

Matthew 21:33-41

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[0 : 00] And so at the end of Matthew chapter 21 we're in the last week of our Lord's life. He's in Jerusalem and as we've gone through our Matthew chapter 20 we've got to the point where Jesus has been speaking very directly to the Jewish leaders.

The religious leaders and the civil leaders together and he has been reproving them for their unbelief. Spoken very very clearly. And he's still speaking to them. So if you look at verse 45 the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables.

They perceived that he was speaking about them. And so what we have here is a parable about the history and the sin and the ruin of the Jewish people.

People of God, people of Israel. And so first of all let's look at their privileges. And verse 33. The privileges of the Jews and they are represented aren't they here by a vineyard.

There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard. There is a landowner and he establishes a vineyard and he lets it out.

[1 : 10] He rents it out to find dresses. And of course God is this landowner. God is the one who has planted a vineyard. And the vineyard it is, is Israel.

How many of you say, well listen to Psalm 80. The psalm is praised in Psalm 80 verse 14. He says, turn again, O God of hosts, look down from heaven and see, have regard for this vine.

The stock that your right hand planted. Israel was God's vineyard. And the privileges of Israel are represented in this picture of a vineyard.

Stay in the Old Testament. You can go to Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 1. And God says, let me sing for my beloved, my love song concerning his vineyard.

My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and he cleaned it of stones. And he planted it with the choices of vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it.

[2 : 14] And he hewed out a wine vat in it. And he looked for it to yield grapes. But the vineyard yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

What more was there for me to do for my vineyard that I've not done it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield rotten, wild grapes?

So for a thousand years, before Matthew chapter 21, for a thousand years the Jews had known that they were the vineyard of God. God had planted them.

What's the story of the Old Testament? God had made them his people. God had hedged them around. Verse 33, they were living under the protection and the blessing of God.

And so when other nations disappeared in famine, Israel went down into Egypt. When other nations perished in slavery, do you remember?

[3 : 19] Israel remained attacked in Egypt. And God steps in, doesn't he? And he brings them out of Egypt. And he brings them to Zion. And he renews his glorious covenant with Israel.

And he says, the theme tune of the Bible, I am your God and you will be my people. And here are the terms of the covenant. In a sort of way, God withdrew.

He never met with them in the same way again. But they were his people. He was their landowner. And they were his vineyard.

They were the tenants of the vineyard. The people who were responsible for bringing forth fruit.

They were to show the world what God was like. And in all these glorious privileges, the privileges of being God's people, had been entrusted to Israel.

Now secondly, let's look at their responsibilities. The responsibilities of the Jews and the people of God were found in verse 34. Can you look at verse 34? When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit.

[4 : 29] Can you see that? It's really obvious, isn't it? That the vineyard owner is looking for... What's he looking for? Fruit. It's pretty reasonable, isn't it?

And the demand isn't high. He is asking for what grows naturally on his vine. And that that should be given to him.

The rent was paid by the vine dresser. He kept part of the crop. And he gave part of the crop to the owner. So what grows naturally on his vine is all that the farmer is asking for.

And so God expects from Israel fruit. God, through Moses, particularly, has taught Israel what to believe.

And he is asking that what grows on his vine should be his. In other words, that they should believe what they've been taught to believe. And God, through Moses particularly, has taught Israel to behave.

[5 : 32] And God is asking for what grows naturally on his vine that they should give to him. That they should behave as he has told them to behave.

It's all that God is asking for. It's a reasonable command. You are my covenant people. I am your God. And so I ask you to believe what I tell you to believe.

And I ask you to behave as I have told you to behave. That's all I'm asking for. And those are the responsibilities which you have. And so those are the privileges.

And those are the responsibilities. And let's come to the body of the parable. Which tells us about their conduct. Their conduct. The master, in verses 35-39, the master sends messages.

And so here were these men. They came from God. And they represented God himself. And they spoke for God himself. And remember what they were looking for? They were looking for fruit. And of course the parable is about the prophets.

[6 : 36] Those people who came to teach Israel the truth. To speak on behalf of God. To bring messages from God. That he expected that they would believe.

And he expected that they would bear fruit. From that message. When the prophets came. What did the prophets say? They said this is what God is like. And they said this is how you ought to behave. And God demands that.

And God said to me prophet. After prophet. After prophet. And we're going to see that they were dreadfully defeated. And you must admire the patience of God.

That when they rejected the first prophet. He sent another prophet. And another prophet. And another prophet. But the reaction was always the same.

It was resistance. And we see in this passage. It was more than resistance. It was hate. Verse 35 and 36. The prophets who came. They were treated like the worst criminals.

[7 : 45] They spoke the truth. And they only demanded righteousness. But some of them were treated like rogues. Some of them were beaten. Like Jeremiah. Some of them were killed.

Isaiah was one of those. Some of those were stoned. Zachariah the son of Jehoiada. He was stoned in the temple we read in 2 Chronicles 24. And Israel refused the messengers of God.

The people who had these privileges. They were named as the covenant people of God. They were stamped with his name. They were the only people in the world.

And they belonged to the living God. And we are the people of the only God.

That there is. When he sent the messengers in his name. They treated. Him. They treated them like they had come to do harm.

[8 : 45] But not to do good. Look at verse 37. And so finally. He sent his son to them. Saying they will respect. My son. Here.

It is very obvious. It is very plain. That our Lord Jesus Christ. Is telling us. That he is the son of the father. And Muslims object. They say. Well how can God have a son. But the Bible uses this homely language.

To try and get across to your or my feeble mind. Tells us something of the wonder. That exists. In the relationships. Between the persons of the deity.

There is one who has life in himself. But who nevertheless. Owes his life to the father. It is a great mystery. And the only way.

That this can be conveyed in human language. That there is a separate person. In the Godhead. Who owes his life. To the father. Even though he has life in himself.

[9 : 48] The only way. That that mystery. Can be transmitted. To our human minds. Is by the word son. And so Jesus Christ. Is here declaring. That he is the son.

And all the prophets. You see. Were the forerunners of Christ. Weren't they? We know that. Because when Christ came. He spoke with an authority. There was no prophet. Who could speak like him. Each prophet. Had to say. They had to say. Thus says the Lord. This says the Lord. But he says. I say unto you. The prophets. Have to say. God is like this. And God is like this. And God is like that. But the son comes. And the son says. He who has seen me. Has seen the father. And if they hadn't respected. The prophets. Which they hadn't. At least. They should have respected. The son. Because there was an authority. [10:48] About him. Wasn't there? There was. A revelation. From God. Which he was giving. Which had surpassed. Everything before. But instead of respecting him. Look what they did. Look at verse 37. Finally. He sent his son to them. Saying. They will respect my son. But when the tenants. Saw the son. They said to themselves. This is. This is the air. This is the air. Come. Let us. Kill him. And have his inheritance. It's a remarkable. Piece of scripture. Because this is the last week. Of the Lord's life. Remember. The cross. Will take place. Later. In this week. But it hasn't taken place yet. And here is our Lord. Predicting his own death. Several days before. It takes place. [11:42] And he predicts. Precisely. Who will be responsible. For his death. And so we see the man. Who is God. He's a man. Because he's standing there. Teaching them. But he is God. He's predicting his own death. And he looks down. At their hearts. And he can see. What the Jewish. And civil. And religious leaders. Of the Jews. Are plotting. Here is. Omniscience. Here is. The all-seeing. Eye. Of God. And there is. The mouth of a man. And that is the wonder. Isn't it. Of the person. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is that a verse 38. But the tenants. Saw the son. They said. To themselves. This is the heir. Come let us kill him. And have his inheritance. And they took him. And threw him out of the vineyard. And killed him. Do you remember. [12:43] Do you remember. Our Lord's ministry. It's been three years. At this point. The first year. Was one of popularity. But as the year. Went on. Again and again. You come to the end. Of that first year. You see the Jews. Coming together. Sometimes even surprising. Sets of Jews. Like Pharisees. And Herodians. Naturally. They were sworn enemies. And they got together. To plot the death. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And even while. Our Lord has been speaking. And doing his miracles. The plotting. Had been going on. They plotted. How they could arrest him. And kill him. In the very week. Of the Passover. Now why. Why. Look at verse 38. Let us kill him. And have his. Inheritance. Jews belong to God. [13:40] They were the people of God. But these people are crooks. And they wanted. The inheritance for themselves. Do you remember. In addition to the word of God. They've been given. All sorts of laws. And regulations. And teaching. In addition to God's. Doctrines. Do you remember. They added their own doctrines. They added. To God's law. They imposed their own law. And they insisted. That people believe. What they believe. And taught what they taught. And did what they said. And along comes Jesus. And Jesus said. Do you remember. You have heard. That it was said. But I say unto you. And Jesus demolishes. And Jesus demolishes. Demolishes the Pharisees teaching. And tradition. He says. By your teaching. And by your traditions. You've made the word of God. Void. Of null effect. And our Lord attacks it. And he declares war on Phariseism. [14:35] Of being outward. And respectable outwardly. But inwardly. Being far from God. He declares war. On obeying man's law. Rather than God's. On observing tradition. Rather than what the Bible. Clearly teaches. Because after all. He is looking for the correct fruit. On the vine. And so these Jewish leaders. They want to seize the inheritance. They've no place for Jesus. In their system. They want to keep hold of the vineyard. They don't want to lose their position.

And so they carry out their plot. You see in verse 39. They caught him. They're going to do that. On the very Thursday. Of that week.

They're going to cast him. Out of the vineyard. On Friday. He would be taken. Outside of Jerusalem. Outside the city. And he would be taken. And killed. And although it would be.

[15:32] Romans who administered. The crucifixion. It would be because. Jews had engineered it. To the extent. When Peter gets up. On the day of Pentecost. He says. Doesn't he.

You. By the wicked hands. Have crucified. This person. Is the glory of Israel. It was a wonderful thing.

And for God to come. To Mount Sinai. And speak to Israel. No other nation had that. It was a really wonderful thing. When the temple of God. Was built in Jerusalem.

For the glory of God. The Shekinah glory. To come into the tabernacle. And then the temple. For the most wonderful thing. Of all. Was that the womb.

Of a Jewish girl. Carried God. Manifested in the flesh. And when God became a man. He became a Jew. And he lived among the Jews.

[16:30] And he came. And to his own. But his own. Received him not. It's the wonder of the incarnation. And Israel's greatest wonder.

Is that God. Became a Jew. But they rejected him. And so we've seen their privileges. We've seen their responsibility. We've seen their conduct.

And now our Lord Jesus Christ. A Jew himself. God himself. Speaks to them. About their ruin. Look at this 14 and 41. He gets to this point.

In his parable. And he asks. Those who are listening. In a question. He says. Verse 40. He says. When therefore the owner. Of the vineyard comes. What will he do with those tenants? And they said to him.

We will put these wretches. To a miserable death. And let out the vineyards. To other tenants. Tenants. Who will give him the fruits. In their seasons. And there. Out of their own mouths.

[17:29] They speak their own condemnation. And God is the Lord of the vineyard. And he will come to it. And there will be no more prophets. And there weren't anymore. Were they? We have all the Old Testament prophets.

And then John the Baptist. And then the son of God himself. But God has sent no one. To the Jew's sins. Nor ever will. The next action of God.

In the life of the Jewish nation. Is the cataclysmic event. Of 1870. When 40 years after this. God comes to the Jews. In fearful horrific judgment.

When Titus and his armies. Came into Palestine. They destroyed Jerusalem. They scattered the Jews. And they razed the temple to the ground. And thousands and thousands.

Of those rejecting Jews. Died and went to judgment. Where the Jews have scattered. To every part of this world. And the vineyard is being led out to others. They see that.

[18:28] Very shortly. In a few weeks time. Because God. Had never ever spoken. In any language. Except the Jewish language.

He'd spoken in Hebrew. And he'd spoken in Chaldean. And through the lips of Christ. He'd spoken through Aramaic. But on the day of Pentecost. Do you remember? This great God.

Will speak. In Gentile languages. That is the significance. Of the gift of tongues. That's what the gift of tongues. Is all about.

It is to show. That the Jews. Have been cast. Out of the vineyard. What does the Bible say? The Bible says. That tongues. Are assigned to unbelievers. And for the first time.

Ever. God will speak. In Gentile languages. To show. That people. Who up to now. Have been outside. The vineyard. Are going to enter into the vineyard.

[19:25] With all its privileges. The gospel. Will go global. And that explains. Does it? How Paul preached. To the Gentiles. In the New Testament. Paul speaks about.

The mystery. When he writes. To the Ephesians. A mystery. In the Bible. Is something. That was hidden. But now. Has been brought forth. And now. Is revealed. I understand it.

Says Paul. The apostles understand it. And those prophets. In the New Testament church. They understood it. That in the Old Testament. It was revealed. That the Gentiles. Would be saved. But it was never revealed.

That they would become saints. And Christians. On exactly the same basis. And on the same level. With all the same privileges. As the Jews themselves. No Old Testament prophet.

Says the apostle Paul. Understood. That when the Gentiles. Came to be saved. They would be saved. On exactly the same level. As the same Jews. That they would be.

[20 : 24] Just as much. As the people of God. As the Jews had ever been. That is the mystery. Which I proclaim. Paul says. And so today. In 2020. God still has.

A flourishing vineyard. And the prophet. Spoke of this. And Jesus. Spoke of this. And so today. All over the world. Men and women. And boys and girls.

Who are God's own people. God has one olive tree. And he has stripped off. The unbelieving branches. And he has grafted. Onto that olive tree.

Believing Gentiles. He doesn't have. A couple of olive trees. He has one olive tree. And so you and I. Have been grafted.

Into the same olive tree. As Abraham. And Isaac. And Moses. And David. Of course. Any Jew who believes. Any Jew who believes. Will be grafted.

[21 : 21] Back in. Into the olive tree. And we thank God. Don't we. That there are a minority. Of Jews. Who do believe. In the Lord Jesus. And are following him. But how are they saved.

They are saved. In exactly the same way. You are. By being justified. By faith. In the Lord Jesus. And any Gentile. Will be grafted.

Into the olive tree. That is not. By his own nature. It's not because. You are something special. It is by faith. In Jesus Christ. Isn't it? And we who believe. Enter. Into all the privileges.

Of the people of God. So turn with me. And wake up. Turn with me. To Ephesians. Chapter 2. Turn with me. To Ephesians. Chapter 2. It's on page. 9. 7. 6. In your Bibles. Let's see.

How Paul applies this. This is what Paul says. To you. If you've trusted in Christ. He says.

Ephesians. Chapter 2. Page 9. 7. 6. Verse 11. He says. Therefore remember. That at one time.

[22 : 14] You Gentiles. In the flesh. Called the uncircumcision. By what is called. The circumcision. Which is made. In the flesh. By hands. He says. You Gentiles. Verse 12. Remember. That you were. At that time.

Separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth. The people of Israel. Strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope.

And without God. In the world. But now. In Christ Jesus. You who were once far off.

Have been brought near. By the blood of Jesus Christ. And so you were once far away. But now you've been brought near.

By Christ. Through the blood of Christ. Once you were far off. But now you've been brought near. Verse 12. Once you were without Christ. But if you are near.

[23 : 07] You have the Messiah. Once you were aliens. You were far off. But now in Christ. You are citizens of the people of God.

Once you were strangers. To the covenant. But now. All those covenant promises. Are ours in Christ Jesus. Once we had no hope.

But now we have great hope. Once we were without God. But now we have him. And if you are a believer this morning.

Abraham is not the father of the Jews. He is your father. And all the covenants. Are yours. And all the privileges. Of the people of God.

Are yours. And all the blessings. Of the people of God. Are yours. And that's why. When Paul comes to describe. The church of Jesus Christ. In the letter of the Galatians.

[24 : 03] He describes them. As the Israel of God. Jesus taught that. We are to believe. What we are told to believe.

And we are to behave. How we are told to behave. And we have the same. Responsibilities. And we have the same. Privileges. Of the people of God. All of them.

And so. When you read. The Old Testament. Do you think you are reading. A Jewish book. You are not. You are reading. Your book. No Jew.

And converted. Can understand. The Old Testament. Paul says that. It's the Corinthians. And so. When you read about Abraham. Are you reading about. The Jewish father. No.

You are reading about. Your father. And when you read. Of David. You think you are reading. About a kind of. Jewish ancestor. You know. You are reading. Of your ancestor. You are a fully.

[25 : 01] Fledged member. Of the people of God. So we have seen. The Jews. Responsibilities. Their privilege. Their conduct. Their ruin. And then lastly. Verses 42. To form 6.

Their ruin. Is underlined. Jesus put the question. To the people. Listening to him. And they have answered.

They have answered correctly. So Jesus presses home. This great truth. That the Jews. And Israel. As a people. Are ruined. And in verses 42. He quotes. Psalm 118.

Can you see that? He says. If you've never read. In the Bible. The stone. That the builders. Rejected. Has become. The cornerstone. And this was. The Lord's doing. And it is marvellous. In our eyes. And Jesus is saying.

That psalm. Predicts everything. That is taking place. And so the illustration. Imagine. You're on a building site. And there's something. And I'm building.

[25 : 56] A great building. And they come across. A massive stone. But the stone. Has got no place. In their plans. And it doesn't figure. In their thinking. So I googled them. Pick it up. And they throw it out.

So they don't use it. And the Jews. Came to the Lord Jesus Christ. And they had no place. In their thinking. And he didn't figure. In their plans. So they threw him out.

And that's. Calvary. But that stone. That the builders. Have rejected. Has become. The chief cornerstone. God. In his plans. Has made the Lord Jesus. The very centre.

And everything. In God's plan. Depends on the Lord Jesus. He is. The cornerstone. Which holds. The whole building together. And you take that stone away.

And the whole building collapses. God's plans. God's plans are entirely. Built on. Jesus Christ. And if. Like the Jews. You reject. The Lord Jesus.

[26 : 53] You are totally. Outside of God's vineyard. Totally. Outside of his kingdom. And totally. Outside of his plans. Because everything.

Must be built. On Jesus Christ. Everything. Must be built. On Christ. Crucified. God. By his. Crucifixion. Has made him.

The head. Of that corner. Where were your sins. Forgiven. They were forgiven. At the cross. Where were you. Put right with God. At the cross. Where did all the privileges. Of the people. Of God. Become yours. Through the blood.

Of Christ. Which brought you near. And so. Verse 43. Jesus. Says. To the Jewish people. Therefore I tell you.

The kingdom of God. Will be taken away from you. And given to a people. Producing. Its fruits. Despite all their privileges.

[27 : 48] Despite all their history. They have no place. In the vineyards of people. Because they reject. Jesus Christ. Again.

Let me say. Any. Any. Individual Jew. Who comes back to Christ. And puts his faith. In Christ. Like we do. They are grafted. Wonderfully. Back into the olive tree. And they will enter. Into the vineyards.

But the Jews. As a people. Have rejected. Gone. And so. Being cast out. Therefore I tell you. The kingdom of God. Will be taken away from you. And given to a people.

Producing fruits. What. What people. What nation. Britain. No. America. No.

What people. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. We know. Throughout the Old Testament. New Testament. We find that each person. Who believes. Is incorporated. Into a new people.

[28 : 45] A new nation. That amongst all. The nations of the world. This morning. There is a new people. Composed of. Men and women. And boys and girls. Who depend on the chief cornerstone.

Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now it says. Jesus verse 44. Which is a difficult verse. And the one who falls on this stone.

Will be broken. To pieces. And when it falls. On anyone. It will crush him. Here's the cornerstone. You embrace it.

You fall upon it. Do you see what it says? You will be broken. Those first believers. In the Lord Jesus. There was terrible hurt. And there was terrible pain.

Because they believed in Christ. Wasn't there? Especially those first Jewish believers. Those Gentile believers. Who first put their trust in Christ. There was terrible pain.

[29 : 43] And terrible hurt. They were persecuted. By the authorities. They were burned alive in Rome. Christians were scattered. Throughout the world. And any of you. This morning. Who believe.

Or who will believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be terrible pain. And hurt. By believing in Christ. Because we know. Don't we? And the world rejects. The cornerstone. And if you fall on that stone. And you depend on it. And you build upon it. You will get hurt in the process. I wish it wasn't the case. But it is. And whoever falls on that stone. Will be broken. But the second half of the verse. On whoever it falls. It will grind him to powder. It will crush him. And so. The truth is this. Isn't it? There is a cost. And there is hurt. In following Christ. We mustn't be naive. But there is a greater hurt.

[30 : 42] And there is a greater cost. In not following Christ. Daniel describes the Lord Jesus. As a stone cut. Not by hands.

It is a stone which grows. And becomes a mountain. That fills the earth. That is the kingdom of Christ. This great stone. Which has existed. From all eternity. Without dimensions. And if that stone. Should fall on you. It is a horrific. Horrific image. Your ruin would be total. And at the end of the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ. The chief cornerstone. Is coming again. And will the great stone. Fall on you. You see. To reject Christ.

To reject the Messiah. To reject. Not only the prophets. But the Son. To reject the stone. Which God has made. The chief cornerstone.

[31 : 40] To reject the one. That God loves the most. And has made the centre. Of his plans. Well. It is a terrible thing. Isn't that? To be at war. With Jesus Christ. And the present situation.

Won't go on as it is. He comes again. And the truth of what. Our Lord Jesus was teaching. Was confirmed. In verses 45 and 46. Would the Jews repent?

They feared this terrible. Terrible warning. When the chief priest. From the Pharisees. He feared his parables. They perceived. That he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking. To arrest him.

They feared the crowds. Because they held him. To be a prophet. It's incredible. Hardness of heart. Is it? All the privileges. This clear.

Stern. Warning. And yet they still want. To lay their hands on him. They would cast him out. And kill him. And they would not repent.

[32 : 37] And they would say. Later on in the week. They would say. May his blood. Be on our heads. And on our children. It's unimaginable. It's beyond imagination. It's beyond imagination.

That you live in Britain. Where a Bible. Can be easily bought. And read. But you never read it. That you're in a country. Where you can hear. The word of God proclaimed.

But you can't be bothered. To go and listen to it a lot. That you should be in a place. Where there are Christian books. Which will show you. The way of salvation. And show you the way. To become like Christ.

But you can't be bothered. To read them. That you should be able to find. Christian help. From people. And not give us stuff really. About the things of God. It's the same.

And it's the same phenomenon. And it will ruin you. It will ruin you. And there is only one way of it.

[33 : 37] The only way of it. Is to repent. and that is to turn from yourself and turn to God and to embrace the stone that the pillars have rejected because that has become the chief cornerstone and it is marvellous in our eyes the one who falls on the stone will be broken but the one on whom the stone falls it will crush let's pray