



Gutenberg College Summer Institute 2015
REUNION: Tanakh and the Gospel of Matthew

Talk 18: Background to Psalm 118:22-23 and Matthew 21:42
Earle Craig

This PDF contains material compiled and distributed by Earle Craig at Gutenberg College's 2015 Summer Institute.

Matthew 21:23-45

23 Then, after he entered the temple, **the chief priests and the elders of the people** approached him while he was teaching, and said, “**By what authority are you doing these things**, and who gave you this authority?”

24 Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which, if you tell me, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 “**From where did the baptism of John come, from heaven or from men?**”

But they were deliberating among themselves, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ then he will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’

26 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the crowd, because they all consider him a prophet.”

27 So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.”

And he said to them, “Then I will not tell you by what authority I do these things.

28 “But what do you think? A man had two children, and he came to the first and said, ‘Child, go work today in the vineyard.’

29 “And he answered, ‘I will not.’ But, afterwards, **he changed his mind and went.**

30 “Then, he came to the other child and said the same thing. And he answered, ‘Yes, sir,’ but he did not go.

31 “Which of the two **did the will of the father?**”

They said, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, the tax-collectors and evil women are entering into the **Kingdom of God** before you.

32 “For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax-collectors and the evil women did believe him. When you saw this, you did not **change your minds** afterwards in order to believe him.

33 “Listen to another **parable**. A man was a landowner, who planted a vineyard, surrounded it with a wall, dug a wine press in it, built a tower, rented it out to farmers, and took a trip <Isaiah 5:1,2>.

34 “When the season of the fruits drew near, **he sent his slaves to the farmers to receive his fruits.**

35 “The farmers took his slaves, and one they beat, another they killed, and another they stoned.

36 “Again, he sent another group of slaves, larger than the first, and they did the same thing to them.

37 “Then afterward, **he sent his son** to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

38 “But when the farmers saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the **heir**. Come, let us kill him and seize his **inheritance**.’

39 “So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40 “Therefore, when the vineyard owner comes, what will he do to those farmers?”

41 They said to him, “**He will utterly destroy those evil men**, and he will rent out the vineyard to other farmers, who will pay back the fruits to him in their seasons.”

42 **Jesus said to them, “Did you ever read in the scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the corner stone? This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes <Psalm 118:22,23>.’**

43 “Therefore, I say to you, that **the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you** and given to a people who ‘do its fruits.’

44 “And he who falls on this stone will be broken into pieces, and on whomever it falls, it will crush him.”

45 After **the chief priests and the Pharisees** heard his parables, they understood that he was talking about them. But when they sought to seize him, they were afraid of the crowd, because they considered him to be a prophet.

Psalm 118

1 Acknowledge (יְדַהֵב) (ἐξομολογεῖσθε) to Yahweh that He is good, because His loyal love (יְדַהֵב) is into perpetuity (לְעוֹלָם).

2 Let Israel say, "His loyal love is into perpetuity."

3 Let the house of Aaron say, "His loyal love is into perpetuity."

4 Let those who fear Yahweh say, "His loyal love is into perpetuity."

5 From a stressful situation I called out to Yah. Yah answered in a big place.

6 Yahweh is for me. I will not fear. What can *adam* (אָדָם) (ἄνθρωπος) do to me?

7 Yahweh is for me. He is among those who are helping me. As for me, I will look upon those who hate me.

8 It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to trust in *adam* (אָדָם) (ἐπ' ἄνθρωπον).

9 It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to trust in the magnificent.

10 All the *goyeem* (גוֹיִם) (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) have surrounded me. In the name of Yahweh I will surely cut them off.

11 They surrounded me. Yes, they surrounded me. In the name of Yahweh I will surely cut them off.

12 They surrounded me like bees. They were put out like a fire of thorns. In the name of Yahweh I will surely cut them off.

13 You pushed me violently into falling, but Yahweh helped me.

14 Yah is my refuge and strength. He has become *yeshua* for me (יְהוָה לִי יְשׁוּעָה) (καὶ ἐγένετό μοι εἰς σωτηρίαν).

15 The sound of joyful shouting and *yeshua* (יְשׁוּעָה) (καὶ σωτηρίας) is in the tents of the righteous.

16 The right hand of Yahweh is being exalted. The right hand of Yahweh operates competently.

17 I will not die, but I will live. And I will proclaim the actions of Yah.

18 Yah has instructed me diligently, but He has not given me up to death.

19 Open the gates of righteousness for me. I will acknowledge Yah (יְהוָה) (ἐξομολογήσομαι τῷ κυρίῳ).

20 This is the gate to Yahweh. The righteous enter by means of it.

21 I will acknowledge You (יְהוָה) (ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι), because You answered me, and You have become for me *yeshua* (יְהוָה לִי יְשׁוּעָה) (καὶ ἐγένου μοι εἰς σωτηρίαν).

22 **The stone which the builders rejected is the cornerstone** (הַבֵּן שֶׁבָּרְחוּ) (κεφαλὴν γωνίας).

23 This is from Yahweh. It is wonderful in our eyes.

24 This is the day that Yahweh has made. Let us rejoice and delight in it.

25 Please, Yahweh save! Please, please, Yahweh, cause success! Please!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh. We have blessed you [pl.] from the house of Yahweh.

27 Yahweh is God, and He has caused there to be light for us. Bind the feast in the clouds until the horns of the altar.

28 You are my God, and I acknowledge You (יְהוָה) (καὶ ἐξομολογήσομαί σοι). I exalt You.

29 Admit to Yahweh that He is good, because His loyal love is into perpetuity.

Some Important Interpretative Issues in Matthew 21:23-45 and Psalm 118

1. What were the Jewish leaders hoping to accomplish by asking Jesus by what authority he was doing these things (v. 23)?
2. What were “these things” to which the Jewish leaders were referring?
3. What does the response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus’ question reveal about them (vs. 25-27)?
4. What is a parable?
5. What is the relationship between the response of the two children in the first parable to the response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus and of the tax-collectors and evil women to John the Baptist?
6. What is the relationship between the vineyard owner, his slaves, and his son to the various people alluded to and involved in this conversation with Jesus?
7. What does the response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus’ question after the vineyard parable reveal about them (v. 31)?
8. What is the Kingdom of God to which Jesus is referring in v. 43?
9. In what sense do the Jewish leaders currently “have” the Kingdom of God, and in what sense will it get “taken away from” them (v. 43)?
10. What does it mean to “do the fruits” of the Kingdom of God (v. 43)?
11. What does Jesus mean in v. 44?
12. What does it mean for the crowd to consider Jesus to be a prophet (v. 45)?
13. Who wrote Psalm 118?
14. What is the Psalmist’s point in Psalm 118?
15. What was the Psalmist’s stressful situation (v. 5)?
16. How does the Psalmist know that Yahweh is “for” him (v. 6)?
17. Who exactly are the *goyeem* who have been hostile towards the Psalmist (v. 10)?
18. What kind of *yeshua*/salvation is the Psalmist expecting from Yahweh (vs. 14,15)?
19. To what “gates of righteousness” is the Psalmist referring (v. 19)?
20. Who are the builders, what are they building, and what is the stone that they have rejected (v. 22)?
21. What is “this” that is “from Yahweh” (v. 23)?

22. Who is “he who comes in the name of Yahweh” (v. 26)?
23. What does the Psalmist mean in v. 27?
24. What in Jesus’ mind is the relationship between the various people involved in the conversation with him in Matthew 21 and the elements/people in Psalm 118 and specifically in the quote from Psalm 118:22, such that the quote helps him say what he wants the Jewish leaders to understand about him and the Kingdom of God?

Typical Characteristics of the Psalms

1. Psalms are a kind of Hebrew poetry that was usually put to music and sung by either individuals or groups of people as a form of worshiping God.
2. Instead of rhyming sounds...

Humpty Dumpty sat on a *wall*; Humpty Dumpty had a great *fall*.

Hebrew poetry rhymes ideas either in a manner where the ideas express the same thing –

Psa. 19:1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Psa. 19:2 Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.

Psa. 19:3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard (NAS95).

Or in a manner where the ideas express opposite things –

Psa. 1:6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish (NAS95).

3. Sometimes the Psalm includes before or after it the name of its author and a short statement of either its purpose or the occasion on which it was written.

Psa. 3:0 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son (NAS95).

Biblical/Historical Context of Psalm 118

1. From The Expositor's Bible Commentary –

Psalm 118 is the last of 6 psalms/songs of praise to God called the “Egyptian Hallel.”

The Hallel [הלל] [Psalm 113:1 – יהי יהוה יְהוָה] psalms are found in three separate collections: the “Egyptian Hallel” (113–118), the “Great Hallel” (120–136), and the concluding Hallel psalms (146–150). The Hallel psalms had a significant part in the praise (hallel) of the Lord. The Egyptian Hallel and the Great Hallel (most of which are pilgrimage [i.e., to Jerusalem for the three annual feasts of Unleavened Bread (Passover and the Exodus), Weeks (Pentecost and the harvest), and Tabernacles (Booths and God’s provision in the Sinai desert)] songs: 120–134) were sung during the annual feasts (Lev 23; Num 10:10). The Egyptian Hallel psalms received a special place in the Passover liturgy, as 113–114 were recited or sung before and 115–118 after the festive meal (cf. Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26). The concluding Hallel psalms (146–150) were incorporated in the daily prayers in the synagogue after the destruction of the temple (A.D. 70).