

THE BOOK OF LUKE
STUDY THIRTY (LUKE 20:9-19)
PARABLES FOR THE RELIGIOUS
"THE WICKED TENANTS"
AUGUST 24, 2008

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 20:18, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces,
but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

INTRODUCTION

Through the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, Jesus provides a brief overview of world history. The Israelites knew very well that Jesus' reference to the vine and fruit represented them. The characters in this story were easily identifiable and even the religious leaders understood who He was talking about.

In the story the owner of the vineyard is God, the vineyard is Israel and the tenants are the religious leaders. The servants who came to the tenants represented the long series of prophets and priests that God sent to Israel during Old Testament times. While these servants (prophets) were rejected, the owner (God) was very compassionate and patient. Instead of punishing those who rejected and rebelled against His servants, the owner provided them one last opportunity to obey, by sending His beloved son (Jesus). The others whom the owner decided to give the vineyard to represent the Gentiles. This parable indirectly answered the question concerning Jesus' authority, but also showed them that He knew about their plan to kill Him.

Jesus uses a special illustration when referring to the rejection of the son in the story. By quoting from Psalm 118:22, Jesus showed the unbelieving leaders that even their rejection of the Messiah had been prophesied in Scripture. In building a structure, the capstone is the very foundation that holds the entire building together. Jesus is clearly the capstone. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11). Ignoring the capstone was very dangerous. A person could be tripped or crushed (judged and punished). While Jesus' words were somewhat veiled, the religious leaders knew exactly what He was saying. This is why they immediately wanted Him arrested (Luke 20:19).

The Parable of the Wicked Servants was centered around the time of the harvest. The harvest represented a celebration of God's provision in their lives. The first fruits were to be offered in gratitude and appreciation for the life He had given and sustained. Just as the owner (God) looked to the tenants to offer up fruit from their borrowed fields, God desires for us to produce fruit in our lives. As you study this passage, examine your relationship with the Son and the fruit of the harvest you are offering to God in your life.

LEARNING FROM GOD'S WORD

1. What do the landowner, the tenants, the servants and the son represent? What does this parable reveal to you about the vineyard owner's character?
2. The owner could surely have taken strong action. He had the law on his side and He could have dealt severely with the offenders. Instead the owner makes one last special appeal to the tenants. What was this appeal? Why did the tenants respond in such a rebellious manner to the one who had provided for them and given them sustenance?
3. The crowd responded to Jesus' parable with horror (Luke 20:16). How does the passage Jesus quoted in Luke 20:17 relate to this parable? Who were the builders and who was the capstone referred to in this verse? How did the quoted Scripture (Psalm 118:22) affect the religious leaders? Why do you think Jesus chose this time to tell this parable?
4. As seen in Luke 13:7-9, the owner of the vineyard makes every effort to see fruit produced. In Luke 20:17-18, the owner has determined the rebellious tenants must be destroyed. The vineyard will be given to others in hopes that they will produce the fruit the owner desires. What do Ephesians 2:1-5, 2:17-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-12 reveal to us concerning who will receive the vineyard now and what is expected of them?

OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. God has given man the highest of privileges: the privilege of life and the privilege of caring for and managing His world. With this privilege, comes the responsibility to produce fruit for God. How are you currently “producing fruit for the Lord” in your life right now? What are some areas of your life where you are not as fruitful as you should be? What commitment will you make to work on these areas of unfruitfulness?

2. God’s dealing with the tenants in this parable reveals His love, grace and patience. He did not strike out in anger at the first sign of rebellion. He continued to send messengers, even His beloved son, in order to give the tenants another chance to respond appropriately. Think back on your life and record how God has been graciously patient with you. After reviewing His working in your life, how does this make you want to respond to Him?

3. Through the parable and commentary, Jesus warns of God’s coming judgment. How do you find yourself responding to His stern characterization of God? Meditate on Luke 20:18. What are the implications of this verse to your life today?

