

FR 251

You who are going to the ACU Lectures come by our exhibit space (B-6) in the Teague Center Feb. 20-23. Leroy and Ouida Garrett are planning to be there too. So come by for a visit. Tell others to come. Tell others about our books.

A Look at Two Parables

Greg Rasaka

In Matthew 21:33-46, we find a well-known parable about a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, dug a wine press and built a tower. He then rented it out to some vine-growers and went on a journey. When harvest time came near, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. What did the vine-growers do? They beat, killed and stoned the slaves. He then sent a larger group of slaves, but the vine-growers did the same to them. After this he sent his son. But the vine-growers did not respect the son, and killed him, in order to seize the inheritance. So when the landowner returned, he destroyed the vine-growers, and rented the vineyard to other vine-growers who would pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons. Jesus then made it clear that the kingdom of heaven would be taken from the Jews and given to people who would produce fruit. Even the blind Pharisees understood that the evil vine-growers were in reference to them.

It is easy to see the meaning of this parable. The Jews were handed a special job to further the kingdom of God, but failed miserably because of their self-centered nature. After repeated chances, they were destroyed, and the kingdom was given to others who would do God's will.

A second parable follows in 22:1-14. This parable is about a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. The king sent out slaves to call out the ones who had been invited, but they did not want to come. Again, he sent out slaves to tell those who were invited that everything was prepared for the dinner. Some paid no attention and went about their ways. Some of them mistreated the slaves and killed them. This enraged the king, who then sent his armies to destroy the murderers and burn their city. He then sent slaves to call all they could, both evil and righteous. The dinner hall was full, but the king found a man who was not in wedding garments and threw him out into the darkness.

This parable is in essence very similar to the first. It shows that the kingdom of heaven was offered to the Jews, but they refused and even killed the prophets sent to them. God destroyed them and their city, and offered the kingdom to others. Many came, but just showing up was not enough. Only the true believers were allowed to remain.

God gave Israel ample time to repent and do his will. He sent many prophets to them through the centuries. The prophets were mistreated, stoned and killed. Even the Son of God was mistreated and killed. In Matthew 23, we find the Lord scolding the scribes and Pharisees for the evil deeds they had done. He told them to fill up the measure of guilt of their fathers, and that they would bear the brunt of God's wrath. He told them that it would all come upon that generation and that their house would be left desolate.

It was at that point that the disciples asked Jesus when all of these things would happen, and what would be the sign of his *parousia* and the end of the age (24:3). Jesus made very clear the things for them to watch for, and that it would all happen in that generation. Matthew 24 and 25 are a continuation of 21, 22 and 23. As I have said before, these need to be read as one continuous discourse. Dividing them up destroys the continuity of Jesus' information packed discourse.

This discourse was focused on the last days of the old covenant. The old covenant did not end at the cross, for we read in Hebrews 8:13 that what was "*becoming obsolete was growing old and ready to disappear.*" This was written nearly forty years after the cross. Shortly after, it did disappear. The entire Jewish theocracy passed into oblivion. That was the point of the symbolic wedding feast. Revelation 18 depicts the destruction of the great harlot, Jerusalem, and in 19:7-9 we find the marriage of the lamb to the bride. "*Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb*" (19:9).

This was the last day of the last days. It marked the consummation of the covenantal change. I cannot see where Jesus or any writer of the NT spoke of this last day, or consummation, as in the far distant future. They all spoke of it as to occur within that generation. As the time of the consummation grew nearer, words with more immediacy were used by the writers.

Jesus said, "*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*" (Matt. 24:34).

Paul said, "*The night is almost gone, and the day is near*" (Rom. 13:12).

James said, "*The parousia of the Lord is near*" and "*The judge is standing right at the door*" (James 5:8,-9).

Peter said, "*The consummation of all things is near*" (1 Peter 4:7).

John said, "*Children, it is the last hour*" (1 John 2:18). "*...the things which must soon take place...for the time is near*" (Rev. 1:1, 3). "*Do not seal up the words of this prophecy, for the time is near...Behold I am coming quickly...Yes I am coming quickly*" (Rev. 22:10, 12, 20).

If they were wrong, our faith is in vain and we cannot trust what they said concerning salvation. However, I do not think they were wrong at all. I choose to believe what they said. []

(Our thanks go to Greg Rasaka for this article. He states: "Permission to reprint for personal, non-profit use is hereby granted, provided the context is maintained and the source stated as Eschatology Review, 32080 NE Corral Creek Rd., Newberg, OR 97132).

Talkin' Texas: The average mileage driven on Texas highways is 457 million miles per day.