


# A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

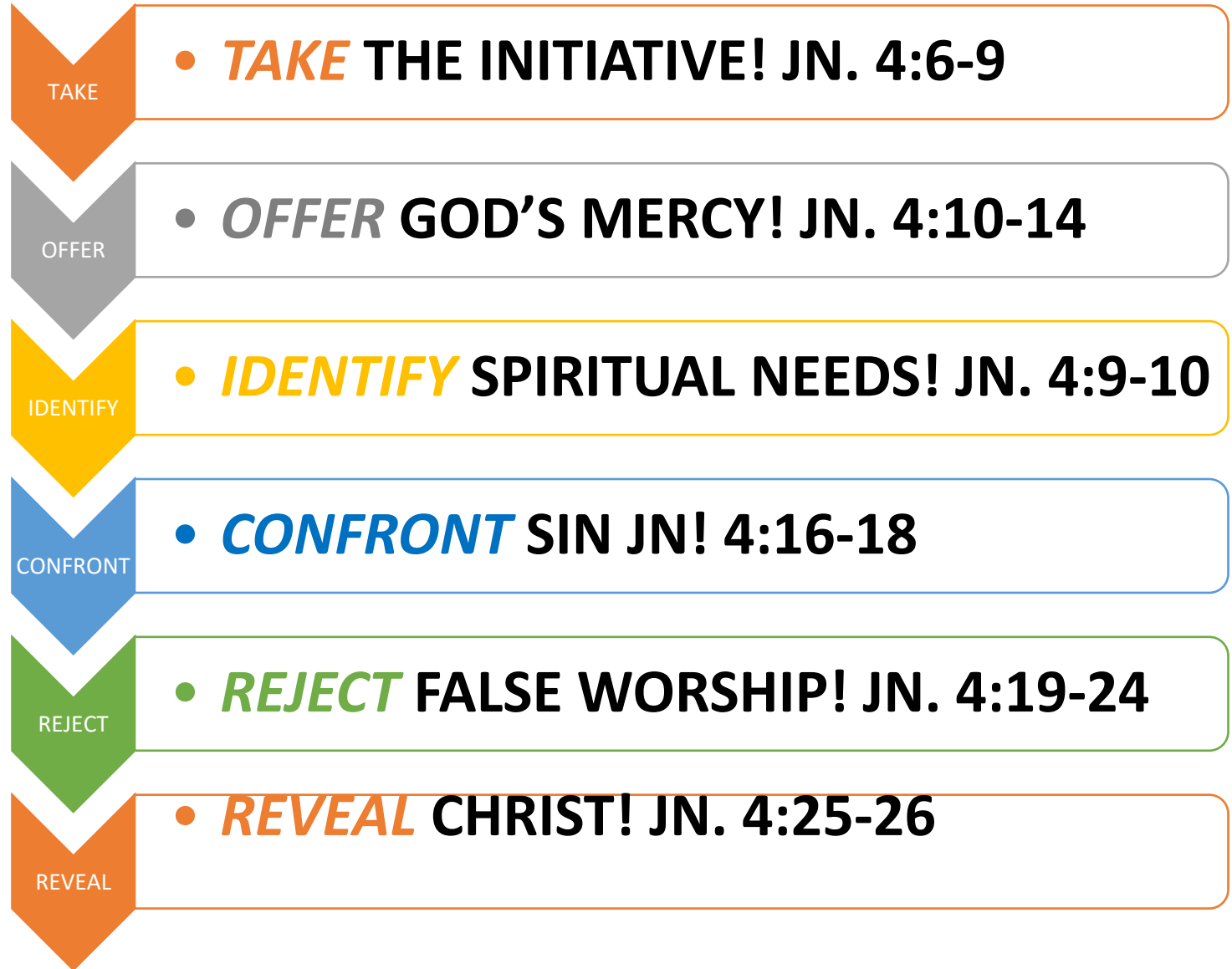


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF  
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A  
TREE OF LIFE,  
AND HE WHO IS WISE  
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES  
FOR  
BIBLICAL  
*EVANGELISM*  
FOUND IN  
JOHN 4, “THE  
WOMAN AT  
THE WELL.”**



I. THE HIGH COST OF *REJECTING* GOD.

II. REJECTING GOD'S *RESTRAINTS*.

1. THE *CONSCIENCE*.

2. THE *FAMILY*.

3. THE *GOVERNMENT*.

4. THE *CHURCH*.

III. IS GOD EVER *UNJUST*?

IV. APPARENT *INJUSTICE*.

V. JUSTICE VS. *GRACE*?

VI. A LESSON ABOUT *JUSTICE* AND *GRACE*.

A. THE *POINT* OF THE PARABLE OF THE *VINEYARD*.

B. THE *PURPOSE* OF THE PARABLE OF THE *VINEYARD*.

C. THE *PRINCIPLES* OF THE PARABLE OF THE *VINEYARD*.

# THE *PURPOSE* OF THE PARABLE OF THE *VINEYARD*

- ***CHRIST'S PARABLES*** were never delivered in a vacuum. They were always provoked by the circumstances, discussions, and debates that surrounded Him. That kind of contextual background information is especially critical concerning the parable of the ***VINEYARD (MATT. 20:1–15)***.
- While the story itself delivers ***A PROFOUND LESSON ABOUT THE GRACE OF GOD***, we don't feel the full weight of Christ's words until we consider their immediate context.

- While the **RISEN CHRIST** was meeting with them (**HIS DISCIPLE'S**) as a group, preparing them for Pentecost, they asked, **“LORD, IS IT AT THIS TIME YOU ARE RESTORING THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?”** (ACTS 1:6).
- **NOW THAT CHRIST HAD SHOWN HIMSELF TRIUMPHANT EVEN OVER DEATH, THEY WERE HOPING FINALLY TO GET THEIR CROWNS AND THRONES AND PLACES OF HONOR.**
- At the end of MATTHEW 19, when PETER asked, **“WHAT THEN WILL THERE BE FOR US?”** JESUS answered by addressing their thirst for **SPECIAL HONOR**. He reassured them that they would indeed have places of honor in the kingdom. **BUT HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT EVERYONE IN THE KINGDOM WOULD BE HONORED:**

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- ***“TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THAT YOU WHO HAVE FOLLOWED ME, IN THE REGENERATION WHEN THE SON OF MAN WILL SIT ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE, YOU ALSO SHALL SIT UPON TWELVE THRONES, JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. 29, AND EVERYONE WHO HAS LEFT HOUSES OR BROTHERS OR SISTERS OR FATHER OR MOTHER OR CHILDREN OR FARMS FOR MY NAME’S SAKE, WILL RECEIVE MANY TIMES AS MUCH, AND WILL INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE.”***

**(MATT. 19:28–29)**

- It is intriguing how little effect the lesson of this parable had on the *twelve disciples*. They were so **OBSESSED** with the idea of **SPECIAL HONOR** that even after they heard this parable, they continued scheming and jockeying for **FIRST PLACE**. In fact, the very next episode in Matthew's account records this:
- Then the **MOTHER OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE** came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, **"WHAT DO YOU WISH?" SHE SAID TO HIM, "COMMAND THAT IN YOUR KINGDOM THESE TWO SONS OF MINE MAY SIT ONE ON YOUR RIGHT AND ONE ON YOUR LEFT."** (MATT. 20:20–21)
- **MATTHEW** (one of the Twelve himself) goes on to say, **"AND HEARING THIS, THE TEN BECAME INDIGNANT WITH THE TWO BROTHERS"** (MATT. 20:24). They were annoyed because they all craved the **INSIDE SEATS!**

- This became a constant source of bickering among the Twelve. Even in the Upper Room on the night of Jesus' betrayal, it was Jesus who washed the others' feet, because all of them desired to be considered "**GREAT,**" and foot washing was a duty of the lowest servant (**JN. 13:4–17**). Later that same evening, right after Jesus broke the bread and consecrated the wine, "**THERE AROSE . . . A DISPUTE AMONG THEM AS TO WHICH ONE OF THEM WAS REGARDED TO BE GREATEST**" (**LK. 22:24**).
- So, although the **PARABLE OF THE LABORERS** was given to confront the selfish, envious, confused perceptions of the disciples, it took a while to sink in. But Christ's lesson eventually penetrated the disciples' hearts and permeated their lives—**LIVES THAT WOULD GO ON TO BE MARKED BY SELFLESS SERVITUDE FOR CHRIST'S CHURCH.**

# THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

- **WHAT ABOUT APPLICATION?** That's a common question from people who want more, or a how to at the end of a sermon. Those pointers can certainly help us in our day-to-day lives. But they can also narrow our understanding of the implications of a biblical passage and bypass the Spirit's work in applying those truths to each believer's specific circumstances.
- **THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (MATT. 20:1–15)** is full of such *transformational* truths—both explicitly and implicitly. And many of them are central to the gospel and salvation.
- The parable teaches, first of all, that **SALVATION IS NOT EARNED. ETERNAL LIFE IS A GIFT THAT GOD GIVES PURELY BY GRACE ACCORDING TO HIS SOVEREIGN WILL.**

- But the parable's most obvious lesson is that ***GOD GIVES THE SAME ABUNDANT GRACE TO EVERYONE WHO FOLLOWS CHRIST.*** Tax collectors, harlots, beggars, and blind people will share in the same eternal life as those who have served God all their lives; those who have preached the gospel to thousands; and those who were martyred for Christ. ***AND THANKFULLY, HE DOES NOT GIVE ANY BELIEVER WHAT WE TRULY DESERVE.***
- When we get to heaven, we'll all live in the Father's house (**JN. 14:2**). We are all ***"HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST,"*** and we will all be glorified together (**ROM. 8:17**). We don't each receive a part of heaven; we all get the whole!
- Elsewhere Scripture does indicate that in addition to full ***redemption*** from sin and ***everlasting life***, ***THERE WILL BE DIFFERING REWARDS THE LORD IS PLEASED TO GIVE HIS CHILDREN FOR THEIR FAITHFULNESS.***

- AT THE **JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**, **“IF ANY MAN’S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN’S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS”** (1 COR. 3:14–15). So, some will **SUFFER LOSS** and some will **BE REWARDED**, depending on the **ENDURING QUALITY** of their work.

- BUT (REV. 4:10–11) PICTURES WHAT BECOMES OF THOSE **REWARDS**:

**“THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS WILL FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND WILL WORSHIP HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER AND EVER, AND WILL CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE, SAYING, 11, “WORTHY ARE YOU, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD, TO RECEIVE GLORY AND HONOR AND POWER; FOR YOU CREATED ALL THINGS, AND BECAUSE OF YOUR WILL THEY EXISTED, AND WERE CREATED.”**

- **REWARDS**, however, are not the issue in the *parable of the laborers*. **JESUS** is teaching a lesson about the **ABUNDANT, ETERNAL LIFE** that belongs to **ALL** who embrace Him as Lord and Savior. **HEAVEN** itself is not a reward to be earned by hard labor; it is a **GRACIOUS GIFT**, given in full abundance to all believers equally. **“GOD IS NOT ONE TO SHOW PARTIALITY”** (ACTS 10:34), and **“THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, THERE IS NEITHER SLAVE NOR FREE MAN, THERE IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE; FOR YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.”** (GAL. 3:28).
- Some important **SECONDARY PRINCIPLES** are also illustrated in the **PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD**. For example, we see in the imagery that **IT IS GOD WHO INITIATES SALVATION**. In the parable, the *landowner went out to find the laborers* in the marketplace of the world and brought them into his vineyard.  
**“GOD DOES THE SEEKING AND THE SAVING.”**

- **OUR SALVATION IS ENTIRELY HIS WORK**, and that's the main reason we have **NO RIGHT** to make demands or set limits on what *He gives* to someone else. **IT IS GOD'S PREROGATIVE AND HIS ALONE TO SHOW MERCY TO WHOMEVER HE CHOOSES.**

1. **GOD CONTINUES TO CALL WORKERS INTO HIS KINGDOM.**

- All through human history and in every phase of the human lifespan, God is calling people into His kingdom. It's an ongoing work. **JESUS** said in **(JN. 9:4)**, **"WE MUST WORK THE WORKS OF HIM WHO SENT ME AS LONG AS IT IS DAY; NIGHT IS COMING WHEN NO ONE CAN WORK."** Our parable illustrates what He meant. **REDEMPTION CONTINUES UNTIL THE JUDGMENT COMES.**

**AND THAT TIME IS COMING!**

## 2. GOD CALLS SINNERS, NOT THE SELF-SUFFICIENT.

- He brings into His vineyard those who *know their own need*, not people who think they are **“RICH, AND HAVE BECOME WEALTHY, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING,’ AND [THEY] DO NOT KNOW THAT [THEY] ARE WRETCHED AND MISERABLE AND POOR AND BLIND AND NAKED” (REV. 3:17).**
- **THE MEN GATHERED IN THE MARKETPLACE** looking for work were *desperate*, fully aware of their need. They were *poor* and *meek*, devoid of resources, begging for work—representing the **POOR IN SPIRIT**. There was nothing complacent or self-satisfied about them—especially those who had come to the end of the day and still had nothing. That’s exactly the kind of person Christ came to seek and to save. **“IT IS NOT THOSE WHO ARE HEALTHY WHO NEED A PHYSICIAN, BUT THOSE WHO ARE SICK; [CHRIST] DID NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS” (MK. 2:17; cf. also 1 COR. 1:26–31).**

### **3. GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN THE OUTWORKING OF SALVATION.**

- Why does He wait till the last hour to call some? Why didn't the landowner hire everyone in the marketplace on his first trip there? The parable doesn't reveal the reasons. Neither do we know why God saves people at different stages of life. **HE SOVEREIGNLY DETERMINES BOTH WHEN AND WHOM HE WILL CALL.**
- But all those who are called know they are needy and are willing to work. **AND THEIR WILLINGNESS IS A RESULT, NOT THE CAUSE, OF GOD'S GRACE TO THEM.**

**"FOR IT IS GOD WHO IS AT WORK IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE" (PHIL. 2:13).**

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#### 4. GOD *KEEPS HIS PROMISE*.

- The **LANDOWNER** told the first group he would give each of them a **denarius**, and he did. He kept his promise to those he hired later too.
- He said he would give them what was **RIGHT**—and what he gave them was more than generous. Likewise, God never gives less than He promises, and often **HE GIVES:**

***“FAR MORE ABUNDANTLY BEYOND ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK”***  
**(EPH. 3:20).**

## 5. ***GOD ALWAYS GIVES MORE THAN WE DESERVE.***

***“EVERY GOOD THING GIVEN AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, COMING DOWN FROM THE FATHER” (JAM. 1:17).***

- ***AND EVERYTHING WE RECEIVE OTHER THAN ETERNAL DAMNATION IS MORE THAN WE DESERVE.*** So, there is no place for Christians to resent God’s grace toward others or to think He has somehow defrauded us. ***THAT VERY IDEA IS FULL OF BLASPHEMY.*** In fact, that was the spirit of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. He deeply resented his father’s grace toward the prodigal.

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## 6. GOD IS GRACIOUS, AND WE SHOULD ALWAYS CELEBRATE HIS GRACE.

- The *parable of the laborers* wonderfully **exalts** the *principle of grace*. My own response to this parable is profound **THANKFULNESS**, for there are many who have been more faithful than I, worked harder than I, labored longer than I, and suffered under greater trials. There are perhaps others who have worked less, fewer years, with less diligence.
- **BUT GRACE ABOUND**S EVEN TO THE **CHIEF OF SINNERS**, AND **GOD SAVES ALL OF US TO THE UTMOST** (HEB. 7:25). That gives Him glory, and that certainly is a reason to praise Him—and rejoice along with all who have received such grace.