

## Marvellous In Our Eyes

Mark says our Lord spoke several parables in the temple but records only this one. It was spoken publicly but directed against the priests and scribes, and they understood it to be so. The parable uses the story of a vineyard owner and his fraudulent and violent tenants. There are historical, current and a future aspects to the Lord's words. They apply to the ill treatment given by the Jews to the Lord's prophets in times past. They allude to Jesus' own death, and point to the subsequent destruction of the Jewish nation.

### **The key message**

As with all the Lord's parables we take from them the key messages without straining to find a parallel in every detail. The main lesson is the rejection and abuse of the Lord and His people by the Jewish religious leaders. The 'certain man' may be likened to God the Father, the 'vineyard' to the Jewish nation, the 'tenants' to the Jewish religious leaders and the 'servants' to prophets sent by God seeking righteous fruit amongst the people of Israel. The prophets, together with later messengers, such as John the Baptist, all came preparing the way for God's own Son. They were abused and killed, as was the Lord Jesus Himself.

### **An illustration**

Remember, we do not apply exact literal meanings to all the phrases and expressions in a parable. It is an illustrative story. When the 'certain man went into a far country' we do not suppose God the Father is 'gone away'. Being omnipresent, God does not ever go away. Nor does God ever act in mere hope or ignorance. He does not think, 'perhaps this will happen' or 'maybe people will do this or that'. When God sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world He knew the Jewish leaders would, in the main, reject and crucify His Son. He did not 'hope for better'. By His death the Lord Jesus redeemed God's elect and delivered them from the curse and condemnation of the law. This was always God's plan.

### **A lesson for all**

In giving us the content of the Saviour's parable Mark shows how the Lord's disciples were again informed of the Lord's death, and the judgment that would follow in the years ahead. In the parable, the vineyard tenants abused and killed the owner's servants before killing the vineyard owner's son and heir. For generations the Jewish leaders had abused and killed the Lord's prophets in the Old Testament before finally condemning the Son of God and handing Him over to the Romans to be crucified.

### **A solemn prediction**

However, as with the wicked tenants, the days of these men were numbered. Soon destruction would fall upon them. The destruction of the temple and nation by the Romans in AD70 corresponded to the predictions made by the Lord. The priesthood would be ousted, the message of salvation would be removed from them, and the gospel committed to 'other husbandmen' and sent to the ends of the earth. God's people and God's word would be scattered amongst the nations and the whole Jewish system would be overthrown.

### **Christ the Rock**

Turning to the scribes and priests the Lord further enforces His Messianic identity by applying to Himself the words of Psalm 118:22. 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.' All these religious leaders would be very familiar with this passage. It was the closing section of the great 'Hallel', or hymn sung at Jewish festivals; particularly at the feast of tabernacles and the passover. These very words would be upon the lips of all Jerusalem in the coming days; a vast choir confessing their own guilt.

### **A precious stone**

The Jewish religious leaders missed completely what the Lord God was doing in their midst. The Messiah, so long sought, had come and been rejected. The Jewish nation, the scribes and priests, would not rest upon Christ's righteousness but sought to establish their own holiness before God. They had no need for God's 'precious stone' upon which to build, but preferred a building made with man's own hands, comprising man's own righteousness.

### **Our One Foundation**

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the sure, firm, and everlasting foundation which God has laid in His building, the church. Upon this Foundation alone all the elect are fitly joined and built up; and all who build on Christ are safe, secure and assured of everlasting life. The true church, comprising all believers, is built on the Rock that is Christ, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

### **Marvellous to behold**

Eternal salvation can never be man's work but must be recognised and confessed to be the work of God alone in its forming, accomplishment and application. The true gospel of Jesus Christ is foolishness to all who reject the Saviour, but it is the wonderful power of God unto salvation to all with eyes to see. God's full and free salvation in Jesus Christ is a marvellous work to behold.

Amen

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