

# Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers

Matthew 21:33-36

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## INTRODUCTION:

1. As we saw in our last study, Jesus often used parables to reply to those who opposed Him
2. In the parable of “The Two Sons” (Mt 21:28-32), Jesus responded to those who had rejected John the Baptist
3. But in the parable of “The Wicked Vinedressers” (Mt 21:33-46), Jesus vividly describes the sinfulness of those religious leaders who were rejecting the very Son of God!

[Let’s begin with a reading of the parable and Jesus’ follow-up comments (READ). This is one parable in which Jesus’ meaning and purpose is very evident...]

## I. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

### A. THE VARIOUS ITEMS OF THE PARABLE ARE EVIDENT...

1. The vineyard immediately brings to mind Israel
  - a. The figure of a vineyard referring to Israel was well-known - cf. isa 5:1-7
  - b. But here it is not Israel as a nation per se...
    - 1) Rather, “the special advantages and opportunities which were given to the people as the chosen seed”
    - 2) For later Jesus explains the vineyard (or kingdom of God) “will be given to a nation producing its fruit” - cf. Mt 21:43
2. The landowner who planted the vineyard is God
3. The wicked vinedressers represents Israel’s leaders - cf. Mt21 :45
  - a. Their chief priests, scribes, elders, and all their followers
  - b. Therefore, the physical nation of Israel as a whole
4. The servants who were sent in behalf of the landowner represents the prophets
  - a. As a nation, Israel rejected many of her prophets - cf. 2 Chr 36:15-16
  - b. Note the plaintive cry of Jesus over Jerusalem later on - Mt 23:37
5. The landowner’s son is Jesus Christ Himself

### B. THE SUCCEEDING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REVEAL JESUS’ INTENT...

1. Which was to help them see why God would be just
  - a. In bringing condemnation upon Israel

- b. In giving the blessings of Israel to those more deserving - cf. Mt 21:43
- 2. Indeed, their rejection of Jesus had been foretold in the Scriptures - Mt 21:42; cf. Ps 118:22,23
  - a. The “builders” were the religious leaders of the nation
  - b. The “stone” which they rejected was Christ
  - c. Yet, this stone would be made a “chief cornerstone” by God Himself
    - 1) In which God would build a something “new”
    - 2) I.e., the church in which both Jew and Gentile were fellow citizens of the household of God- cf. Ep 2:19-20
- 3. In elaborating on “the stone which the builders rejected”, Jesus reveals the terrible consequence for those who reject it - Mt 21:44
  - a. Another way of saying it is anyone who opposes Christ is destined to fall, even be “pulverized”
  - b. The same was said of those who would not trust in the Lord in Isaiah’s day - of. Isa 8:13-15

[The main lesson of this parable can be summarized in the words of Ps 2:12...

“Kiss (i.e., pay homage to) the Son, lest He be angry,  
 And you perish in the way,  
 When His wrath is kindled but a little.  
 “Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”

So obvious was Jesus’ meaning and intent in telling this parable, that the religious leaders’ would have arrested Him at that moment had it not been for the people (Mt 21:45-46).

What application can we make for ourselves from this parable? Is there a lesson for us today that can be drawn...?]

## II. AN APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

### A. FIRST, NOTE THAT GOD OFTEN BESTOWS WONDERFUL PRIVILEGES...

- 1. This He had done with the nation of Israel
  - a. Like a precious vineyard, God planted Israel in Canaan
  - b. He blessed the nation with laws, priests, prophets, and other special privileges
  - c. He eventually sent His only begotten Son as their Messiah
- 2. How about us today?

- a. Have we not received wonderful privileges from God?
- b. We enjoy free access to the Word of God, and the freedom to worship without fear of persecution; many in the world do not
- c. We are blessed to hear things that prophets, kings, and saints of old desired to hear and were not able - cf. Mt 13:16-17

**B. SECOND, NOTE HOW PEOPLE OFTEN MAKE BAD USE OF THEIR PRIVILEGES...**

1. The history of Israel as a nation established by God
  - a. They consistently murmured against God in the wilderness
  - b. They turned away from God time and again during the period of the Judges
  - c. They persecuted His prophets, and eventually rejected His own Son
2. What about us today?
  - a. We have blessings given to us through Christ
    - 1) The forgiveness of sins through His blood
    - 2) The aid of the Holy Spirit in putting to death the deeds of the body
    - 3) The joy of fellowship in the family of God
    - 4) The privilege of sharing the gospel with a dying world
  - b. And yet Christians often turn their back on such blessings
    - 1) They sin, and do not seek forgiveness
    - 2) They do not seek the help God gives to deal with the problem of sin
    - 3) They neglect their brethren by forsaking the assembling, and by not developing close relationships with them
    - 4) They make little or no effort to spread the precious gospel of Christ

**C. THIRD, NOTE THE AWFUL JUDGMENT THAT COMES UPON THOSE WHO MAKE BAD USE OF THEIR PRIVILEGES...**

1. Again, the nation of Israel is an example
  - a. They suffered forty years of wandering in the wilderness
  - b. God allowed neighboring nations to be a thorn in their side
  - c. They endured Assyrian and Babylonian captivity
  - d. God destroyed their temple and their religion by the Babylonians (586 B.C.) and the Romans (70 A.D.) given it to a nation bearing the fruits of it- Mt 21:43
2. Would God bring such judgments against His church or people today if they abuse their privileges?
  - a. Consider the words of Jesus - Jn 15:1-2,6; Re 2:4-5, 16; 3:1-3
  - b. Consider what was written to the Hebrew Christians - He 10:26-31
3. Clearly, if we do not utilize our special privileges...
  - a. God will take away the blessings we have (i.e., the kingdom of God)
  - b. And give it to someone who appreciates it (i.e. bears the fruit of it)

## CONCLUSION

1. Truly God has given us wonderful blessings...
  - a. He made us worthy to be “partakers of the inheritance of the saints” — Co 1:12
  - b. He “has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” - Co 1:13
  - c. In Christ we have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” - Co 1:14
  - d. He sent us apostles and prophets of His Son, whose words are in the New Testament
  
2. Let us be careful how we receive them (cf. Jn 13:20), for the next time the Beloved Son is sent, He is coming in terrifying judgment! -2 Th 1:7-10

Indeed, as Jesus said, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Lk 12:48)

## God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation