

Prayer List

Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Judy
Rose
Ken

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What prophet mentions a gift of ebony wood sent to Tyre?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Joel - Joel 2:4

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God's Goodness And Severity

Paul Earnhart

On Tuesday in His temple confrontations with the Jewish hierarchy Jesus in a third successive parable continued his ever increasing theme of judgment. In the parable of the Wedding Feast of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-14) as in the parable of the wicked vineyard keepers the patient goodness of God is illustrated but only to highlight the wicked contempt of His enemies and to justify a severe punishment.

Jesus had been pointed in applying to His enemies the harsh judgment they themselves had rendered against the vineyard keepers (Matthew 21:41). Like rebellious builders, He said, they were rejecting the very stone whom God intended to be the head of the corner (Matthew 21:42; Psalms 118:22, 23) and were destined to stumble over it and be crushed into powder by it The kingdom in which they took such pride was to be taken from them and given to those who understood and practiced its righteousness (Matthew 21:43, 44). Enraged, the chief priests and Pharisees had only been restrained from seizing and killing him by fear of a popular reprisal (Matthew 21:46; note John 11:47-53).

The parable of the Wedding Feast gives no relief. It is an even more intense parable of indictment and judgment, a stern warning of disaster.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them” (Matthew 22:2, 3).

The king in this parable is unbelievably gracious. The long invited guests who flatly refused when first summoned to the wedding of the son of an oriental king (an occasion of state) would have been fortunate to escape with their lives after such a political affront. Imagine what Ahasuerus would have done to any of his ministers who refused his invitation to dinner (Esther 1:3)! Instead the king sends other servants to intreat further and even graciously entice them with the rich feast he has prepared. Openly contemptuous most proceeded to more appealing business while some outraging all civility terrorized and murdered the king’s servants. In the former parable the workers disdained their duty. Here the king’s subjects despise not only his power but his goodness. One wonders how they thought to escape the consequences of such raw effrontery. The stage is set for judgment.

“But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city” (Matthew 22:7).

A. B. Bruce has correctly suggested another difference in the parables—the previous one approaching the history of Israel from the Old Testament perspective of prophets rejected and killed before the Son was finally sent and murdered, and the second from the New Testament perspective speaking of the rejection of the invitation to the kingdom first issued by John, Jesus and His disciples, and then finally by the apostles after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The nation of Israel was the object historically of so much grace, so many second chances. But that has been true for us all. And that goodness and mercy so often rejected, Paul warns, enlarges the righteousness of God’s wrath and judgment. “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and the righteous judgement of God” (Romans 2:4, 5).

It is a grave mistake to “make light” of the kingdom of heaven and to give great weight to matters of limited significance. This was the sin of most of the Jews, and most of us—too busy with momentary matters to accept God’s invitation to the truly great joys. But the Jewish establishment was not indifferent; they were murderous. Of those who brutalized and murdered the king’s messengers Jesus says that the king “destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.” Is it possible that though certainly speaking to their eternal end (Matthew 23:33) He has reference to the calamitous judgment in history about to be brought on Jerusalem? His words later the same day would indicate it. “Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge.... that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth.... Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:34–36. Note also 24:1–34).

So with us, too. Whether by cold indifference or harsh opposition we reject the kingdom of God our house will be left to us desolate, both here and hereafter. The God who is love (1 John 4:8) is also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).