

A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF MATTHEW 20:26-27

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Divinity in
Grace Theological Seminary
May 1982

Title: A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF MATTHEW 20:26-27
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Date: May, 1982
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There is a great concern among evangelicals today, about the need for more and better leaders in their ranks. The lack of competent leadership comes from: 1) a failure to have a clear concept of Christian leadership, 2) a misconceived notion of how to attain such a position, and 3) a misconceived notion of how to maintain one's position of leadership. Jesus speaks to these three areas in Matthew 20:26-27. The critical investigation of this passage will include a study of the context, an exegesis of the passage, and an application of the principles of the passage.

Jesus, the Messiah, is returning from his last ministry trip, which was to Perea. On His way to Jerusalem and the cross, He spends time in Jericho, where the incident in question takes place. Because the disciples, as well as others expected Him to soon set up His earthly kingdom, James and John, prompted by their mother, ask for seats of honor. Upon hearing of the request, the other ten disciples were indignant at this bold request because they too wanted these positions. From parallel passages, (Matt. 23:11-12, Mark 9:34-35 and Luke 9:38, 14:11, 18:14) this problem of rivalry is seen to be a continual one.

An exegesis of Matthew 20:26-27 reveals that Christ is emphatically presenting truth to His disciples, as His thought moves from the lesser in verse twenty-six, to the greater in verse twenty-seven. The conditional relative clauses assume that men will be seeking to attain and maintain these positions, while at the same time revealing the identity of those who are called "servants" and "slaves."

In Matthew 20:26-27, Jesus reveals three characteristics of Christian leadership. It is to be radically different than that of the world around them. Christian leadership is obtained by those who evidence their desire by service to the group. It is maintained by the one who continually binds himself as a slave to those whom he leads. These principles are important, not only for practical application, but also for use in evaluating current leadership concepts.

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

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INTRODUCTION

The critical investigation of Matthew 20:26-27 will begin with a statement of the need for and the procedure of this study.

The Need for this Study

A point of concern among many evangelicals today is the need for more and better leaders in their ranks. Many congregations and denominations find their progress and their effectiveness retarded, not because they are unwilling to move ahead, but because they do not have enough qualified people to fill leadership positions.¹ No Christian group ever registers progress toward professed goals without strong leadership.²

Since this is an area of concern, the question remains? How did this shortage arise? Gangel writes: "One of the major problems in implementing Christian leadership in the church, or in any other kind of Christian community, is failure to recognize not only a pragmatic, but also a biblical leadership style."³ McCord presents another aspect when he writes: "Many today are obsessed with the notion of

¹Donald Gerig, "The Courage to Allow for Leaders," Christianity Today, 21:4, November 19, 1976, p. 26.

²Ernest T. Campbell, "They Also Serve Who Lead," The Princeton Seminary Bulletin, 2:1, 1978, p. 7.

³Kenneth O. Gangel, Competent to Lead (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 9-10.

power, how to get it and how to keep it."¹ Thus, the problem stems from three basic weaknesses, the failure to have a clear concept of Christian leadership, and a misconceived notion of how to attain and maintain a position of Christian leadership.

In Matthew 20:26-27, Jesus speaks to His disciples, addressing these same three weaknesses in their concept of leadership. On this occasion Salome had come with her two sons, James and John, to ask Jesus for seats of honor in His coming kingdom. Though He refused the request, the incident stirred the jealous anger of the other ten, thus, revealing their own wrong attitudes. In response to this crisis, in verse twenty-five, Jesus tells them what leadership is not to be like, followed by His commands in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven. To illustrate His commands, Jesus gives the disciples the example of His own life in verse twenty-eight. In the two verses to be examined, Christ's exhortation is focused on the aforementioned weaknesses.

The Procedure of this Study

The procedure of this study is as follows. In chapter one the relevant context will be addressed, setting the stage for Christ's words. In chapter two these words and their relationship to each other will be examined, as well as exegetical problems which occur. In chapter three the

¹James I. McCord, "Called to Serve," The Princeton Seminary Bulletin, 2:1 (1978), p. 9.

results of the previous study will be interpreted. Christ's main teaching will be stated. Scriptural examples of possible first century application will be followed by applications appropriate to this current age.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 20:26-27

An essential part of any exegetical study is the study of the context into which the words are spoken. This chapter will include a brief study of the context of the book of Matthew as it relates to the event in question. Further light will also be sought in parallel accounts from other Gospel writers.

The Context Within Matthew

This section on the study of context will include a view of the book of Matthew as a whole. This portion will also focus on the events immediately preceding and following the text being considered.

The Broad Context

The gospel according to Matthew has been considered one of the most important books of the New Testament. The vital function it serves is that of a bridge linking the Old and New Testaments. It does this by focusing attention primarily on the prophecies of the Old Testament as fulfilled in the life of Christ (Matt. 1:1, 2:6, 4:15-16). In a sense, this gospel also serves as a link to future events by explaining the future fulfillment of those prophesied events which did not occur during the earthly

ministry of Christ (Matt. 24:29-31, 24:43).¹

The author of the book is generally conceded to be Matthew, one of the twelve disciples. Though his name did not appear on the book until the end of the first century, the date of the writing of the gospel is placed at about 70 A.D. Regardless of the exact date, the unanimous testimony of the early church fathers, as well as the evidence from early texts, bears witness to Matthew's authorship.²

The apostle's purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, and that as such He fulfilled the requirements of the promised King, David's descendant. Through lavish use of Old Testament quotations (over fifty in all), Matthew seeks to show that Christ's life and ministry conclusively prove that He is the prophesied Messiah of Israel (Matt. 8:17, 11:10, 12:18-21).³ As a result, Matthew organized the book around a Messianic theme. He begins with Christ's royal genealogy and the early recognition that He was indeed the King of the Jews. By the end of chapter four, there have been at least seven prophecies which have been fulfilled in Christ (Matt.

¹John F. Walvoord, Matthew-Thy Kingdom Come. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 9.

²F. F. Bruce, "St. Matthew," in the series Scripture Union Bible Study Books, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 3.

³L. M. Peterson, "The Gospel of Matthew," in vol. 4 of The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, ed. Merrill C. Tenny (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p. 132.

1:23, 2:6, 2:15, 2:18, 2:23, 4:6, 4:15-16). From this point, he moves to the "Sermon on the Mount" which states the moral principles of the Kingdom. Beginning in chapter eight, the author starts to relate a series of miracles and sayings which are part of His concentrated message to the Jews. These incidents are all related to showing His credentials as the prophesied Messiah (Matt. 8:1-7, 9:18-34).¹ Chapter thirteen is pivotal, in that the continual rejection of the Jews causes the Messiah to begin to speak in parables designed to both conceal and reveal the truth to the Jews (Matt. 13:10-23). This continues until chapter sixteen, when the Messiah begins to focus His attention on His disciples in preparation for His final rejection. The Messiah reveals the coming church and begins to separate the twelve from Judaism, as well as deepening His communion with them (Matt. 16:13-28). Chapters nineteen through twenty-six focus on the disciples as Jesus gives them instructions for their future ministry without Him. This includes hope for the future, as He explains that the rejected Servant will return to set up the kingdom He had promised (Matt. 20:1-16, 24:1-25:46). The book then records the suffering and death of the Messiah in chapters twenty-six and twenty-seven. Chapter twenty-eight is the climax of Matthew's proof: the slain Servant rises again to demonstrate conclusively that He was indeed the

¹Walvoord, Matthew-Thy Kingdom Come, p. 12.

Messiah.¹

The Immediate Context

The Previous Week's Events. Matthew 20:26-27 is found in a period of time when Christ's main thrust is the instruction of His disciples. The passage under consideration was spoken by Jesus to His disciples toward the end of His Perea ministry, probably in late 29 A.D. or early 30 A.D.²

As one reads the gospels, the rapid sequence of events at this time can be seen. Because of increasing hostility from Jews who had rejected His claims, Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem to begin His last extended ministry trip. This trip included His last visit to Galilee and Samaria (Luke 17:11). Upon His return to Jerusalem, He was again forced to flee beyond the Jordan to Bethabara (John 10:40-42). After hearing of the death of Lazarus, Jesus returned to Bethany to raise him (John 11:1-44). Controversy over this event then caused Him to retire North to Ephraim (John 11:54). After staying there until "the Passover of the Jews was at hand" (John 11:55), Jesus and His disciples moved across the Jordan River into Perea.³ From this region, after some ministry, He proceeds through

¹Peterson, "The Gospel of Matthew," p. 126.

²A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ, (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), p. 131.

³Charles F. Pfeiffer, Bakers Bible Atlas, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 190.

Jericho, where He deals with the situation in Matthew 20: 26-27, to arrive in Bethany six days before the Passover. From there He proceeds to Jerusalem for His triumphal entry and subsequent death.¹

Christ's ministry during this short time in Perea included teaching on marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:1-12), parables about riches (Matt. 19:16-20), and revelation concerning His forthcoming passion (Matt. 20:17-19). After healing the blind men in Jericho (Matt. 20:29-34), His ministry is directed toward those in Jerusalem as He cleanses the temple (Matt. 21:12), curses the fig tree (Matt. 21:19), denounces the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-39), and has the last supper with His disciples (Matt. 26:20).²

Chapter twenty of Matthew begins with a parable about laborers in a vineyard, spoken by Christ somewhere in Perea. Verses seventeen through nineteen indicate that Christ knew that it was time for them to be going to Jerusalem where He would be killed. Verse twenty-nine states that they were going out from Jericho, implying that the confrontation with the sons of Zebedee, in verses twenty through twenty-eight had taken place in Jericho. At the very least, it can be said that the confrontation occurred as Christ and His disciples were on their way from Perea to

¹Robert D. Culver, *The Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 197-198.

²Peterson, "The Gospel of Matthew," p. 127.

Bethany, somewhere in the vicinity of Jericho, before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. From the implication of verse twenty, it would not be difficult to imagine the group as having settled in some sort of lodging either for a meal or for the night. The chapter closes as Christ heals two blind men on His way out of Jericho.

The Moments Events. The context of verses twenty through twenty-eight finds the twelve disciples together with Jesus, as indicated by verse twenty-four. As has been said, it is possible that they had gathered for a meal or for lodging. The question of the identity of the women is one which naturally arises. Though her background is uncertain, the mother of James and John is identified as Salome, probably the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. Thus, Salome would be His aunt and her sons would be His cousins. This could explain her boldness and free access to Him at this time. Lange also suggests that she was part of a caravan of pilgrims from Galilee, on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover. These then joined Christ and His disciples at Jericho.¹ Though Matthew suggests that it was Salome who made the request, Mark 10:35 shows that her sons were involved in the request as well.

The question then arises: What caused the request, by these two disciples and their mother, for the two highest

¹John Peter Lange, Matthew, Translated by Philip Schaff. In Vol. 15 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1861), pp. 362-363.

positions of honor? This is particularly intriguing in light of Christ's often repeated warning of His coming death (Matt. 20:17-19). It has been suggested that Christ's disciples, as well as those in Jerusalem, were expecting this trip to Perea to be a time for gathering support. It was thought that Christ would bring His conquering army at the time of the Passover and triumphantly enter Jerusalem to set up His Kingdom.¹ This view would help to account for His royal welcome to the city in a few days, even though He had been there many times before, and had even been forced to flee for His life. It would also explain how James and John could ignore Jesus' previous statements and ask Him for seats of honor. It is clear that these two, as well as their mother and the other disciples, fully expected Him to somehow set up His kingdom and fulfill His promise during this Passover (Matt. 19:28). Being a good mother, she naturally wanted the best for her sons in this coming kingdom. None of them understood that His death must now come before His reign.

Verses twenty and twenty-one demonstrate the demeanor with which Salome approached Christ. As one would do when approaching a king, she bowed low and waited for His recognition. Then she requested Him to give the command, as other kings would, which would grant those positions of honor they desired. In the East, the highest place of honor was at the right hand of the king, with the second

¹Culver, The Life of Christ, pp. 195-196.

place being at the left hand. These were the positions arbitrarily given by the ruler as favors and used by those who received them for their own ends.¹

Christ's response to the request for honor, found in verses twenty-two and twenty-three, was rather mild and focuses on the content of the request. Whereas, James and John were looking for an immediate, temporal fulfillment in an earthly kingdom, as the context indicates, Christ's response was not in that vein. Instead, He questioned their ability to drink the cup He must drink. To obtain the honor He was about to receive, they must suffer as He was about to suffer. Where the three were looking for the glory of an earthly kingdom, Christ was referring to the glories of the heavenly kingdom He was about to inherit. They were looking for a painless appointment to honor, while He was looking toward the pain and suffering of the cross to obtain the greater honor.²

After saying that these two disciples would drink this cup, which they did not understand, Christ responded, predicting their future martyrdom. Then, they would indeed drink the cup of suffering He was about to drink. However, because the positions they sought were actually heavenly, He could not grant them, because they were not His to give.

¹Heinrich Meyer, "A Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew," in vol. 1 of Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 354.

²William Hendricksen, "Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew" in vol. 1 of New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 746.

Those who would sit at His side in glory had been eternally decreed by the Father and the position will be granted to those who have been chosen.¹

It is interesting that the Lord did not rebuke or ridicule James and John for their greed or misunderstanding. Perhaps this was His method of commending their faith that He would put them on thrones as He had promised in Matthew 19:28. Regardless of the reason for His response, He did tell them that in the heavenly realm honor comes by appointment from the Father.

Moving to verse twenty-four, the ten were indignant concerning what they had heard. But what had they heard which caused them to react in such a manner? It is clear that the content of verses twenty-two and twenty-three were not of great offense to these disciples, because Jesus had not granted James and John the positions for which they had asked. He had instead responded to their request with a question of His own, which had the tone of a mild rebuke for their ignorance. The indignation of the ten was caused by the request in verse twenty-one, and showed that they all wanted these positions. These two disciples had asked for the places which each of the twelve had considered his own. Thus, the hostility of the ten was directed at these two who had tried to gain the honor they all desired.²

¹Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 277.

²Stanley D. Toussaint, Behold the King, (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), p. 233.

Sensing the danger of the situation, in verse twenty-five, Jesus called the two sides together in order to resolve the problem. He did this by contrasting the world's view of greatness with His own. He explained that the common conception of greatness is exemplified by the manner of the Gentile rulers. In this illustration, He used a progression in terminology which He will again use in verses twenty-six, twenty-seven and twenty-eight. Bruce believes that the "rulers" are subordinate to the "great ones" in verse twenty-five.¹ Although considered similar, these two positions are not quite the same. In the same manner, the verb Jesus used to describe the action of the "ruler," κατακυριεύουσιν, has a negative force and implies that these princes are continually exercising their rule to their own advantage.² Though commonly translated "lording it over," a clearer definition would be to "gain dominion over" or "subdue."³ Thus, He was explaining the method they were using to gain superiority. Similarly, He described the actions of those with greater position with the present active verb κατεξουσιάζουσιν. Christ used this verb to describe how those "great ones" continually

¹Bruce, St. Matthew, p. 258.

²The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. s.v. "κύριος," by H. Bietenhard 2:519.

³Walter Bauer; William F. Arndt; and Wilbur F. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 2nd ed. revised and augmented by Wilbur Gingrich and Fredrick W. Danker. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 413.

used the power of their position.¹ The word can mean "to tyrannize" or "to misuse official authority" as well as "to exercise authority over."² This verse forms a negative illustration of greatness, as compared to the positive illustration in the next two verses. The progression will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.³

Verse twenty-eight is the culmination of His argument as He uses His own life as the supreme example. He concludes that though both the disciples and the Gentile rulers look upon greatness as being served and exercising authority, consider the Son of God: He who is the greatest among men came as a servant, then finally gave His life. He did not come for the purpose of being served, but rather to serve. He did not come for the purpose of exercising authority, but to give His life. He was the example for all those who would have positions of honor in His kingdom.⁴

The Context from Parallel Passages

There are at least five other passages (Matt. 23:11-12, Mark 9:34-35, Luke 9:48, 14:11, 18:14) where Christ repeats the general theme "the first being last and the last first." These, however, would not be considered parallel in the strictest sense because they repeat only a small

¹Richard Charles Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1943), p. 790.

²NIDNTT, s. v. "ἐξουσία," by O. Betz, 2:606.

³Infra, pp. 41-43.

⁴Meyer, Gospel of Matthew, p. 356.

portion of the dialogue and are not in a parallel historical context. It is interesting to note, from these passages, that the dispute for greatness among the disciples had been a continual problem throughout Christ's ministry. Just as their desire for greatness was persistent, so also His teaching to counteract this error had also been persistent.

Another passage which may be considered parallel is found in Luke 22:24-30. Though some of the wording is very similar, the historical setting is different. Luke specifically states when this incident took place, by placing it here in the middle of his account of the Lord's Supper. Because the incident is related here, it is assumed that the dispute arose at this time. In his commentary on Luke, Norval Geldenhuys rightly comments:

"The measure of agreement existing between Matt. 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45 and this section in Luke, is no proof that Luke describes the same occurrence as Matthew and Mark. . . . Although we have here a certain amount of agreement between Luke and Mark (and Matt.), there is also a considerable difference."¹

As has been seen before,² the subject did come up quite often and Christ could have used words similar to those He had spoken only a few days earlier.³ Though the passage is similar, it is not truly parallel.

¹Norval Geldenhuys, The Gospel of Luke, in vol. 3 of The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 563.

²Supra, pp. 12-13.

³Geldenhuys, Luke, p. 563.

The final passage to be considered is Mark 10:34-45. It is the same historical incident viewed by another author. The beginning of the situation is somewhat different, but Matthew 20:22-38 and Mark 10:38-45 are very closely parallel. Because the Matthew passage has been examined, it is proper here to note the difference of Mark from Matthew.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference is that Mark 10:35 says that the request comes from James and John, while he does not mention Salome. One suggestion is that Matthew saw their mother behind the request, or that later respect for these two apostles caused Matthew to shift some of the blame to their mother.¹ Because of the response of the disciples in Matthew 20:24, a more likely suggestion is that Matthew recorded what happened, while Mark recorded what was really behind the request. In other words, James and John influenced their mother to ask Jesus for them.² As Matthew 20:24 suggests, the ten disciples were indignant at James and John, not their mother.³

Mark 10:35 probably verbalizes the unspoken request of Matthew 20:20. The demeanor of Salome, as well as the nature of the request clearly indicates the mother and sons' view that Christ was indeed the Messianic king. William

¹Plummer, St. Matthew, p. 277.

²R. V. G. Tasker. The Gospel According to St. Matthew in vol. 1 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. ed. R. V. G. Tasker. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1981), p. 193.

³Lange, Matthew, p. 363.

Lane states: "The enthusiasm reflected in the sweeping terms of verse 35, and the form of the petition in verse 37, . . . show that the brothers regard Jesus as the eschatological Lord who goes to Jerusalem to restore the glory of the fallen throne of David."¹

Summary

Jesus, the Messiah, is returning from His last ministry trip, which was to Perea. On His way to Jerusalem and the cross, He spends time at Jericho where there may be a caravan from Galilee which was enroute to Jerusalem. The expectation of these people, as well as the disciples and those in Jerusalem, is that Christ is now gathering forces to set up His kingdom during the Passover. Instead, Jesus used this time to concentrate on training His disciples because of previous Jewish rejection.

After telling them a parable of the kingdom and reminding them of His imminent death, Jesus is approached by Salome and her two sons. They requested seats of honor for the two disciples in Christ's coming kingdom. Not knowing its true nature, Christ said they would drink of His cup, but the positions were not His to give.

To quell the indignation of the ten, Christ explains that world greatness and kingdom greatness are different. The way it is done in the world is not the way His followers

¹William Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, in vol. 2 of The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 378.

are to do it. He said, finally, that He Himself is the model of true greatness. He did not come to be served but to serve.

The parallel passages reveal that this was a continual problem which He had addressed before. When they had disputed among themselves He had told them what a leader should be like. But when a few attempted to gain authority over the others, He explained to them the proper method of achieving and maintaining greatness.

In the next chapter, individual words with their meanings and relationship will be examined. This is to determine what Jesus was saying to His disciples.

CHAPTER II

THE EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 20:26-27

It is the purpose of this chapter, to examine the individual Greek words and their relationships from the third edition of the United Bible Societies text of the Greek New Testament. Exegetical problems will also be discussed.

οὐχ οὕτως ἔσται ἐν ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ὅς ἐάν θέλη ἐν ὑμῖν μέγας γενέσθαι ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος. καὶ ὅς ἂν θέλη ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος ἔσται ὑμῶν δοῦλος (Matt. 20:26-27).¹

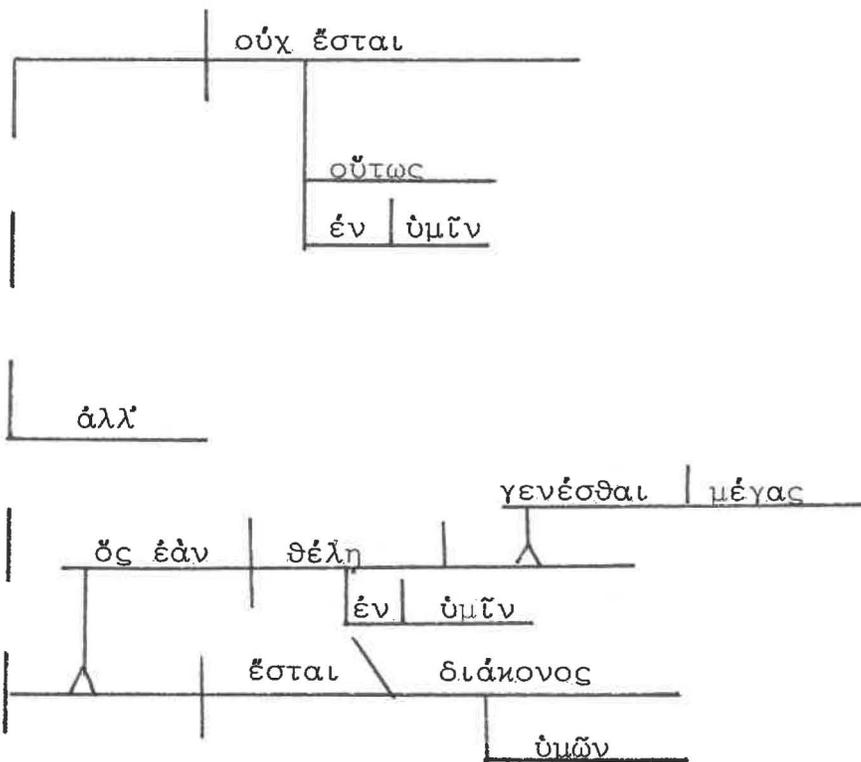
A Diagrammatical Analysis²

A diagrammatical analysis has been included to serve as a visual aid to help the reader understand the syntactical relationships in Matthew 20:26-27. The punctuation of the text shows the sentence beginning in verse twenty-six and continuing through verse twenty-eight. Because verse twenty-eight is Christ's example of the teaching in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, only the content of these first two verses is examined in this paper.

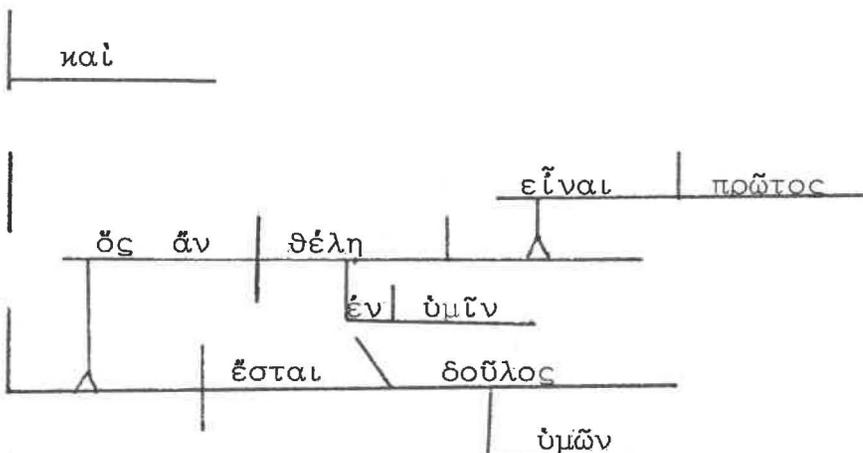
¹Kurt Aland, et. al., The Greek New Testament (New York: American Bible Society, 1975), p. 78.

²The diagram which follows will not be directly mentioned but is the basis of the discussion on pages 26, 29, 30, 32, and 36.

MATTHEW 20:26



MATTHEW 20:27



A Preliminary Exegesis

This section will deal with a discussion of each of the Greek words individually. Though this will be the emphasis, the inter-relationship of some of the words will also be covered.

οὐχ

This is the form of the negative οὐ which is used before those words with rough breathing. It is a clear-cut, point-blank negative and is stronger in force than the negative μή.¹ Because it is stronger, it is usually used with the indicative mood and is considered to be the proper negation for a statement of supposed absolute fact.² In other words, it denies the reality of an alleged fact. Though not the strongest negative, it does reveal a firm resolve on Christ's part.

οὕτως

The most commonly found form of this adverb is occasionally written οὕτω (Acts 23:11, Phil. 3:17, Heb. 12:21, Rev. 16:18). Generally translated "in this manner," "thus," or "so,"³ Dana and Mantey call it a demonstrative adverb

¹A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 1156.

²James H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 232.

³BAGD, p. 602.

which denotes manner.¹ The purpose of the demonstrative is to call attention, with special emphasis to that which it refers.² The manner to which the adverb refers is found in verse twenty-five and includes all of the secular methodology found there. This negative phrase is usually translated "It shall not be thus among you." Another acceptable translation might be "It shall not be this way among you."³

ἔσται

From the verb of being, εἶμι, this is the third person, singular form of the future middle indicative. The third person, in this context is usually translated as "it," referring to the content of verse twenty-five. The use of the indicative mood means there are no qualifications or conditions which will not be a part of the negation.⁴ The middle voice stresses the agent,⁵ the example of the Gentile rulers in verse twenty-five, and along with the demonstrative adverb, serves to make the content of Christ's negation abundantly clear.

The future indicative is usually translated "will be,"⁶ but in this context such a translation would lose the force of the context. Robertson calls this an example of a

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (Toronto: The Macmillian Co., 1955), p. 238.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Meyer, St. Matthew, p. 356.

⁴Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 168.

⁵Ibid., p. 157.

⁶BAGD, p. 222.

volitive or imperative future occurring in the third person.¹ He says: "The volitive future is a matter of context and tone of voice to be sure, but that is true . . . of the real imperative . . ." ² "The future is sometimes used in the expression of a command. Since a command necessarily involves futurity, this is a very natural idiom."³ Because of the nature of the context, Christ quelling a dispute shortly before His death, the imperative future would be the better choice. He sought to strongly emphasize the truth that the world's way must not be the way of His followers.⁴ Thus, the translation, "It must not be this way among you" is the most appropriate. The textual problem associated with His word in this passage will be discussed later.⁵

ἐν

This preposition is used by the author to qualify the relative action of the verb. With the dative, it can indicate place, time, or cause, as well as having other usages. In this context it is best translated "among," and denotes a rather close relationship. The action of the preceding verb is thus limited to the scope of the

¹Robertson, Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 874.

²Ibid., p. 942.

³Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 192.

⁴Tasker, St. Matthew, p. 195.

⁵Infra, pp. 36-38.

relationship expressed.¹

ὕμῖν

This is the dative, second person, plural form of the personal pronoun and is translated "you." The pronoun functions in the place of its antecedent which is found in verse twenty-four. It is here referring to the twelve disciples. Depending on the number of cases in one's system of Greek, this can either be a locative² or dative of sphere. Both of these have a metaphorical use, rather than literal, and denote the sphere in which something is done or in which something is true.³ Thus, Christ is referring to the circle of disciples as a group, and not the physical boundaries marked out by their presence. He was not referring to the building or area where they stood, but rather to their inter-relationship as individuals.

ἀλλ'

A shortened form of the word ἀλλά, this adversative particle is used to indicate a difference with, or a contrast to, that which precedes.⁴ Commonly rendered "but," it is suggested by Dana and Mantey that the emphatic force of

¹Daniel B. Wallace, Selected Notes on the Syntax of New Testament Greek, An unpublished syllabus for Intermediate Greek (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 141.

²Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, pp. 86-87.

³Wallace, Selected Notes, p. 57. ⁴BAGD, p. 37.

the word may be exposed by translating it "in fact."¹ Because of the interventive nature of the context, the latter, emphatic translation may be more appropriate. Jesus here is drawing a clear and emphatic contrast between the actions of the nations in verse twenty-five, and the opposite actions which His followers must take to positions of honor. Therefore, the translation "in fact" would be preferable to show emphasis.

ὅς

This masculine, singular relative pronoun is normally used to connect a substantive with a clause which in some way qualifies its meaning.² However, when followed by the indefinite particle *ἕαν*, the two words function as a single unit. Though this pronoun generally agrees in gender and number with its antecedent, in this usage, the antecedent has been omitted because it is clear in the context.³ The relative clause, which *ὅς* introduces, serves to identify and explain the one who is later called "your servant." The third person of *ἔσται* refers to the person identified in this clause.

ἐάν

Having no corresponding English word, this particle serves to imply vagueness or uncertainty in the sentences where it occurs.⁴ There is debate over the differences and

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 241.

²Ibid., p. 124. ³Ibid., p. 124. ⁴Ibid., p. 259.

similarities between ἕδν and ἄν, but it is generally accepted that ἕδν is frequently substituted in the place of ἄν after a relative pronoun.¹

The relative idea of ὅς combined with the vagueness of ἕδν yields the translation "whoever." Because it is later limited by ἐν ὑμῖν, the ones who would be great must be limited to those who are a part of the group. However, it is not limited to certain ones within that group, but is open to all.²

Θέλη

This word is the verb of the relative clause of which it is a part. The present tense indicates that the action is linear, giving the idea of progress or of continuation.³ The subjunctive mood is the mood of mild contingency and assumes unreality. This mood of probability is here used as a potential subjunctive which is found in subordinate clauses, and commonly implies future reference.⁴ The word itself means "to wish to have," "desire," or "want."⁵ Schrenk adds that it can have the character of wanting or a strong desire to have.⁶ Muller includes the thought of resolute willing when

¹BAGD, p. 211.

²Lenski, St. Matthews Gospel, p. 791.

³Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 181.

⁴Ibid., pp. 170, 172. ⁵BAGD, p. 355.

⁶Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, S. v. "Θέλω" by Gottlob Schrenk, p. 3:45.

defining $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta$.¹ Combining the definitions with the mood and tense, one sees that in this context it may be translated "whoever might be strongly desiring or wishing." The subjunctive mood assumes that not everyone will have this strong desire. The present tense implies a desire over a length of time like a goal which is strived for. It is not merely a passing fancy. The person's resolute desire would naturally be manifest in his service, though it is assumed that some will fail.

It is interesting that Jesus uses the same word here and in verse twenty-seven, as He did in verse twenty-one, when responding to Salome's request. Though it would be difficult to be dogmatic, the word does form a link which Christ may have used to show that the "wishing" of verses twenty-six and twenty-seven is the same as the "desire" they expressed in verse twenty-one. He may have been restating their real desires, and then giving the legitimate fulfillment of those desires in His kingdom.

$\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$

As previously discussed, these words are commonly translated "among you." This prepositional phrase was used before to limit the sphere of the negation to this group of twelve disciples.² Here He again uses it as a dative of sphere to limit the scope of the verb $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta$.³ $\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\alpha\nu\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta$

¹NIDNTT, s. v. " $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ " by D. Muller, 3:1019.

²Supra, p. 20. ³Wallace, Selected Notes, p. 141.

is thus limited to the sphere of those who are a part of the group. Mark 10:43 has a different word order, placing the prepositional phrase after, and thus modifying the aorist infinitive. Either placement of the phrase would not change the meaning of the relative clause because there is abundant evidence from the context limiting both the "wishing" and the "becoming" to those who are "among you." Matthew emphasizes the fact that those who "desire" must come from "among you," while Mark emphasizes the point that those who "become great" are to be "among you." In any case, the sphere of this clause is clearly limited to those in this group of disciples.

μέγας

This masculine, singular adjective is an example of the substantive use of the adjective. Dana and Mantey point out that there are evidences which point unquestionably to the origin of the adjective in the substantive.¹ They conclude that sometimes the adjective recovers its original substantive character so that it performs the function of a noun; in this case as the object of the verb θελη. When used as a noun, the gender influences the concreteness of the adjective. Dana and Mantey state that the masculine gender is used when the nominal adjective is concrete.² The word itself is generally used of rulers, and is defined as "men prominent for any reason."³ Abbot-Smith define it

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 116.

²Ibid., p. 118.

³BAGD, p. 499.

as "great of rank"¹ while Thayer adds the thought of "eminent or distinguished men."² Combining these definitions with the subordination of ἄρχοντες to μεγάλοι (rulers to great ones) in verse twenty-five, it is seen that μέγας is subordinate to πρῶτος in verse twenty-seven. πρῶτος will be discussed later, where the distinctions will be amplified.³ For now, it is sufficient to say that μέγας speaks of prominence, such as men at the right and left of a king, but not necessarily of preeminence, such as the king himself.

γενέσθαι

This is a second aorist middle infinitive from the root γίνομαι. The infinitive, as a verbal noun, can take on a variety of usages, of which there are two basic types. The substantival is one use of the infinitive, but the usage here is the verbal use, specifically to express purpose.⁴ The middle voice stresses the agent as participating in the results of the action, while the aorist tense indicates the action occurs without reference to time.⁵ The root means "to become something," revealing a change in the position

¹G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1944), p. 281.

²Joseph H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: American Book Co., 1889), p. 395.

³Infra, pp. 32-33.

⁴Ernest DeWitt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), p. 146.

⁵Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 157.

or condition of someone, or something.¹ These factors indicate a word which stresses the action or purpose of the person himself to become something. In this case, it is to become great among their fellows. It emphasizes the self-motivated desire for the person to become something greater, to advance his position. It may be translated "to make himself (to) become great."

ἔσται

The future, middle form of the root εἶμι, this verb of being is in the third person singular. In this instance, the singular person of the verb is referring back to the singular relative pronoun ὃς in the previous relative clause. In this case the relative clause serves as descriptive of the person who shall be your servant. It is difficult to know whether to call this an imperative or gnomic future. The force of the context and the preceding negative phrase would tend to give both verses the tone of an exhortation. Burton indicates that though the vast percentage of imperative futures in the New Testament are in the second person, there are three probable instances of it in the third person. Though not dogmatic, he lists Matthew 4:4, 15:6 and 20:26, 27 as the three most likely possibilities.² Because the imperative future is poorly attested, this usage and the one following in verse twenty-seven will be labeled as gnomic futures, though the imperative force would certainly be

¹BAGD, p. 158.

²Burton, Syntax, p. 35.

appropriate. The gnomic future is a statement of fact or performance which may be rightfully expected under normal conditions.¹ The middle voice again stresses the agent and his participation. This service is not something which is imposed by others, but rather is something which is self-imposed. The writer may also be conveying the idea that this service is subsequent to the desire for greatness. In other words, the person who seeks leadership will demonstrate that desire by service to the brethren. In either case, the normal expected means to greatness is defined by service to others. It may be translated "he himself shall be."

ὁμῶν

This second person personal pronoun is in the genitive case, and modifies the word that follows. It is interesting to note the agreement of number between this pronoun and the previous one, ὑμῖν, in this context. The person who "wishes," is to be the servant of the same group from which he comes. He is not responsible, in this instance, to serve all men, but rather his obligation lies within this company of the redeemed. He must serve those he desires to lead. The idea of importing a stranger to be prominent in the group is one which is foreign to this passage. It seems clear that leaders should come from within the group. Though the apostles provided initial leadership in new areas, the eventual leadership for the local churches came from

¹Ibid., p. 36.

within their midst (Acts 14:23).

διδάκονος

The noun is here used as a predicate nominative. Sproule says: "In a sentence containing an equative verb like εἶμι or γίνομαι the word, which is identified with or describes the subject, stands in the nominative case."¹ The predicate nominative commonly refers to the class to which the subject belongs, to the nature or quality predicted of the subject.² Thus, the subject, i.e. the relative clause "the one who might wish to become great among you," is described by the predicate noun "servant." The word itself is commonly translated as a "servant of someone,"³ however, other sources can add to this meaning. Beyer says that διδάκονος refers to one who is waiting on tables, and can refer to almost any service⁴ as long as it retains its personal nature.⁵ Trench states that: "διδάκονος represents the servant in his activity for the work . . . not in his relation, either servile, as that of the δοῦλος . . ."⁶

¹John A. Sproule, Intermediate Greek Notes, An unpublished syllabus for Intermediate Greek. (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 66.

²Wallace, Selected Notes, p. 13. ³BAGD, p. 183.

⁴TDNT, S.v. "διδάκονος," by H. Beyer, 2:87.

⁵Ibid., 2:81.

⁶Richard C. Trench, Synonymms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 32.

It can be seen that the δικάνοος here is willing in his service of others, as opposed to the bondage of the δοῦλος. It speaks of his meeting the needs of others, including menial service. This construction clearly shows that the nature of the one seeking greatness is to be described as or identified with voluntary service to others. It is not merely attitude or position, but rather a way of life.

καί

By far the most common conjunction in the New Testament, this word may be classified by usage into three generally accepted categories. It may be used transitionally, adjunctively or ascensively, and is correspondingly translated "and," "also" or "indeed."¹ In this context, the ascensive or emphatic use would be appropriate, though most writers use the simple transitional translation. Later there will be a more complete discussion as to whether there is progression or simply parallelism between verses twenty-six and twenty-seven.² It is the writer's view that there is progression between the two verses, and that the emphatic translation "indeed" would better convey this movement. The same translation could also be used in verse twenty-five to show the similar progression of the rulers and their actions. Though the emphatic translation is preferred, the transitional translation would be acceptable.

¹Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 250.

²Infra, pp. 41-43.

ὅς ἄν

There seems to be no special significance to the fact that ἄν is used here instead of ἕαν. The parallel passage in Mark ten uses the form ἄν in both verses forty-three and forty-four. In either case, it is best translated as "whoever."¹ The difference in identity between verse twenty-six and twenty-seven in these identical constructions is to be found in the meaning of the infinitives and adjectives which follow them.

θέλη

For further details, please see the previous discussion of this verb.² In this position, it serves to indicate that the "desire" or "wishing" of the person who is described in verse twenty-six, is the same as the person who is described in verse twenty-seven.

ἐν ὑμῖν

As discussed previously, this prepositional phrase serves to define the sphere in which the action takes place.³ Again Christ is saying that the person "wishing" is to be a part of this recognized group. The repeated use of this phrase serves as clear testimony to the fact that Jesus wanted to make sure that there was no mistake, as to whom He was referring. Just as the person of verse twenty-six

¹Robertson, Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pp. 958-959.

²Supra, pp. 22-23.

³Supra, pp. 23-24.

was to be part of the group, the person of verse twenty-seven was also.

εἶναι

This is the present, active infinitive form of the verb of being, εἶμι. When contrasted with the aorist middle infinitive of γίνομαι in verse twenty-six, this word forms an important link in demonstrating the progression from one verse to the other. As was previously indicated, both of these are infinitives expressing purpose.¹ In verse twenty-six, the θέλη is for the purpose of becoming great, to seek a position not currently held. In verse twenty-seven, the θέλη is for the purpose of continuing to be first, existing in a place of prominence.² The difference between the two words is not only in their definition, but also in the tense used with each. Dana and Mantey comment on the comparison of the aorist and present tenses:

"A greek writer instinctively knew what tense to use in expressing an idea accurately. . . . The tense is changed because the writer was acutely conscious of the distinctive force of each tense. . . . The play is entirely upon whether the action is . . . viewed as a single whole or whether it is the opposite, continuous or repeated."³

As a result, in verse twenty-six, when the person is said to desire to become great, his "becoming" is viewed as a single whole, without reference to his progress. Thus,

¹Burton, Syntax, p. 146.

²Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 197.

³Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, pp. 194-95.

it conveys the idea that he has a type of promotion in mind, without reference to how long it will take. His "becoming" is simply occurring with no indication of a continuation from that which was previous, or to that which is subsequent. In contrast, verse twenty-seven views this person's desire as "continuing to exist as first." He is not desiring to become something which he is not, but rather to continue being in a position he already occupies. Whereas verse twenty-six views the action as simply occurring, this verse views it as continuing from the past to the future.¹ The difference of tense, as well as other information to be discussed later, shows that these two verses are not parallel, but that Christ is addressing two different groups of people.²

πρῶτος

As was previously discussed³ concerning the term μέγας, this is another substantival use of the adjective.⁴ In this instance also, the nominal use of the adjective functions as the object of the subjunctive θέλη in the relative clause of which it is a part. The masculine gender of this adjective serves to convey the idea of concreteness in its nominal usage.⁵

Though men such as Lange⁶ and Lane⁷ consider μέγας and πρῶτος to be synonymous, there is a significant difference

¹Ibid., p. 181. ²Infra, pp. 41-43.

³Supra, pp. 24-25. ⁴Ibid., p. 116.

⁵Ibid., p. 118. ⁶Lange, Matthew, p. 365.

⁷Lane, Mark, p. 382.

in meaning between the two words. As has been seen, in this instance, μέγας means "one of prominence or eminence," great but not necessarily preeminent. πρῶτος on the other hand, speaks of "first," "foremost," "most important," "most prominent."¹ Liddell and Scott include the idea of the "first or highest among men."² Whereas μέγας referred to greatness and seats at the right and left hand of the king, πρῶτος speaks of the preeminence and the position of the king himself. Where μέγας referred to positions of influence, πρῶτος refers to positions of decision making. Though these two Greek words may be parallel in a very loose sense of being in a position above ones associates, the progression in thought, following the example of verses twenty-five and twenty-eight, would be preferred.

ἔσται

See the previous discussion of the second occurrence of this word in verse twenty-six.³ Again consider this as a gnomic future with an imperative force.

ὑμῶν

See the previous discussion of this personal pronoun in verse twenty-six.⁴ When the plural of this pronoun is contrasted with the singular of the previous verb, εἶπαι, one again sees that the one who "wishes to be first" is to render his service among those individuals whom he wishes to

¹BAGD, p. 733. ²LSJ, p. 1535.

³Supra, pp. 26-27. ⁴Supra, pp. 27-28.

lead.

δοῦλος

This masculine, nominative noun functions as a predicate nominative which is descriptive of the subject. The subject is the relative clause, "the one who wishes to continue existing as first among you." In verse twenty-six, "the one who desired greatness" was described as having the nature or quality of a servant, while here, "the one desiring to continue as first" is described as having the nature of a slave.¹

As was seen in the discussion of πρῶτος,² there are some such as Hendricksen,³ Lange,⁴ and Lane⁵ who consider διάκονος and δοῦλος synonymous. However, again there is a significant difference in meaning between the two words.

The word δοῦλος was a word of revulsion and contempt to both the Jews and Greeks. To the Greeks, the idea of giving up one's autonomy and subordinating one's will to another, as the slave must do, was abhorant. To the Jews, the memory of their slavery during the Old Testament period lingered and caused them to think of a δοῦλος in terms of repression and service under the complete control of someone else.⁶ As Rengstorf says: "It thus follows that in the N.T. the δοῦλος is the classical picture of bondage and

¹Wallace, Selected Notes, p. 13.

²Supra, pp. 32-33. ³Hendricksen, Matthew, p. 748.

⁴Lange, Matthew, p. 365. ⁵Lane, Mark, p. 382.

⁶NIDNTT, S.v. "δοῦλος" by H. G. Link, 3:592-593.

limitation.¹ Whereas the δῶκονος was a servant relatively free to do as he pleased, the opposite is in view here. Where the word δῶκονος centers on meeting the needs of others, the term δοῦλος emphasizes the fact of obligation and bondage to others. Rengstorf summarizes the concept when he says: ". . . the δοῦλος is one who not only has no possibility of evading the tasks laid upon him but who also has no right of personal choice, who must rather do what another will have done and refrain from doing what another will not have done."² Thus, though these two Greek words are similar in a sense of service of others, they are yet distinct. The δῶκονος is yet free, in his pursuit of greatness, to choose the service he will render. The δοῦλος on the other hand, has obligated and bound himself to the needs and will of others as long as he wishes to continue being first among them.

Exegetical Problems

In the following section, exegetical problems which arose will be considered.

The ἔσται Problem

The word referred to is found in the negative phrase at the beginning of verse twenty-six. The problem is a textual one, with some preferring the form ἔστιν which is found in some texts.

¹TDNT, S.v. "δοῦλος" by Karl Rengstorf, 2:271.

²Ibid., 2:261.

The United Bible Societies Greek text lists over thirty manuscripts which contain the ἔσται reading, with only seven in favor of ἔστιν.¹ However, the later reading is found in two good textual sources, Vaticanus and Cambridge. The former reading is found in Sinaiticus and Ephraemi Rescriptus, among many others. The editors of this Greek text preferred the former reading, but gave it only a "C" rating when assigning relative certainty.² The parallel passage in Mark reads ἔστιν and was assigned an "A" on the basis of evidence from Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi Rescriptus and others. The alternate reading ἔσται again has the majority of textual occurrences but Alexandrinus is the only very early witness.³

Plummer best summarizes the view of those commentators who prefer the present reading, ἔστιν. He states:

"Both here and in Mk. 'is' (BDZ) is more probable than 'shall be' (CLX). At the moment when Christ spoke, the disciple's frame of mind was that of the Gentiles, and hence there was a temptation to change the present into the future: 'they would learn better in time. . . .' The 'is' was quite true of that ideal; but copyists have altered it into 'shall be' in order to harmonize with the 'shall be' twice repeated, which follows."⁴

Morison, in support of the future reading says: "the expression 'shall be' (ἔσται), . . . is the correct reading, supported by the great body of manuscriptural authorities. . . . But the future expression 'shall be' was

¹Aland, The Greek New Testament, p. 78.

²Ibid., p. 78. ³Ibid., p. 168.

⁴Plummer, St. Matthew, p. 279.

idiomatically employed to denote what was imperatively required."¹ Hendricksen adds: "The preferred reading has imperative force: 'it shall not be,' 'must not be;' hence "do not let it be."²

It is the opinion of this writer, though there is adequate evidence for either view, depending on the textual evidence or commentator which is trusted, that the εἶναι reading is preferred. The disciples frame of mind was similar to the Gentiles,³ thus Jesus could not be describing conditions which were currently existing. Neither is He referring to His own example which "is not so among them." Plummer offers another suggestion: "But Christ is speaking of their ideal, of that which He has set before them by His own example; . . ."⁴ However, there is simply no contextual or textual evidence to explain the third person of the verb εἶναι as referring to His own example. Indeed if this were the case, then the contents of verse twenty-five would be out of place if these words were not the "it" identified by the third person at the beginning of verse twenty-six. It does not make grammatical sense to import something outside the immediate context as the unidentified subject of this negative clause.

¹James A. Morison, A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), p. 362.

²Hendricksen, Matthew, p. 747.

³Plummer, St. Matthew, p. 279.

⁴Ibid.

An alternative translation is suggested by Lange. Using the present tense while still referring to verse twenty-five, he translates the phrase "but not so it is among you."¹ This is not much different from the imperative translation "it shall not be so among you," but lacks the force which seems evident from the context.

A further question which must be answered is: Why does Mark have the present form, while Matthew has the future form of this verb? Lenski believes that the statement of fact in Mark would be even stronger than making it a demand.² Another suggestion would have to do with the view of the author as he wrote. Matthew, portraying Christ as the promised king, as was noted in the discussion of verse twenty, saw the words of verse twenty-six as being the commands of a king.³ Mark's picture of Christ as the servant, previously discussed with the parallel passages, required Him to respond in a more reserved manner.⁴

Because of the added emphasis of the imperative future and a balance of evidence for either reading, ἔσται is chosen as the correct reading in this context.

The ἐν ὑμῖν Problem

Two questions arise when looking at this prepositional phrase. Specifically to whom does this phrase refer

¹Lange, Matthew, p. 365.

²Richard Charles Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), p. 462.

³Supra, pp. 8-9. ⁴Supra, pp. 14-15.

and, how does this relate to believers in the church?

As far as can be determined from the context, it was directed to the twelve disciples. Verse seventeen states that Jesus took the twelve aside by themselves as they were about to go up to Jerusalem. Likewise, verse twenty-nine indicates that they were going out from Jericho to Jerusalem. There is nothing in the intervening verses, except the appearance of Salome, which would cause one to think that more than just the twelve were present. Jesus is here directing His exhortation to those who were closest to Him.

The second question is not so easily answered. To fully answer it is beyond the scope and purpose of this work. However, an answer must be proposed if this study is to have benefit to believers today.

Because Christ refers to His future kingdom in verses twenty-one through twenty-three, it is logical to expect that He is also referring to His future kingdom in verses twenty-four through twenty-seven. However, because similar teaching is often repeated without clear kingdom reference,¹ it is reasonable to expect that the principles He explains were not only to be applied with regard to their future greatness, but also with regard to the greatness among themselves. The same principles which would bring future kingdom greatness would also bring present greatness. As Ramm says: ". . . the interpreter must keep in

¹Supra, pp. 12-15.

mind that the kingdom in some sense has come; it is continuing; and it will come, and with this in mind he must understand whether the . . . consideration is concerned with one or all of these aspects."¹ In this instance, it is concerned with continuing and future aspects of Christ's kingdom.

The teachings of Christ were intended for present and future results. The one who would be great among the congregation must meet the same requirements as those who would be considered great in the future kingdom. As Acts 26:11c indicates, these same disciples were later called Christians, making the two synonymous. Because His followers today are Christians and disciples, the teachings of this passage are directly applicable to believers today.

The ὅς ἐάν, ὅς ἄν Problem

As was previously discussed, the combination of the relative pronoun and this particle produce the ambiguous translation "whoever."² The question which arises is: What type of relative clauses do these pronouns introduce?

Burton calls these "indefinite or conditional relative clauses" because it refers to a supposed event or instance and implies a condition.³ These conditional clauses can be further classified according to the nature of the supposition or condition implied in it. Burton

¹Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 281.

²Supra, pp. 21-22. ³Burton, Syntax, p. 119.

classifies it as a "future supposition with more probability,"¹ while Dana and Mantey call it a "more probable condition."² Both agree that the use of the subjunctive with ὄσοντες states a future supposition, suggesting some probability of fulfillment. In this particular context, these clauses assume the probability that there will be those in the future who desire to become great or to continue being first. Thus, the passage indicates that there will continually be those who are desiring for greater positions.

It will also be noted that in Matthew's account there is no punctuation between γενέσθαι and εἶται in verse twenty-six, or between πρῶτος and εἶται in verse twenty-seven to mark the end of the relative clauses.³ This punctuation, a comma, is however found in Mark 10:43-44,⁴ and is probably an omission in Matthew.

The Parallelism Problem

As has been mentioned,⁵ there are those who would call verses twenty-six and twenty-seven strictly parallel, saying the same thing with synonyms. Hendricksen says: "It is clear . . . the two words διάκονος and δοῦλος are synonyms . . . that symbolize the position of the Christian. . . ."⁶ Lange likewise says: "in this instance then,

¹Ibid., pp. 121-122.

²Dana and Mantey, Manual Grammar, p. 273.

³Aland, The Greek New Testament, p. 78.

⁴Ibid., p. 168. ⁵Supra, p. 32.

⁶Hendricksen, Matthew, p. 748.

the 'minister' and the 'servant' or 'slave' are intended as emblems of the greatness which the disciples should covet. . . ."¹ Lane writes: "The synonymous parallelism between verses 43 and 44 identifies . . . men whose activities are not directed toward their own interests but to those of another."² As can be seen, the strict parallel view causes these two verses to be taken together as merely a general platitude about humble service. There is much more to be found in this text.

From the former discussions, there are at least five factors which would favor a progression of thought instead of synonymous parallelism in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven. These are as follows:

1. The progression in verse twenty-five. Christ moves from the "rulers" who are attempting to "gain dominion" upward to the "great ones" who are "tyrannizing" those under them.³

2. The progression in verse twenty-eight. Christ here, using His own example, moves from the "greatness" He achieved as a result of His service. He then moves to the "preeminence" He was granted because of the submission of His will to that of another.⁴

3. The progression from μέγας to πρῶτος. Lenski

¹Lange, Matthew, p. 365. ²Lane, Mark, p. 382.

³Meyer, St. Matthew, p. 356.

⁴Toussaint, Behold the King, p. 234.

summarizes: ". . . he (Jesus) now begins with the one who wills to be 'great' and then rises to the very pinnacle by speaking of the one who wills to be 'first'. . . ." ¹

4. The progression from δίακονος to δοῦλος. Toussaint concludes: "It is most interesting to note the progression in the Lord's instruction. Greatness is dependent upon being a 'servant' (δίακονος) of others but primacy comes from being a 'slave' (δοῦλος) of others." ²

5. The progression from γενέσθαι to εἶναι. Machen draws the distinction: "The aorist infinitive refers to the action without saying anything about its continuance of repetition, while the present infinitive refers to it as continuing or as being repeated." ³

Summary

It is shown that, in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, Christ is emphatic in His presentation of this truth to His disciples as His thought progresses from the lesser, in verse twenty-six, to the greater in verse twenty-seven. The conditional relative clauses assume that men will be seeking these positions, while at the same time revealing the identity of those who are called "servants" and "slaves." The principles He reveals to the disciples concerning His kingdom are applicable to believers of this present age

¹Lenski, Matthew, p. 791.

²Toussaint, Behold the King, p. 234.

³J. Gresham Machen, New Testament Greek for Beginners, (Toronto: The Macmillian Co., 1951), pp. 131, 137.

because His teaching has present, as well as future implications.

Having examined the words of verses twenty-six and twenty-seven and their relationship, the next step is to draw out the main teachings of this passage.

CHAPTER III

THE PATH OF LEADERSHIP IN MATTHEW 20:26-27

In this passage, Jesus presents several principles of leadership which were applied by His followers in the first century. These same principles need to be repeated for current application. In this chapter, the principle will be stated, along with the Scriptural evidence of its first century application. Following this, a current application will be suggested.

Characteristics of the Path of Leadership

This section will discuss the principles found in the passage as well as their first century and present application.

It is Different than the World View

The Principle. At the beginning of verse twenty-six, Christ emphatically declares: "It must not be so among you." He is drawing a stark contrast between the characteristics the nations exhibit as they gain and exercise authority, and those characteristics which are to be practiced by His followers. Jesus is saying that leadership among believers is to be unique in the world, in two areas. The first area is found in the remainder of verse twenty-six, as He shows

how men are to become leaders. The second area is in verse twenty-seven, as He shows how a leader is to maintain his position. Jesus uses the future tense for emphasis and to indicate that these are the attitudes the disciples will develop. The account of the previous verses clearly shows that their attitudes were, at that moment, the same as those of verse twenty-five which Christ condemns.

First Century Application. The application of this truth is perhaps the most easily seen. Jesus had spoken to this recurring problem of rivalry among the disciples at least seven times as recorded in the gospels. The twelve were continually striving for honor in the same manner as the kings and princes around them (Matt. 20:20-38, 23:11-12, Mark 9:34-35, 10:35-45, Luke 14:11, 18:14, 22:24-30). In vivid contrast to this, in the Book of Acts, the sound of self-serving disciples is conspicuously absent. An example of this is found in Acts 1:14 where, speaking of the disciples, it says that they were all "with one mind." Again in Acts 2:14 when Peter stands to speak, there is no fighting for the right to preach. In Acts 10:25-26, Peter turns down the perfect opportunity to be great in the worldly manner. Finally, in Acts 15:6-22, the council at Jerusalem, though there was debate, produced a unified statement from the apostles to the Christian world. These twelve and many others had learned that their relationship was not like that of the rulers around them. Miller summarizes: "It may be that the equivalents for our word 'leader' in the first

century culture were not used for the Christian church because of the shifts in understanding that took seriously Jesus' teaching. . . . Jesus exemplified and taught the reality of leadership as serving."¹

Current Application. Great care must be exercised when borrowing principles or techniques from extra-Biblical sources to be imported into Christian work. Though Christ is speaking of only two main points of difference in this passage, the emphasis of the negation would indicate that there are other areas of difference as well. Stedman rightly states: "Jesus indicated that an entirely different system of government should prevail among Christians. Rather than lords, disciples are to be servants of one another. . . . Authority among Christians does not come from the same source as worldly authority, nor is it exercised in the same manner."² As a result, before embracing worldly methodology or philosophy, believers must be careful to show that it is Scriptural. The methods that work for the secular world are not the methods of the Christian unless they measure up to Christ's standards.

It is Obtained by Service

The Principle. In the remainder of verse twenty-six Christ explains how a person may achieve a position of greatness among other believers. He states that these positions

¹Marlin E. Miller, "The Recasting of Authority," Sojourners, 8:2 (February, 1979):25.

²Ray Stedman, "Should a Pastor Play Pope?" Moody Monthly, 76:11 (July-August, 1976):41.

are open to "whoever should will." Lenski correctly asserts: "Moreover, to be great, to be first, is open to all, . . . 'he who wills (shall will),' no matter who he may be. . . ." ¹ This concept, of course, is limited by later Scriptural revelation which places certain other limitations on the one who would be great.

Jesus also teaches that the person desiring greatness must have determination, a strong desire to seek this position. A mere fleeting fancy is not enough. This person must have a continuing hunger to rise above his associates as stated by Griffin: ". . . if anything is certain in the study of leadership, it is that no one becomes a leader if he doesn't want to be one." ²

The means to the end which the person desires is service. The one with the desire to lead must seek to serve those whom he wishes to lead, as the means of fulfilling his aspirations. There is, however, danger here as Beerens relates: "I think there is a common error . . . of seeing being a servant as a role . . . of being a servant for a while as a strategy to be able to lead." ³ He continues: "Our servant nature must become an indelible part of our character . . . that, I believe, was the depth of servanthood that Jesus meant." ⁴

¹Lenski, Matthew, p. 791.

²Em Griffin, "Why Some People Become Leaders," Eternity, 28:5 (May, 1977):60.

³Gene Beerens, "Journey Into Weakness," Sojourners, 9:1 (January, 1980):26.

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

First Century Application. Perhaps the clearest example of the application of this principle is found in Acts 6:1-6. Though it is not possible to determine the desires of the men involved, there are certain things which can be surmised. The men are "unknown" in that they are not of special note before they are here appointed to positions of greatness, men in charge of serving tables. In some sense, they also desired greatness, because they accepted the positions offered to them. It is also clear that they are appointed to these positions by the whole congregation because of their previous faithful service. Thus, these men became "great" because their "desire" was manifest in "service" to the congregation. Another example would be the years that the apostle Paul spent in service before his recognition and commission as a missionary (Acts. 13:2).

Current Application. A misconception concerning leaders which is common today is typified by the thought of Armerding. He writes: "A leader is one who has natural endowments. Scripture says that when Moses was born he was a beautiful child. . . . God endowed him with qualities requisite to leadership. One of these qualities was a higher than average intellect."¹ He continues: "In summary, then, a leader has both natural and supernatural gifts."² How often have faithful servants been overlooked

¹Hudson T. Armerding, Leadership, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1979), p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 106.

because they were not "beautiful" or did not have "higher than average intellect"?

The thrust of verse twenty-six is that leadership is available to any qualified person who has, by continued service to the group, shown his will to lead. Jesus here says nothing of gifts or abilities, instead He speaks of desire and service. Gangel wisely remarks: "New Testament leadership is not flashy public relations and platform personality, but humble service to the group. The work of God is to be carried on by Spiritual power not personal magnetism. . . ." ¹ It may be wise to look again at those "average" people who demonstrate dependability and responsibility in tasks assigned to them, ² when looking for leaders.

It is Maintained by Slavery

The Principle. In this verse, Christ addresses those who are currently in positions of leadership, those who are "first" among you. This is deduced from the present infinitive which views the action as continuing or being repeated. ³ In verse twenty-six He spoke to those who sought leadership by becoming "great." That individual was supposed to obtain this goal by service to the congregation. Now He says that the one who desires to maintain his position must be the

¹Gangel, Competent to Lead, p. 13.

²Reginald McDonough, Working with Volunteer Leaders in the Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976), p. 29.

³Supra, pp. 31-32.

"slave" of the congregation. Whereas, the man of verse twenty-six merely "waits upon" those he would lead, the one who already leads must continue to "bind himself" to those under him. He must let the will of the people become his will, as he gives up his life for others.

First Century Application. A positive example of this truth is found in the life of Paul. From the time of his conversion until the time of his commissioning, in Acts thirteen, he was relatively free as he ministered to people. Acts 11:25 indicates this to some extent as Barnabas had to look for Paul. But from that time, he became a slave to the Christians along the Mediterranean. How often did he call himself a bond-slave when addressing those churches which he had helped found (Rom. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Titus 1:1)? He realized that with preeminence comes increasing bondage.

A negative example of this same truth is the life of Demas. Though not in the same prominent position as Paul, he experienced the loss of privilege because he stopped serving others. As a companion of Paul, he is mentioned in the greetings of Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24. However in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul mentions that Demas has deserted him "having loved this present world." He apparently had stopped serving others so that he could serve himself.

Current Application. Again there is a misconception of the proper way for a Christian leader to lead those in his charge. MacDonald voices this misconception when he

writes: "A good leader also knows how to use people. . . . In short, he knows how to call the play, how to use the players."¹ This view is fundamentally opposite of the Lord's view. Though it is true that the leader must guard his time, the Christian leader must allow, to some extent, the people he leads to use him as one who can meet their needs. Jesus often allowed the needs of the multitude to "enslave Him," as He fed the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21) or stayed up late healing those who were at His door (Matt. 8:16). MacArthur communicates the spirit of the verse when he writes:

"The world wants leaders who achieve at the others expense. But Jesus wants leaders who stoop to wash their follower's dirty feet. He wants leaders characterized by love, humility, and a willingness to put other's needs first. . . . He is our example today. Humility and servitude are still the qualities that Jesus wants in the leaders of His church."²

The Importance of the Path of Leadership

The question of the importance of the principles of Matthew 20:26-27 is continual. The characteristics of the path of leadership are important, not only for the applications suggested in the previous section, but also for their use in evaluating current leadership sources. An example of the use of these characteristics as an evaluating tool is shown in the following paragraphs.

¹Gordon MacDonald, "Nehemiah and the Peter Principle," Eternity, 25:10 (October, 1974):41.

²John MacArthur, "Leaders Make the Difference," Moody Monthly, 79:9 (May, 1979):81.

Fiedler and Chemers, in their book on secular leadership and effective management, describe one reason that men seek leadership. They observe: "Leadership gives power over others, and with this power comes the satisfaction that one cannot only control the fate of others . . . but also have greater control over one's own life and destiny."¹ Immediately, this observation is shown to be unscriptural. It demonstrates the principle that Christ's view is different from the world's view. He said that the leader loses control of his own life as he allows others to have power over him. The Christian leader does not seek to control, but to serve.

Again Fiedler and Chemers comment on the attainment of leadership: ". . . those who aspire to leadership seek dominance, they seek control, and they seek acceptance."² When compared with the second principle,³ leadership is attained by service, this secular principle is shown to be in error. Rather than seeking dominance or control, the Christian who aspires to leadership must do so by subjection of his own desires. He must show his leadership ability by seeking to serve, not by seeking the service of others.

Finally, to maintain one's leadership in the secular world, Fiedler and Chemers state: "A leader . . . must

¹Fred E. Fiedler and Martin M. Chemers, Leadership and Effective Management (Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1974), p. 14.

²Ibid., p. 15. ³Supra, pp. 46-47.

be able to satisfy both the requirements of the organization which appointed him to the job and, to some extent, the needs of his subordinates."¹ The secular view is again contrasted to the Scriptural view. Whereas the secular leader seeks to satisfy an organization, with a subordinate emphasis on the follower's needs, the Christian leader is to put the needs of his subordinates first. In order to maintain his position, the Christian leader must increasingly enslave himself to those whom he leads.

As has been shown, the principles of the path of leadership can serve as a clear contrast to a few of the secular principles of leadership just mentioned. Thus, when evaluating possible leadership concepts for use in the Christian church, Christ's teaching can serve as a Scriptural guide together with the positive applications of Christ's principles. The teaching of Matthew 20:26-27 is of great use today.

¹Fiedler and Chemers, Leadership and Effective Management, p. 17.

Summary

In Matthew 20:26-27, Jesus conveyed three characteristics of Christian leadership to His disciples. He said that Christian leadership is to be radically different than that of the surrounding world. Christian leadership is open to those who would evidence their desire by service to the group. Finally Christian leadership is maintained by continual slavery to those whom he leads. These three principles are important for both positive application and for guides in evaluating current literature.

CONCLUSION

An attempt, by two disciples, to gain positions of honor, above their associates, revealed three erroneous concepts that all twelve had concerning leadership in Christ's kingdom. Addressing these three misconceptions, Jesus taught them that leadership among His followers was to be different than those practices of attaining and maintaining power of the Gentiles. He taught them that leadership was available to those qualified ones in the group, as they demonstrated their desire by waiting upon the needs of that same group. Finally He taught them that a Christian leader must continue to bind himself in a slave relationship with those he leads, if he is to continue in that position.

Many today are looking to secular management techniques to find their concept of Christian leadership. Jesus said they are different. Many are confused on how to attain leadership positions by the idea that leaders are only those "gifted" individuals. Jesus said that one should look to the faithful servants to find those who really desire leadership. Many are using their positions of power as a means of personal gain. Jesus said that in order to continue in that position, he must enslave himself to those he leads.

Engstrom concludes: "His kind of service set an

example . . . thus He showed His followers how to serve, and He demanded no less of those who would carry on His work on earth. Jesus teaches all leaders for all time that greatness is not found in rank or position but in service."¹

¹Ted Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 37.

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