

THE GREAT WENCHOSTER BIBLE

Matthew 21: 23-32

23. And it came to pass, when Jesus was come into the temple He went into the choir stalls and leaned against a misericord of a rather naughty prophet of old, and began to speak to those around Him. And behold, numerous worshippers came near to hear Him. And the vergers, clutching their rods in consternation, did report this unto the priests, and the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto Him as He was teaching, and said, Ehem! Excuse me! Yes, you in the rather nice gown. By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? and what translation of the scriptures are ye using? and tell us, is it the Authorised Version, or the Living Bible which we reject utterly, for it is an anathema. Although we do like the pictures. And the useful maps in the appendix. But that's beside the point.
24. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Yeah, the maps are great, aren't they. But now - I also will ask you one thing. One thing will I ask, and the asking shall be of one thing. And of the which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. And they got all excited – verily, all of a-quiver – and did prepare themselves to answer, and some did wonder if there would be prizes if they got the right answer. For they knew that theological points mean prizes.
25. And Jesus said, Okay. Here is the question. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? For many of you did go out unto the Jordan to witness it. Come on! Whence? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? And it might have been, but it was all a bit irregular, wasn't it? No godparents for a start. And when were the preparation classes?
26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And an hirsute and slightly odourous one, at that. And some did suggest a show of hands to vote upon the answer, and some the placing of coloured balls in a jar, but they could not come to an agreement. And many sulked, but some doubted.
27. And so they answered Jesus, and said, You got us there, rabbi. We are an bit stumped. We cannot tell. Some say from heaven and some from men, but most of us wish to abstain. Plus, it's getting near lunchtime. And He said unto them, Typical! Neither then tell I you by what authority I do these things.
28. And He continued, But what think ye? A certain man had two sons. And the disciples did wag their heads in understanding, and Nathanael did say, We have heard this one, it's a good one. And Jesus said, Nay, thou hast not, for thou hast not read Q. For this is not about wages or becoming like unto a prodigal. Pin your ears back. [1] The man he came to the first of his sons, and said, Son, thou art an hairy man. Go and work today in my vineyard, for there are grapes to be plucked.
29. He answered and said, I will not, for I have a meeting with a fair maid from Bethlehem who hath promised me a pleasant time. But when he had learnt that his brother hath also visited the maid he repented, and went into the vineyard. And plucked until the sun had set.
30. And the man came to the second son and said, Son, thou art a smooth man. Go and work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I go, sir: but he went not, for the maid from Bethlehem had enticed him with the promise of favours and sweetmeats. (Let the reader understand.) And lo! He did not pluck.
31. And Jesus asked them, Whether of the twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first, although to be honest we can't blame the second. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots, even the maidens from Bethlehem, go into the kingdom of God before you. And they did mutter and were disquieted, though some wondered if what

was said about Bethlehem maidens was true. But the kingdom sounded heavenly, what with publicans and the rest.

32. And Jesus concluded, John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots, albeit keeping upwind, believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. At least I think I got that right. And suddenly He did depart from the temple. And James and John did ask Him for details of the maiden, but He answered them not.

Notes:

[1] Some manuscripts contain “Let he who has ears to hear let him hear.” But most scholars dismiss this as a later interpolation.