

Faith Matters

What Jesus really said - To those who hated Him?

Matthew 21:33-46 and Matthew 21:28-32

Exploring the relevance of faith for us today

Hebrews 1:1-2

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe...



**The Parable of the Vineyard
(Matthew 21:33-46)**

Who do the following represent?

The landowner.....
The tenants.....
The servants.....
The son
The other tenants.....

Jesus refers to Himself as the 'stone the builder's rejected'.
What is he saying to the temple leaders?
(See also 1 Peter 2:6-8)

**The Parable of the Two Sons
(Matthew 21:28-32)**

What two types of attitude/people are represented in this story?

Why do you think Jesus uses John the Baptist as a challenge to the temple authorities? (vv. 23-27and v.32)

What other indicators could Jesus be giving by aligning himself with John?
(Matthew 3:1-2, John 1:7, 23 and 31)

What was the response of His audience?
(See vv. 45-46)

Summary of Jesus' Message

- His death was anticipated, intended and exactly as preordained. (Psalm2)
- He can be for us a cornerstone or capstone to build our lives upon or a stumbling block or a rock which crushes.
- He calls us to turn from a life of hypocrisy, paying lip-service to God, to one of honesty , trusting in and serving Him.

Anyone at the Cross Could Have Written That!

By Tim Challies

An excerpt from the testimony of a Christian Jew, Rich Ganz
(<http://www.challies.com/archives/guest-bloggers/the-revival-of-a-rebel-jew.php>)

...The next few days were interesting. They were full of religious discussion. But as a man with no sense of God, seeing myself as a chance accumulation of molecules in an absurd and meaningless world, I listened and talked to these people, questioning and mocking their beliefs. Then one day a man asked me if he could read something from the Bible to me. I consented, and this is what he read.

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

I'd heard that expression "Man of sorrows" and "acquainted with grief" before, though I wasn't sure where. But at that point I suddenly understood what was happening: they were reading to me about Jesus. I thought, Do they know what they are doing, reading this Christian stuff to a Jew? But I told myself to be patient.

Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions...

Images of Renaissance paintings leapt to my mind. I wasn't an ordinary Jewish guy; I had a doctorate; I was cultured; I'd seen paintings with crosses; I knew that their guy had been pierced. They were trying to read me stories about Jesus and I felt the anger rising in me.

...he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus just bore your sins! I couldn't stand it. That was just a cheap way out of long term psychoanalysis. What they were telling me was "the Catholic way". From the age of seven, when I had walked into a Catholic church I thought Jesus was a Catholic: Scandinavian, perhaps, very delicate, tall, thin—slightly anorexic—with long silken blond hair and piercing blue eyes. I had got as far as the vestibule of the church, looked at one of the statues and thought that the ground was going to open up and swallow me; that I was unalterably damned for having done that and I ran eight blocks home to get away from what I considered an unpardonable sin.

...He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...

I remembered pictures of Jesus on the cross and the two thieves, one on either side of him. Three crosses—I knew that stuff; they weren't going to fool me with their rhetoric.

...though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

There was the myth about the resurrection. They get it into all their literature, don't they. They can't accept the fact that once a person is dead, he's dead. Grow up! Put away your infantile neuroses and realise that when you're dead, you're dead; that's it.

“ He handed me the Bible and in a millisecond of receiving it, my life was changed.

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

When he finished reading, he looked at me and said, "What do you think?" I was, of course, keen to give the benefit of my insights. They were obviously quoting to me from their New Testament and I responded without a moment's hesitation: "Anyone

who was there at that cross could have written that stuff! What does that prove?" He handed me the Bible and in a millisecond of receiving it, my life was changed. The name that I saw at the top of the page was Isaiah (53-54)! They had been reading from *my* Bible, *my* Hebrew Scriptures and I felt as though someone had taken a sword and cut me to pieces. When the man who read it told me it was written 700 years before Jesus was born, I felt dead. Why couldn't it be Krishna? Why couldn't it be Buddha? Why does it have to be him? I knew at that instant that if Jesus wrote history about himself in my Bible—if the Gentile God was the Jewish God and he was truly God—then I had to submit everything to him for the rest of my life.

"A Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself, but a spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself." A.W. Tozer