

## Jesus Gave a Parable About a Landowner

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share with others the message of how they can have the righteousness of God placed on them. We also saw that many tax collectors and prostitutes had received that gift by faith while the religious leaders had rejected that gift. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus gave a parable about a landowner.

Jesus knew that in a few days, the religious leaders would condemn Him to death and demand that Pilate crucify Him. As a result, Jesus chose to speak to the religious leaders in parables. Jesus went on to give a parable that predicted His coming death. Matthew 21:33-39 says, “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, “This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.” So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*.” In this parable, we will see that God, the Father, is pictured as the landowner and Jesus as His Son.

Isaiah had written in the book of Isaiah that Israel was the vineyard of God, in Isaiah 5:1-7. Verse seven 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*.” Jesus knew that the religious leaders were very familiar with this message in the book of Isaiah. As a result, Jesus began this parable by explaining again the process by which a person prepared a vineyard. Jesus said that the first thing the owner did was plant the vineyard. This was always the first thing because it takes a vineyard a period of years before it is ready to bear fruit. Once the vineyard was planted, the owner built a hedge (fence) around the vineyard. Then, the owner built a winepress to squeeze the juice out of the grapes when they ripened. Finally, the owner built a tower in the vineyard. This was a high tower that allowed a watchman to watch in every direction as he protected the harvest when it would ripen.

Once the owner had everything in the vineyard ready, he leased it to vinedressers. These were the people who would care for the vineyard and give a certain percentage to the owner of the vineyard. Then, the owner went to a place a great distance away. In this parable, we will see that the vinedressers were the Jewish religious leaders. After a period of years to allow the vineyard to develop and begin to bear fruit, the owner began to send various servants to receive the share of the fruit that belonged to the owner. In this parable, the servants represented the Old Testament prophets. However, instead of listening to the servants, the vinedressers rejected the servants. Some of the servants were beaten. Others were killed. Some were even stoned to death.

Regardless of how many servants were sent, they were all mistreated by the vinedressers.

Finally, the owner decided to send his son. He said, “They will respect my son.” Jesus went on to explain, in the parable, what the religious leaders were already planning to do to Him in the next few days. Matthew 21:38 says, “‘But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’”” Just a few weeks earlier, the high priest had said in John 11:49-50, “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.’” Then, John 11:53 adds, “Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.” Jesus showed, by this parable, that He knew exactly what the religious leaders were planning to do to Him.

Jesus concluded the parable by telling what the religious leaders were going to do when He said, “‘They said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’” So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*.” John 19:19-20 says, “Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin.” Here, we see that the death was near the city, which meant that it was outside the city wall of Jerusalem. This fulfilled, to the exact detail, everything that Jesus spoke in this parable.

Then, Jesus asked the religious leaders a question. Matthew 21:40-42 says, “‘Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?’ They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?” Jesus asked the religious leaders what the owner of the vineyard would do when he came. The religious leaders answered, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably.” Here, we see that the religious leaders described themselves, and then pronounced their own judgment, as they answered the question of Jesus. They called the vinedressers wicked men. They also said that the owner would destroy those wicked men miserably. That judgment came on the city of Jerusalem just forty years later.

Christ then 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.” When Solomon was building the temple, the materials were prepared at a different location and then brought to the temple site. Here, we see that the builder rejected the stone that was to become the cornerstone of the temple. The Lord caused this to happen as a picture of the fact that the religious leaders would reject the One who came to give eternal life. By quoting this verse, Jesus was telling the religious leaders that they were rejecting the One who would die for sin and make salvation possible for all who would believe in Him. The chief priests and the other religious leaders were pictured, by this statement, as the ones who had rejected the chief cornerstone.

Jesus went on to explain that the religious leaders had condemned themselves. In Matthew 21:43-

46, we read, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.” Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews.

Romans 11:25 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.” In this verse, we see that God said that most of Israel would be blind and the people set aside as God’s witnesses until God had completed His work of reaching the Gentiles. We see that on the Day of Pentecost, just fifty days later, God began the church, which became the group that God is presently using to reach the world for Christ. The church is composed of both Jews and Gentiles and has taken the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus worldwide over the years. However, in the future, God will restore Israel to the place of blessing.

Jesus is the One who is the stone. Matthew 16:18 says, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The name “Peter” means *a little rock*. The word translated “rock” means *a great massive rock*. Jesus is the One who is this great massive rock on which the church is built. Isaiah 8:14 says, “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.” Jesus was a stone of stumbling to both Israel and Judah. He is also a stone of stumbling to many Gentiles. Some ignore Jesus and they will be broken. Others actively oppose Jesus and they will be crushed.

Jesus had made it very clear, by His words, that He was the promised Messiah. As Jesus spoke these parables to the chief priests and Pharisees, they realized that Jesus was talking about them and the judgment that would come to them. Instead of repenting of their sin of unbelief, these religious leaders wanted to lay their hands on Jesus and destroy Him. They refused to accept the fact that Jesus was the Messiah and wanted to kill Jesus because they saw Jesus as a threat to their power.

The common people recognized Jesus as a great prophet because they had heard Jesus speak and had seen the miracles that Jesus had done. However, Luke 22:2-6 says, “And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the religious leaders wanted to kill and destroy Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand how their unbelief and fear controlled these religious leaders.