

Matthew Lesson 21

Matthew Chapter 21

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Memory verses for this week: *Heb 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.*

Introduction: In last week's lesson, we studied the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Later, Christ explained that to sit on his right and left hands in his earthly kingdom was not his to choose, but was an honor that would be bestowed upon certain individuals by God the Father one day.

In the first half of chapter 21, Jesus rode into Jerusalem presenting Himself as King. He officially offers Himself to Israel as their King. Although the common people rejoiced, official Israel rejected Him and all for which that He stood. He cleansed the Temple and cursed the barren fig tree. The last half of the chapter is rich in metaphor and conflict as Jesus is confronted and rejected by official Israel. Here, the chief priests questioned His authority and were frustrated by His response. Jesus then proceeded to present three parables to enlighten Israel concerning the blessings of God.

I. The King's Public Offer of Himself as King

Mat 21:1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Mat 21:2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

Mat 21:3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

As Jesus and His disciples approached Jerusalem from the east, they passed through the tiny community of Bethphage. Bethphage is on the backside of the Mount of Olives on the eastern outskirts of Jerusalem. After arriving, he sent two of His disciples to fetch a donkey from the village.

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem passes through a rugged, inhospitable, mountainous region which tradition calls the valley of the shadow of death. Approaching Jerusalem, Bethphage is located on the east, or the back side, of the Mount of Olives in relationship to Jerusalem. From there, Jesus would ride

the donkey over the ridge of the Mount of Olives down into the Kidron Valley and up into Jerusalem.

Notice Jesus' omniscience in knowing of such a mundane thing as an donkey and her colt tied in the village. Notice also His foreknowledge in knowing how the owner of the animal would react when told of the need of the animal. That in itself would border upon a miracle in allowing strangers to walk away with one's livestock, simply because they said the Lord had need thereof.

Jesus gives instructions to the disciples. You and I might have questioned if we should do this.. but the two disciples do as they are commanded and don't question Christ. He tells them to go to a certain place and find an ass that was tied. They were to loose it and bring it to Jesus. If someone was to ask what they were doing, they were to tell them that the Lord had need of the animal, and straightway the man would send them on their way. I think it was a great honor to be the owner of something that the Lord would want to use. And if we have talents or possessions in this life, we ought to let God use them for His honor and glory.

Jesus had very few possessions in this life. Jesus warned the disciples when they left all to follow him that he did not even have a place to lay his head. Some possessions in life are good, but as we get older, it is clear that the more things we own, the more they can weigh us down. Paul wanted to be one that got rid of the things, particularly the sins of life, and put them out of the way that he might be effective in running the race of life for the Lord.

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Mat 21:4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Mat 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Here is a clear fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 which is partially quoted here. It is significant that Jesus Christ did not officially present Himself as King of the Jews,

riding upon a prancing white stallion in royal array. He came rather upon a donkey, a symbol of servitude and lowliness.

Christ's first coming was entirely in humility and grace. His second coming will be in power and royal array. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart. Jesus Christ sought for men willing to repent and receive the truth of spiritual principle. Sadly, most did not. It is evident that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were oblivious to the clear prophecy in Zechariah how that their Messiah would arrive. This is evidenced in the fact that they crucified Him. It is wonderful to see Christ coming and fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament. These were given to prove to us that Jesus was the true Messiah.

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Mat 21:6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

Here is a simple illustration of obedience to Christ's command.

"And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them."

God's people to this day would solve most of their spiritual problems by adhering to the simple principle of obedience advanced in this verse.

Mat 21:7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

It is a good thing to see people do what the Lord commands. So many times when we are given a job to do, we question the work at hand. But to obey is what God desires of his servants.

John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

John 14:19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

John 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Mat 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strowed them in the way.

Mat 21:9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, many with great enthusiasm and joy received His entrance. In spreading the way before him with their own clothes and branches, many of the common people in effect were receiving Jesus as the Messiah. Unfortunately, the power that then ruled we did not. Only John's gospel accounts that the branches were from palm trees.

Spectacular must have been the sight as throngs gathered upon the Mount of Olives as Jesus rode slowly down the mount to Jerusalem and then across the Kidron Valley and up to the gates of the city.

The jubilant procession could undoubtedly be seen from the Temple on the eastern edge of the city. The King of Israel was officially arriving. Sadly, the nation as a whole received Him not.

In verse 9, we find the throngs were quoting this from Psalm 118:25.

Psa 118:25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

Inasmuch as Israel of that day was under the political and military occupation of the Romans, they well may have been crying out for Jesus to deliver them from the yoke of Roman tyranny.

The word *hosanna*, is a Hebrew word and essentially means, 'Save us, we pray.' The salvation He offered to them was spiritual, requiring repentance towards God and faith in Him. Sadly, most were not interested therein. "Hosanna to the son of David" is evidence that some realized Jesus was the Messiah, the descendant of David's royal dynasty.

They also quoted from Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The final acclamation is quite similar to that which the angels cried out in Luke 2:14.

Luk 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Luk 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Mat 21:10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

Mat 21:11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The greater majority of the multitude rather considered Him merely a prophet from Galilee. It is apparent that it was the elite of the city which asked this question, for it was the multitudes which answered them. The word translated as moved (seiw *seio*) also has the sense of being 'shaken,' 'agitated', or 'shaken with fear.'

The power brokers of Jerusalem were shaken by the prospect of Jesus' arrival. It rather was the multitude, the common people, who were happily proclaiming His entrance, notwithstanding most thought Him merely a prophet from Galilee.

Many ask who this is, and others answer that he was Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. But he was so much more than a prophet... he was their future king. And one day, and not long from now, Jesus will sit on that throne of David and rule the nations of this world.

II. Jesus' Second Purification of the Temple

Mat 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

Mat 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Matthew records the account of Jesus' second purging of the temple. John's gospel records how that Jesus similarly cleansed the Temple near the beginning

of His ministry. The cleansing of the Temple was not solely due to the commercial activity. Jesus was purging dishonest practices as well.

Jewish custom required all males to pay the annual Temple tax in Hebrew coin, which was a half shekel. Hebrew pilgrims traveling from the diaspora frequently did not have the proper coinage or animals for sacrifice in their possession.

By sanction of the high priests, local businessmen set up kiosks in the Temple complex to exchange money and sell doves and other animals for sacrifice.

The problem was, these dealers charged exorbitant prices and offered a fractional value in their currency exchange. They were gouging unwary Jewish pilgrims from distant lands when they came to the Temple.

In quoting from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, Jesus was not condemning the practice of providing a service for pilgrims at the Temple although this type of activity would have been more appropriate near the gate. The Lord was displeased at the fraudulent practices of the unscrupulous merchants present. Recall, His wrath was directed at those who had made the Temple a “den of thieves.”

People sometime perceive Jesus as a weak person because he taught how we should be meek in our lives. But Jesus was strong and a real man when he needed to be, and when he saw these people making a house of merchandise out of the temple, he took a cord of strands and drove out these moneychangers who were there to make money at the temple. And while they may not be selling doves at the temple today, be sure there are many who use the name of God to raise money for themselves today. I would not want to be a person who made money off the name of the Lord in this life. Jesus was upset with these who had made the temple into a den of thieves. He tells them that God’s house should be a house of prayer.

J. Vernon McGee had some excellent insights on the Lord coming into Jerusalem.

When you consider the four Gospel records together, they present a composite picture. The obvious conclusion is that He did not enter the city on only one day but on three separate days.

The first time was on Saturday, the Sabbath Day. There were no money changers on that day, and He looked around and left, “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve” (Mark 11:11). He entered as *Priest*.

The second day He entered Jerusalem was on Sunday, the first day of the week. The money changers were there, and He cleansed the temple (vv.

12–13). On this day He entered as *King*.

The third day He entered Jerusalem was on Monday, the second day of the week. At that time He wept over Jerusalem, then entered the temple and taught and healed (see Luke 19:41–44, 47–48). He entered as a *Prophet* that day.

As we compare these three records in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it becomes apparent that they record three different entries, and I believe that our Lord entered Jerusalem on three consecutive days and in three consecutive roles—as Priest, as King, as Prophet. And He retired each day to Bethany. Apparently, He did not spend the night in the city until He was arrested.

Remember that the so-called triumphal entry ended at the cross. But He will come the second time in *triumph*. The writer to the Hebrews puts this together in a wonderful way: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). We are told in Zechariah 14:4 that when He comes the next time to this earth, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives—that’s where He will touch down. Then when He enters the city of Jerusalem, that will be the triumphal entry! I cannot call these three entries into Jerusalem triumphal entries because He is on His way to the Cross to die for your sin and my sin.

After the Lord cleansed the temple, many came to Him for help:

Mat 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

Mat 21:15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,

Mat 21:16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Jesus thereafter healed within the temple complex.

"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them."

During the years of His public ministry, most of Jesus’ miracles had been performed either in Galilee or outside of the Temple itself. Now the high priests and rulers of the nation could see with their own eyes the miracles which multitudes in Galilee had witnessed.

Jesus showed forth His miraculous power before them. Yet they hardened their hearts and continued their rejection.

Official Israel saw the power of God evident in His miracles. Even the children present in the vast Temple complex were crying out *Hosanna* ('Save us now, we pray').

In jealousy and anger the Temple leadership directed Jesus to put a stop to it all. The word translated as sore displeased (*aganaktew aganakteo*) also has the sense to be 'indignant.' Jesus replied in quoting from Psalm 8:2.

"Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

God's Spirit so laid it upon the heart of even small children to praise the Son of God when the official leadership of the nation refused.

Jesus was always about doing good. It says the blind and lame come to him in the temple, and he healed them. Isn't it sad to see this attitude by the chief priests and scribes. If they had been close to God, they would have rejoiced in seeing these miracles come to pass. But they were not. Jesus reminds them that scriptures taught that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise... they praised Christ in say "Hosanna to the son of David."

III. The Barren Fig Tree is Cursed

Mat 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Mat 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

That evening, Jesus journeyed a short distance to Bethany to lodge. Contrary to modern assumptions of the word, lodged, the Greek word (*aulizomai aulizomai*) has the sense of sleeping out of doors. There may be an allusion here to how the foxes had holes and the birds had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head (Matthew 8:20).

In the last week of His ministry, Jesus may not have had a place to stay. Though Jesus certainly had friends at Bethany, He also had His party of twelve disciples which would have been imposition for any home. The name *Bethany* literally means 'house of despair.' There may be more than coincidence that in Jesus' last days, He spent his nights in a place named Bethany. Indeed, in His rejection, He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

Evidently, the next morning, no one offered Him anything to eat. In His humanity, He therefore hungered.

Mat 21:19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found

nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

The fig tree has always been a picture of Israel. Israel had become a fruitless nation for the Lord. They had become a great tree of religion with lots of leaves, but no fruit. You know if God looks in our lives and never sees any fruit, it has to be disappointing. Our goal every day should be to try and lead someone to Jesus. We can't save anyone, but we can tell them about Christ, and He can sure save them.

Mat 21:20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

In Palestine, fig trees can bring forth two crops annually. The early figs appear in the spring and the latter crop in the autumn. In the spring, the figs form on the trees before leaves appear. A fig tree in the spring with leaves and no figs was unnatural.

When its very Creator was in need, it had nothing to offer Him. It apparently had plenty of leaves, but no fruit for the Master. A lesson remains as a warning to this day. Grammatically, Jesus' statement about the tree is more of a prophecy than a command. He in affect said, no fruit will ever grow on you again. Immediately, the tree withered. The word translated as presently (parachma *parachrema*) has the sense of 'immediately.'

A likely application of the incident was that Israel, as God's planting, was like unto a fig tree. Though they had much superficial religion like unto leaves, they bore no fruit for God. A similar application can be related to John 15:1-16. We have been called to bear fruit. Sadly, all many have to offer the Master are leaves. Ominously, Israel soon would wither nationally from their land.

Mat 21:21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

Mat 21:22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Jesus, in replying to the disciples' astonishment at the withered tree, taught another great lesson in faith. A major vehicle of faith is prayer. As we pray, trusting God and taking Him at His Word, that faith can move God to move mountains. It is not prayer or faith that moves mountains. It is God.

As we begin to trust the Lord and His Word, beseeching Him for help, He can and very well may move the mountain before us. The thought may in some fashion be allegorical. However, the greater point is that with God nothing is impossible. Faith channeled through prayer can move God to do the impossible including moving mountains of whatever variety they might be.

We see Christ curse this fig tree, and it immediately withers away. Israel has been cut off because of unbelief today.. and the Gentiles have been chosen to be Christ's witnesses. The fig tree should be something we can learn a lesson about. Without Christ, we can do nothing. And our lives need to be fruitful lives. Don't be disappointed when many won't hear you. Things are drawing to a close soon. But if we only reached one more between now and the time Christ returns, it would be worth it all. Salvation is for an eternity. What love God had for us when He sent Jesus to die on that old rugged cross. We have a great promise from the Lord about prayer. If we have faith, we can move mountains. In this life, there are many mountains. Mountains of disappointment, mountains of financial troubles, possibly mountains of trials. Whatever we face, with Christ's help, we can overcome. We need to pray for God to show us His will for our lives, and then give us the ability to fulfill that will. Ask in prayer believing, and you will receive.

IV. Jesus' Authority Questioned

Mat 21:23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Mat 21:24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

On what was Tuesday after His official presentation of Himself to Israel (see Mark 11:13,20), Jesus went again into the Temple and began to teach. Jesus was promptly challenged by the chief priests and elders. They wanted to know who gave Him permission to so teach in *their* Temple.

The significance is that these men represented *official Israel*. Under the Romans, official Israel was embodied by the Temple officials and these were the ones now hostile to and rejecting Jesus Christ.

Their challenge was, *"By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"*

Their question was simple: by whose authority are you so teaching? It certainly was not theirs. Jesus masterfully answered their question with a question.

"I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things."

A malicious question is often best answered by a question which will expose the questioners.

Mat 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

Mat 21:26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

Mat 21:27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus then put them on the spot. Official Israel, in the high priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, had rejected John and dismissed his baptism. The common people in much of Israel had responded to his preaching and many had been baptized of him.

If the Temple authorities accepted Jesus' clear inference that John's baptism was of God, then why didn't they believe John?

Conversely, if John's baptism was not of God, they faced the political wrath of the populace who perceived him as a prophet of God. Jesus left them on the horns of a dilemma. Like most politicians they were unwilling to expose their true color if it was unpopular.

When they declined to answer Jesus, He declined to answer them as well. The authorities of the Temple were hypocrites and wolves in religious clothing. Jesus had no respect to them in any regard.

The chief priests and elders come and question with what authority Jesus did these things. They were probably referring to the purification of the temple, the healing of the blind and lame, and his teaching in the temple. He taught like no other had ever taught. Jesus asks them a hard question, and they can not answer him because they feared the people. Jesus does not give them an answer. But the reality was that He was God Himself, and had total authority to do whatsoever He desired. This was the maker of heaven and earth and the whole universe. And these come and question "His authority." Without God, we may think we have power, but we are truly powerless.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and

every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

V. The Parable of the Two Sons

Mat 21:28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

Mat 21:29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

Mat 21:30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

Mat 21:31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

Mat 21:32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

In this immediate context, Jesus proceeded to set forth a parable illustrating how official Israel, though outwardly pious and religious, was in fact rebellious against their God. Israel, as a whole entity, would not be the first to see the kingdom of God. The two sons are a clear allegory of Israel and church in the greater scope of history.

The first son, Israel, historically gave lip service to the Father, but in reality ignored His will. The second son, the gentiles, though initially rebellious against God, in due season repented and have accomplished God's will in the church.

The import of this thought was not lost on the Jewish ears. Israel, in the time of Christ, had come to view themselves as the exclusive recipients of God's blessing and the sole heirs to the promised kingdom. Jesus here clearly indicates they, by their unbelief and hardness of heart, had missed God's blessing in their cherished hope of a messianic kingdom.

The parable might conceivably also be a veiled allusion to Isaac with Jacob and Esau. The first son initially rebelled against his father, but in the fullness of time obeyed. The other son gave lip service to obeying, but in the final analysis did not.

What seems obvious is that pious and religious official Israel gave lip service to God, but were in fact disobedient and far from God. The ungodly gentile, though initially disobedient will in fact repent and turn to God. Jesus clearly made the application how that publicans and harlots, obvious sinners, would enter the kingdom before hypocritical official Israel.

The sinners were willing to repent and believe. They had already done so before the preaching of John. Likewise, they were the ones turning to Christ throughout his ministry. It is the largely gentile church which will see heaven and rise first before Israel. An application even for today is how that heritage and tradition have little importance to God. His interest is in finding "the lost sheep" that will repent and trust Him for salvation.

Often the gospel is more widely received by obvious sinners than those who have been exposed to it throughout their lives.

The first son first denies his father and says he will not go and work in the vineyard. But later he repents and goes and does what his father desired him to do. The second claimed he would go, but he never did go. The second son represents the self-righteous. Many today claim they will do whatever God wants them to do, but when he calls, they are never going where God would have them to go. Sometimes we have a major call to a mission field around the world, but our call may be to go and see the widow or the fatherless child. Or maybe to minister to our neighbor, or that harsh man or woman at work who has no knowledge of the love the Lord. Let's not be like the second son... let's go and do the Father's Will. Jesus teaches in verse 31 that the harlots and the publicans will enter into heaven before the self righteous. John preached unto all, and the Jews rejected John's teachings. But the publicans and harlots believed, repented, and received salvation. The Pharisees did not believe John... they trusted in their religion and their self righteousness. It is not enough.

VI. Parable of the Householder

Mat 21:33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

Mat 21:34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

Mat 21:35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Mat 21:36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Mat 21:37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

Mat 21:38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

Mat 21:39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

This parable is clearly about Israel. Time and time again God sent his prophets to Israel demanding fruit of them, but they killed the prophets. At last, the Householder, sent forth his own son. God did this when He sent Christ, and again, they rejected Him and killed Him.

Mat 21:40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Mat 21:41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Jesus continued in the same vein to the same audience with another pointed parable. In this parable, Jesus referred to a landowner who planted a fine vineyard with all of the necessary accessories: a hedge, a winepress, and a tower to guard it.

To the Jewish ear, the reference likely was loud and clear. In Isaiah 5:1-7, God through the prophet clearly portrayed that the nation of Israel was His vineyard and the people thereof His planting. In that context, God protested how He sought for righteousness therein, and found none. The parallel between the vineyard in Isaiah 5 and the parable here likely did not escape the hearers.

Jesus expanded the parable to explain that the landowner in due course sent servants to receive the lord's portion of the crop. In each case, these servants were rejected and treated with cruelty. The parallel to how Israel down through the centuries had treated prophets sent by God was only too obvious. Finally, the landlord sent his son.

The implication is clear. Jesus was that sent Son. He clearly foretold that He shortly would be not only rejected, but in fact slain at the hands of official Israel. The ultimate application of the parable was how the Lord of the vineyard would therefore give the vineyard to others who will bring forth fruit unto Him. The clear

inference is that Israel was about to be set aside as God's basic people on earth. The "other husbandmen" is a reference to the church.

In referring back to Isaiah 5:7, the sought after fruit was righteousness. Israel surely had produced only the hollow shell of self righteousness. Inwardly, they were like unto ravening wolves.

Jesus questions what the Lord of the Harvest would do to these mean husbandmen. The Pharisees knew what should have been done. God would let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, which is us, the Gentiles today. Out of the Gentiles, God has taken out a portion from them to become a people for his name.

Mat 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Mat 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Our Lord, in concluding the parable, inserted another 'mini-parable.' Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22-23 which is thought to be an account of the building of the Solomonic Temple. Then, the stones for the Temple were cut and fitted at the quarry before being shipped to the Temple site.

In the process of construction, the chief cornerstone was shipped earlier than expected and the builders cast it aside. The weeds grew up about it. In due season, they sought for it but could not find it. The inference is clear as to how God had sent His Chief Cornerstone and He was rejected. Meanwhile, Israel sought for their Messiah and could not find Him.

The same rejected Cornerstone has become the Chief Cornerstone of the church.

Eph 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

This short parable closely parallels the previous one of the husbandman and his vineyard. Our Lord once again, albeit in allegorical form, clearly foretold His impending rejection and death several days hence.

Jesus further clarified the point He previously made. The sought for kingdom of God was about to be taken from Israel and given to “a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” With the benefit of retrospect, we can clearly see how God shifted His focus from Israel and turned it to the coming church which was already organized.

Though the chief priests may not have had any understanding thereof, they no doubt understood the implication concerning God turning away from Israel. In verses 45 and 46, they desired even then to destroy Him, but it was not quite yet His time.

he clear reference shifts back to Christ as the Stone (or Rock) in verse 44. To Israel, He was a rock of offence and a stumbling stone (Isaiah 8:14-15).

To the church, He is the foundation and cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-22, I Corinthians 3:11).

To the world, He will be a stone smiting them with judgement and destruction (Daniel 2:34).

To reject Christ and stumble over Him will bring destruction. Ultimately, when He returns in power and great glory, He will grind His enemies into powder. See II Thessalonians 1: 7-9.

Jesus answers and tells them that the scriptures teach that the stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This stone is Jesus, and whosoever falls on this stone shall be broken. But on whomsoever if falls in judgment, those will be ground into a powder.

Mat 21:45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

Mat 21:46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

The chief priests and Pharisees heard the parables, and they recognized that it was against them that Christ spake. They wanted to take him and destroy him, but they could not for the people. But they would plot and scheme, and soon would take him. But not before it was time.

John 7:30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

The implications of these several parables did not escape His enemies. They clearly perceived that He spoke of them. Though Jesus was in the Temple and in the 'camp' of the chief priests, the time was not quite yet for His death. They were intimidated by the common people which still had regard for Jesus. He was perceived to be a prophet by them. Curiously, the common people had little more respect for their leadership than did Jesus. They could see through their hypocrisy and self-righteousness. The authorities of official Israel were forced to bide their time for several more days.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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