

66. Jesus Gave the Parable of the Vineyard Owner

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand two very common groups of people that they will meet. Those who desire to have power and control over other people will often reject the Word of God. In contrast, the common people are often eager to learn more about Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that the religious leaders asked Jesus who gave Him the authority to teach. Jesus answered their question with a question. Then, Jesus spoke to the people and gave them a parable about a vineyard owner.

One day the religious leaders challenged the authority of Jesus to teach in the temple. Luke 20:1-8 says, “Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, *that* the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted *Him* and spoke to Him, saying, ‘Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?’ But He answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.’ So they answered that they did not know where it was from. And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” Here, we see that Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the Gospel to them.

The chief priests (mostly Sadducees), the scribes (mostly Pharisees) and the elders (the seventy men who were the Sanhedrin) all came together and asked Jesus who gave Him the authority to teach the people. We saw in the last topic that these were the very groups that wanted to kill Jesus because they were afraid of losing their power and control over the people. Instead of answering their question immediately, Jesus asked them to answer one question for Him before He answered their question. Then, Jesus asked them, “The baptism of John--was it from heaven or from men?” Suddenly the religious leaders realized that they were going to trap themselves if they answered the question of Jesus.

They had two choices. They could say that the baptism of John came from heaven, but they knew that Jesus would then ask them why they did not believe the message of John if his message was from heaven. These religious leaders were totally unwilling to admit that the message of John came from God because they had rejected his message. In contrast, they could say that the baptism of John was from men. However, they were afraid to give this answer because of their own fear. They were afraid that the common people would stone them because the common people were convinced that John was a prophet who had been sent by God. The religious leaders did not want to give either answer. As a result, they said that they did not know whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. Jesus then said that, in that case, He would not tell them by what authority He was teaching and doing the miracles that He had done.

Jesus knew that the religious leaders were trying to control the people because they loved power. As a result, Jesus told the people a parable. Luke 20:9-12 says, “Then He began to tell the people this parable: ‘A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far

country for a long time. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent *him* away empty-handed. Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty-handed. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast *him* out.” We see that Jesus gave this parable both to the religious leaders and to the common people. It became very clear by the time that Jesus finished this parable that the man who planted the vineyard was really a picture of God.

The man planted a vineyard and leased it to the vinedressers. 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.” This passage from Isaiah was very familiar to the Jews and 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*.” God chose the nation of Israel to have a special relationship with Him. As a result, this passage from Isaiah makes it very clear that the nation of Israel is the vineyard and the people of Israel and Judah are the vinedressers.

We read that the owner of the vineyard sent various servants to get the fruit from the people who were taking care of the vineyard. We see that the people caring for the vineyard mistreated the various servants that the owner sent to them. Hebrews 11:36-37 gives us just a small picture of the way that the people of Israel mistreated the Old Testament prophets that God sent to them. Those verses say, “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 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—.” Here, we see that Jesus said the people beat one servant and sent him away empty-handed. Another servant they beat and treated shamefully and also sent him away empty-handed. A third servant they wounded and cast him out. Throughout the Old Testament, we see various ways that the people of Israel rejected the prophets that God had sent to them.

We see that, as Jesus continued the parable, He said the owner of the vineyard finally sent His Son to get the fruit. Luke 20:13-18 says, “Then the owner of the vineyard said, “What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect *him* when they see him.” But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed *him*. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others.’ And when they heard it they said, ‘Certainly not!’ Then He looked at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone”? ‘Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’” Since we look back at this parable, we can recognize that as Jesus told the last part of the parable, He was talking about Himself and what the Jews were going to do to Him within a few days.

The owner of the vineyard then decided to send his beloved son to get the fruit from the people who were caring for his vineyard. Jesus said that the vineyard owner thought that the people would respect the son of the owner. Instead, we will see that Jesus went on to describe exactly what the Jews were going to do to Him in the next few days. The people caring for the vineyard talked among themselves and said, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” John 11:49-53 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.’ Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.” Here, we see that from the day that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead that the Jewish religious leaders began to plot the death of Jesus.

Jesus was telling what the Jewish religious leaders were going to do to Him when He said that the people caring for the vineyard cast the son out of the vineyard and killed him. Then, he asked the people listening that day what the owner of the vineyard would do to the people caring for the vineyard. Jesus said that the owner of the vineyard would come and destroy the workers in the vineyard and give the vineyard to others. The people who heard Jesus answered, “Certainly not!” The Jewish religious leaders who had been plotting the death of Jesus for a period of months recognized that Jesus was saying that judgment would come upon them.

Then, Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22, which says, “The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.” At the time that Solomon was building the temple in Jerusalem, the materials were prepared at another site and brought to the site of the temple. A stone was brought and the workers could not determine where it would fit, and so it was thrown on the rubbish pile. Later, when they could not find the cornerstone, the men realized that they had thrown away the cornerstone, which was the most important stone, because it determined how every other stone was placed. The Jewish religious leaders were preparing to kill the One who is the Son of God. Jesus gave one more warning to these Jews when He said, “Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” Jesus is that stone. For some, Isaiah 8:14 had warned, “He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” For others, Daniel 2:45 warned, “Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold--the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” Some were ignoring Jesus, while others were fighting Him; but all who rejected Him faced judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand that Jesus warned the Jews of coming judgment.