

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2



CHRIST'S PARABLE OF THE KINGDOM

Scripture Texts: Matthew 21:33-43; Romans 11:32

We are studying about a kingdom different from and above all others, the only kingdom established and ruled by God. This is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Heaven. The terms are interchangeable.

The kingdom that Israel possessed was not the one that Christ came to establish, but it was the pattern of this later one (**Hebrews 9**). It was an earthly kingdom symbolic of the greater, spiritual one to follow. When

Jesus came bringing the spiritual kingdom to be sealed by a new covenant, Israel rejected Him and, in so doing, rejected the kingdom. All religious confusion can be attributed to a false conception of the kingdom of God.

MEMORY VERSE: *For, if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*

—Romans 11:21

Householder's Care for His Vineyard

Matthew 21:33 This story from Jesus is a parable. The characters and events stand for others of which these are symbols. Christ used many parables to describe the spiritual kingdom, which He came to set up in the hearts and lives of men and women. This kingdom was conceived in the mind of God before the world was created—**forever and ever in eternity, before time and after time (Hebrews 1:8)**. Christ holds the key to everything God has for mankind. He is the key to peace among nations, and without Him history and prophecy have no meaning. Christ is the key to Scripture, death, life, hell, Heaven, and the kingdom.

The householder planted a vineyard—God brought the nation of Israel as a vine out of Egypt . . . **and planted it in Canaan (Psalm 80:8-9; Psalm 44:1-2; Isaiah 5:2)**. He said, **If ye will obey my voice . . . ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6)**. The householder hedged the vineyard round—fenced it against destroyers, human or animal. God protected Israel against all enemies (**Book of Joshua**). **Dugged a winepress**. This is the way God provided means for receiving fruit from Israel. **Built a tower to watch for enemies or danger**. God is a tower to His people (**Psalm 61:3, Proverbs 18:10**).

Behavior and Punishment of the Husbandmen

Matthew 21:34; Matthew 21:41 When the owner expected a harvest from his vineyard and sent servants to receive it, the husbandmen beat . . . killed or stoned them repeatedly. This they did to the prophets and priests who God appointed among them (**2 Chronicles 24:18-21; 2 Chronicles 36:14-16; Nehemiah 9:26**). When yet the son was sent, they did their worst—**caught . . . cast out and slew him**. This they did to Jesus (**Matthew 26:50; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16**). God looked for spiritual fruit from Israel—obedience, love, joy, peace, and faith. They brought forth wild grapes (**Isaiah 5:1-7**). Israel forgot the pledge made in **Exodus 19:8**. All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.

These husbandmen made the same mistake that far too many are making today, in the thinking that taking what God has sent into their own hands, they can seize on His inheritance. In killing the heir they forfeited all chance of inheriting the kingdom. Man crucifies Christ afresh when he turns down or attempts to change God's Word. The inheritance is lost.

Asked by Jesus their judgment, the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees thought the husbandmen would be destroyed and the vineyard let out to more faithful ones. Jesus agreed.

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The Kingdom Given to Others

Matthew 21:42-43 Jesus quoted **Psalm 118:22-23**, signifying that the ousted Son (the rejected stone) would eventually be given the greatest place (the head of the corner) (**Acts 4:11**). The kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. **First Peter 2:9** describes it as that holy nation, which would shew forth the praises of Jesus Christ and bear the fruit of the Spirit for Him. It is the people of God. Satan prevailed against Israel, the choice vine, and caused her to lose the kingdom. He cannot prevail against this true vine because the branches are as the vine. She WILL bring forth good fruit. Any individual branch not doing so is cast out (**John 15:1-5**).

God's Mercy

Romans 11:32 God has not cut off Israel that they cannot be saved. Israel as a nation is no longer His kingdom. But each individual stands before an open door of repentance and salvation just as any Gentile. Every person on earth is counted by God an unbeliever or sinner. Each must believe on Christ and repent to be saved and put into the kingdom of God.

Two Israel's are mentioned in the Bible. One is the literal nation, the other the spiritual one, of which the Church of God is built. Speaking of the latter, Paul wrote, For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly . . . But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly . . . of the heart, in the spirit . . . and, For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children . . . They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (**Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6-8**). The promises made to the nation of Israel are being fulfilled spiritually to spiritual Israel in this New Testament day.

The result of Israel's failure to be faithful was the loss of God's favor as His people. The result will be the same to us individually if we are unfaithful. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of Heaven, and Christ's kingdom are the same kingdom. They are of the same nature. Examples are found in **Luke 6:20**, **Matthew 5:3**, and **John 18:36**. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man are two separate natures.

JUST A THOUGHT

Only those who are truly bound to Christ are truly free.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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