

PASTOR RAY'S BIBLE SCHOOL 301

Kingdom Nation

Session Eleven

“Kingdom Lost”

Matt 21:28-22:1 NASB

28 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' 29 "And he answered and said, 'I will, sir'; and he did not go. 30 "And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, 'I will not'; yet he afterward regretted it and went. 31 "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you. 32 "For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. 34 "And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 "And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 "But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance.' 39 "And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 "Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons." 42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures,

'The stone which the builders rejected,
This became the chief corner stone;
This came about from the Lord,
And it is marvelous in our eyes'?

43 "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. 44 "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." 45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 And when they sought to seize Him, they feared the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.

I. Christ And The Kingdom

A. The Most Important Subject In The Bible

1. We know of no other subject more worthy of central place in our arrangement of truth than the Kingdom of God.

2. In the “prophetic view” of scripture, we’ve learned to see “big picture” perspectives, to “connect the dots” so we can see as God sees.

3. The ministry of Jesus provides us with the key that unlocks the purpose of God from the beginning:

- A Kingdom ON earth, but not OF the earth (John 18:36)
- A condition where man, *under God*, exercised DOMINION over God’s creation (Genesis 1:26-28)
- Where the will of God is “done on earth as it is in heaven”

B. The Focus Of Jesus Ministry

1. The centrality of the Kingdom of God is fully expressed in the Gospels and Acts:

- It was the topic of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2)
- It was the central topic in the preaching of Jesus (Matthew 4:17)
- Mentioned by Jesus over 100 times in the Gospel (the “church” is mentioned twice)
- It was what Jesus commanded we “seek first”...the condition that released everything else we would ever need (Matthew 6:33)
- It was the subject of the 7 parables of Matthew 13
- It was what Jesus taught the disciples between Resurrection and Pentecost (Acts 1:1-8)
- It was the message of Philip (Acts 8:12)
- It was what Paul and Barnabas preached (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25)
- It was the subject Paul was preaching at the close of the Book of Acts! (28:23-31)

2. The Kingdom of God is the “master key” that unlocks and opens up the heart and purpose of God *from the beginning*.

3. The Kingdom of God, God sharing His authority and dominion with His creatures, flows from His sovereign GRACE...

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32 KJV

The Kingdom is a gift of grace, but personal responsibility and obedience is required.

“...seek the Kingdom of God...”
Luke 12:31

C. Review Of The Course

1. God’s primary purpose for man is the Kingdom. And even though man sinned, God’s purpose is not abandoned.

2. Beginning with Abraham, we’ve studied the development of God’s “Kingdom Nation”, those He chooses to redeem and entrust with His authority to “take dominion” over His creation.

3. The Garden of Eden is the prototype of how God sees the earth as His “vineyard”, and “PLACES” a man in stewardship of it.

3. As long as man is OBEDIENT, the flow of delegated authority is intact. But when man disbelieves and disobeys God, his “dominion” is forfeited, and he is DISPLACED.

4. Israel becomes the “corporate” model of the same principle:

- God “chose” Abraham and called him to a PLACE called the Promised Land
- This placement was to be God’s “vineyard”, where His “Kingdom Nation” could abide and prosper in a “land flowing with milk and honey”
- Israel’s disobedience brought DISPLACEMENT
- The birth of Jesus occurred during a time of national re-location, as the dispersed Jews returned to their land...

5. Only when we have this context, this background, this “big picture”, can we truly appreciate what’s going on in our main text...

- The “man” in the first parable and the “landowner” in the second parable is God, the great Creator
- The subject of both parables is the “vineyard”. God sees the earth as His “vineyard”, (Psalm 24:1; Deut. 10:14; 1 Cor. 10:26), the place where He wants to see blessing and fruitfulness takes place
- To Adam, the “vineyard” was Eden; to Israel, the “vineyard” is the Promised Land
- The parable makes it clear that it is God’s will that the vineyard be “worked”, “cultivated” and (by implication) “guarded”, and bring forth fruit.
- The “bottom line” of the 2 parables is “the Kingdom of God”. We know this because Jesus declares that “the Kingdom will be taken away from you”...and given to a nation producing the fruit of it. This judgment is awful in its implications.
- If Adam’s expulsion from Eden was “Paradise Lost”, Israel’s rejection might be termed, “Kingdom Lost”.

II. Kingdom Lost

A. The First Parable (Matthew 21:28-32)

1. Jesus speaks of a man with 2 sons, to whom he gives a clear commandment to “go and work” in his “vineyard”. The first son says he will go and does not. The second says he will not go but changes his mind and does go.

2. It is clear that Israel is the “first son” in the parable.

“...Israel is my son, even my firstborn.”

Exodus 4:22

a. Throughout its history, Israel professed its commitment to God, then failed to keep it. (Exodus 19:8; Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8)

b. At the end of the parables, we are told that they knew He spoke of them! (Matthew 21:45)

3. The “second” son starts out in disobedience, but ends up and “doing the will of his father”...which obviously speaks of those who truly “repent”, change their mind and actions to come into conformity with the Father’s will.

a. Jesus interprets these people to be the “harlots and publicans”, those hated by the Jews and seen as morally inferior.

4. The reference to “harlots” and “publicans” entering into the Kingdom in their place was clearly a prophecy that henceforth, the most unlikely people, (i.e. Gentiles and sinners), would find their way into the Kingdom of God while those previously privileged with the program of God would not.

B. The Second Parable

1. As if to enforce His theme with another metaphor, the Lord proceeds in the second parable to portray the Kingdom of God as His “vineyard”, and *national Israel* as those entrusted with its stewardship.

2. In his usual masterly fashion, Puritan commentator Matthew Henry unpacks the second parable for us in a way that deserves to be fully reproduced for you here. This is an example of the rich heritage we have as 21st century saints, and we ought to avail ourselves of the incredible array of commentaries and study tools available to us today. Matthew Henry breaks down the details of the parable for us and demonstrates Jesus’ amazing ability to teach complex truth

through simple stories. (I have added highlights so you can see the various elements of the parable more easily).

Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Bible

Matthew 21:33-46

1. How God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite to an advantageous management and improvement of it.

(1.) He planted this vineyard. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa 61:3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted (Ps 80:15), planted with the choicest vine (Isa 5:2), a noble vine, Jer 2:21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; but vines must be planted. The being of a church is owing to God's distinguishing favor, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others. *(2.) He hedged it round about.* Note, God's church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a hedge round about, like that about Job on every side (Job 1:10), a wall of fire, Zech 2:5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without, may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within, may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain. *(3.) He digged a wine-press and built a tower.* The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church, for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient?

2. How he entrusted these visible church-privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them as husbandmen, not because he had need of them as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honoured by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great, when they were taken to be to God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise (Jer 13:11), when he revealed his word unto Jacob (Ps 147:19), when the covenant of life and peace was made with Levi (Mal 2:4,5), then this vineyard was let out. See an abstract of the lease, Song 8:11,12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a thousand pieces of silver (compare Isa 7:13); the main profit was to be his, but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he went into a far country. When God had in a visible appearance settled the Jewish church at mount Sinai, he did in a manner withdraw; they had no more such open vision, but were left to the written word. Or, they imagined that he was gone into a far country, as Israel, when they made the calf, fancied that Moses was gone. They put far from them the evil day.

II. God's expectation of rent from these husbandmen, v. 34. It was a reasonable expectation; for who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Note, From those that enjoy church-privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. 1. His expectations were not hasty; he did not demand a fore-rent, though he had been at such expense upon it; but staid till the time of the fruit drew near, as it did now that John preached the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. 2. They were not high; he did not require them to come at their peril, upon penalty of forfeiting their lease if they ran behind-hand; but he sent his servants to them, to remind them of their duty, and of the rent-day, and to help them in gathering in the fruit, and making return of it. These servants were the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent, and sometimes directly, to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. 3. They were not hard; it was only to receive the fruits. He did not demand more than they could make of it, but some fruit of that which he himself planted—an observance of the laws and statutes he gave them. What could have been done more reasonable? Israel was an empty vine, nay it was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and brought forth wild grapes.

III. The husbandmen's baseness in abusing the messengers that were sent to them.

1. When he sent them his servants, they abused them, though they represented the master himself, and spoke in his name. Note, The calls and reproofs of the word, if they do not engage, will but exasperate. See here what hath all along been the lot of God's faithful messengers, more or less; (1.) To suffer; so persecuted they the prophets, who were hated with a cruel hatred. They not only despised and reproached them, but treated them as the worst of malefactors—they beat them, and killed them, and stoned them. They beat Jeremiah, killed Isaiah, stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the temple. If they that live godly in Christ Jesus themselves shall suffer persecution, much more they that press others to it. This was God's old quarrel with the Jews, misusing his prophets, 2 Chron 36:16. (2.) It has been their lot to suffer from their Master's own tenants; they were the husbandmen that

treated them thus, the chief priests and elders that sat in Moses's chair, that professed religion and relation to God; these were the most bitter enemies of the Lord's prophets, that cast them out, and killed them, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. See Jer 20:1,2; 26:11.

Now see, [1.] How God persevered in his goodness to them. He sent other servants, more than the first; though the first sped not, but were abused. He had sent them John the Baptist, and him they had beheaded; and yet he sent them his disciples, to prepare his way. O the riches of the patience and forbearance of God, in keeping up in his church a despised, persecuted ministry! **[2.] How they persisted in their wickedness. They did unto them likewise.** One sin makes way for another of the same kind. They that are drunk with the blood of the saints, add drunkenness to thirst, and still cry, Give, give.

2. At length, he sent them his Son; we have seen God's goodness in sending, and their badness in abusing, the servants; but in the latter instance both these exceed themselves.

(1.) Never did grace appear more gracious than in sending the Son. This was done last of all. Note, All the prophets were harbingers and forerunners to Christ. He was sent last; for if nothing else would work upon them, surely this would; it was therefore served for the ratio ultima—the last expedient. Surely they will reverence my Son, and therefore I will send him. Note, It might reasonably be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be revered; and reverence to Christ would be a powerful and effectual principle of fruitfulness and obedience, to the glory of God; if they will but reverence the Son, the point is gained. Surely they will reverence my Son, for he comes with more authority than the servants could; judgment is committed to him, that all men should honour him. There is greater danger in refusing him than in despising Moses's law.

(2.) Never did sin appear more sinful than in the abusing of him, which was now to be done in two or three days. O (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.)

Matthew 21:43-46

(1.) That he will miserably destroy those wicked men; it is destruction that is their doom.

Kakous kakos apolesei

—Malos male perdet. **Let men never expect to do ill, and fare well. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in that miserable destruction which was brought upon them by the Romans, and was completed about forty years after this; and unparalleled ruin, attended with all the most dismal aggravating circumstances.** It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness; hell is everlasting destruction, and it will be the most miserable destruction to them of all others, that have enjoyed the greatest share of church privileges, and have not improved them. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites and persecutors.

(2.) That he will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Note, God will have a church in the world, notwithstanding the unworthiness and opposition of many that abuse the privileges of it. The unbelief and frowardness of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. If one will not, another will. The Jews' leavings were the Gentiles' feast. Persecutors may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the church. The Jews imagined that no doubt they were the people, and wisdom and holiness must die with them; and if they were cut off, what would God do for a church in the world? But when God makes use of any to bear up his name, it is not because he needs them, nor is he at all beholden to them. If we were made a desolation and an astonishment, God could build a flourishing church upon our ruins; **for he is never at a loss what to do for his great name, whatever becomes of us, and of our place and nation.**

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III. Conclusions And Applications

1. Man-centered thinking will always put the things of man at the center, i.e., Israel or the Church, and yet the Kingdom of God is the most important subject in the Bible. From the beginning, it was God's will to rule the earth through His delegates. "Man" (Adam), "Israel" and the "Church" are important. But the Kingdom, the righteous rule of God, is greater. Israel and the Church are subsumed in the greatness of the bigger issue, the Kingdom of God, His will being

done on earth as it is in heaven. *Israel and the Church are stewards of the Kingdom, with the responsibility of “bringing forth its fruits”, righteousness, peace and joy. (Romans 4:17)*

a. Matthew Henry, (1662-1714), clearly recognized that Israel was God’s “church” in the Old Testament, and that the Church is God’s “Israel” in the New Testament. This was the view of the Church fathers throughout Church history. Students of PRBS are strongly encouraged to search the great Bible commentaries of church history to re-connect with the fact that what we have presented in this 301 course is not “new truth”, or some strange doctrine. Quite the contrary, this was the prevailing view until the past 150 years or so, when the gross doctrinal errors of Dispensational Theology have blurred the truth, producing much confusion, and retarding the growth of God’s Kingdom.*

*As long as the Church focuses on itself, or wastes time with the fanciful debates of Dispensationalism, She can never “seek first the Kingdom of God”, much less advance its cause!

2. Unfaithful stewardship results in the “loss” of the Kingdom, in that God WILL have a “Kingdom Nation” in the earth regardless of the unfaithfulness of some. There is *always* a “remnant”.

a. Elijah, overwhelmed with disappointment and fear, asked God to kill him in 2 Kings 19, complaining that he was the only one who remained faithful. But God assures him...

18 Yet **I have reserved seven thousand** in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."
1 Kings 19:18 NKJV

b. This principle, based on the election of grace, is found repeatedly in Israel’s history...God will never leave Himself without a faithful witness! (Isaiah 1:1-9; 2 Kings 19:31; 2 Chronicles 30:6; Ezra 9:7-8)

c. The New Testament expression of this principle is given as a warning to the backslidden church at Ephesus:

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
Revelation 2:4-5 KJV

3. The purpose of God’s “Kingdom Nation”, (Israel in the OT or the Church in the NT), has always been to “steward” God’s “vineyard” and bring forth its fruits. God is full of patience and mercy, “longsuffering” toward us. But eventually, we must give an account. The acid test is how we treat the Son!

4. Jesus is speaking institutionally, not to individuals. He is *NOT* pronouncing judgment on each and every Jew! He is *not* closing the doors of heaven on Israel.

a. Israel was the focal point of God's "program" in the earth. Its institutional unfaithfulness is what is being judged here.

b. The term "you" is plural, and refers to national Israel.

c. In the same way, Jesus warning to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 is corporate, not individual. He is not saying that none of the Ephesian Christians would be saved, but that they, as an institution, would lose their power to witness for God and represent Him locally.

d. Paul picks up the metaphors in this parable in Romans 11, where Paul compares life in Christ and the Kingdom as the "tree", Israel as the "natural branches" and the Gentiles as "wild branches" graciously "grafted" into the tree after the "natural" branches were broken off by unbelief. He warns the Gentiles not to glory or be proud of this, but to "fear". Where is this "fear" today?

18 (You Gentile Christians), Boast not against the branches (Israel). But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root.

19 If you (Gentile Christians)...say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in...(remember)...because of unbelief they were broken off, and (you claim) you stand by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches (Israel), take heed lest he also not spare you.

Paraphrase of Romans 11:18-21

***A careful study of Romans 9-11 seems to point toward a great revival and ingathering of Jews into the Kingdom at some future point. We should pray to see this take place!**

5. The glorious privilege of stewarding God's "vineyard", the Kingdom, is a RESPONSIBILITY for which we, ("we" the visible Church, God's representative work on earth), will be held ACCOUNTABLE.

He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

Luke 16:1-2 NKJV