

# The Parable of the Wicked Husbandman

Matthew 21:33-46

---

## INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus exposed the Pharisees by the following actions:
  - He drove the money changers out of the temple. Matthew 12:13-15.
  - Jesus cursed the fig tree, showing the power of prayer and the judgement on the nations.
2. The reason for the parable
  - Jesus' authority was challenged
  - Jesus' testimony and questions about whether John's baptism was from heaven or of men. They refused to answer.

Jesus sought to expose the Jewish rulers even more. No doubt their prestige was suffering in the eyes of the crowd. They could see that Christ had turned the tables against them. Jesus was seeking to make sure they understood these truths which revealed their hypocrisy as men who were hollow shams. Now a more condemning parable exposed them as murderers.

This parable is:

- A great one covering their refusal to acknowledge God's messengers throughout their history as a nation.
- Amazing in its prophetic scope.

“ The Scribes and Pharisees had tried to impeach the Saviour, only to find themselves in turn impeached of Him. They discounted Him as the Son of God, having all authority. Matthew 28:18-20, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

John 1:12, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”* He now, in a further condemnatory parable set forth:

- Who he was! – the Saviour, the Messiah.
- Who sent Him.
- The death he was to die at the hands of His foes.
- Strongly, he exposed a breach of sacred trust in a parabolic presentation of Israel's past history and the future punishment for the betrayal of such a trust.
- This parable is found in the first three gospels (Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19), with Luke adding that it was addressed to the people as well as to the chief priests and elders.

## **A. THE BETRAYAL OF THE VINE**

In this parable Jesus explained the way in which his people had treated the work of God badly;– they betrayed Jehovah who trusted them with the vineyard (the work of His kingdom). God was likened to the owner – a house holder, a father, The Lord of the vineyard. It was a perfect vineyard. We read of Israel and the vineyard. Psalm 80:8-15, Isaiah 5:1-7, Ezekiel 15:2-3.

The vine was the noblest of all plants, needing the utmost care, but repaying it with beautiful fruit. Israel, as an honoured vine, was hedged round about by its Owner, which can be looked upon as the Law with all its ordinances. Through such (Deuteronomy 7:8; Ephesians 2:14), the Jewish nation was separated from other nations because of the peculiar missions she was to exercise.

The digging of the press, referring to the provision made to receive the juices of the grape as it flowed out in rich abundance, can illustrate the true fruits of piety through the Law.<sup>1</sup>

## **B. THE TOWER**

Erected so that the servant could watch the vineyard, so that the crop would be safe. There was the danger of thieves breaking through to plunder the fruit. The Lord, the owner of the vineyard, guarded, preserved and watched over His ancient people. The covenant keeping God.

## **C. THE PLANTING OF THE VINEYARD**

Planted by the Lord – the house holder. Patiently tended by the Lord who promised his watch-care and who had a plan for the nation. Unfortunately, those

---

<sup>1</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p225

who were to care for it failed over and over again. The vineyard, however, was rented out by the Lord to husbandmen:- the leaders of Israel who were supposed to represent the spiritual needs of God’s people. The chief princes of Israel had failed to maintain the vineyard.

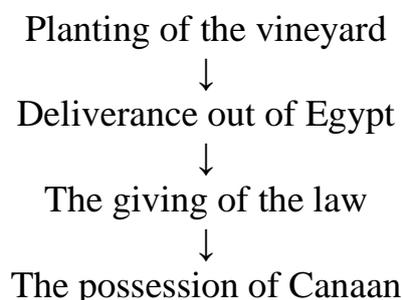
Jeremiah 33:18, *“Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.”*

Ezekiel 34:2, *“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”*

Malachi 2:7, *“For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”*

Matthew 23:2-3 *“Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”*

The history of Israel was encapsulated in this amazing parable.



Israel was to walk by faith in the absent owner and produce fruit. This they failed to do. The fruits of righteousness were not forthcoming to the Lord. So he sent servants to receive the produce!

## **D.THE TREATMENT OF THE SERVANTS**

The servant went to collect that which was due, the rent being paid in kind. The treatment of the “servants” by the husbandmen proves that the worst crimes are often perpetrated by the most highly privileged. “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

We believe the “servants” to be the noble array of the prophets, who, as ambassadors of God, had a special commission to remind the nation of its obligations and to call the people and rulers alike to the subjection that was due. Describing the treatment the prophets received, Jesus Himself claimed to have sent those divinely inspired men.<sup>2</sup> Matthew 23:34, *“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:”*

But the privileged “husbandmen” abused their privileges. Jewish rulers became wayward, selfish, unscrupulous, and turned against the prophets because of the way their God-inspired ministry disturbed the rulers’ conscience and robbed them of the respect of the people. Isaiah was sawn asunder; Jeremiah was stoned; Amos was murdered with a club; John the Baptist was beheaded; Stephen was stoned to death.<sup>3</sup>

## **E. GOD’S PATIENCE**

God’s patience is seen in His slow response to the wicked tenants.

Matthew 21:36, *“Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.”*

## **F. THE SENDING OF THE SON**

Matthew 21:37, *“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.”*

The mercy and longsuffering of God is seen in the servants of the Old Testament.

The Son – Christ the heir of all things. Christ was the last test to the ‘vineyard’ tenants. Mercy and grace, a three year ministry – crucifixion. 40 day of resurrection ministry ascension to glory.

The covenant people of God should have recognized and embraced the Christ of God, seeing Him as Messiah.

Mark 12:6, *“Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.”*

---

<sup>2</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p226

<sup>3</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p226

Mark emphasises that Christ was the pre-existent one, The Father's beloved Son, He was sent because He was the one Son of the owner of the vineyard. Christ revealed himself as the New Vine in John 15.

## **G. THE DECISION TO KILL THE SON**

Mark 12:7-8, *“But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.”*

After the event, Peter charged the Jewish rulers with the murder of Jesus. Acts 2:23. Obviously, their rejection of the Lord worked against them in judgement. The end of the Temple and driving out the vineyard by the Lord. His own received him not. John 1:12, *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”*

## **H. JESUS' QUESTION TO HIS OPPONENTS**

The Lord made the Pharisees face their sin! Their answer condemned themselves. Matthew 21:41, *“They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”*

These men seemed to know that what they were about to do to the Lord was evil, yet they repented not; their's was a terrible judgement which sent them wandering in the world for 2,000 years and more! This judgement was executed by the Romans. The Jews were cut off from the privileges which they had enjoyed for thousands of years.

Matthew 21:42, *“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?”*

Jesus gave clarification, so that the Scribes and Pharisees were without excuse. The depravity of sin in the hearts of the Priests and Pharisees, drove them, causing them to kill the Lord.

“Wicked;” a word the dictionary describes as being “evil” in principle and practice, deviating from or contrary to the moral, divine law; addicted to vice, sin, viciousness. The crucifixion which they supported was a heinous and terrible event. Christ willingly gave himself for our sin. They crucified the Lord of Glory!

## I. THE KINGDOM TAKEN FROM THEM

God's response – "...and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." This is being fulfilled in our days, "The church age"

Because God never leaves His vineyards in wicked hands, there came the transference of His "vineyard" to others. "He will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen." The Pharisees, without knowing it, passed judgement on themselves and are now informed, not only of their fate, but of the cessation of their privileges. The kingdom of God was to be taken from them, and from the nation they represented, and given to another nation, which the Lord of the harvest hoped would prove to be more fruitful.<sup>4</sup>

Another nation to take over the ministry of the Kingdom – The church.

Did not our Lord forecast here the casting off of the Jews, which Paul refers to in Romans 11:15-23? Prophecy teaches that the vineyard will be once again entrusted to Israel. What was the other "nation" to which authority over God's interests passed? Was it not the Church which Peter describes as "a holy nation" and John speaks of as "a kingdom"? (I Peter 2:9, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*" Revelation 1:6). This "nation" consists of all regenerated persons and is constituted on a different principle and held together by different bonds. It is not after the flesh, but after the Spirit that citizenship is obtained in the Christian commonwealth, in which saved Jews and Gentiles are one. Yet the Church, more highly privileged than Israel, must beware lest she forfeit her position. How solemn is the warning, "I will move thy lampstand out of its place" (Revelation 2:5; 3:16).<sup>5</sup>

The Stone which the builders rejected.

Matthew 21:42-43, "*Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*"

Israel fell on the Stone and was broken, and ere long the same Stone will fall on a hypocritical and apostate Christendom and break the image in pieces. After listening to their pronounced doom, the Pharisees, perceiving that Jesus had

---

<sup>4</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p227

<sup>5</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p227

revealed their horrible guilt, would have laid hands on Him there and then and killed Him, but they feared the reaction of the multitude who had come to take Him as a Prophet. Was He not the Prophet raised up of Jehovah (Exodus 20:9), and who is known revealing His authority, not only as a Prophet but as God's Son and Heir? Thus, as Campbell Morgan says, this parable, and others to follow reveal His authority: "That authority is demonstrated by the line of His accomplishment, of the revelation of truth, His recognition of the divine rights, His restoration of a lost order. This was the purpose of His presence in the world."<sup>6</sup>

The judgements administered by the Lord (the Stone).

1. Israel falling, stumbling over the stone being broken. The prophecy fulfilled after the crucifixion and ascension of the Lord. Titus led the Roman army to trash the city, tear down the temple and drive the Jews into exile. They were dispersed over the world for nearly 2,000 years. Because of Israel's disobedience, their worship system fell into disarray. The synagogues in which they worship today are a far cry from the temple worship. It is only since 1948 that Israel has begun to return, making Jerusalem the centre of their reformed nation. They stand at the wailing walls; praying and longing for a new temple. They are set for a terrible tribulation.
2. The church apostate, failing to follow God's Word and deviating from true worship, will also be judged.  
*"...but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."* How important it is that we continue in the Apostles' doctrine, holding to the divinely inspired Word. 2 Timothy 3:16, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"*

The final response of the chief priests and Pharisees to the parable.

1. They perceived that He spoke of them. Our Lord lifted the cloak covering their evil plans. However, they repented not.
2. They played politics because of the people's love for this prophet. Their method was corrupt for they did not receive Him, nor love and respect God, the Father, who sent him. They appeared to follow the father but their actions revealed their heart was far from Him. The result was disastrous as history shows, History is HIS story!

---

<sup>6</sup> Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible, p227

## J. CONCLUSION

1. An amazing parable summarizing God's dealing with His people, Jesus knew it all. His authority was defended and established. He is LORD. This parable covers nearly two thousand years of Old Testament history.
2. An amazing parable because it reaches forward more than two thousand years, covering by prophecy all the years of the church age. In total there are about four thousand years of prophecy covered in this parable.
3. Amazing because it revealed the deep evil intentions of a religion and its leaders devoid of God – Judaism. Deuteronomy 29:24-29. “v28 *And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.*”
4. Amazing because it reveals Jesus as the Lord of all, possessing all authority and all knowledge. He is worthy of our sacrifice and service. We should crown Him Lord of all.  
Romans 12:1-2, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”
5. God's judgement would be executed upon them, driving them into “diaspora,” which meant scattering them over the planet until the end times. A partial regathering is already happening. The end of this exile will be when Israel turns to their Messiah, Jesus. Zechariah 12:11, “*In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem.*” They will be mourning over Him whom they have pierced.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Matthew 21:42, “*Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*”