

## **The Parables of Jesus**

### **Lesson 2**

The parables of Jesus are quite challenging at times, and today's lesson, especially the parable of the wedding banquet, is eye-opening to many people. This lesson was revealing in different ways to me and I'm sure you'll find something to learn today as well. So prepare yourself for a challenging lesson, humble yourself for a shockwave of truth at the end and let's get started.

#### **The Parable of the Tenants**

Let's read Matthew 21:33-46

#### **Setting for the Parable**

Jesus' parable of the tenants was spoken on the Tuesday of Christ's Passion Week, precisely the Tuesday between his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and Friday's crucifixion. Monday found Jesus running out the moneychangers from the temple and Tuesday found him preaching against hypocrisy and Israel's failure at identifying God's prophets which was epitomized by their blindness to the Messiah.

The parables of Jesus use familiar people, activities and events to portray the real spiritual matters and people they represent. The parable of the tenants introduces the listeners to a householder who planted a vineyard. The householder represents God and his vineyard is Israel...based upon Isaiah 5:1-7 which demonstrates God's patient compassion for those he loves. The tenants are the religious leaders of Israel. The servants are God's prophets and of course, the son in the parable of the tenants represents God's most beloved Son, Jesus.

#### **Telling of the Parable**

God is the householder who establishes his vineyard. He contracted with some tenants and placed them over the vineyard and farmstead before he traveled to another country. After the fruit harvest the householder sent his servants to retrieve the fruits which were the tenant's payment to him.

All seems fair but the wicked tenants immediately beat, stoned and killed the servants of the owner. The owner again sent servants...actually more the second time...but the wicked tenants beat and killed them as well. The householder was greatly disturbed and sorrowful for the treatment the tenants showed him and his servants. He thought to himself that if he sent his own son the tenants would respect him and send him home with the good fruits of the harvest. So the householder sent his one and only son.

The wicked tenants saw the son approaching and quickly convened for a meeting. They plotted to kill the owner's son in order to gain the inheritance of the vineyard and farmstead. The wicked tenants did that very thing...killing the owner's beloved son. However, the response of the owner wasn't to write these tenants into his will but to put them to a miserable death. After that, the owner leased his farm and vineyard to new tenants.

## **Meaning of the Parable**

The parables of Jesus sometimes include their interpretations but the parable of the tenants was so clear that even the blinded Pharisees and priests could understand it. They knew Jesus was talking about them. Jesus basically stated with this parable that the leadership over His church would transfer from Israel's current leaders to his newly appointed apostles.

Israel had failed to produce lasting, sweet fruits for the owner and things became so corrupted that they even killed God's precious Son. Therefore, God is taking the authority away from Judaism and placing His apostles over the vineyard of his New Testament Church.

God was overly patient, understanding and compassionate with Israel but after nearly 1500 years of rebellion by the leadership of Israel his patience ran out. The establishment of Christ's Church was now beginning and the apostles were the new leaders. The conclusion of this parable leaves the vineyard allegory and goes to His exposition of Psalm 118:22-23. Jesus...the rejected stone...has become the Chief Cornerstone of the Church.

## **The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

Let's read Matthew 22:1-14

### **Setting of the Parable**

There are three parables of Jesus found in Matthew 21 and 22 in which he reveals those who will enter Heaven's gates. The first was the two sons parable, the second was the parable of the tenants and the third and final was the parable of the wedding banquet.

The parable of the great feast found in Luke 14:15-24 is similar in many respects but is a different parable told at a different time. These three parables of Jesus were told directly to the Pharisees and temple priests with many common people in the larger audience. By the time Jesus told the parable of the wedding banquet the religious leaders were furious and immediately afterward began the final plot to arrest Jesus (Matthew 22:15).

### **Telling of the Parable**

Jesus used a wedding banquet to help his listeners visualize the people who are allowed to attend his marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

The king represents Jesus, while the servants are the apostles and other workers of the Kingdom. The king's initial guests are the Jews. The later guests are the Gentiles and Jews who respond in repentance and faith to God. The three invitations represent the gospel call first given by God, then by his prophets and finally by John the Baptist, Jesus and his disciples (followers of Christ including you and me). The wedding represents the marriage of the Groom and his Bride... the Church. The banquet, feasting and fellowship represent the beginnings of God's final abode – The New Jerusalem.

The king issued his first invitation directly to those on the list. As in keeping with Jewish marriage ceremony tradition, the king issued a more specific invitation to the royal wedding ceremony and feast

of his son. Those who were intimately invited through these first two invitations gave excuses and declined the invitation. Some invited guests became so aggravated that they killed the servants who delivered the invitations! The meal was prepared and waiting but the ungrateful invitees were not yet in attendance so the patient king gave them one more opportunity to come by sending more servants with a final invitation. The invited guests all refused.

This so badly angered the king that he commanded his troops to go and lay waste to the cities of those who refused the invitations. The first group of invited guests were found unworthy to partake in the royal wedding and feast. The parable of the wedding banquet continues with the king summoning his servants and ordering them to invite all people that they encounter. Good people, bad people, every type of person one can possibly imagine filled the banquet hall. It was exciting for all the unexpected guests who found themselves at a royal wedding ceremony!

The king was pleased with the crowd; however, he noticed one person who wasn't wearing the proper wedding attire. All in attendance were granted proper robes for the ceremony and feast. But this man had no response to the king's inquiry because he obviously rejected the beautiful robe. Therefore, the man was bound and then tossed from the wedding feast into the outer darkness. The parable of the wedding banquet implies that the remaining invited, attending guests shared a wonderful and joyful meal.

### **Meaning of the Parable**

The parables of Jesus always contain spiritual messages even though they are veiled in everyday language and figurative speech. The parable of the wedding banquet's main message is that a person must accept God's invitation to join the Kingdom of God. If resistance is practiced repeatedly by the invitee, the King's patience will dissolve into anger and wrath. The invitation will then be issued to another person to fill the seat. God's patience is tremendous but it runs out and then one discovers the terrible nature of God's wrath.

What about the man who lacked the proper attire and was tossed out of the feast by the King? That man was representing the people who hear the invitation but do not heed the conditions of the invitation. This is tough teaching from Jesus. Here Jesus is graphically portraying a person who loves the invitation of the gospel, wants to join the festivities but refuses to wear the robe of righteousness. This robe is freely offered to all His guests but the guest must accept that offer.

What is this robe anyway? Isaiah 61:10 shares this beautiful picture of a true wedding guest, "I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels." This figurative language in the parable of the wedding banquet helps us picture our part in attending the marriage supper of the Lamb.

## **Get This!**

The parables of Jesus are mostly intended for the growth of all Christians; however, the parable of the tenants really exhorts Christian leaders to embrace their position of authority within the Church. Christian leaders are to produce sweet fruits that please God the Father. Christ is the head of the Church and Christian leaders are the new tenants who are expected to produce crops from God's own vineyard. We Christian leaders are not the owners but caretakers and farmers of the vineyard.

Christian leaders are held accountable by God. Followers of Christ are all called to do their part in tending the vineyard. Let's all fall in line behind the Head of the Church...Jesus...and work together to make God the Father pleased with our efforts.

The parable of the wedding banquet reveals that many are called to the wedding supper of the Lamb but few actually remain for the banquet. That lesson should get our attention. Above all, don't miss salvation!

We respond to Christ's invitation to salvation by repentance and faith then He clothes us with His robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).