

The Parables of the Vineyard and the Marriage Feast (part 1 in a 4 part study)

This study will involve a brief look at two parables given back to back by our Lord. Their connection is significant in understanding the impact of God's plan and purpose for our lives here and now, as well as the prophetic future. But first, an all-important caution about parables. They are stories designed to teach an important Biblical truth. Sometimes the emphasis may be more practical. At other times, it can be far more doctrinal. However, what must govern any interpretation and application of a parable is the definitive statement issued by Christ at the end of each story. In moving beyond that point, we run the risk of entering into a fantasy zone of our own making, where imaginations can run wild.

With that in mind, the first comparison of these two stories makes it obvious they are not teaching the same truth. Common sense tells us that Jesus would not engage in the lengthy parable of the Vineyard, only to repeat Himself with the parable of the Marriage Feast. Second, this is supported by the differing conclusions given by our Savior at the end of each parable. The unmistakable teaching/application of the Vineyard story is given in Matthew 21:43, while the Marriage Feast parable concludes with our Lord's soundbite in Matthew 22:14 –

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it.”

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The third comparison confirming the above involves the way in which Jesus details the two different dispensations portrayed here. He describes the period of the Vineyard as the “the kingdom of God” in Matthew 21:43. In direct contrast to that, he describes the period of the Marriage Feast as “the kingdom of heaven.” This is intentional and not coincidental. Even though there are occasions where the Church Age is described as “the kingdom of God” in the New Testament; I am unaware of any reference to the theocratic nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, ever being portrayed as “the kingdom of heaven.”

If these parables are not teaching the same thing, then what are they teaching and how are they connected? Answering those questions is a challenge for even the most sincere 2 Timothy 2:15 Christian. Yet an even greater challenge for any student of God's Word would be to answer the above questions in a manner that is consistent with the whole counsel of God. We will seek to fulfill that two-fold challenge in part two of our study next week.