

# Matthew 20 - Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard; Jesus Predicts His Death/Resurrection; Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

III. King's interim kingdom program (Matt 13:1—20:28)

(3) Christ trains the disciples (Matt 14:13—20:28)

(R) Parable of the landowner and laborers (20:1-16)

(S) Third prediction of Christ's death (20:17-19)

(T) Request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee (20:20-28)

IV. Formal presentation and rejection of the King (Matt 20:29—23:39)

(1) Transitional event: the blind could recognize Christ's identity while Israel could not (20:29-34)

## Matthew 20

(R) Parable of the landowner and laborers (20:1-16) [The Workers in the Vineyard - Matthew 20:1-16](#)

1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

1 “The kingdom from heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

- This parable explains the divine “reordering” (last will become first, first will become last) from 19:30

- Jesus introduces this parable in the same way He introduced the other kingdom parables in Matt 13

— This parable describes conditions in the messianic kingdom

2 When he had agreed with the laborers for a **denarius** for the day, he sent them into his **vineyard**.

2 When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

2 After agreeing to pay the workers one denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

- "...denarius" - *denarion*, the principal silver coin of the Roman empire; one day's wage  
- "...vineyard" - a common idiom for Israel in the OT (Is 3:14; 5:1-2; Jer 12:10, et al)

3 And he went out about the **third hour** and saw others standing idle in the **marketplace**;

3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;

3 When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing in the marketplace without work.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

- "...third hour" - 9am

- "...marketplace" - the central square of the town where day laborers obtained work

4 and to those he said, 'You go into the vineyard also, and whatever is right, I will give you.' And so they went.

4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.

4 He told them, 'You go into the vineyard, too, and I will pay you whatever is right.'

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

- The landowner did not promise a particular wage, only that He would deal justly with the laborers. All the workers trusted the landowner to give them what was fair at the end of the day.

5 Again he went out about the **sixth** and the **ninth hour**, and did the same thing.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.

5 So off they went. He went out again about noon and about three o'clock and did the same thing.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

- "...sixth" - noon

- "...ninth hour" - 3pm

6 And about the **eleventh hour** he went out and found others standing *around*; and he \*said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?'

6 And about the eleventh *hour* he went out and found others standing *around*; and he \*said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?'  
6 About five o'clock he went out and found some others standing around. He asked them, 'Why are you standing here all day long without work?'  
6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?  
- "...eleventh *hour*" - 5pm, one hour before quitting time

7 They \*said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He \*said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'  
7 They \*said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He \*said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'  
7 They told him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He told them, 'You go into the vineyard as well.'  
7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

8 "Now when evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, starting with the last *group* to the first.'  
8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last *group* to the first.'  
8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard told his manager, 'Call the workers and give them their wages, beginning with the last and ending with the first.'  
8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.  
- Evening was the time of reckoning for the workers (Lev 19:13)  
- The order that the landowner's steward paid the workers (last hired to first hired) implies that he took greater pleasure in rewarding those hired last

9 When those *hired* about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.  
9 When those *hired* about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.  
9 Those who were hired at five o'clock came, and each received a denarius."  
9 And when they came that were *hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.  
10 And so when those *hired* first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

10 When those *hired* first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

10 "When the first came, they thought they would receive more, but each received a denarius as well.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

- In view of what he paid those hired later, those hired first expected to receive more than they were promised (one denarius, v2)

11 When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,

11 When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,

11 When they received it, they began to complain to the landowner,

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 saying, 'These who were *hired* last worked *only* one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day's *work* and the scorching heat.'

12 saying, 'These last men have worked *only* one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'

12 'These last fellows worked only one hour, but you paid them the same as us, and we've been working all day, enduring the scorching heat!'

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

- Those hired earlier complained because the landowner was generous with those hired later

— They cited their hard working conditions ("enduring scorching heat") as justification for their complaint

— Their error was that they had served for the pay they were promised, whereas those who worked for one hour did so simply trusting in the grace of the landowner. The difference is in their motivation.

13 But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?

13 But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?

13 "But he told one of them, 'Friend, I'm not treating you unfairly. You did agree with me for a denarius, didn't you?

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

- He hadn't cheated anyone, including those hired who worked all day. He paid them the wage they agreed to accept.

14 Take what is yours and go; but I want to give to this last person the same as to you.

14 Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.

14 Take what is yours and go. I want to give this last man as much as I gave you.

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'

15 I am allowed to do what I want with my own money, am I not? Or are you envious because I'm generous?'

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

Some interpreters understand the laborers hired early in the morning to represent Israelites since the owner made an agreement (covenant promises) with them. Those hired later represent Gentiles as they did not have this guarantee.

16 So the last shall be first, and the first, last."

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last."

16 "In the same way, the last will be first, and the first will be last, because many are called, but few are chosen."

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

- The point of the parable is that God will graciously do more, for some, than His justice demands. His servants should serve Him while trusting in His goodness toward them rather than calculating how much He owes them for their service.

This parable does not teach that God will reward all His disciples equally...it is that He will reward all of His disciples justly, graciously and generously. In some cases, "the last" called will be among "the first" in rank of blessing. Conversely, some of those whom God called early in their lives may not receive as much reward as those called later in life.

(S) Third prediction of Christ's death (20:17-19) (Cf. Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34)

17 As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve *disciples* aside by themselves, and on the road He said to them,

17 As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve *disciples* aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them,

17 When Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and told them as they were walking along,

17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

- Jesus was taking His disciples to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus described the events that would take place while they were there.

18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be **handed over** to the chief priests and scribes, and they will **condemn Him to death**,

18 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,

18 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the high priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death.

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

- "...handed over" - betrayed, delivered; this implied a "betrayal" (Cf. 17:22)

- "...condemn Him to death" - implied legal proceedings

19 and they will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and flog and crucify, and on the third day He will be raised up."

19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up."

19 Then they will hand him over to unbelievers to be mocked, whipped, and crucified, but on the third day he will be raised."

19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again.

- For the third time, Jesus announced His arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection (see Matt 16:21; 17:22)

— This is the most specific prediction of His death, along with the mode (crucifixion), and the Gentiles' part in it

— Jesus' ability to predict His own death, with such specificity as to who, when, and how, is another indication of His messiahship

— In the previous announcements, He had not specified how He would die. But now He clearly mentioned the Cross.

— Did they understand? — No (Cf. Luke 18:34)

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>
First passion announcement	16:21-23	8:31-33	9:22
Second passion announcement	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43-45
Third passion announcement	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34

(T) Request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee (20:20-28) (Cf. Mark 10:35-45)

**20** Then the **mother of the sons of Zebedee** came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

**20** Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

**20** Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons. She bowed down in front of him to ask him for a favor.

**20** Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him.

- "...mother of the sons of Zebedee" - Salome, the mother of James (not Jesus' half-brother) and John. The request evidently grew out of what Jesus had said about Jesus sitting on His throne and the disciples judging the 12 tribes (19:28).

— Evidently James and John approached Jesus with their mom, who voiced the request for them

— This approach shows some reluctance from James and John. Evidently they believed Jesus would be more favorable to their mother's request than to theirs, perhaps because of His recent teaching on humility.

**21** And He said to her, **"What do you desire?"** She \*said to Him, "Say that in **Your kingdom** these two sons of mine shall sit, **one at Your right, and one at Your left.**"

**21** And He said to her, **"What do you wish?"** She \*said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

**21** He asked her, **"What do you want?"**

She told him, "Promise that in your kingdom these two sons of mine will sit on your right and on your left."

**21** And he said unto her, **What wilt thou?** She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

- Despite Jesus' repeated predictions of His Passion, two disciples and their mother are still thinking about privilege, status and power

- The parallel passage (Mark 10:35) indicates that James and John were of the same mind, so this was not a case of the mother embarrassing her two sons
- "...Your kingdom" [NASB] - this is implied to be earthly, not in heaven. If Jesus was reigning spiritually today, how could James and John sit at His right hand?
- "...one at Your right, and one at Your left" - suggest positions of prestige and power in His kingdom
- Note that the disciples, as well as their mother, viewed the messianic kingdom as yet future. This event occurred very late in Christ's ministry.
- Jesus doesn't correct her thinking by saying...the kingdom is already here, in spiritual form, it's in your heart, etc. etc. He doesn't fix her interpretation of a future coming of the kingdom.
- The fact that they would make this request shortly after Jesus had again announced His impending death, with great specificity, shows how little they understood about His death preceding the establishment of the kingdom
- They did not understand the need for the Cross, much less Jesus' resurrection, ascension, or the Church Age

22 But Jesus replied, **"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"** They \*said to Him, **"We are able."**

22 But Jesus answered, **"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?"** They \*said to Him, **"We are able."**

22 Jesus replied, **"You don't realize what you're asking. Can you drink from the cup that I'm going to drink from?"** They told him, **"We can."**

22 But Jesus answered and said, **Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** They say unto him, **We are able.**

- The disciples and their mother did not realize that the Cross must precede the crown. To share the crown they would have to share the Cross.

— Since they did not understand what that involved for Jesus, they could not appreciate what it would mean for them

- "...cup" - Jesus used the "cup" to represent the divine judgment that He would have to undergo to pay for the sins of humanity and the accompanying suffering

- "...and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with" [KJV] - some manuscripts omit this phrase

- "...We are able" - they have no idea what He is going to do, the cup that He is about to drink of

23 He \*said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit at My right and at My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

23 He \*said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

23 He told them, "You will indeed drink from my cup. But it's not up to me to grant you a seat at my right hand or at my left. These positions have already been prepared for others by my Father."

**23** And he saith unto them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father.

- Jesus predicted that the disciples would experience the same suffering and rejection that He would

— In fact, James would become the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2) and John would suffer exile (Rev 1:9)

— Jesus would not determine who will sit on His right and left in the kingdom; the Father had already determined that (Cf. Mark 10:40)

**24** And after hearing *this*, the *other ten disciples* became indignant with the two brothers.

**24** And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

**24** When the ten heard this, they became furious with the two brothers.

**24** And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

- James and John's request, via their mom, offended the other disciples, because they were hoping for those positions

— It is evident that greatness in the kingdom was still at the forefront of their minds, despite Jesus' teaching on humility

**25** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them."

**25** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them."

**25** But Jesus called the disciples and said, "You know that the rulers of the unbelievers lord it over them and their superiors act like tyrants over them."

**25** But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, *Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.*

- Jesus explained that the power structure of worldly governments would be absent in the kingdom

— In worldly governments, people promote themselves over others to get positions of leadership. In the kingdom, those who place themselves under others will get those

positions.

— In worldly governments, individuals who have others serving them are great. In the kingdom, those who serve others will be great.

26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant,

26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

26 That's not the way it should be among you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your slave;

27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

27 and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

- Comparing "servant" *diakonos* (v26) with "slave" *doulos* (v27) shows that the lower the servant on the earth, the higher rank they will have in the kingdom

- Jesus mentions here (and demonstrates later with deeds) what the Church should view in terms of its organization: not a hierarchy; the Church was to be organized with a shepherd

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to **serve**, and to give His life as a **ransom for many.**"

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

28 That's the way it is with the Son of Man. He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people."

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

- Jesus presented Himself as the supreme example of a slave to others. He would even lay down His life in service to others, not just helping them, but dying in their place (Cf. Luke 5:32; 19:10; John 3:17; 10:17-18; Heb 10:5-6)

— As Messiah, Jesus had every right to expect service from others, but instead He served others

- "...serve" - *diakoneō*, the root word for "deacon" (Cf. Acts 6:1-6); Jesus was a "deacon"

- "...ransom" - *lytron*, a term used frequently in Greek to describe the purchase price for freeing a slave

- "...for" - *anti*, indicates the substitute nature of Jesus' death
- "...many" - used by Calvinists to argue for Limited Atonement; they say Jesus died for "many" people, but not "all" people
- What Calvinists or those who support Limited Atonement don't recognize is that you never see the word "only" in any passage that they use. These are all non-exclusive verses. Of course Jesus died for believers, but it doesn't say anywhere that His death was limited to them.
- Calvinism's Limited Atonement proof-texts are: Matt 20:28; John 10:15; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25. Each one of these verses lack any hint of exclusivity. Nowhere does the Bible say that Christ died only for a limited scope of people.
- If the biblical writers/Holy Spirit had wanted to communicate Limited Atonement to us, it would be a very simple thing to do. All they/He would have to do is add one word of exclusivity to these verses (the small Greek word *mona* (meaning "only" or "alone") in any of these passages. But they didn't, not even once.
- However, there are an abundance of verses that support Unlimited Atonement: John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 6:51; 12:32,47; 15:18-19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Tim 2:4,6; **4:10**; Titus 2:11; Heb 2:9; **2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2**; 4:14; 5:9. Of these, 1 Tim 4:10; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2 are explicit in including non-believers in Christ's atonement.
- Only One would die but many would benefit from His death
- This is the first time that Jesus explained to His disciples the reason He would die

To be great is to be the servant (*diakonos*) of many; to be first is to be the slave (*doulos*) of many; to be supreme is to give one's life for many.

### **Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus (Cf. Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43)**

- 29** As they were leaving **Jericho**, a large crowd followed Him.
- 29** As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.
- 29** As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Jesus.
- 29** And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
- "...Jericho" - Luke wrote that Jesus met the blind man as He "was come nigh" to Jericho, but Matthew and Mark write that the incident occurred as Jesus was leaving Jericho (Matt 20:29; Mark 10:46)
  - The resolution to this difference is the fact that there are two Jerichos: the old ruined city and the new one built by Herod the Great. They were about one mile apart.
  - All three accounts record a single incident, that happened as Jesus was leaving "old" Jericho and approaching "new" Jericho
  - The Mark and Luke accounts focus on only one of the two men (Bartimaeus), without mentioning the other

- Big crowds continued to follow Jesus to benefit from His healing ministry

30 And two people who were blind, sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, **Son of David!**"

30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

30 When two blind men who were sitting by the roadside heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!"

30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

- The blind men were probably begging; one of their names was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46); Mark mentioned one beggar, probably the more prominent one of the two

— Matthew likely mentioned both to provide "two witnesses" for his Jewish readers

- "...Son of David" - expressed their belief that Jesus was the Messiah

31 But the crowd sternly warned them to be quiet; yet they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

31 When the crowd told them harshly to be silent, they shouted even louder, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!"

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, **"What do you want Me to do for you?"**

32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, **"What do you want Me to do for you?"**

32 Jesus stopped and called them, saying, **"What do you want me to do for you?"**

**32** And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, **What will ye that I shall do unto you?**

- Jesus asked the same question to Salome in v21

33 They \*said to Him, "Lord, we *want* our eyes to be opened."

33 They \*said to Him, "Lord, we *want* our eyes to be opened."

33 They told him, "Lord, we want to be able to see!"

**33** They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

34 Then Jesus, deeply moved with compassion, touched their eyes, and at once they could see again. So they followed him.

34 So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

- When Jesus previously healed two blind men in Galilee, He commanded them to tell no one about the healing. He did not do that hear because it was unnecessary to conceal His identity.

— The giving of sight to the blind was a dramatic miracle that pointed to the dawning of the era of messianic fulfillment.

— Jesus compassionately delivered them from their literal darkness on his way to Jerusalem, where through His sacrificial death He will deliver all of humanity from an even greater darkness—the bondage of sin and death.

Even though the nation as a whole rejected Jesus, individuals continued to believe. The postponement of the kingdom did not rule out personal salvation for anyone who believed. Those who did would enter the kingdom by resurrection at the Second Coming (Is 26:19; Dan 12:2). For this reason, Jesus continued to present Himself to Israel as Messiah in the Triumphal Entry.