

# NOON BIBLE STUDY: MT 19 (PT 3) & MT 20 (PT 1)

## Matthew 19:27-30

Peter asks an interesting question. Remember, this is on the heels of the rich young ruler who was unwilling to let go of his possessions (and status) and follow Jesus. Conversely, the disciples had done that. So Peter asks “what will be the result of our decision to do that?”

**v. 28** - disciples - 12 thrones, judging the twelve tribes

This isn't just a nice thought - this is a significant role that is founded upon the golden era of Israel's history, known as the time of Zion. Israel flourished during the reign of David and specifically into the reign of his son Solomon. Scripture holds this time as the peak of Israel and a type for the future Messianic age. Yahweh was singularly worshipped, the children of Abraham possessed their greatest reach of the promised land, and peace and prosperity abounded. During the first years of Solomon's reign, Scripture describes things the following way:

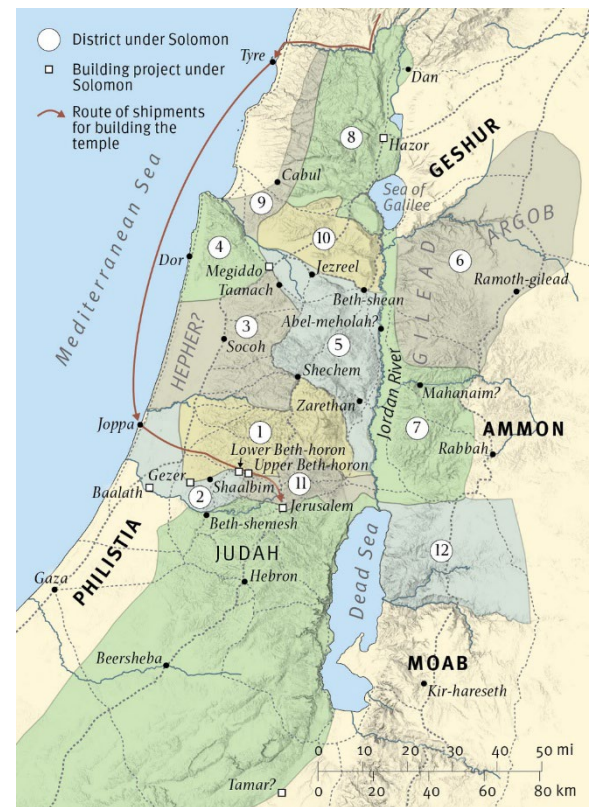
### 12 Deputies - 1 Kings 4:7-19

### Kingdom of Solomon - 1 Kings 4:20-30

Notice that part of the governmental structure Solomon set up was to have 12 deputies exercising his authority over the 12 tribes of Israel. So Jesus is promising his 12 disciples an important part in his coming reign!

For the rest of us who commit to follow Jesus, even if/when it costs us something in this life, we are promised to be cared for now and in the future be recipients of life in the age to come (eternal life) when all that is wrong with this world will be made right. This is a big deal! The hope for the followers of Jesus isn't some pie in the sky by and by nebulous hope but a real, concrete, physical and restoration hope. This passage echos Daniel's prophecy of this same thing:

**Daniel 7:22, 27** - ...the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom... 27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'



In other words, any sacrifice, any cost, any loss in this life as a result of our devotion to following Jesus will be well worth it in the end. It may look like Christ followers lose now, but we win in the end. We may be on the bottom now, but he will raise us up then. We may be last now, but then we will be first.

Conversely, those who cling to being “first” now may find themselves empty-handed then. That is the choice for each of us to consider and make. Live for now and gain what we can in our brief lifetime, or live for Christ, with challenges and trials, and live forever with all things made new.

Let’s not pretend that this is easy (remember the challenge of the rich young man in the preceding verses). Specifically in this culture, the fact that the gospel might affect one’s family relationships - that was a significant challenge. That is why the reward, as well as the consequence, of our choice is really an important part of this conversation.

**v. 28 - regeneration** - (*palingenesia*) is used only twice in the NT (here and Titus 3:5). Here it refers not to personal new birth, but to the cosmic renewal at the end of the age — when the Son of Man reigns in glory and creation itself is restored, a concept rooted in the Old Testament hope of the renewal of all things.

**Q** - What are some things in our culture today that feel hardest to “leave behind” in order to follow Jesus?

**Q** - What would it look like for us as a group to live more as people who trust this promise?

### **Matthew 20:1-16 - Landowner & Hired Servants**

Did you notice that a new chapter starts and yet the chapter is clearly a continuation of the previous conversation/topic? This is a good observation when it comes to skillfully reading Scripture. In this case Jesus will continue on in chapter 20 to tell a parable which addresses the moment at the end of Matthew 19.

**Q** - Can you resonate with the workers that were first hired and their complaint? What do you think they think should have happened?

**v. 1-2 - Day Laborers** - In the 1st century, day laborers were among the most vulnerable workers in society. They had no long-term contracts, no security, and lived literally day to day. A denarius was the typical day’s wage — just enough to provide for a family. To be unemployed even one day could mean hunger.

That’s why being hired late in the day was still life-saving. It’s not about “easy money,” but about sheer survival. This helps us feel the generosity of the master: he ensures no worker goes home empty-handed.

## v. 15 - The Master's Question

In Jewish culture, an “evil eye” meant envy or resentment toward someone else’s blessing, while a “good eye” meant generosity. In rabbinic writings, a “good eye” was *the mark of the righteous person* (generous), while an “evil eye” revealed a distorted heart. That heightens the weight of Jesus’ language. The landowner had paid everyone exactly what he promised, so no one was treated unfairly — but his extra generosity to the latecomers exposed the jealousy of the first workers. This is the punchline of the parable: God is both just and generous, and the real test is whether we trust his goodness when his grace doesn’t look “fair” to us.

The rich ruler’s question was - “*what do I need to do to get what is good?*”

The disciples ask - “*what will we get for being good?*”

Jesus teaches us that we need to be grateful for what we get at all and stop looking at what we think other people should, shouldn’t, or deserve to get.

Oftentimes looking at what others have doesn’t help us in our discipleship to Jesus. Too many people look at the lives of others and wrongly conclude that God loves them more. Comparison inspires covetousness and dissatisfaction in the gifts God has given. It’s not wrong to desire good things, but it is wrong to base our emotions, feelings or determinations about God based on whether we have or get those things.

### What Should We Learn?

Each of the laborers had their own personal connection with the master. He invited them to not only their own responsibility, but their own promise of reward. In the parable the reward amount is the same, but the hours required to gain that reward are different.

Additionally, some of the workers come in at the end of the day and get the same reward as the ones first hired. This reminds me of the parable of the prodigal son where the older son was upset that the younger, reckless son got a party and yet he had been faithful to the father all along. Do you remember what the father said to the older son?

**Luke 15:31-32** - And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'

The older son (representing the Pharisees) is resentful that the younger son (representing the tax collectors and sinners) gets treated so well. Perhaps some of the Jewish leaders, or the crowds or perhaps even the disciples may have been frustrated that the sinners and outcasts are being invited to the Kingdom of God too. The “righteous” had been doing right for years and gained the same as those coming into the fold lately? The deathbed conversion receives the same salvation as the person faithful since childhood?

Yes.

Because the way things work in God's economy are not like the way things work in the world. In the world, we earn and gain through hard work and merit. In God's world, we are all in need of grace and our good deeds are the response to God's love, not the way to earn or keep it. The person who comes to Christ with their final breaths is a glorious testimony to the God of mercy and grace and the person who follows Jesus faithfully for 70 years is a glorious testimony of what the sustaining and enduring power of God can do.

Theologically, this parable is also going to be an important one to remember as the gospel is proclaimed to the nations throughout the world. Though the Jewish people were God's first chosen nation, and recipients of the covenant blessings of Yahweh, the gospel invites people from every tribe and tongue to be the chosen people of God. They are late to the party, but recipients of the same gift.

So this parable presses us to ask: Do I rejoice in the generosity of God to others, even when it doesn't fit my idea of "fair"? Do I compare my service and sacrifice with others, or do I simply rest in the wonder of being invited into the vineyard at all?

Remember, the disciples ask "what will we gain from following you?" - which is not a bad question, but the timing of the question is interesting in light of the rich ruler being unwilling to follow Jesus. Perhaps they aren't just thinking about this out of their own random curiosity.

And so Jesus gives them a clear picture of what awaits those who follow him, but he also continues on to teach the disciples (and us) that we need to keep our eyes not only on the reward, but also on the assignment before us. We can't think we "deserve" more because we're sacrificing more. We can't think we are better than others because we have been on the job for a longer tenure. Our devotion to Jesus must be fueled by grace and gratitude and not distracted by what others are doing or not doing.

In Matthew 19 and 20, Jesus turns upside down the way we naturally think about greatness, reward, and fairness. The rich man walked away because he clung to what he could not keep, while the disciples asked what they would gain from following Jesus. Then Jesus told a parable to show that in God's kingdom, reward is not based on how much we bring, how long we serve, or how impressive our résumé is — it's based on grace. The last become first, the first can become last, and all who enter the vineyard receive the same eternal life. This is the heart of the gospel: God's kingdom is not earned, it is received. Our job is to be faithful today. And when we understand that, our response is not comparison or complaint, but gratitude and worship. The first will be last and the last will be first.