

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1951

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PART 52: THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST

THE VINEYARD OWNER

A number of years ago, I visited a home improvement store and saw a cluster of men standing in the parking lot. I did not understand why they hung out in the parking lot. Then one day a church member who washed car dealership vehicles told me he would hire a day worker from time to time and explained that he found them at the home improvement parking lots. The men I had seen in years past were day workers, waiting for someone to hire them!

This information now brings us to the parable of the owner of a vineyard who hired day workers. The man hired some workers at 6:00 a.m. for a penny at the end of the day and sent them to his vineyard. **Matthew 20:1-2**

He returned to the marketplace at 9:00 a.m. and hired some more men he found standing around. **verses 3-4**

The owner revisited the marketplace at 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. and hired more laborers each time. **verse 5**

He returned a final time at 5:00 p.m. and discovered yet more men looking for work and sent them to his vineyard. **verses 6-7**

When the work day ended at 6:00 p.m., the laborers gathered around the foreman to receive their wages. **verse 8**

The laborers hired last who had worked a single hour received a penny. **verse 9**

The men who had worked a 12-hour shift expected to receive more than a penny and became upset when they received the same wage as the men who had worked just one hour. **verses 10-12**

The vineyard owner responded to the complainers that he had fulfilled the terms of their agreement. Did he not pay them a penny? Then he questioned why he wasn't free to do as he pleased with his money. Their apparent envy wasn't his fault if he wanted to be generous. **verses 13-15**

If you haven't figured it out, God is the owner of the vineyard in this parable. He reserves the right to call sinners to repentance at different times. Some people respond early in life and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven. These men and women devote a lifetime to the Lord. Others are called at later times and some just before they die. Regardless of when the person responded to God's call, everyone receives eternal life in heaven. Many are called to salvation, but few respond to the invitation. **verse 16**

REVEALING HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

After Jesus taught the parable, He continued toward Jerusalem and took the twelve apostles aside to warn them about His upcoming death. It was a somber conversation



that the apostles did not comprehend at the time. **Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34**

SELFISH REQUEST

The mother of James and John came to Jesus with a selfish request. It is obvious that she was not seeking the Kingdom of God, but the earthly Kingdom of Israel. Everyone believed that Jesus was going to use supernatural power to restore Israel to its golden age and the fact that the God-man had come instead to deal with humanity's sin never entered their minds. **Matthew 20:20**

When Jesus asked about her intentions, the mother of James and John stated she wanted her sons to have the top jobs in His administration. **verse 21**

The God-man told her that she didn't know what she was asking for. Then he questioned James and John and if they were able to drink from the cup of suffering and the baptism of trials and pain that the God-man faced. In their ignorance, they blissfully affirmed they could do so. **verse 22**

Jesus confirmed they were indeed going to experience the cup and baptism, but He did not have the authority to grant their mother's request since this is a choice reserved by God the Father for Himself. **verse 23**

It is interesting to note that the apostle James never had a chance to develop his ministry after the Day of Pentecost. He was arrested shortly thereafter and King Herod ordered him beheaded the next day. **Acts 12:1-2**

The rest of the apostles were not happy when they discovered James and John had sneakily tried to get the top jobs in the upcoming administration. They must have made quite a ruckus as they expressed their outrage towards James and John. Love and unity were replaced with resentment, anger, and strife. **Matthew 20:24**

It must have grieved Jesus that these chosen men were so immature. Three years into their recruitment and now they were openly fighting amongst themselves. The God-man sternly told them how things worked in the Kingdom of Heaven:

1. No one was going to be in charge. **verse 25**
2. Anyone that desires to be in charge will be a servant. **verse 26-27**
3. Jesus did not want people to serve Him in the sense of earthly kings. The Messiah came to serve and sacrifice His life on the cross for sin. **verse 28**

SUMMARY

It doesn't matter if a person is saved as a child or on a deathbed. Salvation is the same for everyone; it is a free gift that cannot be earned. **Ephesians 2:8-10**

Rewards will be handed out in heaven according to the work performed in the Kingdom of Heaven after salvation. **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**

As Christians, we cannot demand positions of God. They will be distributed solely on merit during the millennial kingdom on earth and later in heaven. The role of a Christian is to be faithful and true to the best of his ability on earth. **Revelation 20:4-6**

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?