

# “The Bible is History and His Story”

Luke 20:9-20

On Monday morning, I watched a portion of a debate between three self-proclaimed intellectuals (two of whom were avowed atheists, and one who has a deep appreciation for the Biblical stories – but does not believe the Bible is actual history. He sees God as a concept of the human ideal. He was basically a Deist). And for him, the Old Testament was the “story” of the rise of Israel to power, and as soon as they achieved power, they became corrupt and they plunge into chaos (which is a form of hell). And they do this over and over again because they keep ignoring the ideal (that is God) and trust in the state (society, politics, etc.).

Then in the New Testament, the ideal, the perfect man comes to earth and demonstrates that the ideal man (Christ) teaches us that the individual acting in love and pursuing truth leads us to a better place (heaven).

That attitude about God is much like what we here in our Gospel reading today. The chief priests sought to lay hands on Him . . . for they perceived that He had told this parable against them. The chief priests are Sadducees who do not believe in the resurrection, or angels, and God, for them, is more of a concept than a reality. These pseudo-intellectuals have been around forever. Don't get too worked up about them.

What we actually find in the Bible is authentic, recorded, specific history of God's interaction with His people. And the archaeological finds of

the last 100 years in particular have been resoundingly supportive of biblical history being history. And Jesus reminds all the people, especially these chief priests, of this history. In the Old Testament, the Vineyard is always a reference to Israel, and it belongs to God – and He is not just a concept. So He tells of the servants (the prophets) who were sent. Literally, they were “apostled”. An apostle is “one who is sent.”

God’s prophets are sent. And the people know what happened to the prophets. The text literally says the tenants of the vineyard “unapostled” them. That is, they rejected the authority of the ones who were sent by God. And all the people listening know that is exactly what happened. They know their history.

The prophets were mocked, were threatened, were chased out, and had to flee for their lives. You don’t hear of it specifically in Scripture (although there is reference to it in the book of Hebrews), but it was common knowledge among the Jews that the prophet Isaiah was stuffed into a log and the log was sawn in two.

This, among other accounts, is why we heard Jesus say three weeks ago, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you.” It was a commonly understood history. All the people knew what God had done for them and the promises He had made. And the people knew how their forefathers had treated the prophets. And prophets like John the Baptist were still being treated this way.

The people knew what Jesus was saying. The meaning of this parable was completely clear. And Jesus gets to the end and says, “What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” And “when they heard this,

they said, ‘Surely not!’” They knew exactly what Jesus was talking about, and they knew the history.

The Jews wanted to be a part of God’s history, but they didn’t want the real story. They wanted a smoothed over, feel-good, everybody in our land gets to go to heaven, and God would never punish us and give His favor to the Gentiles. “Surely not!!”

As we dealt with the prodigal ancient world headbanger last week, when the apostle Paul went out into the Gentile world, it was the tattooed, foul-mouthed pagans that received the Gospel and were invited into the Vineyard, because we are the new Israel. We are the children of Abraham – not by birth, but by faith.

It is good to be a part of God’s history. It is good to be a part of “His story.” The story is all about Jesus. You are here today because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. All through this Lenten Season, on Wednesday nights, we have been focusing on how the Son of God was sent into the world as the Seed of the woman, takes on flesh, (Behold the Man!) and reverses all of the curses brought on by Adam’s sin.

You cannot tell the real story of the Bible without the real people of the Old Testament continually being pointed toward the coming atoning sacrifice of the Suffering Servant. And you certainly cannot tell the real story of the New Testament without blatantly emphasizing the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ our Lord. There is a reason that God’s church around the world spends 14 weeks in the Lenten and Easter seasons. We only spend 2-3 weeks on Christmas (I know there are four weeks of Advent); But this is the really important time of the year.

Our world wants to dismiss Lent and the suffering of Christ for our sin. Our world wants Easter to last for one day and to be about bunnies

and eggs. Our world wants to do to the Son of God and the ones who have been sent with authority what the tenants of the vineyard did to the son of the owner and the sent ones – the “apostled” ones. The tenants acted the way they did, because they did not recognize the owner of the vineyard as having any real power or authority to punish them. They dismissed him as being nothing – as if He is just a concept.

Our world has treated Christ and His church – the “one, holy, apostolic church” – this way. God, the owner of the Vineyard is viewed as being off in a distant place looking down from on high, but not really having any real power over my life, and certainly not having any authority to punish or hold me accountable for breaking His will. “A loving God would never do that” – so we are told by the masses in our culture. This is called Deism and is the most common view of God in our culture today. In surveys concerning beliefs about God, Deism is much more commonly held than salvation by grace through faith alone in the broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord.

It is unfortunate, but a false story about God has been told and retold. Just make sure you are hearing the real story. Like the tenants in the vineyard, there are many who want a smoothed over, feel-good, everybody in our land gets to go to heaven, and a loving God would never punish – that is an unreal, “unapostled” story.

Christ is our cornerstone. He has been rejected. But His broken body alone; His shed blood alone is what gives you life. Rejoice that you are the object of God’s love in His story. Amen.