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples.

The casting out of the demon had taken place in Gaulanitis, just south of Mt. Hermon. The name Gaulanitis is related to the word “Golan.” Gaulanitis included what is known as the Golan Heights today. The fact that they passed through Galilee on the way to Capernaum and Jerusalem proves that the mountain in question was Mt. Hermon. It was in the province of Phillip the Tetrarch, Herod Antipas’ brother.⁹

From there, as they travelled south to Capernaum in Galilee, they managed to ditch the crowds. Jesus wanted to teach those who were His true disciples, and it was almost impossible to teach them with the crowds thronging around them looking for miracles.

⁸ *Jesus didn’t pray when He cast this demon out, so what does this mean? I believe Jesus was pointing to the real problem with the disciples. They seemed to have lost their perspective when they felt abandoned. Jesus spent a great deal of His life in prayer, and was always aware of the presence of the Father. I think He was telling the disciples that what they needed was to spend more time in prayer, in knowing they were in the presence of the Father. That prayer would increase their faith.*

⁹ *Herod Antipas also had a half-brother named Philip who had been the previous husband of Herod’s wife Herodias. Unlike this Philip, he was merely a private citizen and lived in Rome.*

Matthew 17:22a-23 **“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and ~~on~~ since the third day ¹⁰ he will be raised to life.”** And the disciples were filled with grief.

Mark 9:31b-32 **He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”** But they did not understand what he meant ¹¹ and were afraid to ask him about it.

In this journey on the way south toward Jerusalem, Jesus not only told them He would be betrayed, but that He would be killed and then raised to life after three days.

In Capernaum – Date: 9/29 AD The Temple Tax

Matthew 17:24a **After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum,**

Mark 9:33a **They came to Capernaum.**

On the way south through Galilee, Jesus and His disciples paused in Capernaum. It had been months since they had been in Galilee.

Matthew 17:24b-25a **the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?” “Yes, he does,” he replied.**

These Temple tax collectors were speaking of the Temple tax which was usually collected at the Temple at the week of Passover. Jesus had not been to the Passover in Jerusalem since 27 AD and had missed two Passovers there. Even for the general public, there was no basis for this tax in Scripture.¹² The collection of this tax was probably one of the reasons Jesus overthrew the money changer’s tables in the Temple every time He visited the Temple on Passover during His ministry.¹³ Evidently, the tax collectors had decided that the confident Peter was the leader of Jesus’ disciples and went to him hoping to collect the money. They may have been afraid of

¹⁰ *Clearly in the Greek “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “after three days and three nights” means the same thing. The Gospel of Matthew uses all three expressions to speak of the same time period. I will deal with the issue of the three expressions in a later lesson, but in the meantime, just accept that the accurate translation here is “since.”*

¹¹ *They must have assumed he was speaking in a parable and were ashamed to admit they didn’t understand the parable. They weren’t willing to even consider the He might be speaking plain.*

¹² *The Temple was supposed to be supported by the yearly tithe.*

¹³ *He did it on His first visit (John 2:14-15) and on His last visit (Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-16).*

approaching Jesus publicly in person, fearing that He would expose the tax publicly as a fraud. Typical of Peter, he answered for the Lord without first consulting Him.

Matthew 17:25b **When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak.**

It seems that Jesus overheard this exchange. Jesus waited until they were inside before He addressed the issue with Peter. He was gentle as He explained Peter's mistake.

Matthew 17:25c **“What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?”**

He drew an analogy to kings and their sons. In the application of the analogy, the Father was the King, and Jesus was the son.

Matthew 17:26 **“From others,” Peter answered. “Then the sons are exempt,” Jesus said to him.**

The conclusion drawn from the example was that Jesus and his disciples were exempt. Jesus could have answered the question in at least two other ways. First, He could have argued that the tax wasn't scriptural. Second, He could have argued that since He was the true Temple He could hardly be asked to pay the tax for the stone Temple. However, both arguments would have been beyond Peter's understanding at that point. However, since Peter had recently confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”¹⁴ he could understand the argument that Jesus made.

Matthew 17:27a **“But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line.**

Perhaps partly because these were merely tax collectors and not Pharisees, Jesus decided not to make an issue of it. It is worth noting that Peter was told to fish with a line rather than with a net as was his usual practice.

Matthew 17:27b **Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.”**

In paying the tax this way Jesus Christ used a figure to illustrate a truth of God. The payment for Jesus and Peter would come out of the mouth of a fish. To me, that fish spoke of the sign that Jesus had promised the religious establishment. That was the sign of the prophet Jonah who was raised from out of the mouth of a great fish. It spoke of Jesus' death and resurrection. This was the only “temple tax” that God required, and Jesus would pay it.

The Argument over who was Greater.

¹⁴ *Matthew 16:16*

Mark 9:33b-34 When he was in the house,¹⁵ he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.¹⁶

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

Luke 9:46a An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

The fact that this was their main concern certainly illustrated that the disciples hadn't considered or absorbed what Jesus had just told them about His upcoming death. It should also be remembered that the context of this argument was the Lord's recent special compliment of Peter, and His special preference for Peter, James, and John to accompany Him to the top of the mountain. This seeking after place would continue. Just a little later, Jesus' aunt who was the mother of James and John, asked Him for special preferment for her sons (Matthew 20:20-21). I can't help believing that Judas Iscariot, who was so concerned with wealth that he was a thief, was likely an instigator of this argument. Jesus decided the disciples needed additional instruction.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Luke 9:46b Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

This was the same lesson with a different illustration that Jesus taught a little later:

Matthew 20:25 “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

Mark 9:36-37 He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

¹⁵ The phrase “in the house” just means this wasn't a public teaching. It was directed just to the Twelve.

¹⁶ Evidently as Jesus had been involved with ministering to some others, He heard them squabbling among themselves. Their reluctance to admit it indicated that they sensed what they had been doing was ill conceived.

Matthew 18:2-5 He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.¹⁷ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. “And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.

Luke 9:47-48 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest.”

Here the Twelve had been arguing about status. They had been arrogantly imagining which of them was the most important to God. Evidently Jesus took a little child into the house to make His point. I have to believe that the child, and the other children who must have been standing outside the door when Jesus brought them in, were the children of some of the other disciples. They had come to believe in Jesus with the same childlike faith which was necessary for any believer. When Jesus spoke of the disciples welcoming those children “in my name,” it means in accord with the Word and Truth of Jesus’ message. Every believer in Christ becomes clothed with Christ’s righteousness and accomplishments. When the LORD looked on any of them, one of the believing Eleven, or any child believer, the LORD saw Jesus. Therefore, by the same principle, everyone is of equal status before God.

The disciples were supposed to be learning from Jesus Christ. They had learned to appreciate God’s grace toward them, but they had not appreciated that the same grace was offered to all. They were concerned about their status before men. Paul later summarized what they should have learned from Jesus Christ in Philippians:

Philippians 2:5-9a “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name (*reputation*) that is above every name (*reputation*).”

The word the NIV translates “welcomes” in all these passages is δέχομαι {de'-kho-mī}. Its literal meaning is “to take with the hand.” Thus someone who takes one of these children by the hand in the name of Christ, at the same time takes the hand of Jesus Christ and God the Father. The passage in Luke might better be understood as:

¹⁷ I have to believe that this sentence, which is only included in Matthew, was aimed at Judas Iscariot. He was one of the disciples, yet he was still a lost unbeliever who had never humbled himself enough to believe in God’s grace.

“Whoever takes this little child by the hand in my name takes me by the hand; and whoever takes me by the hand also takes the one who sent me (the Father) by the hand.”

The Gentile Believer who drove out Demons

Mark 9:38 **“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”¹⁸**

Luke 9:49 **“Master,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”**

Here John was referring to something in the recent past. John, realizing from what Jesus had said about the status of someone doing something in the name of Christ, probably understood that what they had done was wrong, and here asked Jesus about it. Considering that they had just come out of Gaulanitis and had spent several months in Decapolis and Trachonitis, it seems likely that John was referring to someone they had run into in that mainly Gentile area. I believe it is not unlikely that this man was the very man from Gadara who had the legion of demons cast out of him. You may remember that he had wanted to follow Jesus. However, because he was a Gentile, Jesus had told him to go preach to the Decapolis which he did. Now, after over a year of civilized living he would have been nearly unrecognizable as the man the disciples had last seen when he had been living unwashed and unshaved in the tombs for years.

Mark 9:39-40 **“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us.**

Luke 9:50 **“Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”**

Remember, this man had been casting out demons by the authority of Christ. The authority of Christ to cast out demons wasn't given to unbelievers. Here, Jesus also broke down the world into two camps which were mutually exclusive, those who were for Christ, and those who were against Christ. Within a year, these Jewish disciples were going to have to struggle with the fact that all the Gentiles who believed in Christ were equal with them before God.

Mark 9:41 **I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.**

The act had to be done “in the name of Jesus.” Only those who bear His name can do things “in the name of Jesus.” All those who acted in the name of Jesus, even the Gentiles would receive eternal rewards from God. To do something “in the name of Jesus” doesn't just mean invoking Jesus' name. It means doing something in accordance to the true counsel of what was the will of Jesus.

¹⁸ By the term “not one of us” he may have meant “not a Jew.”

Sins against the “Little Ones”

Matthew 18:6 **But if anyone causes one of these little ones ¹⁹ who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.**

Mark 9:42 **“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.**

I believe that the millstone here is a figure for the failure of human works. See also Judges 9:52-54 where a millstone was used as a judgment. This is another of those many places in Scripture where the sea is a figure for judgment.

It is certainly true that Judas Iscariot, who heard this warning in person, created great doubt and confusion among the “little ones” when he betrayed the Lord. Of course the principal applies to anyone attacking the faith or the faithful.

Matthew 18:7 **“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!**

Testing in this world is part of God’s plan to refine the believer. But that doesn’t excuse those who God allows to test His children. You should remember that the LORD used Babylon to punish Judah according to His will when they destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews into exile. However, He later destroyed Babylon.

Matthew 18:8-9 **If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.**

Mark 9:43-48 **If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out, *where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched.* And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, *where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched.* And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’**

¹⁹ This referred to all those who had believed Jesus in childlike humility. This does not just refer to little children in age.

In interpreting this passage, we need to remember that neither hand, nor foot, nor eye ever causes sin. It is the sinfulness of the soul that creates sin. The interpretation is then clear. If all it would take was a physical amputation of a body part to save one from an eternal hell, the choice would be easy. Instead the solution to sin is a decision to believe in God's redemption. Ironically, even though it does not work, most of mankind would rather try the amputation route rather than rely on simple faith in the LORD's Savior.

The figure of Hell as a place that "their worm doesn't die and the fire is not quenched" is just another figure of the futility of existence in Hell along with the figures of fire and darkness. I believe that Jesus repeated the warning three times to mark the seriousness of the situation for Judas Iscariot and all unbelievers. Both Mark 9:44 and 46, which consist of the phrase "where their worm doesn't die, and the fire is not quenched" isn't in the flawed Codex Sinaiticus, but it is in the Textus Receptus. For reasons previously given, I always stick with the Textus Receptus. The phrase is repeated in Mark 9:48 of both the Textus Receptus and the Codex Sinaiticus.

Matthew 18:10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."

Here Jesus returned to the subject of the "little children" who the disciples were privileged to serve. The "their angels" here seems to refer to their "guardian angels" who were in constant touch with the Father. The concept of such guardian angels is taught elsewhere in the Psalms:

Psalms 91:9-11 "If you make the Most High your dwelling-- even the LORD, who is my refuge-- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

This guardianship seems to be a special ministry that the LORD gives to a certain few of the trillions of elect angels who are normally scattered in the heavens.

Mark 9:49 Everyone will be salted ~~with~~ for the fire.

The phrase "salted with fire" should be more accurately translated "salted for the fire." This refers to the commandment in Leviticus with reference to offerings:

Leviticus 2:13 "Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings."

The significance of the salt is explained by Edersheim: "--- all offerings were to be without admixture of leaven or of honey; the latter probably because, from its tendency to fermentation or corruption, it resembled leaven. For a similar reason salt, as the symbol of incorruption, was to be added to all sacrifices. Hence we read in Mark 9:49--'For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt'; that is, as the salt is added to the sacrifice

symbolically to point to its incorruption, so the reality and permanence of our Christian lives will be brought out by the fire of the great day, when what is wood, hay, and stubble shall be consumed; while that which is real shall prove itself incorruptible, having had the fire applied to it.” Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple--Its Ministry and Services*, Chapter 5.

Mark 9:50 **“Salt is good,²⁰ but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”**

Although this is close to a saying from the Sermon on the Mount, which we studied in Matthew 5, it is not exactly the same. However, it stood as a warning to the disciples to never let the grace which purified them become corrupted by arrogance and pride. If they treated each other with the same grace that the LORD had granted to them, they would be at peace with each other and wouldn't worry about who was “greater.”

The Love of God for the Lost

Matthew 18:11 **For the Son of man came to save that which was lost.**²¹

Matthew skipped Jesus' discussion of salt but resumed with the importance to Jesus of every living soul.

Matthew 18:12-13 **“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.**

Here Jesus told a parable to illustrate the equal value of every soul. In the parable the shepherd of the sheep only has one sheep that wanders off, and yet the shepherd will spend every effort to find just the one lost sheep. In the reality of sinful mankind, all of the sheep are lost:

Isaiah 53:6 **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray,²² each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”²³**

²⁰ *Colossians 4:6 seems to indicate that salt refers to grace. “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt.” Salt is that which preserves.*

²¹ *Again, we have an example of the flawed Codex Sinaiticus omitting scripture which is in the Textus Receptus. Matthew 18:11 in the Textus Receptus is: “For the Son of man came to save that which was lost.” I have added it to the text. The NIV left it out.*

²² *Jesus said: John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

²³ *This is one of the many places in Scripture that teaches the doctrine of Unlimited Atonement. Unlimited Atonement is the teaching that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, not just those who would believe. Many Calvinists dispute this with no cause.*

Matthew 18:14 **In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.**

This is also taught in 2 Peter:

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

This reiterates an important principal that rather undercuts the view of some that God chooses some for salvation but chooses the rest for condemnation.

The Mercy We Should Show to the Brother who Sins against Us

Matthew 18:15 **“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.**

Here Jesus further developed the theme of establishing peace between Christians which he had established in the Mark passage above on salt. It was established by showing other believers the same grace that God had showered on them. In the previous verse Jesus said that the first communication should just be person to person.

Matthew 18:16 **But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’²⁴**

In this example, the second communication should be established between the parties in a small group setting.

Matthew 18:17a **If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;**

If that failed, the problem could be communicated to a larger group.

Matthew 18:17b **and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

What Jesus said here was telling. This lesson is recorded only by Matthew. Do you remember what Matthew was? He was a tax collector as were two others of the disciples, Matthew’s brothers James and Thomas. I can imagine Jesus saying this while looking directly at Matthew.

²⁴ This quotes the laws of jurisprudence from the Law of Moses: Deuteronomy 19:15 “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

He was telling them, if all else failed in resolving the dispute, they should still treat the offending brother as Jesus had treated them, with grace.