

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD OWNER - MARK 12:1-12

“And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. [2] When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. [3] And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. [4] Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. [5] And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. [6] He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' [7] But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' [8] And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. [9] What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. [10] Have you not read this Scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; [11] this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? [12] And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.”

The placing of this parable by Mark is important. In it, Jesus *underscores the doom* of people who show the kind of hard-heartedness that the religious leaders had just shown in **Mark 11:27-33**. Because these leaders had consistently rejected the testimony of the Scriptures, John the Baptist, and even Jesus Himself, there could be no future hope for them. *This parable is an acted out story of their rejection of God's chosen Messiah.*

1) JESUS BEGAN TO TEACH IN PARABLES - MARK 12:1

This was a fitting form of teaching, giving truth to those who would receive, while hiding it from those who had no intention to submit (see **Mark 4:11-12** - “And he said to them, “**To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, [12] so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.**” As always, God presents His truth in such a way that it *wins the hungry and willing* and, at the same time, *judges and dooms those unwilling to hear.*

2) THE PLAYERS IN JESUS' STORY

First, there are the *servants* who represent the succession of prophets sent to draw Israel to God. Second, there is the *son* who is Jesus Christ. Third, there is the *owner* of the vineyard, who is Father God Himself. Fourth, there are the *farmers* who worked the vineyard. They are the religious leaders of the Jewish people.

3) THE PARABLE SHOWS THE INCREDIBLE GRACE OF GOD

This whole parable is taken indirectly from **Isaiah 5:1-7**. This is a song that was actually sung by the people of Israel during a time of their own repentance, lamenting their ungratefulness for all of God's mercy and kindness.

In Jesus' story we see a land owner who went to such great lengths to insure a good vineyard. He clears the land, plants the grapes, puts up a wall to keep out the thieves and animals, and waters and tends the new plants. *He didn't have to do any of this. The vineyard did nothing of itself to deserve such treatment.* This is a picture of God's gracious choosing and caring of Israel - all to prepare the way for the Messiah.

4) THE PARABLE POINTS OUT HOW PERVERTED THE INSTITUTIONS OF ISRAEL'S RELIGION HAD BECOME

The very people who should have cared the most about the vineyard were the ones who killed the owner's servants. The farmers had been given a place to live, to work and earn a living. All of this was done in return for a portion of the annual crop which would be given to the owner.

In the same way, Jesus exposes the twisted nature of these religious leaders - who were planning to **put to death the Son of the very One they were to serve and represent!** Of all the people, these Priests and Scribes should have welcomed Jesus with open arms.

5) IN THE PARABLE JESUS ONCE AGAIN PREDICTS HIS OWN DEATH

Again we see Jesus anxious to point out that His death was not to be viewed as just another event of history. It was not to be seen as an accident. The plan of God was unfolding still.

6) THE PARABLE SHOWS THE BEAUTIFUL PATIENCE OF GOD

How many messengers would you send? We can hardly imagine the land owner, after seeing the bruised condition of the first servant, still sending another, and another. Then, unbelievably, He sends his own son into that same wretched situation. Even today, judgment does not thunder out at every rejection of God's ways. Judgment is never rushed or rash. There's an unbelievable mercy at work in God's heart. **See 2 Peter 3:9 - "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."**

There's also an OT passage illustrating this same situation - **2 Chronicles 36:15-16 - "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. [16] But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy."**

7) THE PARABLE SHOWS THAT JESUS IS GOD'S FINAL OFFERING TO MANKIND

"He sent him last of all"(6). There would be no others sent. This is consistent with the teaching of the Word in other places. **See Hebrews 1:1-2 - "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. [2] For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution...."**

Jesus already dealt with this topic with His own disciples in **Mark 8:27-30 - "And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" [28] And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." [29] And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." [30] And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him."** A right response to Jesus was dependant upon a firm recognition of the importance and **authority** of His person.

8) THE PARABLE TEACHES THAT FIRM JUDGMENT AWAITED THOSE WHO ABUSED GOD'S FINAL OFFER OF GRACE

Man's rejection of Jesus didn't mean the end of Jesus Christ (**see verses 10-11**). The murdered son wouldn't stay dead. Christ's death would be honored by the Father. Christ would be the centerpiece of God's redemptive plan. And those who rejected Jesus would face the wrath of Father God. Notice how this theme is picked up in other NT passages (**see Acts 4:11 - "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."** And also **1 Peter 2:7 - "So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...."**

Notice that in **Matthew's account** Jesus forces the religious leaders to pronounce their own sentence of

judgment (**Matthew 12:40-41** - **“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. [41] The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”**Everything in God's coming kingdom hinges on what people do with Jesus. Notice that their religions will be of no use or value if Jesus had been rejected.

9) THE PARABLE TEACHES THAT THIS FINAL REJECTION OF JESUS BY THE JEWS WOULD BRING GOD'S OFFER OF GRACE TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

See also **Matthew 21:43** - **“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.”** And so, the leaders are furious when Jesus finishes His parable. They know they've been exposed. They know that God's true plan to reach the nations through Jesus Christ doesn't fit in with their narrow religion. They begin to plan to get rid of Jesus once and for all.