

The Verdict of the Vineyard

Mark 12: 1-12

In our text today, Jesus remained in Jerusalem at the Temple. These events took place during the days immediately leading up to His arrest and crucifixion on the cross. Following a challenge by the chief priests and scribes regarding His authority in ministry, Jesus offered this parable unto those who were present within the Temple that day, including the chief priests and scribes.

This parable focused on a vineyard, being planted by a certain man and leased out for others to take care of, harvesting the fruit it produced. The relationship between the owner of the vineyard and those who leased it was strained to say the least. While the owner had provided a profitable and beneficial situation for those who leased the vineyard, they were ungrateful and sought to take advantage of the owner's kindness and provision.

This parable deals primarily with the nation of Israel; she is pictured as the vineyard, the Jews are revealed as the husbandmen who leased the vineyard, and God is the owner of the vineyard. Jesus revealed the state of affairs in Israel at that moment in time and how God viewed their commitment and obedience to Him. While this is given prophetically and practically to Israel at that moment in her history, there is certainly application for each of us today. As we examine the [certainties](#) within this parable, I want to deal with: [The Verdict in the Vineyard](#).

I. The Description of the Vineyard (1) – *And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.* Jesus spoke of a particular vineyard. Consider:

A. The Details – *A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower.* Jesus revealed that the vineyard had been well planned and prepared for success. Those left in charge of the vineyard had everything needed to produce much fruit. We find the owner had taken care of:

- **Planting** – The owner had planted a vineyard, choosing the location of the vineyard and what types of fruit and vines it contained. God had brought Israel out of Egypt's bondage, planting them in a land of great abundance. They were blessed to have been planted there by God.
- **Protection** – The owner had also set a hedge about the vineyard and built a watch-tower – both for protection of the vineyard. The hedge served as a barrier from anyone or anything that would bring harm, and the tower allowed for observation of impending threats. God had put a

hedge about Israel, keeping her secure from her enemies down through the ages. She had suffered captivity, but God had preserved a remnant. He had provided faithful prophets throughout her history to warn of impending danger and direct Israel toward the Lord.

➤ **Provision** – The owner also had dug a place for the wine-fat to be collected, producing the grape juice for consumption. He had created an environment for the husbandmen to be successful and enjoy the fruit of their labor. God had blessed Israel with a land that flowed with milk and honey, providing for them for generations. He had continually preserved them and met their needs. God had been faithful to Israel.

B. The Dependence (1) – *and let it out to husbandmen*. Once the vineyard was planted and established, the owner leased it out to caretakers to tend the vineyard and bring in the abundant harvest. He depended on these men to faithfully care for his vineyard.

▪ Jesus was speaking primarily to the chief priests and scribes, those responsible for the spiritual well-being of Israel. God had entrusted the priests and prophets down through the ages to care for His vineyard, the nation of Israel.

C. The Departure (1) – *A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country*. Having planted and provided for the vineyard's success, securing able laborers, the owner departed and left them to their work. The owner had entrusted these men to care for the vineyard and fully expected them to be diligent in their labor.

▪ The Lord had called and equipped men to care for Israel, particularly regarding their spiritual needs. He expected these men to use their abilities to ensure prosperity for Israel.

II. The Disobedience within the Vineyard (2-8) – Here Jesus revealed the disobedience and disarray that transpired in the owner's absence. Consider:

A. The Resentment (2) – *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard*. At the time of harvest, the owner sent a delegation to receive his share of the harvest. They were expected to offer a certain portion of the abundance with the owner. This created resentment toward the owner. Those who labored within the vineyard resented being accountable to the owner and didn't want to honor him with a portion of the harvest. They wanted to consume the harvest as it pleased them.

B. The Reprisal (3-5) – *And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.* ^[4] *And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.* ^[5] *And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.* As the owner continued to deal with those who leased his vineyard, he continually sent servants to secure his portion of the harvest. Due to their resentment toward the authority of the owner, they shamefully treated each servant that was sent unto them. Some were beaten and wounded, while others were killed. Clearly Jesus revealed a scenario that had been repeated throughout Israel's history. Those whom God sent to lead Israel spiritually, and warn them of their sin, were not honored or accepted. Many were abused and some were killed.

C. The Repetition (3-5) – We also discover this treatment of the servants was repeated time and again. Each time the owner sent a servant unto the vineyard, he was rejected and abused. Those who leased the vineyard continually rejected the servants sent by the owner.

- We cannot miss the patience and grace of the owner. Time and again he had sent servants, and they were all mistreated and abused; yet he continued to faithfully send servants unto the vineyard. Israel rebelled against God for centuries and yet He continued to send prophets and others to warn of their sin and challenge them to return unto the Lord. Through it all God remained gracious and patient with Israel.

D. The Rejection (6-8) – *Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.* ^[7] *But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.* ^[8] *And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.* Finally, the owner of the vineyard sent his only son to see about the affairs of the vineyard and collect his share of the harvest. He believed those who had leased the vineyard would honor and respect his son. Instead of receiving him, they killed him also, like others who came in the name of the owner. Having killed the son, they cast him out of the vineyard. Those who labored in the vineyard rejected the son, and in doing so, rejected the owner.

- While most failed to see it, Jesus spoke prophetically of events that would soon transpire in Jerusalem. The only Son of the Owner of the vineyard had come and Israel would reject Him. He would die upon the cross for their sin, but the nation of Israel as a whole would deny Him as the Christ, and He would be cast out of the vineyard as a fake and impostor.

III. The Decision regarding the Vineyard (9-11) – Jesus finally revealed the consequences regarding the rejection of the son. Israel would suffer for their rejection of Him. Consider:

A. The Proclamation (9a) – **What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?** No doubt, He had gotten the attention of some who heard this parable. He raised a serious question. How would the lord of the vineyard respond to such treatment of his son? Surely, they realized such behavior would result in devastating consequences.

B. The Punishment (9b) – **he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.** Jesus revealed the punishment the husbandmen would receive due to their treatment of the owner's son. He would come and destroy the husbandmen, those whom he had placed over the vineyard, and give the vineyard to others.

- Israel would reject Jesus as the Christ and it would come at a heavy price for them. They remain God's chosen people, and He will regather them in the end times, but the Gospel was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles to share throughout the world. They had rejected the Christ and God would take the Good News to a different people, entrusting them to labor within the vineyard. (It is a serious mistake to neglect the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ.)

C. The Preeminence (10-11) – **And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:** ^[11] **This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?** Jesus spoke directly to the chief priests and scribes, those who should have recognized and embraced Him as the Christ. He was the Cornerstone which the Scriptures prophesied would be rejected. Having rejected Jesus, they had rejected the Christ, their promised Messiah, the Cornerstone of the faith. Their rejection of Christ would result in devastating consequences, both spiritually and nationally for Israel.

- This was given specifically to Israel at that moment, but this truth applies to all people. Jesus is the only means of salvation and reconciliation to God. The only way to have a relationship with the Father is through the Son. He provided our redemption and we must see Him as the preeminent Savior and Lord.

Conclusion: **Mark 12:12 – And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.** Even after this compelling parable, the chief priests and scribes refused to believe. Their hatred for Christ increased, along with their resolve to destroy Him. They had encountered the Christ but refused to believe. We have been given the truth of the Gospel. We are now expected to embrace that Truth and share it faithfully with others. We too will give account of what we have done with Jesus and how the truth of the Gospel impacted our lives. If you are unsaved, come to Christ. If you are saved, serve Him faithfully!