

Episode #849 Matthew 21 Part 5-Parable of the Two Sons

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. In Matthew 21:23-27, the chief priests and elders of the people confronted the Lord Jesus Christ, demanding to know where He got His authority. He told them He would answer them if they would answer Him where John’s authority came from. Realizing they were trapped either way, they answered that they did not know, getting out of His trap only by weaseling out with a weak and humiliating answer.

III. The Parable of the Two Sons. Matthew 21:28-32.

A. Verse 28. They have failed to judge regarding Himself, so He will allow them to pronounce upon themselves instead. The Lord is not going to let this go and allow them to slink away. The grand confrontation has come, in public, in the temple. He opened the contest by driving out their inappropriate and insulting temple marketplace. Now, when they confront Him about this, He uses the occasion to reveal their wickedness and hypocrisy in stunning detail. This confrontation, which continues all the way to chapter 23, results in the complete dismantling and condemnation of these religious leaders. They are helpless to answer, and helpless to defend their indefensible position. Their true character is made plain for all to see. The mask they hid behind is pulled aside, and their true character as the real sons of Satan is revealed. No wonder after this they felt they had no choice but to put the Lord to death! He brought them to that place and gave them no way out of it. They either had to submit to Him or kill Him, one or the other. Sadly, their wicked hearts would not allow them to yield.

1. This starts another series of parables. These are not meant, as the earlier ones, simply to teach about the kingdom of God, but are meant to expose and rebuke the wickedness and hypocrisy of the religious leaders.
2. “Son” would be much better translated “Child.” The *New King James Version* reverses *huios* and *teknon*.
3. Again we have the vineyard, which in the Old Testament is used as a symbol for the nation of Israel

B. Verse 29. “Will” is *thelo*, meaning “I do not desire” or “I do not wish” to go. Dr. Schofield, commenting on the KJV, says this is the perfect illustration of repentance, along with Luke 15:20 (which does not contain the word. Did he mean 15:10? Or the returning to his father? But there is no word for repentance there!). Yet he should have checked his facts before saying something like this, for this is not the word for repentance, *metanoeo*, but this is the Greek word *metamelomai*, and *melomai* has to do with the care, whereas *noeo* has to do with the mind. This means to care afterwards or to regret. “But afterward he regretted.”

C. Verse 30. The second says “I, lord,” “sir” being *kurios*. Here it represents the Hebrew *adonai*, master, and not Jehovah. This implied that he would obey, though when it came down to it, he did not.

D. Verse 31. “Will” is *thelema*, the desire or wish. “Assuredly” or amen I say unto you. The Lord used this expression thirty times in Matthew, out of 32 uses of “Amen.” Mark has this same expression 14 times, Luke 7 times. John never uses this

expression, but has 25 times the expression, “Amen, amen, I say unto you,” with the double amen instead. This expression never occurs outside the gospels, and is never uttered by anyone but Christ. They condemned themselves by this answer. They were those who said they were serving God, but when God actually demanded service they would not serve Him at all. The tax collectors and sinners supposedly (and probably thought themselves) that they were not serving God, but when He called on them to do so, they did! Notice the rare use of the actual expression “kingdom of God” in Matthew. They needed clarity Whose kingdom they were rejecting, and so it was no time for tiptoeing around it with substitutes.

- E. Verse 32. John was following the way of the righteous, which Jehovah knows, Psalm 1:6. Wisdom leads in the way of righteousness, Proverbs 8:20, but they had rejected that way. The way of righteousness is life, Proverbs 12:28. A grey head is a crown of gold if it is found in the way of righteousness, Proverbs 16:31, but these men had not followed that way, though many of them were grey-headed. The way of the righteous is made plain, as Proverbs 15:19 says. It is better not to know the way of righteousness, than to know it and turn from it, according to II Peter 2:21. “Relent” is the Greek *metamelomai* again, regret. The big talker child who did not obey was not moved to obey, even when he saw the rebellious child do so. These religious leaders were the same way. Nothing could stir their sinful, rebellious consciences. Note the fearless way the Lord confronts these powerful, religious leaders.

IV. The Parable of the Murderous Vinedressers. Matthew 21:33-46.

- A. Verse 33. Notice “another” parable, meaning that the previous story was also a parable. A series of parables in His grand condemnation of the religious leaders.
 - 1. “Landowner” is again an *oikodespotes*, a house despot or lord. The tower was for the watchman to keep watch over it from here.
 - 2. *The Companion Bible* “There were three kinds of leases: (1) where the labourers received a proportion of the produce for their payment; (2) where full rent was paid; (3) where a definite part of the produce was to be given by the lessees, whatever the harvest was. Such leases were given by the year, or for life, or were even hereditary. From v. 34 and Mark 12.2 the word “of” shows that the latter kind of lease is referred to in this parable.
 - 3. Vinedressers is *georgos*, the name “George” coming from this
- B. Verse 34. The Greek for “drew near” is the same as “at hand” in, “the kingdom of the heavens is at hand,” as John proclaimed. “Sent” is *apostello*, meaning He sent them with His authority to receive the fruits He had contracted with the husbandmen to receive. “Servants” are *doulous*, meaning slaves. These were common in that day. Notice the differences between this and Mark 12 and Luke 20, where he is only said to have sent a single servant. Mark and Luke have him sending three times before sending his son; Matthew only twice. The illustration is the same, but the details are different. Perhaps the Lord told this parable about the leaders more than once during his confrontations with them at this time.
- C. Verse 35. The slaves came to take the fruits, but the vinedressers took the slaves! The second they might have killed in any way whatsoever, but the one stoned was formally executed. This is the first of nine references to stoning in the New Testament. The only ones we read about who were actually stoned were Stephen and

Paul. In the days before Rome, the Jews were much more capable of stoning than they were under the overwatch of the Empire.

D. Verse 36. He sent more, *apostello*, sending with authority, more than the first, here *protos* meaning first in a series.

E. Verse 37. He sent the son, *apostello* again, sent with authority. Of course, no human being would do this. Yet this was an illustration of just how God had acted. He was very patient and merciful indeed! He had sent His Son with His authority. Bullinger points out this is the real answer to their question in verse 23! He had been sent by God, and His authority was that of God's Son, God's Own. They should have respected Him, but they did not. The same is true today: all should respect and regard the Son of God. Yet even today many still mock Him!

V. Conclusion: The Lord showed clearly that the religious leaders said they would obey God but did not when He called on them to do so, whereas the tax gatherers and prostitutes responding when God called them to service. They were far better than these religious leaders, therefore. He told a parable of wicked vinedressers over a landowner's vineyard. Next time, we will see how He leads them to condemn themselves in this parable as well.