

## The Parables of Jesus

### Lesson 7

#### Parable of the Two Sons – Matthew 21:28-33

The parable shared here has a very strong message. Worthless words reveal empty hearts. The parable of the two sons is a wonderful and powerful lesson. Let's find out why.

#### Setting for the Parable

This parable was taught between Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and His crucifixion. Jesus was claiming His kingship and informing the people of who He was – the Messiah...King of the Jews. His day had come and secrets were no longer necessary. Jesus was calling out the religious hypocrites and giving sinners hope for eternal life. He was the spotless sacrificial Lamb that would pay the ultimate price for the sins of all mankind.

The two sons parable was given in response to the Pharisees' attack on Jesus' authority. They wanted to know who or what gave Him the authority to do the things He had and was doing. Jesus asked the Pharisees a question before responding with His own answer.

He asked, "Where did John the Baptist receive his authority, from heaven or men?" The Pharisees were trapped and they knew it. If they responded, "From heaven" they would be admitting that John was right and they were wrong. This would ultimately lead to the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. If they responded, "From men" then they would be in trouble with the people because John was loved by them. To reject one of God's prophets was to reject God Himself.

The Pharisees had no way out so they answered, "We don't know." The reality was that Jesus' authority came from the same place John's did...from heaven.

#### Telling of the Parable

This parable addressed the Pharisees attitude toward both John the Baptist and Jesus as Messiah. Jesus gives us the direct explanation and application in verses 31 and 32 so we won't spend much time setting the stage for the meaning of this parable.

There was a father with two sons and he told them both to go work in the vineyard. One son said he was not going to work but later changed his mind and did as his father told him. The other son respectfully answered his father and said he would go and work but left and did not do as his father said.

Jesus then asked the Pharisees, "Which of the two sons obeyed their father?" They responded by saying the first son...which was obviously the correct answer.

## Meaning of the Parable

The two sons parable gets turned directly on the Pharisees. Jesus says to them in verse 31, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

Jesus holds nothing back in His condemnation of these religious hypocrites. Tax collectors were essentially legal thieves who took as much from the people as they could get their hands on. They used trickery and bullying techniques to put fear in the people. Tax collectors and prostitutes were two groups despised by the Pharisees.

The first son in the parable represented the tax collectors and prostitutes...the sinners. They didn't initially agree with the message of the gospel but when they heard John the Baptist, they believed and repented.

The second son represented the Pharisees. On the surface they agreed with the message of the gospel but by their actions they proved they did not truly believe.

Jesus told them, "John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did." Jesus...bluntly and in no uncertain terms was telling the Pharisees they could not reject Him and be right with God.

Miracle conversions were happening all around the Pharisees but they were too blind to see. Jesus told them, "And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him." Because they rejected John, they in turn rejected Jesus and ultimately God the Father.

The parable of the two sons has one main lesson. A person's words don't always reflect the true condition of their heart. A person's actions are more indicative of what is in the heart.

James, the brother of Jesus put it this way. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." James 1:22

We must all be the first son from the parable. We're all sinners in need of repentance. A life of selfishness and sin only ends in eternal grief and punishment. Instead of talking about our religion let's live it...let's act on it. We can't fool God.

## Get This!

The two sons parable gives us a pattern in which to observe and respond. In what do you believe and trust? Are you trusting in your religion or your relationship to get you to heaven?