

Devotional Questions: Matthew 21:28-32 The Father's Vineyard:

1. *Who do the characters in the parable represent?*

The Father:

The first son:

The second son:

2. *How were the 'tax collectors and prostitutes'* like the first son?*

*The Biblical term is ***"the publicans and the harlots."***

"Publicans" not ***"tax collectors"*** is correct because the term reinforces why the Lord said ***"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"*** Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, Luke 11:44. The Pharisees despised publicans, Matthew 9:10, 11, Mark 2:15, 16, Luke 5:30, 18:10, 11. However, they and the scribes were no different from them, being like ***"Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them"*** 3 John 9 - and were therefore shown to be hypocrites, in addition to what the Lord said in Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, Luke 11:44.

What ***"publicans"*** did was according to ***"a public example"*** not ***"privily"*** Matthew 1:19 but ***"publicly"*** Acts 18:28, 20:20 ***"that they may be seen of men"*** Matthew 6:5 and ***"for to be seen of men"*** Matthew 23:5 like Diotrephes, like ***"the scribes and the Pharisees"*** Matthew 23:2 and typified by ***"a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich"*** Luke 19:2, whom everyone knew, Luke 19:7, and hated for his graft and pomposity.

The following verses show further that ***"the scribes and the Pharisees"*** and ***"the publicans"*** were two groups of a kind when it came to self-importance. The 1984, 2011 NIVs miss the vital reference in Matthew 5:47 by substituting ***"pagans"*** for ***"publicans."***

"And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" Matthew 5:47.

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat...But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi" Matthew 23:2, 5-7.

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The lesson is that tax-collection is not the issue with God. Pride is the issue, whether it is religiously or economically and politically-based. ***"Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate"*** Proverbs 8:13.

Note also that ***"publicans"*** not ***"tax collectors"*** is the precise term because they did not *collect* but instead *received* ***"the tribute money"*** Matthew 22:19 on behalf of Caesar, Matthew 22:20, 21. ***"Tribute money"*** Matthew 17:24 is the expression for ***"custom or tribute"*** Matthew 17:25.

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A ***"collection"*** in scripture is an actual collection, according to the only three times that the word is used in scripture.

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“And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, *to bring in to the LORD the collection that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness*” 2 Chronicles 24:9.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem*” 1 Corinthians 16:1 with 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 9:1-2. This is the second recorded collection to be taken and given to the saints in Jerusalem and Judea via Paul’s ministry. See also Romans 15:25-26. The first such recorded collection had been forwarded some years before.

“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, *determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul*” Acts 11:29-30.

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“Harlots” not “*prostitutes*” is correct because the term relates to Israel and Judah in rebellion against God as Jeremiah states. **“The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, *Hast thou seen that backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot...yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also*”** Jeremiah 3:6, 8. The 1984, 2011 NIVs miss the cross references by substituting “*committed adultery*” for “*played the harlot*.”

The essential point here is *the precision of “the scriptures”* Matthew 21:42, 22:29, 26:54, 56, Mark 12:24, 14:49, Luke 24:27, 32, 45, John 5:39, Acts 17:2, 11, 18:24, 28, Romans 15:4, 16:26, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4, 18 references in all, that should *always* be honoured, *without exception*.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” Hebrews 4:12.

How were the religious leaders like the second son?

3. *Is this parable teaching works salvation? If not, how do you explain that it does not? After all it was the son who did the work that entered the kingdom.*
4. *Is Jesus saying all of the religious leaders’ work of study and belief in the God of the Bible fails because they did not recognise Jesus’ purpose and mission?*
5. *The Father told his sons to go work in his vineyard.*

What is the vineyard – and what work is needed?

What is the significance of the word ‘today’ for you and me?

6. *What personal applications can we make from this parable? How should we apply this parable to our lives today?*

Devotional Questions: Answers to Questions, Matthew 21:28-32 The Father's Vineyard:

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of Matthew* pp 49-50, 67, 433-444, 523-527 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 1240-1241, 1277-1278, 1283-1284, 1407, 1636.

1. *Who do the characters in the parable represent?*

The Father:

The Father represents the Lord Jesus Christ "...the Son of God...the King of Israel" John 1:49. "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass...And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" Matthew 21:5, 9.

The first son:

The first son represents in the context "the publicans and the harlots" Matthew 21:31, 32. They were like "The men of Nineveh...because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" Matthew 12:41 with Luke 11:32.

The second son:

The second son represents in the context "the chief priests and the elders of the people" Matthew 21:23, of whom "...spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" Matthew 23:1-3.

The lesson for today's believer is therefore James 1:22 "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" especially with respect to having assurance of answered prayer, as John exhorts. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" 1 John 3:22.

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"Publicans" not "tax collectors" is correct because the term reinforces why the Lord said "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, Luke 11:44. The Pharisees despised publicans, Matthew 9:10, 11, Mark 2:15, 16, Luke 5:30, 18:10, 11. However, they and the scribes were no different from them, being like "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them" 3 John 9 - and were therefore shown to be hypocrites, in addition to what the Lord said in Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, Luke 11:44.

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“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” Hebrews 4:12.

“The publicans and the harlots” Matthew 21:31, 32 were like the first son because ***“he repented”*** Matthew 21:29 and ***“did the will of his father”*** Matthew 21:31 and they did likewise when ***“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins”*** Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6. See *Question 1* on *The first son*.

How were the religious leaders like the second son?

The religious leaders were like the second son who did *not* do ***“the will of his father”*** Matthew 21:31 in that they were as those whom Stephen rebuked in Acts 7:51 ***“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”*** Acts 7:51. They were like King James Bible ‘correctors,’ Calvinists and Charismatics.

“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” Luke 7:29-30.

The lesson for today’s believer is as the Lord Jesus Christ said for anyone seeking close companionship with Him.

“For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother” Mark 3:35.

3. *Is this parable teaching works salvation? If not, how do you explain that it does not? After all it was the son who did the work that entered the kingdom.*

Matthew 21:28-32 is not teaching works salvation. The son that did the work was the son who repented and ***“did the will of his father”*** Matthew 21:31, *illustrated* by his work in the vineyard.

Matthew 21:28-32 is teaching who, in the immediate context, are ***“the children of God”*** and ***“the children of the devil”*** 1 John 3:10, as the Lord rebuked ***“The Pharisees”*** John 8:13 in John 8:44 ***“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”***

For today’s believer, *it is those already in* ***“the kingdom of God”*** 2 Thessalonians 1:5 who do the work.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Ephesians 2:10.

4. *Is Jesus saying all of the religious leaders’ work of study and belief in the God of the Bible fails because they did not recognise Jesus’ purpose and mission?*

They *did* recognise both them and Him. However, they wanted to rule ***“the vineyard of the LORD of hosts...the house of Israel”*** Isaiah 5:7 themselves.

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him...And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them” Matthew 21:38-39, 45.

“But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way” Mark 12:7-8, 12.

“But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him...And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands”

on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them” Luke 20:14-15, 19. The lesson for today’s believer is that when the scripture reproves you, the right response is as David’s. **“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies”** Psalm 119:59.

5. *The Father told his sons to go work in his vineyard.*

What is the vineyard – and what work is needed?

See *Question 4* and Isaiah 5:7 **“For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry”**

The Lord’s vineyard is **“the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah”** Jeremiah 13:11. The work to be done is to rid the vineyard of the oppression. That in part was John’s ministry with respect to preaching and administering **“the baptism of repentance”** Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, 19:4 conditional on a willingness to repent on the part of the recipient.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” Matthew 3:7-8 e.g. don’t oppress, Matthew 23:1-4.

This same ministry of **“John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** Matthew 3:1-2 and whereby **“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** Matthew 4:17 will be resumed in the run-up to the Second Advent not only for Israel but for the whole world. The Lord will put down *all* oppression at the Second Advent.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” Matthew 24:14. **“This gospel of the kingdom”** will forewarn what then comes, spoken prophetically by David with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ at the Second Advent and afterwards. **“Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son...He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations”** Psalm 72:1, 4-5. Psalm 72:1, 4-5 and context have yet to be fulfilled.

Today’s believer should be encouraged though. **“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ”** 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

What is the significance of the word ‘today’ for you and me?

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” John 9:4. That is the exhortation for today’s believer as the Lord’s Return draws nigh. Time to **“Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”** Colossians 4:17 is fast diminishing.

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” Ephesians 5:15-17.

6. *What personal applications can we make from this parable? How should we apply this parable to our lives today?*

For personal applications, see remarks under *What is the significance of the word ‘today’ for you and me?* and in addition to aiming **“as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart”** Ephesians 6:6, aim at **“the profit of many, that they may be saved”** 1 Corinthians 10:33 by whatever *Biblical* means of ministering **“the gospel of Christ”** Romans 1:16.

“Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” Ecclesiastes 11:2.