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The Parables of Jesus Christ: Hourly Workers and Daily Wages

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THE PARABLES OF JESUS CHRIST

THIRTY-SEVEN: Hourly Workers and Daily Wages (Mt. 20:1-16)

SURVEY

A landowner hired certain men to work in his vineyard, securing their services at different times of the day, but agreeing to pay the wages for each man. As it turned out, some would labor twelve hours, and the final group but one hour. However, at the end of the day those who had toiled twelve hours complained bitterly upon receiving the exact wages of those who had worked but one hour.

However, the owner's defense was he had paid all exactly what they had been promised and that as owner, he could do exactly as he wanted!

SIGNIFICANCE

In this parable Jesus makes one statement He has previously said and will later repeat.

"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?" (Mt. 20:16)

For the other two occasions, see Mt. 19:30; 22:14.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- The interpretation of this parable

1. Negative considerations

- a. It has nothing to do with the subjects of salvation or rewards.
- b. It was not related to describe the ideal working arrangements between management and labor.

2. Positive considerations

It may have served as an object lesson to illustrate both the sovereignty and the fairness of God. If so, Jesus was referring to that divine plan for Jews and Gentiles.

- a. The first workers hired would represent Israel. They began "working" in God's vineyard as early as 2000 B.C. in the time of Abraham.
- b. The last workers to be hired would represent the Gentiles. As a group, they did not "clock in" until the advent of the Apostle Paul, some twenty centuries later. And

yet, in the fullest sense, both groups will share equally in the glorious millennium, God's ultimate payday.

- The applications of this parable

1. We are not to question or criticize God's dealings, either with us or with other believers. To do so leads to either pride or envy.

- a. Jesus rebuked the Apostle Peter. Our Lord had just predicted the eventual martyrdom of Peter. We read:

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (Jn. 21:20-22).

- b. Paul rebukes the Roman church:

"Who are thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand... But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:4, 10).