

Review

In our recent studies of Matthew, we saw Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His cleansing of the temple, and his ministry to those who were blind and lame. He and His disciples did not stay the night in Jerusalem, but departed to Bethany until the following day. That morning, Jesus cursed a fruitless fig tree.

And so it is now the second day that Jesus walks into Jerusalem and enters the temple. We will be spending several Sundays reviewing Jesus' interaction that day with the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, scribes, lawyers, Rabbis, and leaders, which Matthew documents over the next two and a half chapters.

21:23-27 By What Authority?

The day before, Jesus had entered the temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. He had driven out all those who were buying and selling. He had caused quite a ruckus, and now He's come back. He's not causing any damage today, but begins to teach the people.

Immediately, the temple leaders come to Him and interrupt His teaching. "What authority do You have? Who gave it to You?" they demanded.

Authority is an interesting thing. It is invisible, yet completely powerful. It is not tangible, yet it is something that can be given or taken away.

- The military gives an officer authority over an enlisted man.
- The city gives authority to the police over citizens.
- The government gives authority to the President over the members of his cabinet.

The chief priests and elders wanted to know what authority Jesus had. Who gave it to Him?

Jesus often had to illustrate the invisible truth by visible means. When He forgave the sins of the paralytic in Mark chapter nine, the scribes thought, "He's not allowed to forgive sins!" And, after all, how do you prove tangibly that sins are forgiven? You can't. And so Jesus asked

them,

Matt. 9:5-7 “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk’? “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then He *said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” And he got up and went home.

So that they would understand He had the ability to do the invisible, He demonstrated to them that He had the ability to do the visible. In a similar way, Jesus tells them that if they can accept where John the Baptist's authority came from, they will be able to accept His.

But of course, they were stuck because they hadn't believed John the Baptist either. And yet, because their own authority was only as good as the people who were willing to submit to it, they were in danger of alienating them if they denied John's authority.

Jesus had them stuck between a rock and a hard place, and they knew it. So they took the wimpy way out, saying, "We don't know."

Jesus then refused to tell them outright that His authority came from God, for He knew that they would reject it, just as they had rejected the authority that God had given to John the Baptist.

But He is going to illustrate their complete rejection of God's authority by the teaching of three parables.

21:28-32 Parable Of The Two Sons

The first of the three parables was about a man with two sons. There was work to do in the vineyard, and the Father told his two sons to go do it. As we see in places like Isaiah chapter five, the vineyard represents the nation of Israel.

There was work to do in Israel, to tend the vines, water them, and cause them to bear fruit.

Jesus translates the meaning of the sons in the parable for us, saying that the son who said, "I will not," but later went represented the "sinners," the tax collectors and prostitutes. Those who made decisions to live lives of sin. But afterwards, they repented.

And the son who said, "I will" - but didn't go - was symbolic of all of

the religious people like the chief priests and elders, who said that they were being religious, but were in fact just total hypocrites.

They had rejected the authority of the Father, who had commanded them to work in the vineyard.

21:33-46 Parable Of The Rented Vineyard

This second parable was also about a vineyard, again symbolizing Israel. Israel clearly belongs to God, but He had entrusted it to the religious leaders to care for it. Again, we see that they were given the responsibility of making the land fruitful for the kingdom - in other words, raising godly people that were beneficial to God.

But they became selfish, serving themselves and rejecting those whom God sent to collect the fruit. After killing the prophets, they would ultimately reject the authority of the Father's only begotten Son, and kill Him.

God was going to take their authority away because they had rejected the authority of the Son.

The chief priests and elders had made the mistake of questioning Jesus about His authority. He has used the opportunity to blast them with parables demonstrating their rejection of God's authority. They had rejected the authority of the Father, and they had rejected the authority of the Son. Now, in this third parable, we will see their rejection of the authority of the Holy Spirit.

22:1-10 Parable Of The Wedding Feast

The third parable was about the wedding feast of the king's son. Unfortunately, the original invitees had rejected the invitation. The servants of the king went out to draw them in, to bring them to the wedding feast. But the servants were completely rejected.

The king judged them, and again sent out His servants, this time to anyone and everyone who would be willing to come. It didn't matter who they were - "As many as you find on the highways, invite them." The people who ended up attending the wedding feast were from all walks of life, from all places, and from good to bad.

The king's servants represent the Holy Spirit, Whose main ministry is to draw us into relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said of the Spirit,

John 15:26 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me

The Spirit's service is to bear witness of Jesus, that people will accept Him and will one day attend the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Rev. 19:9 ...‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’...

The Jews were the original invitees, but they rejected the invitation. It is as Paul and Barnabas told the Jews in Pisidian Antioch,

Acts 13:46-47 ...“It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, ‘I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.’”

And so because the Jews rejected the invitation from the Spirit to know Jesus Christ and to attend the marriage supper of the King's Son, the doors were opened for all to be invited. This is who the church is: "as many as were found on the highways, both good and bad."

Many have accepted the invitation of the Spirit to receive Jesus Christ, and one day the wedding hall will be filled with them.

But that's not the end of the story...

22:11-14 Without Wedding Clothes

At the wedding feast, there was a man who had wanted to get into the feast, but had refused to put on the wedding clothes that were provided.

This man represents those who seem to have accepted the invitation. They're dutifully members of the church. They're financially putting money in the offering. They're physically sitting in the pews. But spiritually, they're not wearing the right clothes.

The Bible says that if you are truly saved, you...

Gal. 3:27 ...have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The only person who is properly clothed for the wedding is the one who can say,

Is. 61:10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Are you simply in church today? Following the crowd in, following the crowd out? Hoping that you'll make it into the kingdom of God? You'll only be welcome in heaven if you have been clothed with Christ, with the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation.