

### Jesus Gave a Parable About Two Sons

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray according to the will of God. We saw that as they pray according to His will, He will hear and answer their prayers. In this topic, we will see that Jesus spoke a parable about two sons.

Jesus had cleansed the temple of those who bought and sold in it the previous day. The chief priests and elders of the people were very angry because they were gaining riches by stealing from the people through their buying and selling. As a result, they wanted to stop Jesus from teaching in the temple. Matthew 21:23-25a says, “Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?’” The word translated “confronted” means *to come near or to approach*. As soon as the chief priests saw that Jesus was teaching the people, they came to Him to stop Him from teaching.

The religious leaders asked Jesus who gave Him the authority to teach in the temple. In John 3:2, we see that Nicodemus came to Jesus early in His public ministry. “This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’” Here, we see that Nicodemus recognized that Jesus had authority; this authority was recognized by the fact that Jesus was able to do miracles. The authority of Jesus had also been recognized when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:29 says, “For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The religious leaders knew that Jesus had a source of authority.

Jesus could have answered in the words of Matthew 28:18 which says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” However, Jesus chose to answer the question of the religious leaders with a question. He told them that He would answer their question, if they would answer His question. Throughout the Gospels, we see that Jesus often answered questions in this way. Jesus asked them, “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” Jesus asked a question that forced the religious leaders to have to really think about the ministry of John the Baptist. However, as they thought about the question of Jesus, we see that the religious leaders suddenly had a new problem.

Matthew 21:25b-27 says, “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” The word translated “reasoned” means *to carefully discuss or to bring different reasons together*. This was why the religious leaders suddenly had a new problem. As they talked together, they realized

that they could not answer the question of Jesus. There were two reasons why they could not answer that question.

First, there was their personal unbelief. They refused to believe John and they refused to believe Jesus. Jesus had explained the reason for their unbelief earlier in His ministry. John 8:43-45 says, ““Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.”” The religious leaders could not accept the message that Jesus shared with them because their hearts were filled with unbelief.

Second, we see that the religious leaders were controlled by fear. They were afraid of the people because many of the people had recognized John as a great prophet. In the same way, many of the people had heard Jesus and had seen the miracles He had done. They had recognized Jesus as a great teacher. Here, we see an example of the fact that if a person is not led by the love of Jesus, the person will be driven by his or her own fear. In 1 John 4:18, we read, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” As a result of the fact that the religious leaders were controlled by fear, they told Jesus that they could not answer His question because they did not know. In their discussion, they had given their actual answer when they said that if they answered that John was from heaven, they knew Jesus would ask them why they did not believe John.

Since they would not answer His question, Jesus went on to give them a parable and then asked them another question. Matthew 21:28-32 says, ““But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of *his* father?’ They said to Him, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”” We see that Jesus gave a parable about two sons.

The father asked the first son to go and work in his vineyard. When the father asked the son, we see that the son refused at first. The word translated “regretted” in verse 29 and “relent” in verse 32 means *to repent or to change one’s mind for the better*. We see that as the son thought about the request of his father, he changed his mind and then went to work in the vineyard. The father made the same request to the second son. This son immediately told his father that he would go and work in the vineyard. However, he did not go to the vineyard and work. Then, Jesus asked the religious leaders the question, “Which of the two did the will of his father?” The answer was very clear and so the religious leaders answered, “The first.” Christ agreed that their answer was right and then He went on to explain the lesson that He wanted to teach the religious leaders.

Jesus then said that the, “Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.” Tax collectors were hated by both the Jews and the people of other nations because they were known for cheating the people by charging more than they were supposed to charge because of their greed. In addition, they often treated the people with harshness. The word translated “harlots” was used to speak of women who sold their bodies for sexual use or one who committed unlawful sexual intercourse for gain or for lust. As a result, it is another word for “a prostitute”. The religious leaders treated such women with great contempt. John 8:3-6 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.” This was clearly an attempt to trap Jesus because it takes two to commit adultery. The fact that they said they “caught her in the very act” meant that both people had been caught in the act.

In these verses, we see that Jesus told the religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders of the people. Then, Jesus explained why that statement was true. Jesus answered the earlier question that the religious leaders had refused to answer. He said that John the Baptist had come in the way of righteousness. This statement made it clear that John had been sent by God to prepare the way for the Christ. Many tax collectors and prostitutes heard the preaching of John, believed his message and turned from their sin of unbelief. In contrast, the religious leaders did not repent. Even to this very day, when Jesus was speaking to them, they had still not repented, because they had just said that they did not know where John got his authority.

The way of righteousness is explained for us in Romans 3:21-24, where we read, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The first thing that we see in these verses is that it is the righteousness of God. Second, we see that no person can obtain that righteousness by the law because of the fact that all have sinned. Third, we see that all who believe are “justified freely by His grace.” That means the righteousness of God is given, by God, as a free gift and is placed on all who believe in Christ through faith.

The word “redemption” means *to buy back from sin, to set free and to remove from further sale*. Those are the three things that Jesus did when He died in our place and for our sin on the cross. The Father showed that He was satisfied with that payment by raising Jesus from the dead. That is the message that we want to help both our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message.