

What happened in Holy Week?

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[0:00] And I've asked some questions. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, why did he make people so annoyed? What was he doing that produced this very hostile reaction?

! The coming of Jesus to Jerusalem, what would that, if you put it into that context, how does it fit? How does Jesus teach, bearing in mind that Bible-believing people will so far have believed what Isaiah says and up to that?

And what does Jesus add to that in his teaching? And I also put at the bottom a question, what characteristics are emphasised for the kingdom life, which is the Christian life, which is what we're seeking to live?

So that's a question about application. I think first of all we have to ask the question, what is Jesus saying? What is he telling us? And then to think, having understood that, what does it say to us as we are here in the 21st century in this particular city trying to live for him?

So can we just really quite quickly whiz through and see what we have here? That's going to be my input and maybe you have things that can be added to this.

[1:39] So we're just going to do a whistle-stop tour through these chapters. Chapter 21, verse 18, is the fig tree where Jesus says to the fig tree, May you never bear fruit again.

And immediately the fig tree withered. One of the commentators says Jesus does three, he claims that this is all in threes, I'm not quite sure whether that's true, but he does three symbolic acts here. He enters Jerusalem on the donkey. That's a highly provocative, very visible symbolic act because why? What's the donkey thing all about?

In what way is that provocative or significant? It's prophesied the king comes to you on a donkey.

So when he comes on the donkey, he is no longer telling people to be quiet about his identity.

He is no longer being, what should we say, sort of modest about it. He's being fully up front. So saying that he's the king.

[3:02] Second symbolic act is that he goes into the temple and overturns the tables and makes a right fuss, a big thing going on in the temple.

So that was very visible and public. And that, I think, is him claiming to be the judge of the temple, to be able to go in and say, this is not what God wants it to be.

And then this third symbolic act is the fig tree. And you remember that he looks for fruit. He doesn't find any.

And he says, may nobody bear fruit again from you. And it's uncharacteristic of Jesus.

It's uncharacteristic of Jesus to do things to inanimate objects, I think, in that sense. It's uncharacteristic of Jesus to be so negative.

[4:06] In the other gospel it says he curses the fig tree. So I think we're meant to look at this quite carefully and say, what's going on?

Is it just somebody being annoyed because, as one might be annoyed to go to KFC and find they'd run out of chicken? Somebody tell us what significance are we meant to detect in this cursing of the fig tree?

That's rare. It's just not what it should be.

It's not bearing fruit. Yeah. It's just like... Yes. Yes. Okay. So what's being said is that this is related to Israel.

There is a likeness between Israel and the vineyard. And I'm just struggling to think of a specific reference, but I think the fig tree fits with that.

[5:13] And Jesus visibly, I think not in huge public gaze, but certainly to his disciples, demonstrates he's looking for fruit, finding none.

And the consequences is not, well, we'll try again later. That's it. And I think that's in mind as Jesus comes into Jerusalem for this week.

So let's look at... Actually, Jesus uses it as an opportunity to teach about prayer. Verse 21. I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea and it will be done.

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. So I take it that Jesus is making an additional point. That wasn't the whole point. This is an additional point.

It's a very interesting additional point, isn't it? The power of prayer. Power of prayer for people who have faith in God. So let's go to verse 23.

[6:25] Jesus enters the temple courts. So I've got these clocked up on here somewhere. No, not yet. The next thing in verse 23 is Jesus being asked by what authority he does these things.

And that's an excellent question. Because if somebody goes into the temple and starts chucking all the tables over, you ask, who gives you the right to do this?

And you have this wonderful exchange where they say, by what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority? Verse 23. And Jesus, in this rather shrewd way, says, okay, I'll answer your question if you answer my question.

So I'll ask you, John's baptism, where did it come from? Was it from heaven or from men? And that puts them in a very difficult position.

Because the people rightly believe that John's baptism was a God thing. He was sent from God to do this. But the people asking the question, the chief priest and the elders of the people, had not taken notice, by and large, of what John was saying.

[7:45] So they're now stuck. Because if they say it was from men, then all the people listening will say, oh, come on. They will... They will...

The people held that John was a prophet. And if they say it was from heaven, then Jesus is going to say, well, why didn't you take any notice?

So they answer, verse 27, we don't know. And Jesus says, well, actually, it isn't that you don't know. It's that you won't say.

And he says, neither will I tell you by what authority I'm doing these things. So you do get a little hint of Jesus' superb skill in debate.

He has exactly the right wise answer. Now, this next parable, verse 28, the two sons. There was a man who had two sons.

[8:40] He went to the first and said, son, go and work today in the vineyard. I will not. But later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the other son and said the same thing.

And he answered, I will, sir. But he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted? The first they answered.

And then Jesus turns it back. He says to them, I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, but you did not believe him.

But the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. So you've got the two sons.

The one who says, I won't obey, but he did. And the second son says, I will do exactly what you say. But he didn't. And Jesus says that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are like the first son who have said, we're not going to follow the way of God.

[9:53] But in the end did so. Whereas the, are they the scribes and the Pharisees? The chief priests and elders of the people who claim they do follow God, but actually don't act on that.

What do you think the tax collectors and the prostitutes were doing so that Jesus could say they're actually doing the will of God?

What is picked out? Well, it says a number of those things, doesn't it?

It says they're entering the kingdom. It's verse 31. And you said, Ray? Repenting. Repenting. Yes, they're turning. I think we need to just point out, it's not that tax collectors and prostitutes are in the

kingdom, enter the kingdom because they're tax collectors and prostitutes.

They enter the kingdom because they turn. And the particular thing which Maria spotted there is in verse 32, they believe. These are the people who believe.

[11:09] Yeah, repenting and believing. Yeah, go together. So who do you think, what would you say was the impact of that parable on the listeners?

Okay. Made them furious.irate. Yep. And which sector of the listeners would have been made furious and irate?

The Pharisees, yeah. The chief priests and the elders of the people. Yeah. So the... Sorry. Well, the people who were renowned to be godly.

But Jesus is saying, what you claim as godliness actually isn't, because it doesn't have this characteristic of repentance and believing.

Yep. So the... If we come to verse 33, the parable of the tenants, which we just read before, how would you interpret this?

[12:23] What is Jesus' meaning to convey in this parable about tenants who don't give fruit? Servants come and ask for fruit.

Last of all, the son comes and asks for fruit. What is Jesus' meaning to convey by this? Prophets.

Okay. Which are the prophets in the parable? Servants. The servants. Okay. And let's just establish the vineyard. What do we understand the vineyard to be?

Israel. Yeah. That's an established metaphor. It's an established way of saying Israel. Isaiah 5. Let me sing a song about my beloved and his vineyard.

My beloved planted a vineyard in a fruitful place, cleared it with stones, put a watchtower, and where's the fruit? So, Jesus is referring to a well-established idea.

[13:30] And the people that go to get the fruit... So, you said there are prophets. Anything else to say about people who went to get the fruit? Who was the last of the sequence who went to get the fruit?

The son. The son. The son. Which I think is very significant. Last of all, doesn't it say? Last of all, verse 37, he sent his son.

Here's Jesus, very conscious that he is not just a prophet, but he is the son of the owner. And he's the one who goes to get the fruit.

And the response of the tenants is they kill. They want to kill the son. What do they want to gain from that? What do they expect to gain from killing the son?

Take his inheritance. Take his inheritance. Inheritance. They want to be the other one. Yes, take his inheritance. This is the heir. If we kill him, we'll have the inheritance for ourselves. Which is a very insightful accusation by Jesus, because he's depicting them as people who love spiritual power.

[14:56] If only we could get rid of Jesus and the son, we could have Israel for our, we have all this.

We're no longer tenants, but landlords. That's what they're thinking. And I remember reading a book about this when he says, it isn't just Jewish people.

It isn't just that historical Jewish setting in which human beings resent being tenants that want to be landlords. Because that's, in a way, what human sin is.

That human beings, by nature, we don't like to be obligated to the owner. We don't want to do what the owner says. We don't want to be grateful to the owner.

We want to be the landlords ourselves. We want to run our own lives the way we see and not to be obligated to anybody. So the sin in this parable is the human condition, really.

[16:01] Sort of writ large. What is the upshot of this? According to the parable here, what's the upshot of this murdering of the son?

What? I'm sorry? The murdering of the son. They took him to arrest him. Yep. Well, they did murder the son. Yes, that's right. Yeah.

And... Yeah, that's certainly what...

The son is killed. And there is then a consequence of that. He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, verse 41.

Rent the vineyard out to other tenants who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time. And then Jesus says, that's exactly right. Verse 43. I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

[17:08] What's he referring to? I think so. I think so. I think he's showing the Jewish leadership this horrible, abominable prospect that all their privileges, all their special treatment will no longer be theirs, but the vineyard will be...

Other people will be allowed to come in and have those privileges and produce fruit. That's Paul's argument, isn't it, in Romans, where he talks about us...

He uses it as a slightly different way of putting it, being grafted in. Am I right? Which chapter is it? Around about chapter 11?

11-11. Beg pardon?

11-11. 11-11? Yes, okay. Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all. Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

[18:24] So he says that salvation comes to the Gentiles. And it has a further phase that the Gentile enjoyment of salvation has this effect on Jewish people.

Well, I wish I had that. Because the Christian people are enjoying the things that belonged originally to Israel. As St. Paul says, theirs is the adoption of sons.

Theirs is the divine glory. The covenants. The law. The temple worship. The promises. The patriarchs. Those are all Jewish things. And we as Christians enjoy those privileges.

It's a strange, it's almost like a foreign thing. Because we have adoption of sons, don't we? We have the glory, the promises, the law, all the things that belong to the temple worship.

These are now our privileges. And they didn't ought to be, but amazingly, it is. So I guess one thing that this reminds us of is the great privilege that we have.

[19:34] So much to be grateful for. We don't deserve that. Let's see if we can just whiz on in a few minutes.

Because I'd like us to get to... I'd like us to get to... No, let me just stop and make a comment.

No, I should have clicked. There's various topics that get mentioned. But bear in mind, Jesus has been saying, I'm looking for fruit.

I'm not finding it. The vineyard, the tenants of the vineyard are blameworthy for this. They'll be chucked out. The vineyard will be let to others.

And this has a huge implication for the city of Jerusalem and for the temple. In the Old Testament, when the nation was judged, what happened to the city and the temple?

[20:45] Anything or nothing? It was destroyed. Can you think of the specific example of who came and destroyed the temple and took over the city?

Who was it who did that? It was the Babylonians. And the people were taken into exile. And you had this almost unthinkable judgment.

The temple of the Lord was taken over by the Babylonians. The city was destroyed. And I can't help but think that Jesus, who in a sense is a prophet, is looking forward and saying, that's what happened in the past when there was this mounting, persistent, chronic fruitlessness.

You had another chance. That's what's going to happen in the future. And that will be the last chance. That there will be, the temple will be destroyed.

It will be, in a sense, the end of an era. The end of an age. And the beginning of a new age. And just with that thought, Matthew 24.

[22:01] This is Jesus' prophetic, I think it's a difficult chapter, prophesying looking forward about the end of the age.

So chapter 24, verse 3, the disciples say, when will this happen? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? The question he'd been asked was in verse 2, do you see all these things?

I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another. Everyone will be thrown down. So having asked that question, and that being the context, I would not be surprised if at least some of what Jesus says is to do with the end of the age that they're now in and the destruction of the temple.

And then included in that, perhaps, that the bigger question of the whole age before his final coming.

Do you see what I mean? That there is a sense in which the context says the end of the age is the end of the Old Testament, if you like. The end of the age in which the temple is the place you go to and Zion is the city you actually have to walk to.

[23:16] And Jesus has said that's coming to an end. Not one stone here will be left on another. Everyone will be thrown down. So I'm not going to delve any further into that, but I think that thought might help us when we read that chapter just a tiny little bit.

What I wanted to touch upon before we change gear and pray is the time element that Jesus is now going to introduce because he's going to refer to the final end of everything, his coming, and a delay in his coming.

And so it doesn't all happen at once. It isn't that the temple is destroyed, the city is overrun, that's the day of judgment, history comes to an end.

But Jesus has this huge chapter to put in there when the vineyard is rented out to other people and the Gentiles have these promises offered to them.

And there are a number, actually quite a large number, of parables in which this time interval is mentioned.

[24:43] Let's look at 24, verse 45. Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?

This is the master who goes away and is going to come back. It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, my master is staying away a long time. And then he begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with drunkards.

The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and it's an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I'm always struck by the way parables like that go into almost nuclear mode right at the end. So what's this servant been doing? Well, he's been getting drunk and beating up fellow servants.

[25:53] But what's the consequence? What's the penalty for this? Well, he's going to get cut to pieces and given a place with the hypocrites where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So it's a huge, hugely awful penalty. What do you think Jesus means us to draw from that parable? So assuming it's relevant to us in this age following the destruction of the temple but prior to Jesus' final coming, what do you think he means us to draw from that parable?

Thank you. It is a great warning. It is a great warning. What is he warning us not to do? To live life as we want.

Okay. Can we tease that out a little bit? Okay. Not according to his will. Yeah. Yeah. Can we tease that any further?

[27:02] It's actually saying that it's the claim to be the boss again, isn't it? Yeah.

Well, my master's not really going to come back. It's the implication. Yep. So I might as well claim his right to myself. Yeah.

And then he becomes a bad master. Yeah. And then he becomes a bad master. And he doesn't look up to the rest of the household. But he's so drunk and rips it off.

Yeah. I mean, he's doing more than claiming to be master because the master wouldn't beat the servants, we presume, and eat with the drunkards. But he's abusing even that usurping of power. It is to go back, isn't it?

[27:58] Because he was put in charge, but he stops doing so. So anybody got any wisdom on how this, what this looks like or what this would look like in practice?

To make the people proud of the Lord and not to take over the Lord for the time in the marriage of that and give the course of what he is doing.

Can you say that again? No? You know, that they haven't kept the Lord in sight.

Yeah. You know, let's just say it's a church. They haven't kept the Lord in sight. And the master of the church is just abusing the people, you know, keeping them under the cross.

Yes. And there's no lordship from the Lord in the church. Yeah. I think that would make a lot of sense. The person who is supposed to be responsible, the people who are supposed to be responsible, forget that responsibility, don't they?

[29:15] They forget they have a master above them and just operate as if it's there for themselves to get out of it what they can, what they want.

Oh, thank you.

Yes. Yes. Remember that you're serving Christ. So, does it say, slaves, don't obey your ministers only when their eye is upon you.

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It is a sort of unbelief, isn't it?

Yeah. It's a loss of faith or a loss of confidence in the fact that he's coming back. I mean, I don't think I know all the answers to this, but I think it's well worth us thinking about because Jesus put it there for a reason, didn't he?

[30:32] Patience. Well, patience. Patience. The Lord. Yep. Being prepared to hang on waiting. You get that also with the parable of the ten virgins.

It's actually a very powerful thing to think about. Are we living in the consciousness that we have a master who will one day come back?

And do we put everything through that grid, through that filter? That's why I'm doing what I'm doing. That's why I'm living how I'm living, because I have a master who has given me a responsibility a stewardship, a job, if you like, a mission, and I need to put everything under that heading because one day he's coming back.

It's quite a searching question, isn't it? Do I do that? Yeah. There's lots of fake masters, and of course this person, as Steve said, tries to make himself into the master.

You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't. Jesus, the Father in the sense is cast as the owner and Jesus the son who goes to the vineyard or, I don't think it's quite so specific here but we're talking about the Lord in the Christian sense.

[32:35] I mean I think your remark at the bottom of your slide is, I mean everything in Matthew is about the kingdom so I think in a sense what it's saying is that the kingdom the king is not here but the rule of the kingdom is here and therefore we live according to the laws and values of the kingdom and eventually the kingdom will become visible but I mean Jesus says doesn't it the kingdom of heaven is amongst you you can't say it's here or there at the moment because it's amongst you but eventually you will never say that it is but while we're waiting for that we live with a kingdom perspective according to the laws and values of the kingdom exactly, exactly, yes well the master's coming back and in this case it says it simply says it will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns you know, are we still on task?

are we still seeing things through the right lens? so if I may I have a thought on this that as church as churches we are given a mission to proclaim the gospel which is about heaven and hell it's about the precious blood of Christ it's about repentance and faith and it's not unknown for churches to lose that perspective and think our main task is to do the things that kind and generous people do on earth feeding the hungry looking after the poor and needy which are good things it's not that we're to forget that but we shouldn't let our horizon contract so that that's all the church is meant to do this seems to me to be losing the point of the mission that the Lord has given us so let me just say that again it's not that we shouldn't be doing those things we should but the mission of the church shouldn't contract so that that's all we do so that we forget there's a heaven and a hell so that we forget that the real salvation is through the blood of the Lord Jesus and that you know if we haven't got people ready for that we have not yet done all that we're supposed to do

I think that's sort of on the within the remit of that parable Yes Yes Does it say you neglect the weightier matters?

Yeah Yes So keeping that perspective is a big and important thing I think we'll stop there I think that's a big and important thing I think that's a big and important thing that we need to do I think that's a big and important thing that we need to do that we need to do I think that we need to do