

The Parables of Jesus

- The Wicked Husbandmen

- Matthew 21:33-41;

- Mark 12:1-11;

- Luke 20:9-18

This parable is found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. It immediately follows the events of the cleansing of the Temple and the "cursing of the fig tree" which was just discussed in the previously. The context and the setting are the same. Jesus is in Jerusalem at the Temple speaking to His disciples and the Pharisees. Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that this is where Jesus spoke this parable.

This parable is the second in the course of this teaching setting in which Jesus was responding to the religious leader's confronting Him with the question, "... by what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" Jesus began to expose and deal directly to the "hardness of heart" of the Pharisees and their lack in desiring to hear the message of both, John the Baptist and Jesus, Himself, to "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus begins His time of teaching with the "Parable of the Two Sons" and continues with this next parable.

We will take our parable from Matthew 20:33-41 - *"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 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."*

The "Characters" on this parable

1. A "certain householder" - The owner of the vineyard. This is obviously referring to God, the Father
2. A "vineyard" - As discussed previously, the term "vineyard" is used in the Bible to represent God's field – Israel. This would also come to represent everyone on the earth that God desires to save.
3. The "husbandmen" - These were farmers who the owner of the vineyard had entrusted with his vineyard. This is obviously representative of the Jewish religious leaders.
4. The "servants" - These were servants of the owner who were sent to "receive of the fruits." These represented the prophets and other mighty men and women of God who remained obedient and preached God's word to the people of Israel. It was usually the spiritual leaders found within the governmental system of Israel who did not want to hear the truth or did not like what these servants of God were saying that caused the leadership to end up killing these prophets and mighty, obedient people of God.
5. The "son" of the "householder" - Obviously, this is referring to Jesus Himself who was right there in front of them as the "Son of God."
6. The "new husbandmen" - Those that would receive the Good News of salvation through Jesus. This would include any Jew who accepted Jesus as their Messiah, as well as any Gentile that would come to believe in Him. It refers to any disciples of Jesus - Jew, Gentile, male, female - all becoming as one as the "one new man in Christ."

The theme, as we said, was that the time had come when there would be a "changing of the guard" concerning God's leadership over His Kingdom upon this earth. Jesus asked the Pharisees at the conclusion of this parable, *"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?"* (Matthew 21:40) Not realizing it, out of their own mouths, they spoke their own judgment. *"... 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."* (Matthew 21:41)

We must take notice that the "husbandmen" in our parable knew who the last person who came to them was. They knew that he was the son of the owner. They ultimately planned to kill the son and take over the land. Wow!! If we really look at this scripture for what it is telling us, we can see that the religious leaders, down deep within themselves, knew who Jesus was. They simply continued to reject the fact that He was the Son of God.

In this parable, it seems as if Jesus exposed their plan which was that they ultimately, really wanted Him dead. It also exposed and revealed the fact that they were using the things of God's Kingdom for their own benefits and not for God's purposes. We see that they actually rejected the prophets who revealed Messiah was to come. They rejected the Messiah when He did come. They would not simply reject Him but they would kill Him. All these things merely reveal to us that they ultimately had rejected God. It truly revealed where their heart was – it was for their own benefit.

Notice, in the parable, it tells us says that the "new husbandmen" will bring forth "fruit." Obviously, these religious leaders and those that have gone before them had no "fruit" to show for their time of leadership. It was just as with the fig tree that Jesus had "cursed" in Mathew 21:19. It looked as if it should have fruit, but when Jesus went to partake of the fruit, He found none. We must understand that Israel, God's "vineyard," because of its leadership, was not bearing any "fruits" of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus was teaching His twelve disciples, as well as His disciples today, that now as God's new leadership in God's vineyard and fields, we are to learn from, and heed from, the lesson of the Pharisees and leadership of the Jewish people of that time. We are to not make the same mistakes as the religious leaders had done at that time. As Jesus' disciples we are to *"render him fruits."*

As His disciples our purpose is to "occupy" and render "fruit" which is the character and personality of love, joy, peace, faithfulness, goodness, kindness, longsuffering, gentleness and self control – the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22) These were and are the characteristics and personality of Jesus. When He returns, Jesus will be looking for those who are truly His disciples. Jesus tells us earlier in His ministry that He will know His true disciples by their "fruit." (Matthew 7:18-20)

Jesus in Matthew 21:42-44 proceeds to answer the Pharisee's original question to Him which was, *"... by what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"* (Matthew 21:23) In Matthew 21:42-44 Jesus tells 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 marvelous 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. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."*

Jesus was clearly using the scripture found in Psalm 118:22,23 to refer to Himself as the "head stone," the "cornerstone," the "foundation stone" (Isaiah 28:16) which would be rejected, initially. However, this stone that would be rejected and thrown aside would ultimately be brought back and placed in the main spot to become the "head stone" for God's dwelling place. Psalm 118 is considered by the Jews to be "Messianic." Meaning it points to their Messiah. It points to Jesus.

In no uncertain terms Jesus was referring to Himself, the one who they were rejecting as their Messiah, as the rejected "head stone" of Psalm 118. He was stating that this prophetic, Messianic scripture was being fulfilled at that very moment with the Pharisees as the ones who were rejecting God's Anointed One, their Messiah. Therefore, the answer to their question was that Jesus was doing the works of the Kingdom and speaking the words of the Kingdom in the authority given to Him by God, the Father.

He also states that there will be those that will *"fall on the stone and be broken"* and there will be those that it will *"grind into powder."* This was a serious warning to the leaders, as well as anyone who hears these words, both in that day and for today.

The ones that *"fall on the stone"* will be those who truly recognize their need for God and come to Him with a "broken and contrite heart." It is this attitude of heart that will never be "despised" or rejected by God. (Psalm 51:16, 17) Those that it *"falls on"* and crushes are those that reject the Good News of salvation through Jesus. They will be crushed. Their hypocritical, self righteous, greedy, covetous ways will be *"ground into powder"* and the consequence will be an eternity in the place where there is *"weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Knowing this, we can understand the anger and indignation that arose within the Pharisees and other religious leaders as stated in Matthew 21:45, 46 - *"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."*

Notice, in these scriptures it tells that the people had received Jesus as a prophet. The chief priests and religious leaders did not receive or accept Him as anything but a trouble maker. They were angered with Him. Why? They knew that He was speaking and referring to them as the ones in which the "stone" would fall upon and be *"ground into powder."* Jesus was very clear in telling them that they would be ending up in a place where there would be *"weeping and gnashing of teeth."* In other words, He was being very clear that they would end up in hell. He was telling them the result of their wrong lifestyle. It was at that moment that they needed to make a decision. They needed to either repent or they would continue on in their foolish ways. They were told in very clear terms where they would end up if they did not change.

Instead of repenting and changing, they hardened their heart and wanted to *"lay hands on Him"* right there. That statement makes it seem as though they came to the place where they were ready to kill him. This is important for us to take note. Isn't this what He had just told them in this parable? In the parable He just told to them we read that the "husbandmen" would take the son and kill Him.

When I read this parable, it makes me take note to be reminded to watch my own heart. Many times we can unknowingly or unwittingly become like the religious leaders. I have seen it many times throughout ministry and throughout my Christian life where we take things into our own hands. We many times make God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit say and speak things that they really are not saying or speaking.

Many times I have "killed" the Son of God with my own understanding and with my own ways. I have refused His correction and I many times have rejected His ways in preference to my own ways and my own understanding. To this, I willingly, at this moment in my life, choose to repent of those thoughts and of that way of thinking.

We must take careful note of these last public parables by Jesus. He is being quite blunt to those listening to Him. His death was to come within at week. There was no time to mince words. Jesus knew this. The religious leaders who had hardened their heart to His truth were hardening their hearts even more. The question we need to ask ourselves is what is happening within our own hearts. When we hear Jesus' parables, as well as all of His Word when He walked this earth - are we hardening our hearts?

Many think that the words that Jesus spoke while He walked the earth are no longer valid nor are they needed after His death. We hear that a lot in today's "churches." It's as if all of a sudden Jesus' words, as well as all of the Words of Father, God previous to Jesus' resurrection and ascension are no longer needed for His people today. To those who believe such things I trust the Lord will allow you to see His truth in these last days. There is nowhere in His Word in which He tells us this. Rather, it very clearly states that His Word is the same yesterday, today and **FOREVER**.

Through the blood of Jesus we have been set free from the bondage of our sin. That does not mean that none of us sin anymore. Yes, He is faithful and just to forgive us of all our sin. However, we all have the responsibility to own up to it when we do sin – which we all do, no matter how hard we try not to. We all need to continually "*fall upon the rock*" of Jesus and recognize when we do "miss the mark."

When an individual realizes this and truly repents, then and only then will they truly experience God's love and forgiveness. We must be very careful to not get so "hard-hearted" to this understanding that we come to the place that when we do sin, we fail to repent. We must be mindful that if we fail to repent, as Jesus told us in His Word, that this will cause the "*the rock*" to fall on us and "*grind us into powder*."

We must realize that I am not saying that we are always to be thinking about sin. I am not saying that at all. What I am saying is that when we do sin, which everyone will and does, we simply "own up" to it, repent, receive His forgiveness and move on. We must never let ourselves to come to that place where we "unknowingly" allow ourselves to think as the Pharisees and other religious leaders had come to think. They failed to see their own wicked ways because of a misinterpretation of the scriptures.

Their "misinterpretation" was caused by their own hard heartedness and misconstrued understanding of the scriptures and of themselves. I pray that in these last days, God's truth would prevail in the hearts of those that truly love Him and who are truly called by His Name. It is my desire that none of us will be caught up in this very large lie and deception and be "*miserably destroyed*." It is my prayer that all those who call upon Jesus as their own personal Lord and Savior, will be of those "*husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons*." (Matthew 21:41)