

**Two More Vineyard Parables.**

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:23-45.

We too easily identify ancient Israel as the vineyard. It is the application that the priests and Pharisees made for themselves, as it was an image that they knew well v45. See also Isaiah 5:1-7 (from which Jesus quotes v33) where there is a very similar illustration. Paul used the same imagery for the same reason Romans 11:11-24. However we ought to broaden the imagery to the kingdom of God, Study 1, Rule 4. It follows then that identification of the other entities is almost self evident provided we resist accounting for every little detail, Study 1, Rule 10.

**The Context**

Jesus told these parables to the chief priests (Sanhedrin) early on the Tuesday before His crucifixion. They were a prophetic warning to the people who were to fulfil them, something they understood, but disregarded. They stem from their question about the authority of Jesus to act as He did v23. The word authority is translated from a word with grades of meaning, and here it is a license, or the right to exercise authority. They also wanted to know the power that extended this right to Him. It was a trap. If He said from Heaven (God His Father), they could charge Him with blasphemy. If he said of men they could charge Him with complicity with the devil. His answer was most shrewd, turning the question back to them. They twigged and backed off claiming ignorance (incompetence) and thus Jesus was not obliged to entertain them. He stepped out of the trap. They were to soon give up trying to trap Him. See Matthew 22:46. He also told them that He knew that they already knew the answer in their hearts. The first words of v28 belong to the end of verse 27 and conclude that paragraph.

Jesus then called them to repentance with the parable of:

**The Two Sons**

The word for sons is better translated 'children' as it does not express a relationship. The preferred son (the word 'first' is *proto* - first in order and importance) refused, but later repented and went. The other son ('second' is *hetero* - 'other or different in kind or nature') sidestepped the father's request to work. The words he used were 'I Lord!' But he did not go. These two Greek words, which are not brought out in our English, describe the children but also categorise the priests and Pharisees in their response to the Kingdom following the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Some of the priests and Pharisees repented later and came to faith in Christ, Acts 6:7&15:5, but many did not. They were *hetero*, of a different nature.

Tax collectors and prostitutes v31 Jesus said they 'are getting' in ahead of you. He used a present active verb, that is a current action. His statement was to spur them, not to classify as one of the two kinds.

**The Wicked Tenant Farmers.**

There were three methods of farming. Labourers were paid in kind, say 33% of the harvest, or it was tenanted for a rent in money, or a set return in produce. Such leases could be for a year, or life or in perpetuity and inherited by the share-farmer's sons. Jesus is referring to this kind of lease.

The householder has made a covenant with Israel and 'withdrew'. As the tenant organised his farm for production, so Israel was given liberty in the Theocracy, to live in righteousness as priests before God to the nations.

*'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* Exodus 19:5&6a.

Israel failed to pay her rent and the Landholder sent messengers to remind her of her obligation under the covenant. They were ignored, abused and killed. In patience others were sent with the same result; even His own Son. The tenants had come to view themselves as owners of the vineyard.

Jesus asked them to make application of the parable v40 and they did, prophesying the events that were about to befall Israel after they themselves killed the Landholder's own Son a few days from this event.

**The Mini Parable of the Headstone.**

In making an application, Jesus inserted a mini-parable, changed His metaphor, and quoted Psalm 118:22&23.

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

We identify Jesus as that headstone. Until His death, resurrection and ascension the stone lay in the quarry. They, Israel, stumbled over the stumbling stone Romans 9:32&33. And many were broken.

At the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD the stone fell on them and Israel was crushed. Drop a pot on a brick and it will break. Drop a brick on a pot and it will shatter.

Jesus applied the parable v43. He told them that the tenants were to be disinherited and a new tenancy established. God was calling for a time, bringing a new people into being 1 Peter 2:7-10, one based on individual faith and righteousness through the cross-work of His own Son. The conduct of the vineyard was to be entrusted to them. He would expect of them the fruit He desired, and still desires, of Israel. Let us then be careful to not disappoint Him!

Remember:  
*Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*  
 Romans 11:22.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NIV, unless otherwise acknowledged. \* Head of the corner

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 Lower Road, Eltham North  
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