

# PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 21 :33-46

LESSON 197 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Matthew 21:33-46

<sup>33</sup> 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:

<sup>34</sup> And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

<sup>35</sup> And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

<sup>36</sup> Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

<sup>37</sup> But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

<sup>39</sup> And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*.

<sup>40</sup> When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Jesus saith unto 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 marvellous in our eyes?

<sup>43</sup> Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

<sup>44</sup> And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### A Vineyard

As Jesus was teaching in the Temple during the last days before His death, He said, "Hear another parable." The one we study today is called the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. A husbandman is like a farmer; he is one who tills the soil. In this parable, the husbandmen are they who rented a vineyard to care for.

The owner had prepared the vineyard with great care, and in the best manner. No doubt, the householder or owner carefully worked the soil, and then selected choice plants for his vineyard.

#### The Planting

Some fields are planted with seeds — for example, wheat. But a vineyard is started with young plants. There were no machines which could plant the young vines. Each one had to be planted by hand. Perhaps you can picture this man as he carefully planted each vine. Some with long roots would be placed in deep holes. Others with shorter roots needed to be planted in more shallow holes. Each vine would receive the planting and care that it needed as an encouragement for growth. No doubt, the planter fixed the vines firm and straight, with plenty of room to grow. He handled them with care lest, being tender, they would be broken.

#### A Purpose

After the planting, the vines would need to be watered and fed. The householder had a plan. He planted the vines for a purpose. He did all he could to give them a good start. His care did not stop with the planting. The owner hedged the vineyard, to protect it. Sometimes young plants are trampled, broken, and even pulled out by animals and careless people. This would not happen to his vineyard, for a hedge was placed about it.

#### Fruit

The owner expected to gather fruit from the vines, so he prepared for the harvest, too. A winepress was dug, and made ready for the time when the grapes would be gathered and the juice pressed from them. A tower was built, perhaps for the convenience of the caretaker, that from it all parts of the vineyard could be watched.

All these things had cost the owner time, care, and money. When he went into a far country, he did not leave his vineyard uncared for and neglected. The vineyard was rented to husbandmen. It would be only reasonable that the owner would want fruit in payment for the vineyard, so in the time of harvest he sent his servants to collect from his vineyard.

#### Treatment of Servants

How were the servants treated? Did they receive fruit and pay, for their master? No. One was beaten, another stoned, and one was killed by the husbandmen who were in charge of the vineyard. Other servants were sent to collect that which was due their master, but they were treated in a similar manner.

The owner was not unreasonable. The vineyard belonged to

him to powder.

<sup>45</sup> And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

<sup>46</sup> But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

him. We do not read that he asked any rent until the harvest time. Some people want rent and pay in advance. Others would have demanded pay when there was no fruit. Still others would have the fruit delivered to them, rather than send servants for it. The owner asked only what was right and just. The husbandmen were the unreasonable and wicked ones.

### The Owner's Son

In time, the owner sent his son to the vineyard, for he thought that the husbandmen would surely respect him. They did not. When they saw the son coming, they plotted against him. They put him off the property, as if it were their own. They slew him, to try to gain his inheritance. One can scarcely imagine such wicked people.

### Punishment

That was the parable that Jesus taught. Of the people who were gathered about Him and who had questioned Him, He then asked what would happen to the husbandmen when the owner came. The people answered that the wicked husbandmen would be destroyed, and the vineyard let out to others who would pay of the fruits in their season.

Jesus had a purpose in telling this parable. The chief priests and elders who listened were Jewish people and very religious. They had asked Jesus what authority He had to teach as He did. In fact, they were just like the husbandmen in this parable.

### The Lord's Vineyard

The owner of the vineyard represents the Lord. God has planted His people as a Church in the world. It belongs to Him. It cost Him something. The Prophet Isaiah tells about the Lord's vineyard and that it was furnished with all things necessary (**Isaiah 5:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: <sup>2</sup> And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes). The Prophet Isaiah spoke about God's people as "the planting of the LORD" (Isaiah 61:3). The Psalmist wrote about the vineyard which God's right hand had planted (**Psalms 80:15** <sup>15</sup> And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.). Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

### The Vines

Every Christian has been "planted" by the Lord. He picked them out to be His Church and vineyard because they answered His call. God gives each person the care and encouragement needed. God has prepared spiritual food and drink for His people. Jesus said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Jesus said: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:32, 33).

God protects His people. "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7). God has made all these preparations for His people. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should

remain" (John 15:16). "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away" (John 15:2).

### The Husbandmen

God gave the Law to the Jewish people. He made a covenant with Abraham (Lessons 8 and 157). Later, at Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with the Jews as a nation (Lessons 69 and 158). The charge of God's people fell into the hands of their leaders. They were to care for God's people (His vineyard) so that fruit could be gathered for the Lord.

### The Servants

In time, God expected fruit; and He sent His servants, the prophets, to remind the people of their duty to the Lord, and to help with the harvest of souls. The servants — the prophets of the Old Testament — instructed and reproved the people. God did not demand the impossible from them. He expected the people to observe and keep the Law.

What happened to God's faithful servants, the prophets? Jeremiah was beaten (**Jeremiah 37:15** <sup>15</sup> Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison). He prophesied against the people, for they would not hearken to the words of the Lord. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned to death when he reminded the people that they had forsaken God, and could not prosper (**2 Chronicles 24:20-22** <sup>20</sup> And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. <sup>21</sup> And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. <sup>22</sup> Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon *it*, and require *it*). "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets" (II Chronicles 36:16).

In the New Testament we read about John the Baptist, who was sent by God. He, too, was a martyr. He was beheaded when he preached against sin (**Matthew 14:10** <sup>10</sup> And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.).

### The Son

In due time, God sent His only begotten Son (**John 3:16** <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ). His own people, the Jews, hated Him (**John 15:24-25** <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. <sup>25</sup> But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause). They refused Christ as they had refused to obey the prophets. They schemed against Him and made a plot which resulted in Christ's crucifixion (**Matthew 26:47-49** <sup>47</sup> And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. <sup>48</sup> Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. <sup>49</sup> And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. **Mark 15:1-47** <sup>1</sup> And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried *him* away, and delivered *him* to Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou

sayest *it*.<sup>3</sup> And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.<sup>4</sup> And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.<sup>5</sup> But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.<sup>6</sup> Now at *that* feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.<sup>7</sup> And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.<sup>8</sup> And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them.<sup>9</sup> But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?<sup>10</sup> For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.<sup>11</sup> But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.<sup>12</sup> And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do *unto him* whom ye call the King of the Jews?<sup>13</sup> And they cried out again, Crucify him.<sup>14</sup> Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.<sup>15</sup> And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.<sup>16</sup> And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.<sup>17</sup> And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his *head*,<sup>18</sup> And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!<sup>19</sup> And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees worshipped him.<sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.<sup>21</sup> And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.<sup>22</sup> And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.<sup>23</sup> And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received *it* not.<sup>24</sup> And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.<sup>25</sup> And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.<sup>26</sup> And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.<sup>27</sup> And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.<sup>28</sup> And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.<sup>29</sup> And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days,<sup>30</sup> Save thyself, and come down from the cross.<sup>31</sup> Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.<sup>32</sup> Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.<sup>33</sup> And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.<sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?<sup>35</sup> And some of them that stood by, when they heard *it*, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.<sup>36</sup> And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.<sup>37</sup> And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.<sup>38</sup> And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.<sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.<sup>40</sup> There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;<sup>41</sup> (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.<sup>44</sup> And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.<sup>45</sup>

And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. <sup>47</sup> And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses beheld where he was laid.)

When the chief priests and Pharisees heard the parables of Jesus, they realized that He was speaking of them. Jesus showed them that they had rejected Him, as the husbandmen had rejected the son of the owner of the vineyard. It was even worse to reject Jesus, the Son of God, than to reject the heir to the vineyard. To reject Jesus meant rejecting eternal life. Jesus said: "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" Even though Christ was rejected by the Jewish people, it is still the plan of God that every spiritual house be built and established upon Christ and His teaching, as a true foundation. Christ is the chief corner stone (**Acts 4:11** <sup>11</sup> This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **Ephesians 2:20** <sup>20</sup> And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; **1 Peter 2:6** <sup>6</sup> Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded).

### The Gentiles

The chief priests and elders condemned the husbandmen. They were judged by their own words. The vineyard was given to another. The Kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas spoke of this as they said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46)

God has "let out" (rented, not given) his vineyard to us, the Gentiles, and He expects to find good fruit in our lives. If Christ looked for fruit in your life today, what would He find? Grapes that are wild, small, sour, and of no value — fruits of the flesh? Or would Christ find in your life the fruit of the Spirit — that which is acceptable, usable, and blest of the Lord? (**Galatians 5:19-23** <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup> Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. **Ephesians 5:3-9** <sup>3</sup> But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; <sup>4</sup> Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. <sup>5</sup> For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Be not ye therefore partakers with them. <sup>8</sup> For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: <sup>9</sup> (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) God's people live clean, holy, busy lives for Him. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

Perhaps all would condemn the husbandmen for their treatment of the son and the servants. No doubt, all would condemn the Jews for their rejection and crucifixion of Christ. They rightly

should be condemned for such evil deeds. But let us take a look at ourselves, the Gentiles. Many of the Gentiles, too, neglect Christ, reject Him, and even despise Him and His people. The time is coming when the door of salvation will be closed to the Gentiles. They will be given no more opportunity to be forgiven. The times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled (**Luke 21:24** <sup>24</sup> And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled). Let each one look at himself, individually. Has Christ been neglected, rejected, and put out of your life? Or have you made Him welcome and opened the door of your heart?

#### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 Why did Jesus teach this parable?
- 2 Who owned the vineyard?
- 3 What did he do for it?
- 4 Why were the servants ill-treated?
- 5 What happened to the son?
- 6 Why was the vineyard let out to others?
- 7 What did this parable show the Jews?
- 8 What do we learn from this parable?