

BROOKLYN TABERNACLE BIBLE STUDIES

"GO YE ALSO INTO THE VINEYARD."
Matthew 20:1-16.—August 14.

GRape culture was one of the main industries of the days of the Great Teacher. The stony hillsides of Palestine were once terraced and extensively used as vineyards. On our recent visit we noted with particular interest the revival of this custom, as one of the evidences of the beginning of restitution of the Holy Land.—Acts 3:19-21.

The grapevine was honored of the Master, in that he used it in a parable, to symbolize himself and the Church, saying, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches;" "My Father is the husbandman;" "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;" "Every branch in me which beareth fruit he pruneth it that it may bring forth more fruit;" "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away."

Our present Study, the Parable of the Laborers, is in full accord with the foregoing, but shows the matter from a different standpoint. It shows how each one of the Lord's consecrated Church, each heir of the Messianic Kingdom shortly to be established, is privileged to be a co-laborer with his Lord and Master and with the Heavenly Father in the vineyard work—tending the vine, looking out for the injurious pests, keeping the soil in good condition, assisting every way in the production of "much fruit" and of fine quality. Evidently many Christian people do not appreciate the privilege of being laborers in the Church of Christ—"building one another up in the most holy faith" until we all come to the full stature of a man in the Anointed One.

St. Paul appreciated this privilege greatly, saying, God hath made us qualified servants of the New Covenant. So then we, as ambassadors for God, beseech men, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20.) Whoever is negligent of his opportunities to serve others who manifest a hearing ear, a humble heart and a teachable spirit shows his own lack of appreciation of God's message. He thus indicates that he has not come to a knowledge of God nor to a knowledge of the Truth respecting the Divine Plan. And indeed the Scriptures declare that a deep knowledge of God, his Word and his purposes, is attained only as a gift of God, bestowed only upon those who are in a humble, faithful, zealous attitude of mind—"To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God."

The things pertaining to God's Kingdom, in its future operation toward the world for a thousand years, will be openly manifested to every creature, shortly. But now it is appropriate, and is the Divine will, that these things should be known only to the Church, the consecrated, the spirit-begotten sons of God. Likewise there are important truths pertaining to the Kingdom class, the Church which is being prepared to be the Bride of Christ and his joint-heirs in the Kingdom. And these things are likewise intended to be comparatively secret—to be clearly and full understood only by such as have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice. (Psalms 50:5.) "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him, and he will show them his Covenant." (Psalms 25:14.) All such in close sympathy with the Divine purposes will be anxious to serve the Lord, the Truth and the brethren. And such from time to time will be specially sent into the Vineyard, and will be specially used of the Lord for the assistance of his consecrated people in various ways.

The word "penny" here is from the Greek *denarius*, a silver coin of about 17 cents value. But the value of money has so changed in recent years that today a laborer's wage in proportion to other things would be considerable more. The *denarius* was the Roman standard of that time, as the *lira* is the Italian standard, the *mark* the German standard, the *franc* the French standard, the *shilling* the English standard and the *dollar* the American standard. It is worthy of note that in one of the fine old English cathedrals the records show that its excellent chisel work, superior to anything of today, cost "A penny a day and a bag of meal for each laborer." The parable of our lesson is evidently intended to teach that God will give all that he has agreed to all who labor—that he may in generosity give more than he has stipulated.

At the close of the day, we read, those first hired murmured against their lord. We cannot suppose that any who would be counted worthy of a share in the Kingdom would murmur against the Giver of all Good. The rewarding is to be expected at the close of the harvest day and the murmuring may be expected there also. The "penny" or reward would thus seem to be something of the joys, blessings, honors and privileges of God's people in the present life, at the close of this age. Those who murmur that they do not receive a sufficiency of honor and distinction and of Divine acknowledgment will be thereby proving themselves unfit for the future service "beyond the veil," as members of the Church in glory. This would seem to point a warning to those of God's people who have been long in the Truth and who have had great privileges of service, that if they murmur against the blessings and rewards coming to them, it will mean that they were laboring for the reward merely and not appreciating the privilege of being laborers with Christ and with the Father; it would imply that they had failed to enter into the spirit of the wonderful privileges granted them of serving the Lord, the Truth and the brethren. The right spirit, the proper interest in the Father's work and in the brethren should prompt all to rejoice with every new laborer and to be glad that all such should receive of the Lord's favors, blessings and enlightenment as fully, as freely, as themselves. Surely any who have not this spirit have not the spirit of Christ on this subject.

The general lesson is that God is so just, so generous, so bountiful, in his dealings that all those who appreciate matters from his standpoint will rejoice in the blessings which overflow upon others. A failure to appreciate the Lord's generosity was one cause of stumbling to the Jews eighteen centuries ago—they were offended that the Gospel message should go out beyond them to the Gentiles. Similarly today some Christian people are stumbling over the fact that the Word of God shows that, whereas Divine blessings are now confined to the Church, "the elect," the servants and handmaidens of the Gospel Age, yet the time is near at hand when "God will pour out his spirit upon all flesh," and when all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

All who have the privilege of bearing the labor and heat of the day in the Lord's service must be glad of the privilege, in order to be worthy of participation in the Kingdom. Thus some who seem to be first in their promptness to respond to the Lord's call for laborers may be amongst the last to receive special blessings of grace and Truth and this may serve as a special test upon them—as respects their loyalty, and the motives which actuated them in engaging in the Vineyard work.

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11:33 A. M. daily.
6:48 P. M. daily except Sunday
11:48 P. M. daily.

Trains to and from Suffolk Branch.

Arrives at Elizabeth City Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12:25 P. M. returning leaves same days at 3:15 P. M. for Suffolk and local stations.

SPECIAL NOTICE

South bound train leaving Elizabeth City daily at 11:33 A. M. makes connection at Washington for all stations on the Raleigh Division, Greenville, Wilson, Raleigh etc. makes connection at New Bern for all points on the Beaufort Division, Goldsboro, Kinston, Morehead City, Beaufort, etc.

South bound train, night express leaving Elizabeth City daily at 11:18 P. M. makes connection at Wilson for Wilmington, Goldsboro, A. C. L. both north and south bound, makes all connections at Raleigh Southern Railway, S. A. L. Ry. and R. & S.—P. R. R.

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