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Parables: The Sovereignty of God

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"Sovereign - One who possesses supreme authority." - Funk and Wagnalls

"Sovereignty is the quality of having independent authority..." – Wikipedia

Let us consider one parable that we will classify as a "sovereignty" parable.
Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

The setting (Matthew 19:16-30): Jesus told a rich young ruler, "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me." The young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Peter, hearing this, asked, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?" Jesus explained that they would be rewarded greatly. The twelve would receive great authority in the regeneration (The New Testament Age, cf. Titus 3:5), when Jesus sat upon His throne (cf. Acts 2:30-33; Hebrews 1:8). Moreover, eternal life awaits everyone who follows Me.

The parable (Matthew 20:1-16): A landowner needed workers for his vineyard. (1) He went early to the marketplace, the place that day-laborers would gather to be hired. He hired some for the agreed upon price of one denarius. (2) He decided to hire more at about 9 a.m.. He did not promise a certain amount. He just said, "Whatever is right I will give you." (3) He hired more at 12 noon. (4) Still more were hired at 3 p.m.. (5) Finally at 5 p.m. the last group was hired. He asked this final group, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" They answered, "Because no one hired us." They were not unemployed due to laziness. They simply had not been hired. He hired them agreeing to pay them what was right, but no specific wage was promised.

The workday ended at 6 p.m.. The laborers were called to receive their pay. The landowner paid all one denarius. The first workers thought that this was unfair. They said, "These last men have worked only one hour and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day." The landowner replied, "I am doing no one wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?.. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?"

The application: (1) The vineyard of the Lord is not a place of idleness. (2) God is sovereign. He will reward as he sees fit. (3) One does not need to be a "charter member" or an apostle to be rewarded greatly. (4) Coming in at the last hour is better than not coming in at all. (5) Dr. Ben Carson commented, "I think the point of the parable is that you should do your own work in a responsible manner, be satisfied if you are paid according to the agreed amount, and not worry about what someone else is getting" (America the Beautiful, p. 73). I think this is the main point. Peter may have wanted to compare the disciples' reward with what was offered to the rich young ruler. Paul said that the crown of righteousness is "not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).