

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: “Parable of the Vineyard” Luke 20

Scripture of Lesson: Luke’s Gospel 20: 9-19

1. The owner of the vineyard: his plan and will

- A. The owner of the vineyard of this parable is obviously God who formed the universe and the earth, which corresponds to the vineyard in this parable.
- B. God made the world and all things in it. He gave the stewardship of the world to Adam and his descendants [Gen 1: 28]. When Lord Jesus presented the parable to the Jewish people at this time, He was apparently referring the vineyard to the Kingdom of Israel including the Promised Land, which God had promised to Abraham and given to the people of Israel. The land was flowing with milk and honey, and it compares to a productive vineyard in this parable.
- C. God provided a goodly vineyard. He wanted the select group of farmers, the people He created, to tend this goodly vineyard and produce yields for themselves and for honoring God the Creator [v. 10]. Through this covenant, a contractual relationship was established between the owner and the tenants. The owner provided well and kept his part of the contract. And he desires the tenants to keep their portion of the contract. Moreover, he wants to develop this relationship to one of Father and His children.
- D. The tenant farmers refused to give a portion of the yield to the owner and mistreated the messengers [v. 12]. Yet the owner waited in patience and mercy toward them. He hoped they would repent and honor his son whom he would send as his messenger [v. 13]. But, they would even kill the son of the owner [v. 14-15], whereupon the owner would destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others [v. 16].

2. The tenants’ depravity toward the vineyard owner

- A. The tenants refer to the chosen people to whom God’ inheritance was entrusted. Apostle Paul refers to the people of Israel as the people to whom God had given “*the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises*” in the following verses:

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. [Rom 9: 1-5]

- B. From the viewpoint of the vineyard owner, the tenants’ unjustified mistreatment of his messengers and their refusal to give the rightful portion of the vineyard’s yield to the owner were unacceptable. Yet, his mercy was so great that he would send his own son, in the hope that they would repent and honor the son. Lord Jesus knew what would happen and foretells beforehand the unjust judgment He would receive and the cruel killing of Himself through this parable. They would take out the son outside of the vineyard and kill him [v. 15], indicating how Jesus would be crucified outside of Jerusalem on a hill called Calvary.
- C. Later, Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the fellow Jewish Christians in Rome about the depravity of his own people, that the Jewish people had killed the Son of God because they had taken offense on Him. They thought their work in the vineyard justified their rights of the vineyard. Yet they forgot to realize that their tenantry was thanks to God’s grace and mercy. Consequently, they failed to honor God and His Son:

but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” [Rom 9: 31-33]

3. Prophetic implications of the parable

- A. The immediate consequence of the parable was realized within only a few days from the time of telling of the parable in the cruel killing of the Son by the tenants (the Jewish people). Lord Jesus knew of what would happen to them and to Himself. And He wanted to tell them that the attitude they had toward God and the Son of Man, the human incarnate of the Son, was totally wrong.
- B. The second consequence of the parable's conclusion would be the transfer of the tenantry of the vineyard. This seems to imply a change in God's plan of transferring the ownership of the kingdom of God here on the earth from the Jewish people to "others", who are obviously the Gentiles. Apostle Paul knew that this transfer had been prophesied in OT when he wrote about it in Romans 9:

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people, 'There they shall be called sons of the living God.'" [Rom 9: 25-26]

In Acts 13 we see Paul's declaration of the shift in the missional focus from the Jews to the Gentiles:

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" [Acts 13: 46-47]

- C. The third prophetic consequence is the great destruction of the Jewish people, which would befall on them for rejecting and killing the Son in AD 70 [v. 18]. *"Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."* Lord Jesus spoke of this destruction only a few days ago when He wept over Jerusalem. Here again, He told them of its coming in a clear parable, which was understood well by the scribes and the chief priests. These Jewish leaders, though they understood that the Lord's parable was referring to their depravity, did not repent. On the contrary, they took offense at the Messiah and chose the cruel consequence of their own destruction and of the people who sided with them.

4. Applications to us today

- A. Let us be grateful to God for granting a citizenship in His kingdom as an elect although we were not worthy.
- B. Let us show honor, fear and respect to God with our time, heart's desires and devotion daily. Let us seek God's guidance and counsel on how to do this in ways to please God's heart.

Discussion topics:

1. *What was my attitude before accepting Christ and now?*
2. *How am I tending God's vineyard? What am I doing to produce good fruits of this vineyard?*