



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.*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.*³ *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.*⁶ *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.*⁹ *What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.*¹⁰ *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?*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* (Mark 12:1-12)

This parable is uttered by our Lord in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy found in Isaiah 5:1-7 which identifies Israel as the Vineyard. One point we will be keen to remember is that the judgments rendered regarding the keepers of the Vineyard are not applied to the Vineyard itself. The people of God (Israel) will always remain as the people of God. The Old Testament Church is comprised of men and women who have placed their faith and hope in the coming of Christ. Enoch, Elijah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, etc - these are Christians by faith in the promised Savior. We are Christians by our faith in the accomplished Savior.

A certain man planted a vineyard, This certain 'man' is God in this parable. God will always have His elect according to His Will and Purpose. He plants the kind of seed that bear the true nature of His elect and, therefore, knows what progeny will arise. *And set an hedge about it:* God does, indeed, set a hedge about His people to both protect from predators and to confine to proper limits of behavior. *And digged a place for the wine fat* (or wine vat). This was a vat built under the wine press where the blood (or

juice) from the grapes, crushed and pressed, could be collected. Thus the wine vat was the receptacle of the fruits of the grapes. Would it not be a blessing if we, too, would be the receptacles of the blessing of the shed Blood of Christ streaming down as a covering for our sins?

And built a tower The Tower is for our protection. It is the duty station of the watchman (spiritual leaders of His people) to ensure that no thief comes in to steal from the Vineyard. *"The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, **and my high tower.**"* (Psalm 18:2) He makes provision for His people – His remnant shall be preserved of all nations.

And let it out to husbandmen For a fair and reasonable remuneration, He leased His Vineyard to Husbandmen. He would not have leased to just anyone who did not bear the reputation of honesty, but these men were not honest. They kept the Vineyard, but they dishonored the owner of the Vineyard, His servants, and even His dear Son whom they would slay. **And went into a far country** God's celestial home in Heaven.

And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. In due season God has sent unto His people prophets and ministers to reveal God's Word and Will. This investment has more often than not resulted in rejection of the servants of God and often their murder instead of a ready and eager acceptance of what God has ordered for our good. This fact is brought out in the continuing narrative: **And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 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. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.** Satan has misappropriated the property of God unto himself. That which God intended for good, Satan has corrupted and attempted to destroy and keep from its Maker. Now that the Owner of the Vineyard has performed all reasonable steps to recover His lost property, we may presume that He will yield to these wicked keepers of the Vineyard. We would be wrong to so presume.

Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. This parable is presented in simple and everyday terms. Though the Owner of a Vineyard might send His many servants to reclaim His rightful possessions, it is doubtful that a worldly ruler would send His only Begotten Son into such a den of thieves. But God the Father is no common Lord of the Vineyard. He knows the certainty of the egregious treatment His Son will receive, but His love for His Vineyard makes the cost the worth of it. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* (Gal 4:4-5). It has never been the intention of God to abandon us in our great need. He will send His Only Begotten!

So, God sent His Son to redeem us! **But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.** Here Christ draws out the certainty the Elders and Chief Priest of Israel had of His identity. They (the Pharisees and Sadducees) KNEW who He was, but they could not release their greedy grasp upon the Vineyard (People of God). **And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard** Thus they crucified the LORD of Glory! He was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem on the brow of an ugly hill called Golgotha – all for YOU and for ME!

What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? In order for an offense to be forgiven, it must be repented of. But these buggers were evil to the bone in their intent. The religious leaders manipulated the same men and women who had, less than a week earlier, welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with shouts of Hosanna! Now they scream

“Crucify Him!” What shall God do to such as reject His Son and re-crucify Him by their sins and transgressions?

He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others

There is a warning here to the modern church as well as to ancient Israel: If we be guilty of like offense, we may expect a like reprisal from God. **Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof** (Matt 21:43) These words Christ spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees, and He did, indeed, take the Kingdom from them and gave to others bearing the fruit thereof. We would be well-advised to continue to bear fruit for Christ and not for mammon.

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

There is a story regarding the building of the Great Pyramid at Giza. All stones were cut to individual specifications at the Pharaoh's quarry and transported to the base of the pyramid as it was being constructed. The workers often cursed at a stone of unusual shape near the pyramid around which they had to toil in pulling the large stones. As the pyramid neared completion, the workers wondered what could be used for a capstone. Suddenly, they realized that the stone which had always been in the way was the very capstone they needed but, alas, it was too late to construct the pilings required to transport the great stone to the top where it belonged. This was the stone which the builders rejected, but which has become the chief cornerstone of the building. And that Stone, dear reader, is Christ!

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 Cowardly scum, these men. They knew who Christ was beyond any doubt. They were abject sinners! **And they left him, and went their way** They certainly did leave Christ for all time and Eternity and went THEIR way – not the Way of Christ! Our souls are our most precious possession. Let us safeguard them from offending the One who redeemed us out of our sin and folly. If we have transgressed, this Lenten Season is due time to repent and “go the Way of Christ!”

This parable was directed to the men and women of Israel in that day of apostasy; but it is at least as intended for us today when we consider the egregious heresy abounding, not in the corrupt world, but in our corrupt churches. Our preaching is bland and comprised more of man's philosophy than God's truth. Our church discipline is nonexistent. The attire of the people is often immodest and irreverent. The music is worldly, sensuous, and lacking in doctrinal truth. The worship has become effeminized to the point that mature men and women no longer will abide a service of screaming, arms, waving, and repeating the mantras of the kindergarten days gone by. The Church institution has come to mean more than the profession of her Bridegroom. Money and prestige has replaced godly humility and service. Love has faded as a rose in September.

I seriously doubt the modern church and her ministers would welcome the return of the Man of Galilee whom they would view, like the Jewish religious rulers, as a threat to their livelihood and well-lined nests of opulence. Rather than being received in America, our Lord would be more welcome in the deserts of Pakistan by those few Christians who know the daily need and comfort of a mighty God.

If we continue this spiral into the abyss of sin, America, too, will face the harsh arm of God's judgment. Those terrible atrocities we have merely heard and read about will come home to roost on these fair shores with greater tumult and horror than those of which we have heard. WAKE UP AMERICA – we have arrived at the very Day of Reckoning!