

## “Parable of the Tenants”

### Introduction – Matthew 21:33-46

Today we go back to the parable series! 😊 The parable of the tenants is told by Jesus using a very natural example of a landowner planting a vineyard and getting everything set in place so that the tenants, the farmers could work the vineyards to produce a harvest of grapes!

#### I. THE SETTING OF THE VINEYARD

##### Matthew 21:33-34 (NIV)

**33** “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. **34** When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

The Old Testament often used the picture of a vineyard to speak of Israel:

Asaph the Psalmist said:

##### Psalm 80:8-9 (NIV)

**8** You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. **9** You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

Listen to Isaiah spell it out:

##### Isaiah 5:1-7 (NIV)

**5** I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. **2** He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. **3** “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. **4** What more could have

been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? **5** Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. **6** I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.”  
**7** The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Jeremiah also brings this out:

**Jeremiah 2:21 (NIV)**

**21** I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?

These passages bring out an important interpretation, of scripture truth:

**“SCRIPTURE INTERPRETS SCRIPTURE”**

So we see Jesus speaking to the religious leaders here in a language they understood!

**THE LANDOWNER** – is the Lord

**THE VINEYARD** – is the house of Israel and its inhabitants

**THE FARMERS AND THE TENANTS** – are the religious leaders

**II. THE WORKING OF THE VINEYARD**

**Matthew 21:35-39 (NIV)**

**35** “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. **36** Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. **37** Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. **38** “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s

kill him and take his inheritance.’ **39** So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Now we see new characters in this parable:

### **THE SERVANTS REPRESENT THE PROPHETS GOD SENT TO ISRAEL.**

Listen to how some of these prophets were treated:

**ISAIAH** was sawn in half under King Manasseh whom Isaiah has confronted with his idolatry and rebellion to God’s ways.

**JEREMIAH** – according to the early church Father Tertullian – the Jews stoned Jeremiah to death in Egypt. He had survived numerous attempts on his life in his ministry trying to plead with Israel and it’s leaders to repent and turn back to God. They didn’t want to hear it! Listen to this account in Jeremiah:

#### **Jeremiah 39:8-12 (NIV)**

**8** The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. **9** Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city, along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people. **10** But Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people, who owned nothing; and at that time he gave them vineyards and fields. **11** Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given these orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard: **12** “Take him and look after him; don’t harm him but do for him whatever he asks.”

The Jewish leaders sought to kill him, pagan King Nebuchadnezzar looked after him! How amazing is that!?

**HABAKKUK** – was also stoned

**EZEKIEL** – was also killed for confronting the religious leaders for worshipping idols.

Now not all were killed for their ministry but when Jesus is telling them this they knew what He was referring to!

Listen to Jesus' words to them:

**Matthew 23:29-36 (NIV)**

**29** “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. **30** And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ **31** So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! **33** “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? **34** Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **35** And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **36** I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

So lastly, the son is sent! He represents Jesus who came to save his people from their sins.

Listen to Jesus speaking to the religious leaders about their response to Him:

**John 8:42-47 (NIV)**

**42** Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. **43** Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. **44** You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the

beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **45** Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! **46** Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? **47** He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

And we know the story of what they ended up doing to Jesus which was in God's plan for our redemption and reconciliation to God! Thank you, Jesus!

### **III. BRINGING IT HOME**

#### **Matthew 21:40-46 (NIV)**

**40** "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" **41** "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." **42** Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" **43** "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. **44** He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." **45** When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. **46** They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

In verse 41 we see them answer what should be done to the tenants for how they acted:

**"HE WILL BRING THOSE WRETCHES TO A WRETCHED END".**

Jesus had already taught:

### **Matthew 12:33-37 (NIV)**

**33** “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. **34** You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. **35** The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. **36** But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. **37** For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

So we do not want to imitate and follow the way of religious leaders who profess to know God and walk with Him but do not live out the truth they proclaim!

Jesus refers to Psalm 118 which is a definite messianic psalm:

### **Psalm 118:22-23 (NIV)**

**22** The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; **23** the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Jesus has come as the fulfillment of all these messianic prophecies! Listen to Peter explain this:

### **I Peter 2:4-10 (NIV)**

**4** As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” **7** Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, ” **8** and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. **9** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a

holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

So yes, the gospel has come to all tribes, languages and nations! Jesus came for the Jew and also all of us Gentiles! As we respond to this gospel we are grafted into the vine! We are a part of God's family! His vineyard! His people!

We cannot take this lightly! It's a necessary truth that we must fully surrender or the warnings will also apply to us! God help us to see this! 😊

## **Conclusion**

So what is our response?

### **Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)**

**1** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. **2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.