

## **THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.**

– APRIL 14, MARK 12:1-12; MATT. 21:33-46; LUKE 20:9-19. –

**Golden Text – "They will reverence my son."**

THIS parable was very promptly recognized by the Jews as spoken against them (Mark 12:12); and so aptly did it represent their state of heart that its only effect was to arouse them to renewed energy to fill up the iniquitous measure of their guilty fathers and so fulfil the final prediction of the parable. – Verse 13.

The foundation of the parable is the very similar language of the prophecy of Isaiah 5:1-7, which is explained thus – "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." – Verse 7.

The parable, briefly interpreted, would read thus – "A certain man [God] planted a vineyard ["the house of Israel" – Isa. 5:7. See also Psa. 80:14,15; Jer. 2:21] and set a hedge about it [the divine law, the testimony of the prophets, the special supervision and fatherly guardianship of God and the ministration of his faithful servants, all of which served to separate them from the ungodly, surrounding nations, and to protect them from their influence], and digged a place for the winefat [or wine press, including the trough in which the grapes were pressed and the vat for the reception of the juice pressed from them. Thus God represents the various advantages conferred upon Israel, such as the worship of the sanctuary, the wonderful leadings of Jehovah, the teachings of the prophets, all of which should have caused the vine, Israel, to yield a large increase of precious fruit and caused her vats to overflow with wine. Well did the Lord inquire through his prophet, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" – Isa. 5:4], and built a tower [a watch tower

for the protection of the vineyard – representing God's care over it in setting watchmen, the prophets and others, upon the towers of Zion – Ezek. 3:17; Isa. 62:6; Jer. 6:17], and let it out to husbandmen [the priests and leaders of the people, whose duty it was to instruct and to lead in the right ways of the Lord, which they were miserably failing to do], and went into a far country [left the vineyard thus prepared and equipped with every advantage to insure an abundant harvest, which he had a right to expect at the [R1795 : page 87] appointed harvest time, in which those addressed were then living]."

The fruits which the Lord had a right to expect from Israel in view of all his favors to them as a people were gratitude, love, obedience, meekness and readiness of mind [R1796 : page 87] and heart in the end of the age to follow the further leading into the new paths and the greener pastures of the Gospel dispensation, through the long promised and then present Messiah, the Son of God. These fruits, properly cultivated all through the age, would also have been manifested in a proper treatment of the prophets and in giving heed to their counsel and warnings; but the fruit was sadly lacking.

Verse 2. "And at the season [at such times as it was proper to expect some fruit] he sent to the husbandmen a servant [a prophet or teacher], that he might receive *from the husbandmen* [ – through their influence; for the rulers in Israel, because of their influence and power, were held specially responsible for the course of the nation, although this did not relieve the masses of the people, the individuals of the nation, from responsibility] of the fruit of the vineyard."

Verses 3-5 refer to the shameful handling of those worthy servants of the Lord. See also Jer. 37:13-21; 1 Kings 18:13; 22:24-27; 2 Kings 6:31; 2 Chron. 24:20,21; 36:16; Acts 7:52; Heb. 11:35-38.

Verse 6. "Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved [the Lord Jesus, who thus spake to them], he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son." Though God knew it would be

otherwise, it is so expressed to show the reasonableness of such expectation.

Verse 7. "But those husbandmen [the chief priests and rulers] said among themselves [they plotted privately and deceitfully, saying in substance], This is the heir [this man claims to be the king, the Messiah of the Jews]. Come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours [the desire to retain their prestige and power was the very object of the leaders in Israel in persecuting and finally crucifying the Lord]."

Verse 8 was a prophecy of the murderous culmination of the wicked purposes that were even then filling their hearts.

Verse 9 foretells the purpose of God to cast those wicked husbandmen out of their offices and to give his favors to others than the Jewish nation; viz., the Gentiles.

Thus ended the parable with its awful significance of the triumph of evil; for full well the Lord knew that his days were numbered. But he did not wish to leave them with the idea that their triumph would be lasting, and so he called their attention to another prophecy (Psa. 118:22,23), saying, "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 marvelous in our eyes."

This was said in reference to his triumph in the resurrection and his future glory as the king of the whole earth.

Verse 12 shows the wickedness of their hearts in strong contrast with that beauty of holiness which never more than on this occasion appeared more lovely. Not a selfish thought stirred his generous soul. Here was goodness, purity, benevolence, grace, standing on the verge of an awful tragedy, with calmness and composure doing the last works of his earthly life. He had no time for gloomy thoughts or fearful forebodings: he must be about the Father's business. He must give the last words of testimony, of instruction, of warning, and fulfil all that

remained to be fulfilled of the prophecies concerning him in the flesh. Then he was ready to be offered for the sins of the world – for just such ungrateful, wicked people as the Jews had proven to be, even under all their advantages, and as the Gentiles also were without those advantages.

But, thank God, he shall yet see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

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