

Matthew 21
Part 2 (23-46)

Jesus is confronted about authority and teaches with parables

- IV. Jesus has His authority questioned (23-27).
- A. The chief priests and elders want to know the nature and source of His authority (23).
1. Jesus now goes back into the temple after His triumphant entrance into the city.
 - a. He was teaching daily in the temple (cf. Lk 19:47, 48; 20:1).
 - b. His popularity was still very high and was causing jealousy in the religious leaders.
 - c. Remember, Jesus wasn't a priest or even of the priestly order (cf. Rev 5:5).
 2. They wanted to know the authority of "these things".
 - a. "These things" would be the overturning of the tables, the verbal condemnation, and possibly more (cf. 21:12-16).
 - b. The apostles would hear the same question very soon (cf. Acts 4:7).
- B. Jesus answered their question with a question (24-27).
1. He turns their attention to John the baptizer (cf. Mk 1:1-3; Jn 1:6-8).
 - a. In light of all the works Jesus had done this was a ridiculous question.
 - b. Jesus received no authority from John, but John did testify of the coming Messiah (cf. Jn 3:26-28).
 2. They understood the implications of the question, i.e., to believe John would be to believe Jesus.
 - a. No matter which way they answer they will be exposed, so they answer dishonestly (cf. Rom 1:21, 22).
 - b. "From heaven" would require an answer of why they didn't follow or believe John.
 - c. "Of men" might get them stoned (cf. 14:5; Lk 20:6; Acts 5:26).
 3. Because they refused to answer this basic question Jesus refused to answer them.

Note: Jesus never "beat around the bush" while teaching.

- V. Jesus then presents the parable of two sons (28-32).

Note: Jesus teaches three parables in a row. All three involve a son. The 3rd is contained in chapter 22.

- A. A certain man asks his two sons to go work in his vineyard (28-30).
1. He asked the first son to go. He said no, but afterwards repented (cf. Lk 15:17-19; Acts 26:20).
 - a. Many of the common people repented at the preaching of John the baptizer (cf. 3:5, 6).
 - b. This may be the very reason Jesus brought up John's baptism, because it required a change.
 2. When the second son was asked to go he said; I will, but did not go (cf. 23:3; Titus 1:16).
 - a. Offering lip service to God has never been acceptable (cf. Lk 6:49).
 - b. More than just a profession was required (cf. 3:7-9).
- B. Jesus makes application of the parable (31, 32).

1. They gave the right answer to the question (cf. 7:21; Rev 22:14).
 - a. They must not have seen the connection that was to come.
 - b. In confirming the proper son they condemned themselves.
Note: This is known as a “constructive dilemma” and is a logical argument.
2. Jesus uses “publicans and harlots” as those seemingly unacceptable before God (cf. 9:9-11; Lk 7:37-39; 19:7).
 - a. In their self-righteousness they rejected God’s council through John (cf. Lk 7:29, 30; Acts 13:25, 26).
 - b. Those who knew that they needed God’s wisdom accepted John’s teaching (cf. 3:5, 6).
Note: This parable shows the importance of doing rather than talking about what is right.

VI. The parable of the evil tenants (33-46).

- A. A householder made all the arrangements to grow grapes and make wine from them (33-39).
 1. The list of items shows this to be a well-prepared vineyard.
 - a. The “hedge” was a fence to keep animals out (cf. S of S 2:15).
 - b. The “winepress” was dug.
 - (1) A low place was cut out of solid stone for the “stomping” of the grapes.
 - (2) The juice ran down hill to a second “pit” where it was saved for bottling.
 - c. The “tower” was a place from which to see problems or thieves.
 - d. After it was all arranged the “householder” went to a far country (cf. 25:14, 15; Mk 13:34).
 2. When payment came due the householder sent his servants to collect the payment (cf. S of S 8:11, 12).
 - a. There was a series of servants sent to collect what was due.
 - b. God’s servants were treated in like fashion (cf. Heb 11:35-38).
 - c. They carried it to the extreme of killing some of the servants (cf. 23:31, 34, 37).
 - d. The number of servants sent shows the compassion and longsuffering of the householder.
 3. The householder expected them to reverence his son (cf. Phil 2:5-7).
 - a. The “seize” of verse 38 may indicate they thought the householder to be dead.
 - b. They felt that if they slew the son they would be rightful heirs to the vineyard.
 - c. They took him outside the vineyard and slew him (cf. 26:3, 4; 27:1, 2; Heb 13:12, 13).
- B. Jesus asks them a question concerning this parable (40, 41).
 1. The word “miserably” is a reference to both the punishment and the type of men (cf. 3:12; 22:6, 7).
Note: This is similar to Nathan presenting a case before David (cf. 2 Sam 12:3-7).
 2. Interestingly, even they thought the vineyard should be given to better tenants (cf. Lk 13:28, 29; 14:23, 24; Acts 13:46).
- C. From their answer Jesus makes the application to the religious leaders (42-44).

1. This statement by Jesus is a reference to a prophecy, which may be the most quoted prophecy in the New Testament (cf. Ps 118:22; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7).
 2. Those who had rejected the head of the corner rejected the only hope to be in the kingdom God had planned.
 - a. Not a physical kingdom but a spiritual one (cf. Jn 3:3, 5).
 - b. This is a problem premillennialists still have today.
 3. The figurative stone of verse 44 may be a reference to Isa 8:14, 15 (cf. Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8).
 - a. Whosoever falls on the corner stone will be broken, i.e., arms and legs, in the fall.
 - b. I think this refers to stumbling caused by Christ being the cornerstone. Serious, but correctable (cf. Acts 2:37).
 - c. If not corrected it will come down with everlasting results (Rev. 6: 15-17).
- D. Those religious leaders react to the parable (45, 46).
1. They realized He had spoken about them (cf. Mk 12:12; Lk 11:45).
 2. They totally rejected the warning just given and wanted to “lay hands on him”. What wicked and callused men these were (cf. Jn 7:7; Gal 4:16).
- Note: This parable shows the terrible position of those who reject God and His son.