

## 42. Jesus Gave the Parable of the Vineyard Owner

In our last topic, we saw that the religious leaders refused to believe that Jesus is the Christ. They wanted to know who gave Him the authority to cleanse the temple. Jesus answered their question with a question they refused to answer. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave a parable that described these religious leaders.

The religious leaders had just said they could not answer the question of Jesus. Then, Jesus gave a parable to them that described these religious leaders and gave a warning about coming judgment. Mark 12:1-5 says, “Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around *it*, dug a *place* for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took *him* and beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.’” This parable is most easily understood if we read Isaiah 5:1-7 first.

Isaiah 5:1-2 says, “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” Then, Isaiah 5:7 says, “For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry *for help*.” Here, we see that the Lord established Israel as His vineyard. Understanding that fact will help us to understand the entire parable, as Jesus warned of the judgment of the religious leaders.

God sent His servants, the prophets, to the nation of Israel. Instead of turning to the Lord, when God sent the prophets and other messengers to them, we see that the leaders of Israel rejected the message of the prophets. They showed their rejection of that message by the way they treated the prophets. 1 Kings 21:13-14 says, “And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead.’” God then sent Elijah to speak to Ahab. In 1 Kings 21:19, God told Elijah, “‘You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you murdered and also taken possession?’” And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.’”” This is an example of the way godly men were treated in the Old Testament.

Hebrews 11:37-38 gives us a summary of the way the leaders of Israel had treated the Old Testament prophets, when those verses say, “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being

destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.” The leaders of Israel in the time of the Old Testament rejected most of the prophets God sent to warn Israel.

Mark 12:6-8 tells what the Father did in the New Testament to speak to the leaders of Israel. Those verses say, “Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed *him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard.” The religious leaders had just challenged Jesus and asked who had given Him the authority to cleanse the temple of those who bought and sold. John 1:11-12 says, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” These religious leaders were showing their rejection of Jesus at the very moment Jesus gave them this parable.

Jesus was actually prophesying His own death, which would come just a few days later at the hands of these religious leaders. It was these very men who would condemn Jesus to death. Mark 14:62-64 says, “Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.” Here, we see that all of those who were gathered there that night condemned Jesus to death.

Jesus explained the reason why the religious leaders condemned Him to death in this parable. Mark 12:7 says, “But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’” Caiaphas explained to the other chief priests and Pharisees why he thought it was necessary for Jesus to be killed. John 11:49-50 says, “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’” Caiaphas said that they either had to kill Jesus, or they would lose their power and control over the people. The parable shows that Jesus knew exactly what they were planning.

Jesus said that these men would kill Him and cast Him out of the vineyard. John 19:14-16 says, “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ But they cried out, ‘Away with *Him*, away with *Him*! Crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’ Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led *Him* away.” The crucifixion of Jesus happened outside the city wall of Jerusalem, because John 19:17-18 says, “And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.”

Jesus went on to warn these religious leaders about their own coming judgment, when He said, in Mark 12:9-12, “Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: “The stone

which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away." In these verses, we see that Jesus warned the religious leaders that the Father would bring judgment upon them.

Just forty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Roman army came and completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and all of the people who were in the city. In this way, there was a direct judgment of the very men who had condemned Jesus to death, by the Father. Jesus also said that the Father would give the vineyard to others. In Romans chapters 9 through 11, we see that God temporarily set aside the nation of Israel and gave the Gentiles the privilege of taking the Gospel to the whole world. However, that setting aside is not permanent. Romans 11:25-27 says, "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" This shows the mercy of God to Israel.

Then, Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22-23, which says, "The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes." In the time of Solomon, when Israel was building the temple in Jerusalem, all of the materials for the temple were prepared away from the location of the temple and then brought to the site where the temple was being built. One of the stones that was brought to the temple site did not seem to have a place, so the builders threw it away. Later, they realized that they had thrown away the chief cornerstone. The chief cornerstone was the stone by which all the walls had to match up so that the entire temple would have straight walls. In this parable, Jesus said that was the Lord's doing. The religious leaders were rejecting Him. It is only through repentance of sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that anyone can come to the Father. The leaders were rejecting the One who gives life.

The religious leaders were very angry when they heard this parable of Jesus. They knew that He had spoken this parable about them. They were so angry that they wanted to lay hands on Jesus immediately and kill Him, but they were afraid of the crowd of people around Him. That was why these religious leaders were so happy when Judas Iscariot came to them. Mark 14:10-11 says, "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him." Jesus was going to die at the time He planned, not at the time the religious leaders wanted to kill Him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus gave this parable to let the religious leaders know that He knew exactly what they were planning to do. However, He was going to die according to His set time, not theirs. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this parable to others.